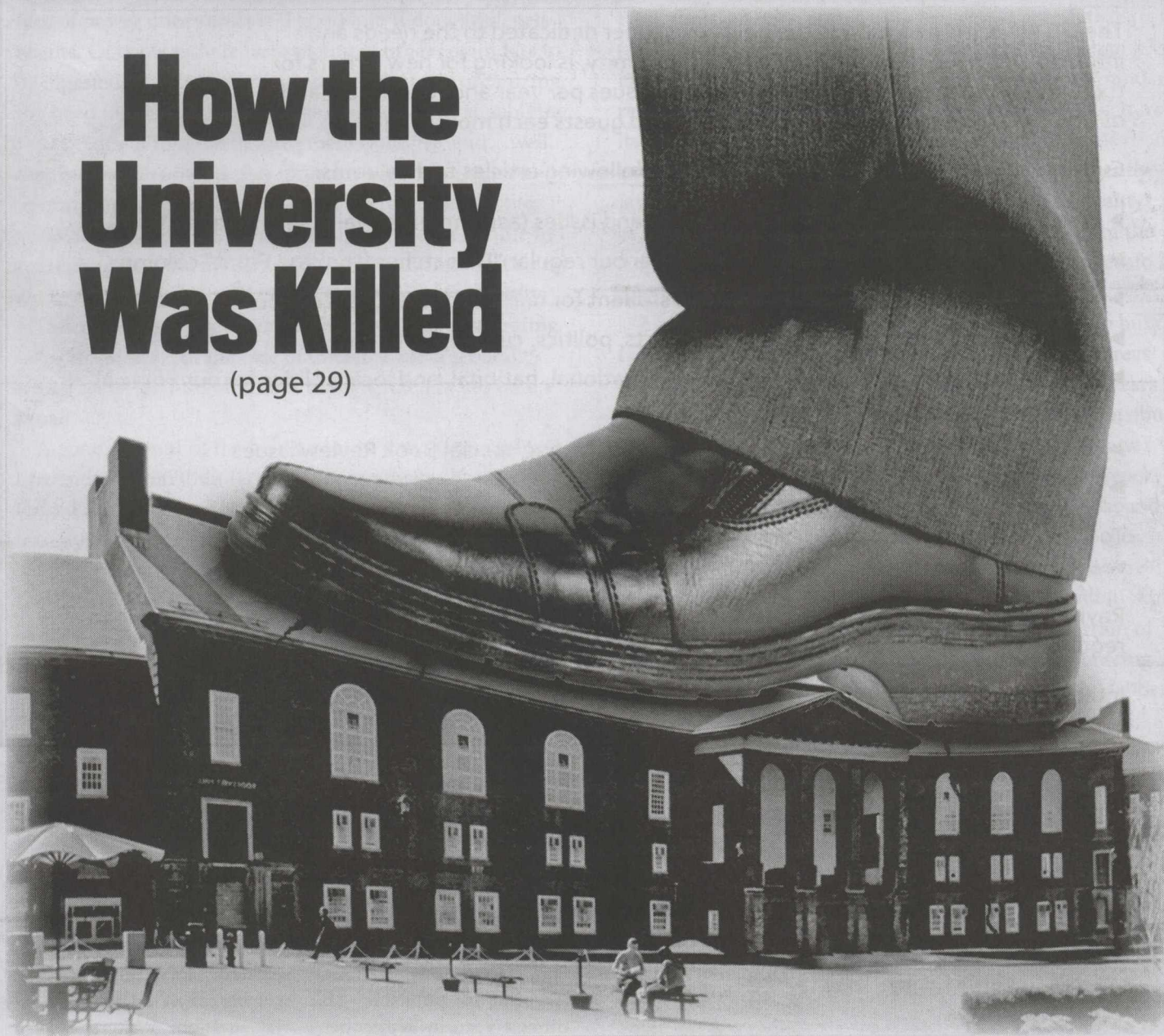


How the University Was Killed

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The New Wave of Student Power—What's Next? (page 10)

NEVER SUBMIT. CONTRIBUTE!

The *GC Advocate* newspaper, the only newspaper dedicated to the needs and interests of the CUNY Graduate Center community, is looking for new writers for the 2012-2013 academic year. We publish six issues per year and reach thousands of Graduate Center students, faculty, staff, and guests each month.

Currently we are seeking contributors for the following articles and columns:

- ▶ Investigative articles covering CUNY news and issues (assignments available on request)
- ▶ First Person essays on teaching at CUNY for our regular "Dispatches from the Front" column
- ▶ First person essays on life as a graduate student for our "Graduate Life" column
- ▶ Feature "magazine style" articles on the arts, politics, culture, NYC, etc.
- ▶ Provocative and insightful analyses of international, national, and local politics for our Political Analysis column
- ▶ Book reviews for our regular Book Review column and special Book Review issues
- ▶ Local Music Reviews and Art Reviews

To view recent articles and to get a sense of our style, please visit the *GC Advocate* website:
www.gcadvocate.com.

Payments for articles range between \$75 and \$150 depending on the length and amount of research required. We also pay for photos and cartoons.

Interested writers should contact Editor Michael Busch at michaelkbusch@gmail.com.



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SUBMISSIONS

The *GC Advocate* accepts contributions of articles, illustrations, photos and letters to the editor. Please send queries to the email address above. Articles selected for publication will be subjected to editorial revision. Writers who contribute articles of 1,000 words will be paid \$50 and those who submit longer articles requiring research will receive \$75. We also pay for photographs and artwork. Email for details.

Advocating Change

Shit kicking is back in style, and thank god for that. If there was one takeaway to be had from the encampment era of the Occupy movement and the offshoots therefrom, it was the important reminder that sticking a middle finger in the face of power doesn't just feel good but, if done well, gets results. Of course, there were plenty of other reminders to be digested as well: the importance of strategic organizing, the need for solidarity, the perils of internecine squabbling, the fatigues of long-term movement building, and...well, the list goes on and on. But for many who were moved to march, to donate their time and energy to any of the various May Day activities last spring, to don a hoodie in outrage against the murder of a child, or even to just stand along the periphery of Zuccotti in the name of curiosity, events of the past year have left them with an exhilarating taste for defiance in the face of injustice and immorality which had been long dormant in the United States on a broad scale.

A good amount of the credit goes to university students across the country, undergrads and graduates both, who locked arms to lock horns with authority, who spent countless hours doing the often dull but critically important work of planning effective actions, who allowed their bodies to be abused by batons and chemical agents, who tirelessly documented and critiqued what was going on around them, and who crafted radically reimagined, and at times beautiful, visions of how citizens ought to interact with their societies. In New York, it's been no different. CUNY students, including a thick concentration at the Graduate Center, have been a driving force in a movement that continues to build and evolve here despite cynical post-mortems from those who've grown tired and gone home, or who never liked what they saw in the first place.

In part, this momentum sustains and has been sustained by an arc of broader activism than many acknowledge. The structural inequality, corporate greed, and political dysfunction that animate protests across the country—and indeed the world—play out in grotesque concentration throughout the halls of higher learning and particularly here in the City University system. Readers of this newspaper are no strangers to this reality, and know all too well how the logic driving CUNY's institutional decision making grinds most against those whom the university is supposed to serve and protect. Happily, readers of the *Advocate*

have also come to expect that the paper will stand up with them as they push back against a system that rarely, these days, looks out for their best interests.

Six years ago, the previous editor of the *Advocate*, James Hoff, took the reins with a clear mission in mind: to transform the paper into a vehicle for action and change. During his tenure, the *Advocate* experienced a profound renovation—both in its style and substance—and anchored itself more firmly in the direct interests and concerns of the student body here at the Graduate Center. Consequently, James was able to expand the paper, increase the quality of content and the quantity of readers, and transform the *Advocate* from being merely a source of information into a tool by which its name could be more fully realized.

As the new editor-in-chief of the paper, I intend to build on these strengths while working to shore up some areas in which the paper has been less successful over the years. This means retaining the same stable of excellent contributors wherever possible while proactively recruiting new voices, maintaining many of the traditional silos of reporting and analysis that made the paper strong while expanding the field of topics and concern covered in our pages, continuing to cultivate partnerships that have been a tremendous resource to the *Advocate* in years past but looking also to connect with new allies across a diverse terrain of activism and interest. It also means, critically, embracing new and emerging modes of communication more deliberately and effectively.

One of the chief limitations of the *Advocate* historically has been its publishing schedule. The newspaper traditionally comes out once a month, and only during the academic year. As a result, a lot gets lost in the shuffle, and more than once the *Advocate* has found itself behind the curve on important events and issues of concern to the GC community. This trouble has been especially acute during the summer and winter recess periods, when CUNY administrators seem consistently to make their worst decisions, and when graduate students are scattered around the world doing research, at home getting some much needed rest and relaxation, and least likely to be watching what's happening on 80th Street and on their otherwise quiet campuses.

No longer. This coming year, the *Advocate* aims to more deliberately make its presence robust online and in the blogosphere. As this issue goes to press, we are in the midst

reorganizing the *Advocate* website in ways that we hope will allow greater space for robust, interactive dialogue, and that will serve as a platform for online activism that compliments actions being taken on the ground. The *Advocate*'s role in this regard couldn't be clearer. Over the past several years, the CUNY Board of Trustees has taken decisions that were as rotten as they were susceptible to repeal, though members of the university administration didn't know it at the time.

The first was Brooklyn College's move to fire an adjunct from teaching a course based on the beliefs about his beliefs, held by a local politician with connections to the board. The second was the BoT's rejection of John Jay's request to recognize playwright Tony Kushner with an honorary degree. In both cases, CUNY administrators acted rashly, unfairly, and in the comfort of expected impunity. And in both cases, the *Advocate* took action against these moves, mobilizing community and political support that was swiftly brought to bear on the Board and others in the CUNY system, pressure which lead to reversals of these decisions in each instance. With greater attention to building an online presence year round, the *Advocate* will always be ready to engage like this against the predatory actions of administration and government officials whenever they occur.

Part of this overhaul includes deploying social media tools more deliberately moving forward. The *Advocate* features profiles on both Facebook and Twitter which we plan to inject with greater life in the coming weeks and months. In order to increase their effectiveness, however, both demand a greater membership of GC students, faculty, staff, friends, and others. We'll be reaching out to many of you with this purpose in mind, but will also depend in some part on your willingness to proactively engage with us online. A perfect first step in this respect is to join our Facebook page (search for "Graduate Center Advocate"), and follow us on Twitter at @CUNYAdvocate. But Twitter and Facebook are only part of the equation, and a small one. Ultimately, what's more important to the life of the paper is

the variety of voices to which it gives a megaphone. Therefore, we're looking to initiate in the coming year a roster of blogs on the website that run the gambit from politics to the arts that collectively serve as a hub for conversation, intellectual and social interaction, and expression for our community no matter where you are or what hours you keep. The Graduate Center boasts a remarkable population of students, faculty, and friends, and we want the *Advocate* to reflect its diversity and quality wherever possible. So, if you want to blog, or have an idea for one, please let us know and we'll make every effort to see it through. And who knows? We may be able to find some money to compensate you for it, as all labor should be.

Back in the real world, you'll notice some other changes to the paper, largely stylistic. The first is likely already evident to longtime readers of the *Advocate*. The paper's layout guru, Mark Wilson, and I decided to reorient the physical design of the paper away from the broadsheet format that was a traditional hallmark of the *Advocate* to the minitab version you're holding in your hands. The idea here is simple, and two-fold. First, we think the new organization will be easier on the eyes.

Even with tons of photographs and other graphic enhancements we use to dress up the paper's copy, the old style hit readers with a wall of grey that we felt needed some breaking up to keep readers focused and engaged. And second, we hope that the new format will allow us greater flexibility to deploy color printing beautifully and effectively in the near future (fingers crossed).

There's a lot happening in the coming year, and even more to do. We'll make every effort to continue muckraking and shit kicking on your behalf, while continuing to be a resource and a tool for readers to remain informed and effective advocates for themselves, their schools, and their society. At the same time, the door—real and metaphoric—will always be open if you want to write, rage, or refute. Because in this struggle, as in any other, the most important rule is "never submit." But think about contributing instead. Ⓐ

DSC PARTY

The first DSC party will take place at 8pm on October 26 in 5409 and 5414. All Graduate Center students are invited.

cunydsc.org

All the Wrong Moves

Taking CUNY to Court

The battle over CUNY's Pathways initiative continues to rage, and has expanded further into the courts. The beginning of August witnessed a concerted new push by the University Faculty Senate (UFS), which filed a lawsuit against the implementation of Pathways in the CUNY system, arguing that it would stand in contravention of New York's Open Meetings Law. At the heart of this claim is the fact that at six CUNY campuses—Baruch, John Jay, Staten Island, Lehman, BMCC, and Queensborough—the Pathways initiative has been rejected by each school's respective faculty senate. And still, university administration forged ahead, submitting revised Pathways proposals which were then considered behind closed doors. CUNY's policy on curricular design is unambiguous about the rule demanding that all debates over new proposals be held in public and advertised with appropriate advance notice. All proposals, furthermore, must meet with faculty senate approval. Neither condition in these instances were met.

At the same time, the University Faculty Senate, in partnership with the PSC, has pushed ahead with an earlier proposal to design and ultimately implement an alternative plan which would address CUNY's concern about student transfer between the system's junior and senior colleges. In a statement released at the end of the spring semester, the UFS and PSC representatives were clear in their intentions. "We plan to begin with an examination of the scale of the current problems in student transfer, a survey of existing best practices, and a study of the success and failure

of the articulation agreements currently in place. Our discussion will also include the question of additional resources for CUNY; we believe that a meaningful solution to the student transfer problem will require more funding, not less. And we may consider how new technology, including some currently being implemented at CUNY, could be reshaped to address the needs of transfer students." Efforts in this direction were undertaken at the beginning of summer recess, and will continue through the fall semester. The *Advocate* will continue to report on Pathways-related news as it develops in the coming months.

CUNY Brass Increase Spending...On Themselves

School recess periods are always a good time to bury shitty news, as the CUNY Sith well knows. In June, the CUNY Board of Trustees (BoT) met to approve a resolution that would grant a sweeping collection of salary increases for top bureaucrats across the university. The numbers are simply staggering, especially—and we can't emphasize this enough—as budgets for spending on students and faculty are being pillaged by state legislators. The BoT was in a generous mood. They originally resolved to increase the salary of our Chancellor, Lord Vader, by some 50 percent, from \$470,705 to \$724,470. Holy fuck! But the chancellor isn't the only CUNY exec whistling all the way to the bank. His vice-henchmen would enjoy pay raises of between \$50,000 and \$100,000 each. College presidents also make out like bandits: those at the junior college level would make upwards of \$325,000, while the ones running prestigious senior schools

will rake in around \$370,000.

A gathering of students and outraged faculty protested the vote while the board was busy passing the resolution, highlighting the stark contrast between students struggling to make ends meet while CUNY's executive class treated themselves to a pay hike, one many believe is undeserved. The response from the board, if our old friend Jeffrey Wiesenfeld is any indication, couldn't be clearer—fuck off. "It's just needless rancor," Wiesenfeld told reporters, referring to what he calls "this extreme striving for egalitarianism...that's forced on the Board, [when] students and others could be using their energy more productively." We're glad to see old Jeff's penchant for charm hasn't dimmed since we last spoke.

When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Go Shopping...for New Real Estate

You might think that sweeping budget cuts, and the larger economic crisis that continues to chomp down on the 99 percent of Americans not blessed with extreme affluence, would dissuade decision makers in the CUNY system from speculating in property markets throughout New York City. But then, you wouldn't be Matthew Goldstein. Over the summer, as the university continued to push its vision of austerity for students and faculty, CUNY's head hanchos were busy figuring out how to spend enormous sums of money on buildings, real and imagined, across the city.

A few years back, Big Pharma heavyweight Pfizer cleared out of its offices along East 42nd Street, leaving the owner of the space, the Durst Organization, with trouble filling the

gap. With leasing markets struggling, and purchasing markets not much better, Durst had difficulties capitalizing off their property. Until CUNY came along, that is. In a megadeal, which is being touted as a sale, but looks suspiciously like a long-term lease, Durst sold its 170,000-square-foot office condominium to an eager CUNY for roughly \$120 million. Because CUNY qualifies as a non-profit organization, it will be allowed to skirt having to pay any real estate tax on its new acquisition. After thirty years, the ownership of the building will revert back to the Durst Organization.

It's not clear where the money to make the purchase will come from, though CUNY has confirmed that it is looking to dump its Death Star at 535 East 80th Street, and has put it on the market. At the same time, proceeds from the much hoped-for sale would not go to covering the cost of buying land on 42nd Street, but would be directed instead at the construction of a 200,000-square-foot "research center" in Harlem, the jewel in the crown of its "decade of sciences" initiative, whatever that means.

But Chancellor Goldstein and friends aren't content to contain themselves to Manhattan on this shopping spree to acquire and develop what's left of the New York City real estate market. *Crain's* reported at the end of August that CUNY had also retained a high octane real estate firm, Cushman and Wakefield, to help guide the university through the process of constructing a hotel in Queens. Located on the campus of LaGuardia Community College, the site under speculation would be home to a gigantic, possibly 600,000-square-foot luxury hotel that would benefit, so says CUNY, students studying for careers in the hospitality industry. As of now, no possible hotel partners for this scheme have been identified. So:

how can CUNY continue financing multimillion dollar schemes such as these, while increasing payouts to its top bureaucrats, while at the same time claiming poverty when it comes to spending on students, faculty and staff throughout the university system? Hospitality indeed.

Hope for Adjunct Healthcare?

It was a busy summer for members of the PSC tasked with negotiating continued health care coverage with representatives from CUNY. It has been increasingly clear that the package of health care benefits designed over thirty years ago for part-time labor in the CUNY system is no longer sustainable. In the original agreement, CUNY had agreed to finance coverage with payments that did not increase with time, even as the cost for health-care ballooned exponentially. As a consequence, the PSC Welfare Fund had to make up the difference which eroded the fund's capital wherewithal to sustain the program much longer.

The Union has been demanding deep structural changes for a few years now, and the pressure they've brought to bear seems to be paying off, if slowly. First, the PSC called on CUNY to request money for health care coverage from state legislators in Albany, an appeal that was granted last year. With the possibility of collapse safely averted, PSC representatives began working with CUNY brass on structuring a new plan of coverage for adjuncts that would offer comparable services with minimal to no loss of benefits. The process has steadily progressed, according to union officials, but movement has been at a snail's pace. "When it comes to medical coverage," Michael Bastion, a member of the PSC negotiation team and an adjunct himself, told the *Clarion* newspaper, "every detail is important, and settling these issues has required many, many hours of

discussion. We know how important it is to get this right."

As the *Advocate* went to press, a compromise solution had yet to be reached. Yet when it arrives, time could be of the essence. "We need to have a reliable way to reach you as quickly as possible, as there may be a need to enroll in a new insurance program on very short notice," says Larry Morgan, executive director of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund. Affected adjuncts would do well to stay on top of things by joining the PSC emergency alert listserv. To sign up, visit <http://www.psc-cuny.org/our-benefits/form/adjunct-email-addresses>.

Martin E. Segal, RIP

Martin E. Segal, after whom one of the Graduate Center's theaters is named, passed away over the summer. The former chairman of Lincoln Center, and founder and executive director of the Lincoln Center Film Society, was also an active member here at CUNY, and an unstinting friend to the Graduate Center. President Bill Kelly remarked that "His formal association with the Graduate Center began in 1983, when President Harold Proshansky asked him to serve on the Board of Visitors. In 1996, he agreed to serve on the Graduate Center Foundation Board, and for the next twelve years he was an active benefactor and advocate for the Graduate Center. Marty made many generous gifts to the Graduate Center, he inspired his friends to support the GC, and he wrote passionate and persuasive letters to politicians to urge them to maintain and support New York State funding for the Graduate Center and CUNY. In short, he was one of our greatest champions. His name will live on at the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center and his memory will guide and inspire us. We will miss him very, very much." Martin E. Segal was ninety-six years old. Ⓐ

Blood and Discrimination at CUNY

NICOLE HANSON

In May 2012, the CUNY Doctoral Students' Council (DSC) passed a resolution asking the Graduate Center to cease holding New York Blood Center (NYBC) donation drives on campus property. The intention wasn't to shortchange the New York blood supply—quite the contrary. The DSC, like many other organizations, is protesting the Federal Food & Drug Administration's (FDA) unscientific and discriminatory policy of refusing to allow blood donations from men who have had sex with another man even once since 1977. Not only does this policy irrationally prevent many healthy donors from bolstering the blood supply, possibly contributing to blood shortages, it may put CUNY in the difficult legal and moral position of holding on-campus community events which discriminate against a portion of its student body. If CUNY continues to implicitly support the ban on gay and bisexual male blood by holding on-campus blood drives, it is not actually protecting all of its students instead; it merely pays lip service to its moral commitment to its students.

Since 1985, the FDA has prohibited men who have had sex with another man (often abbreviated "MSM" in the literature) even once since 1977 from donating blood for the rest of their lives. In the intervening years since the AIDS crisis prompted this change, science has learned a great deal more about HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and has made significant advances in testing techniques. As the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) notes in their 2010 report, *A Drive for Change: Reforming U.S. Blood Donation Policies*, "current testing technology can detect HIV in donated blood within days or weeks of infection." As such, GMHC points out that it would make more sense to focus on an individual's recent high-risk behavior, and employ a donation policy which "defers only those donors who are within the 'window period' between that high-risk behavior and the point at which HIV is detectable by post-donation tests." Such a policy is likely to be just as effective at protecting the blood supply as lifetime bans without discriminating against a group of people exclusively based on sexual orientation and sex.

Making the FDA policies more scientific and less discriminatory would also make them more rational. MSM donors have a lifetime ban on blood donation—even if they have never had unprotected sex, are in a monogamous relationship and both parties are HIV-negative, or are currently celibate and HIV-negative. However, non-MSM blood donors who have had unprotected sex with someone

who is known to be HIV-positive or is a commercial sex worker only face a delay of one year. The insistence of the FDA on maintaining this ban in the face of such contradictory policies implies that the blood of all gay and bisexual men is somehow "tainted." In a country in which gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and queer individuals face rampant discrimination and a suicide rate 200 to 400 percent greater than the general population, this implication is intensely troubling.

The MSM ban is not merely an abstract moral issue. This policy currently and seriously impacts CUNY students, faculty, and staff. Participation in blood drives at schools and workplaces, as noted by the Gay Men's Health Crisis, "is widely considered an important civic act." This policy may therefore stigmatize gay and bisexual men at CUNY schools who do not participate, causing CUNY campuses to no longer feel like safe spaces for people of all sexes, genders, and sexual orientations. Members of the CUNY community often participate in blood drives as a group activity. If gay or bisexual men have not informed peers or colleagues of their sexual orientation, this policy puts them in a position of potentially having to lie about their identity to either their peers or to the New York Blood Center staff. Further, by allowing blood drives on campuses, CUNY implicitly supports the FDA policy that actively discriminates against students, putting it at odds with both federal anti-discrimination requirements for publicly-funded institutions and its own anti-discrimination policies.

This policy prohibits a very specific group of CUNY graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, and staff from participating in a CUNY-supported community activity entirely because of their sex and sexual orientation. According to CUNY's anti-discrimination policy, all CUNY schools are required to "provide services for students without regard to...sex, sexual orientation, [or] gender identity (CUNY Manual of General Policy, Article VI, Policy 6.2)." Further, Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendment, which CUNY is subject to, states that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

The DSC and GMHC are far from alone in their protest of the MSM blood donation policy. The New York City Council, members of the United States Congress, The American Red Cross (ARC), the American Association for Blood Banks (AABB), and America's Blood Centers (ABC),

Blood Pressure

COLIN PATRICK ASHLEY

Two years ago I was doing research at one of the CUNY community colleges. While I was waiting in the cafeteria for my next interviewee to show up, an eager student approached me and asked if I would sign up to donate blood. I responded that I unfortunately didn't have the time due to a scheduled appointment. The student, obviously excited about participating in and helping out with an important cause, continued pressuring me. She mentioned that it was a short questionnaire and that the drive was an all day event so I could do it after my appointment. She listed the benefits that such a simple act could have for the community. I could save a life. I shook my head with a "sorry, no thanks" and went back to my notes.

However, this mention of a lack of time didn't reflect the actual tensions pouring through my body. Do I out myself in this moment (a continual process for every LGBTQ individual) and lay into this eager humanitarian about the problematic nature of blood drives? Do I pounce on the word community and note the necessary others left out and stigmatized for a term to hold merit? The activist, the educator in me says "yes, I should have." I stayed silent and went back to my notes.

That decision—to out myself or silence myself—and the feelings of guilt and regret, is of less concern to me today than the possibility of a newly out seventeen-year-old college freshman facing the same decision. Outing oneself in such a situation isn't simply announcing that you are gay or bi. Because of the fallacy of the MSM policy and its interpretation, you are also announcing that your intimate life is somehow inherently riskier, inherently more dangerous, inherently worse than that of another.

including the New York Blood Center (NYBC), which runs the blood drives at CUNY campuses, have all called for the FDA to change this policy. In response, in 2010 the federal government convened the Department of Health and Human Services' Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability (ACBSA) to review the MSM policy. While this review found that the current deferral policies were sub-optimal, the FDA declined to change the policy until more research was completed on the best ways to differentiate low from high-risk donors (for example, by asking more specific behavioral questions in donor screening questionnaires). Recently, a group of Democratic and Independent lawmakers publicly urged the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to move more quickly on studies that would help refine the MSM donor policy, calling the current broad ban on MSM donors "indefensible" and "discriminatory" in their letter to Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

Within CUNY, the CUNY LGBT Task Force, the Academic Senate of Queens College, and City College (CCNY) have all expressed deep concern about the particularly negative impact the ban has had on the CUNY community, and last year, City College moved an on-campus blood drive to off-campus property—an action which GMHC described as being "congruent with GMHC's position on acceptable alternatives to blood drives." Though they do not support full boycotts, last year, in letters to CUNY leaders, GMHC expressed support of efforts to find "innovative" and "creative" ways to hold blood drives while continuing to draw attention to the MSM blood ban, and the organization has even offered to consult with CUNY on possible alternative measures.

Moving blood drives off-campus may be seen by some as a drastic step—but that's exactly what this issue needs right now. CUNY students, faculty, and staff could, of course, hand out pamphlets at blood drives in their schools. We could sign petitions, or write letters to the local newspapers, or stand outside the FDA headquarters with protest signs. All of this has been done, and none of it has been effective. CUNY colleges must take strong steps to protect both the blood supply and *all* members of its community, no matter their orientation, sex, or gender. As one of the largest public institutions of education, CUNY could stand at the forefront of this historical moment by refusing to legitimize an irrational fear-based policy that creates a potential atmosphere of shame and discrimination by simply moving blood drives off-campus and maintaining its spaces as safe and non-discriminatory. This simple move will not only allow people to continue to donate blood but would put immense pressure on the FDA and other political actors to move forward with research and legislation.

The DSC suggests simply that CUNY schools refuse to host blood drives on their campuses, and instead, arrange to have a donation bus parked just off-campus. The next scheduled blood drive at the Graduate Center will be held on October 18. If, instead of using a CUNY space, the Graduate Center arranged for a bus to be parked directly across from the building, donation levels would remain the same. Marketing which would normally advertise on-campus blood drives could be used to advertise off-campus bus drives, as well as producing awareness that informs students about the FDA's MSM ban and encourage them to be vocal in their opposition of this policy. As colleges are important donation sites, CUNY is in a unique position to both protect its students (rather than just paying lip service to its moral responsibility to do so) and make a strong statement about this policy by refusing to continue to ignore it. A

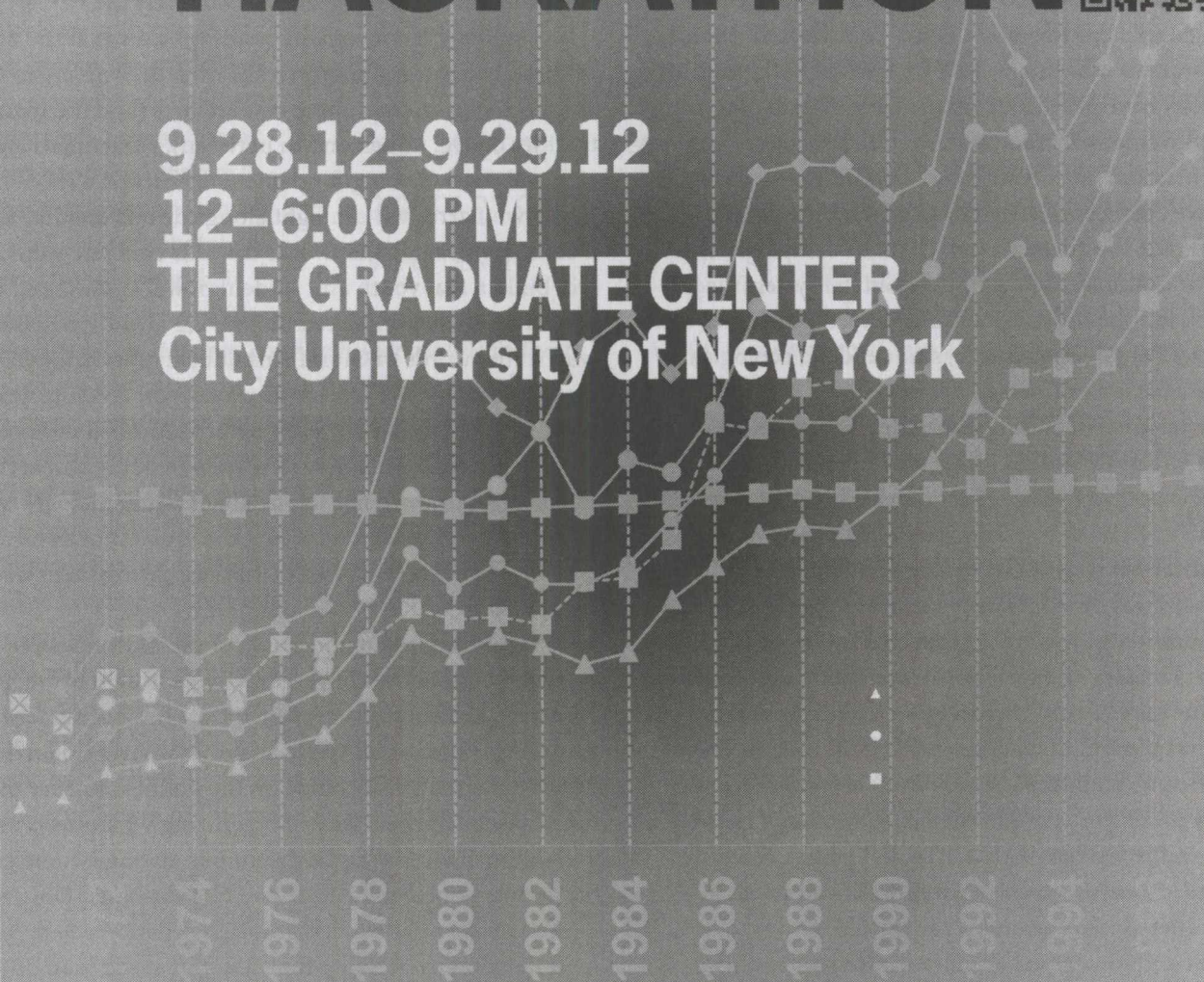
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12-6:00 PM

THE GRADUATE CENTER
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CREDIT: "Income Inequality in the United States, 1913-1998" with Thomas Piketty, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118(1), 2003, 1-39, (Tables and Figures Updated to 2010, March 2012)

Radical Education Nation

ISABELLE NASTASIA AND CONOR TOMÁS REED

The struggle over education has recently become one of the most significant fulcrums for our social movements' futures. This was thrillingly evident at the recent National Student Power Convergence, which welcomed over three hundred people from around the United States, as well as organizers from Quebec, Mexico, and Puerto Rico for five days in Columbus, Ohio to envision, educate, eat, entertain, and enact steps towards a better coordinated (inter!) national student movement. At a time when both pundits and activists have perversely mourned the death of a young Occupy movement, its radical education roots were content to busily blossom here. And no student power gathering would have been complete without a street march and protest outside President Barack Obama's campaign headquarters in Columbus to decry the political system's lack of concern for our collective futures, future which face the ugly specters of unemployment, student debt, ecological crisis, mass incarceration, and more.

The convergence represented nothing short of a sea-change in efforts by students and educators to create vibrant new political spaces. Participants brought a fiercely thoughtful analysis of intersectionality and anti-oppression to many discussions without apology or timidity. The environment was broadly queer and trans* positive (even though, admittedly, this wasn't reflected in the composition of event organizers and was more a system of accountability from the participants themselves). Words wove from inquiry to argument to laughter, all in fluid motion. Twitter and livestreams mainlined people from around the world into every event (for one day, the NSPC hashtag #HereUs-Now was in the top ten of global Twitter posts). Sleeping-safe spaces, caucuses, and three well-balanced meals a day were offered and considered alongside our myriad differences and ideologies. And the entire plucky crew was thrilled to see that we were making it all happen ourselves.

Reflections on the convergence

Two narratives were meant to act as the pillars for convergence. The first and regrettably prevailing one focused on middle-class students who are coming to terms with a new and intimidating set of challenges left by generations who came before: a rapidly deteriorating planet, and the failed promises of the "bootstraps" paradigm by way of mounting student debt and dismal job opportunities. The second nar-

rative involved the students and youth for whom a future was never promised. This included, but was certainly not limited to, young people who are trapped in the school-to-prison pipeline, Dreamers (undocumented youth who have no access to student loans or federal financial assistance for college), and push-outs (most commonly known as "drop-outs") who have no access to the Welfare State that middle-class students had thought they could rely on.

The strategy of movement building that sits at the nexus of these two integral narratives is what drew many to Ohio from the start. Across these two realities (and the many realities above, under, and in between), Millennials are sick and tired of being fundamentally fucked over. When these two narratives can fight alongside one another with a coherent strategy that works towards concrete gains, we will build a real youth and student power movement. The convergence demonstrated that we are already well on our way. In the words of Gloria Anzaldua in *This Bridge Called Home*, our movement is in the process of "erecting new bridges. We're loosening the grip of outmoded methods and ideas in order to allow new ways of being and acting to emerge, but we're not totally abandoning the old—we're building on it. We're reinforcing the foundations and support beams of the old *puentes*, not just giving them new paint jobs."

To these means and end, some of the most resourceful workshops at the convergence were hosted by people who have historically not been at the center of student left gatherings. The Bronx-based Rebel Diaz Arts Collective gave a dynamic crash course on the political history of hip hop, and the necessity of organizing with music, art, and performance from the ground up in our own neighborhoods. Gabe Pendas with the Florida-based Dream Defenders shared how his group's foundational approach to organizing—not doing for others what they can do for themselves—created the space for students of color to lead a confident series of direct actions that began in response to Trayvon Martin's death, and has since targeted police stations and immigration centers.

At the "Global Student Uprising" panel, alongside student activists from Mexico and Puerto Rico, a member of CLASSE named Emilie Joly shared a slew of incisive mantras for the packed room: "Start to talk about crazy ideas" (like free education for all!), i.e., don't self-censor or dilute discussion, or we ultimately close our own doors to wider

radicalizations. "A strike is only as good as you're willing to defend it." "Strikes suddenly create organizing time and space." "Tuition hikes are not a dollar amount issue, but part of a larger austerity campaign." It was clear that several months of strike organizing had heightened and distilled the CLASSE members' political clarity in each contribution and question they offered during the convergence.

On an interpersonal note, such newly institutionalized movement practices at the convergence, such as introducing ourselves with preferred gender pronouns, would not have occurred in the student movements before us. Many students expressed that because of this practice, they felt comfortable saying that they had been questioning their own gender identity and felt safe expressing uncertainty (or finally, certainty!) in their preferred gender pronouns. We acknowledge that these kinds of anti-oppression modes are integral in ensuring that we all develop language and find words that better fit us and reflect our realities.

To be sure, while the convergence was an important step in bringing together youth from across the country, many expressed concern for reproducing the same hierarchies and tokenization in our movements that college administrators pull on our campuses. Other frustrations were raised by participants that a small group of organizers were working behind the scenes at the convergence, as opposed to instituting a more democratic decision-making process to address criticism of the program and make changes to it

"Student unions could replace out-of-touch student governments, give the boot to overpaid administrators, and actually run the university in cooperation with other organized groups on campus."

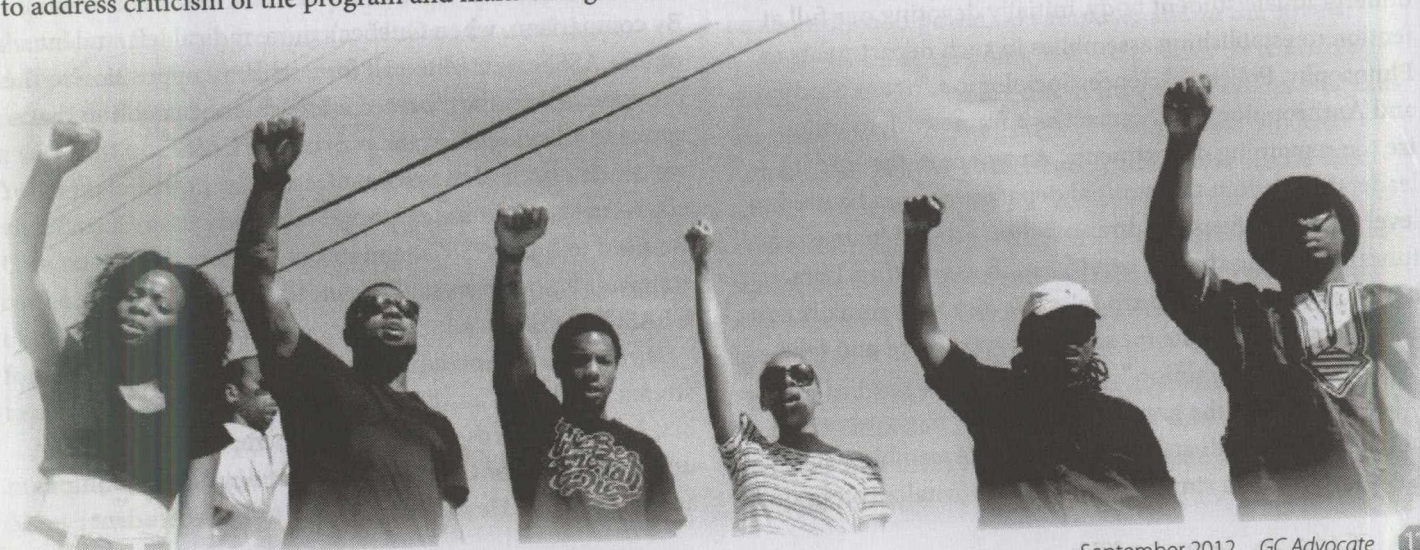
JASPER CONNER

on the ground. As a result, autonomous participants held caucuses in order to ensure that, collectively, our different concerns were being met. In these caucuses, people came together to discuss their experiences as queer and trans* folks, people of color, vegans and vegetarians, and white anti-racist allies.

On a wider scope, another setback was due to the American Left's historically uneven trajectories that brought many people to the convergence. In short, social movements up until the mid-Twentieth Century seldom highlighted such issues as race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and migration in their political organizations. After a period of major social upheavals that began to address these inequalities and oppressions, government and business coordinated an assault on social movements through the late 1970s. In these conditions, identity politics arose for those who perceived that only the most immediate alliances of similarity were possible during such an embattled retreat. Throughout the

1980s, this developed into a more complex intersectional analysis that evaluated how multiple axes of oppression (and possibilities of resistance) co-existed, for which more nuanced strategies and coalitions were needed to confront them.

Today, student movement politics in the United States are largely formed out of this intersectional framework, coupled with a lack of familiarity with organizational histories and models from which to coalesce the power to determine our own futures. We've become familiar with critiquing our organizations as gendered, racist, and otherwise replicating dominant ideologies, but there isn't enough work done on what new kinds of organizations we can make. What we urgently need is an emphasis on both intersectionality and



Above: A protest by the group Dream Defenders.

organized student power. While the two largest education movements in Quebec and Chile demonstrably lack a central anti-oppression analysis within their expressions of student power, the US movement may be poised to interweave these facets quite influentially.

Building Student Power from the Ground Up

Returning to our campuses in NYC, CUNY undergraduate and graduate students are striving to act more effectively in tandem across such coalitions such as Occupy CUNY and Students United for a Free CUNY, while keeping these historically rendered strengths and weaknesses in mind. Even though resources of our highly stratified university system are concentrated at the Graduate Center, graduate students are predominantly adjunct lecturers—many of us women—who are unfunded and forced to take out loans, while being exploited and under-resourced on the job. At the same time, graduate student adjuncts and undergraduates are strategically positioned to interact with each other every day, and can be regarded as mutual, integral allies in the CUNY struggle. These partnerships can end past cycles of hostility and misunderstandings between undergraduates and graduate students, and encourage deeper collaboration across university system tiers in general.

In the spring, CUNY students discussed with Quebecois students how to approach building autonomous student movement infrastructures in the United States. Brooklyn College student organizers are starting the process of unionizing with the undergraduate student body, initially devoting our full attention to establishing assemblies in such departments as Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, Africana Studies and Anthropology that can act as a framework to unionize the remaining departments. As we see it, the student leadership built in these initial departments can be used to leverage the university administration around increasing funding in basic student services such as printing, library hours, and subsidized textbooks. We aim to eventually run a “student power” slate for student government and take over the “company union.”

Meanwhile, on the graduate student level, members of the CUNY Graduate Center General Assembly (GC GA) have begun a similar campaign to revitalize program

student associations to become more directly democratic, while retaining our general assembly space for broad discussion and creative action. An array of GC GA members have been elected to the Doctoral Students Council, and are beginning to establish an escalation strategy for highlighting issues of inequity in admissions, funding, and student/faculty/staff control of the building's affairs. We're strengthening political ties, while widening the scope of possibility for transforming graduate higher education so that it becomes accessible for CUNY's entire population.

We're also renewing a rank-and-file focus on the staid contract campaign between the PSC union and CUNY management, with plans to host mobile teach-ins outside the closed-door negotiations. Although a small minority of active grad-juncts can't sway an entire union's trajectory, we

Although a small minority of active grad-juncts can't sway an entire union's trajectory, we estimate that mounting grievances shared between students and educators can galvanize union power in both of these sectors of the CUNY system.

estimate that mounting grievances shared between students and educators can galvanize union power in both of these sectors of the CUNY system to the inspiring levels seen with the Chicago Teachers Union's looming strike on September 10.

While taking on these ambitious projects in the city, CUNY students and educators have also begun a national conversation about building statewide student associations comparable in strength and reach to CLASSE in Quebec and ConFECH in Chile. When it comes to statewide student associations, some states are further along than others. New York Students Rising (NYSR) and the Ohio State Student Association

(OSSA) are preliminary models of statewide student coalitions, but still don't widely represent student majorities. By comparison, when Quebec's more radical left student union, ASSÉ, wanted to call for a strike in opposition to the proposed hikes, they formed a broad-based coalition that spoke to all students in the province: CLASSÉ. In the U.S., we can use both of these organizations as potential models. So to speak, in states where we already have CLASSÉs, we need to build ASSÉs, and in states where there is no statewide association at all, we need to begin by building CLASSÉs.

These organizational models have syndicalist roots that stretch much further than our generation's historical memory. Jasper Conner's contemporary pamphlet on student unionism refers to Quebec's long-standing student unions as ideal models. He outlines how, in the US, “Student

unions could replace out-of-touch student governments, give the boot to overpaid administrators, and actually run the university in cooperation with other organized groups on campus.” However, in a recent *Nation* article, Zachary Bell also asserts that American students have mass strike potential if we build our *own* relevant models of meaningful student participation to meet our immediate political needs (instead of uncritically grafting models from elsewhere), while scaffolding communication structures that can enable mass mobilization.

On Free Education and Direct Action

Another city-wide critical effort is to sustain political education through the Free University Week, September 18-22, in New York City’s Madison Square Park. Billed as “an experiment in radical education and an attempt to create education as it ought to be,” the Free University aims to nourish the momentum of Occupy Wall Street’s September 15-17 weekend birthday bash with a space for strategizing into a whole new year worth celebrating. Building on its May Day 2012 success of over forty workshops and two thousand participants across five hours, Free U has the potential to gather—this time across several days—the dozens of intersecting movements in NYC that have needed consistent space for both direction and reflection. This educational component of Occupy’s anniversary advocates a methodically longer-term focus that eschews single-day actions for events with rolling momentum, creative and critical new models of pedagogy, and ultimately lasting radical coalitions.

Free University workshop series will highlight past and present models of organization and anti-oppression strategies each day that can combine lessons from the massive movements in Quebec, Chile, and elsewhere with the particular attention this country’s left has developed around intersectional issues. Each day will begin at 2:00pm with shared community agreements, followed by workshops, skills-shares, relocated classes, and performances, as well as recurring thematic areas and activities like an artists bloc, a writers bloc, poetry speak-outs, and info hubs for New York City’s various and diverse organizations. An education visioning assembly at 7pm will round out each night. Free U will welcome new and returning participants like Rebecca Solnit, Ben Katchor, and Ruth Gilmore to join thousands of people from New York and around the world to advocate for education as a human right and demonstrate our ability to implement free education for all.

Another element of the budding #HereUsNow movement is that we are excited by politics beyond the elections. Many innovative campaigns and projects will emerge this

fall that represent a multiplicity of approaches to political engagement in the wake of the 2012 Presidential elections. 99Rise, an organization coming out of Occupy Los Angeles and other movement-building efforts on the West Coast, is attempting to “restore Congress” to one that is held accountable to the people and not corporate money. Their campaign is built around a non-violent organizing model passed on from the Serbian revolution and, much like the Occupy efforts of last year, thousands of people from New York to California will be targeting Wall Street bankers on September 28 via mass arrests.

Ultimately, however, coordinating days of actions alone isn’t enough to challenge the crises in higher education and government corruption. Nor is only being academically well-versed in various political frameworks. Given the scope of the crisis we are facing, students and teachers desperately need to get organized. We need to create political structures that are durable and democratic. With dialogues at the Free University and elsewhere, we can begin to envision—among many possibilities—how building a NYC Student Union over the next few years can present a long-term, sustainable view committed to developing organizational solidity and capacity at a time when student union models have demonstrated considerable power in other countries. In Quebec, the resignation of Premier Jean Charest and the new premier’s announcement that the proposed tuition hikes will be rescinded, show that victory is possible when infrastructure is in place.

Looking ahead at “American Autumn” 2.0, we will have many opportunities to patiently apply these ideas and lessons as kindling toward a slowly developing conflagration. In mid-October, Chilean student leaders Camila Vallejo and Noam Titelman will speak in NYC about their education movement’s significant new stage in contesting social power. International days of action on October 18 and November 14-21 will offer us space to express and then assess our coordinated power on campuses and in the streets.

While focusing on doing each step right, we’re also cognizant that we’re running out of time, and fast. As Nicholas Mirzoeff writes, “capitalism is choosing to drown itself rather than die.” We students and educators, on the other hand, choose to extend out a hand for people in society to save ourselves together, with inspiration from the Quebec strike, the Chilean student protests, Mexico’s #YoSoy132, and beyond. While Occupy Wall Street turns its attention towards debt as the central theme of its one year anniversary assemblies, students and educators share the forefront in constructing dynamic coalitions across the Left that can erect the new bridges we need for a sustainable future, and then get us there. (A)

Bristling in Bristol

NAOMI PERLEY

The back-to-school Facebook statuses began proliferating in over the past couple of days:

- ▶ “I love teaching 8:00am sections. (Repeat until it feels true.)”
- ▶ “FELLOW ADJUNCTS: can anyone tell me how the hell to make my courses available on BlackBoard 9.0?”
- ▶ “I can already tell which of my two sections I’m going to like more...”
- ▶ “Kicking off the semester with a premium, unleaded panic attack.”

I can sense through the internet the anxiety, excitement, ennui, optimism, that accompanies the beginning of yet another semester at the GC, and yet I feel strangely removed from it. For the first time in my life, I am not going back to school at the end of August.

At the end of May, I packed up my Williamsburg apartment, found a subletter, cleared out my filing cabinet at Hunter College, emptied my locker in the music students’ lounge at the GC, and moved to Bristol, a small city in southwest England. Before I left New York, I had carefully scripted answers for all of the obvious questions, answers I got used to chirping out several times a day during my last week or two in the city:

- ▶ “My boyfriend started a PhD program at the University of Bristol last September, so I am moving over there to be with him.”
- ▶ “No, I’ll still be a student at the GC. I’m done all my coursework, and the faculty are really supportive of students who need to move away while they work on their dissertations.”
- ▶ “Well, I know it won’t be as exciting as New York, but really, I think I need a break from all the excitement. I don’t know how I would work on a dissertation while living here and teaching and everything.”

I have been here in Bristol for over two months now, and I’m still not entirely convinced that I have, in fact, moved here. Reading about all my friends starting the new semester evoked a curious double response in me. On the one hand, it made my move to Bristol seem somehow irrevocable—the new semester is starting this week, and I am not flying back in a couple of days to make my Tuesday morning class at Hunter. But at the same time, it feels like I am still on summer vacation, and any day now I am going to wake up in my bed in my Williamsburg apartment to

discover that the last two months have just been some kind of surreal dream. Then I’ll get dressed and go to school, like normal.

In a sense, I really am still on summer vacation. The English university system has many quirks, not least of which is the trimester system: instead of having a fall and a winter semester, like most American schools, English universities have three shorter semesters. When I arrived in Bristol in mid-June, the University of Bristol’s Summer term was just wrapping up. The autumn term doesn’t begin for another couple of weeks, on October 1.

Because of the protracted summer vacation, I haven’t met too many musicians or musicologists since I arrived. One of the musicology professors at the University of Bristol invited me to attend the musicology department’s weekly seminars, but they don’t hold any seminars during the summer. I found a choir I’d like to join, but I arrived in Bristol just in time to see their summer concert—after which they take a break from rehearsing until September. I even discovered, through the internet, the Bristol Music Club: a real British club, with a quaint little clubhouse with a bright blue door. For the paltry membership fee of thirty pounds per year, I can let myself in (yes, I have a key to the clubhouse!) and practice on any one of their three grand pianos whenever I please. During the year, they host concerts at the clubhouse once every two weeks, and I’m sure I’ll enjoy attending them and perhaps playing at them—but alas, like the choir, I arrived in time to attend their final concert of the season before the club broke for the summer.

So, I have spent my summer looking for an apartment, moving in, buying furniture, doing all the things you do to try to create a new life for yourself after you move across an ocean. But without a job, or seminars, or rehearsals, I can’t help but feel adrift—like I have moved into a permanent summer vacation. I am living in this city, for awhile, but I don’t really live my life in it yet.

In lieu of finding my niche in the academic life of the city, I have spent my summer trying to acclimate to British life and culture. When I moved to New York from Ottawa (via a few years in Montreal), I braced myself for culture shock. I was surprised to find that I felt more at home in New York after one week than I ever did over four years in Montreal. It must have had something to do with being exposed to large quantities of *Seinfeld* during my developing years. Moving to Bristol, I made the opposite mistake. I assumed

SCHOOL'S IN.
(THE PARK)

FREE UNIVERSITY WEEK

SEPTEMBER 2012
18-22

TUESDAY TO FRIDAY
2PM TO 7PM
SATURDAY
10AM TO 2PM

MADISON SQUARE PARK ■ NYC

The Free University of NYC will host a week of free educational courses and events in Madison Square Park this September. Bringing together people from around the world, Free University will advocate for education as a human right and demonstrate our ability to implement free education for all.

SUBMIT WORKSHOPS OR BRING YOUR CLASS: FREEUNIVERSITYNYC.ORG

FreeUniversityNYC@gmail.com > Facebook: bit.ly/Sept2012FreeU > Twitter: @FreeUnivNYC #FreeU

that living in England couldn't be too different from living in Canada—after all, we share a head of state and a number of traditional spellings that mystify Americans. It took me maybe two weeks to realize that the fraternity of the Commonwealth had nothing against a large ocean and a couple of hundred years of intervening history. England is further away from Canada than I could have ever imagined.

The first shock to my system was the rain and the cold. The last week that I was in New York, it was already too hot and humid, over ninety degrees most days. The entire first month I was in Bristol, I doubt the temperature crept up past seventy degrees. I think it must have rained enough in that first month to flood lower Manhattan. The lowest point for me, the day when I nearly convinced myself that the weather was some sort of sign from above that I was not meant to be in Bristol, came

on Canada Day, July 1. I was already somewhat depressed at the thought of not getting to celebrate the 145th anniversary of Canada's Confederation in my hometown, the nation's capital. But I maintained hope that we could at least partake in some Canadian summer fun from this side of the Atlantic. The British weather, however, had other plans in mind. When we woke up on Canada Day, it was cold, wet, and grey outside. Nonetheless, we set out on a stroll around Bristol's harbor. Not five minutes after we left the apartment, I tripped on the wet, slippery, uneven cobblestones, and landed on my butt. My jeans, my white tote bag, my hands—everything was covered in mud. My boyfriend picked up my bag, pulled me up from the street, and we turned around and trudged home, defeated.

I have since acclimated to the weather. I always take my rain jacket or umbrella (or both) when I leave the house, even if it's perfectly sunny when I leave. And I've come to realize that even if it rains most days, there is also a little sun most days—it's just a matter of luck whether you make it outside before it starts raining again. And while I have mostly gotten used to the rainy weather, I am still struggling with another aspect of English life: British accents. Of course I find the accents I hear on a daily basis all quite charming in the way that English speakers around the

It took me maybe two weeks to realize that the fraternity of the Commonwealth had nothing against a large ocean and a couple of hundred years of intervening history. England is further away from Canada than I could have ever imagined.

world are usually enthralled with the accents of those who speak the same language but come from far away. But what seeps in when you start to live your life somewhere else—when you have day-to-day conversations with the locals—is a sense of bemusement over the tiny differences. When I tried to spell out my email address for the secretary of the choir, we hit a major road bump at the “dot” before the “com.” I said “dot” over and over again, and she just stared at me uncomprehendingly. I tentatively offered, “uhhh... a period?” before remembering that the British don't say period. I turned to my boyfriend, mutely begging him through my eyes to “translate” for me, trying to remember whether “full-stop” meant a comma or a period or something else altogether. When we finally succeeded in getting the point across to her, the poor woman told me that she

thought, from my accent, that I had been saying “dart” over and over, not “dot.” I may have been asked a few times in New York if my accent was from “the Northeast” (by which people always meant Maine or Massachusetts; Canada didn't really enter into their consciousness as another northern possibility), but at least people always knew what I meant when I said “dot.”

Every time I think I've gotten the hang of it, I inevitably discover a new way to make an ass of myself in normal conversation. The other day, I was trying to arrange a job interview with a prospective employer. He said he would like me to come in at midday on Friday. “Midday?” I asked, “what time?” He just repeated his first answer: “Midday.” I started to suspect that the term midday meant something more specific than just “the middle of day, after breakfast, before dinner.” “Noon?” I asked him. “Yes, I said

midday,” he replied.

When I was in New York, I found it rather funny to be referred to as an “international student.” Everyone knows that Canadians aren't really foreigners, they're just members of this bizarre annex to the United States that seems a little like a lost fifty-first state. So I was taken aback when the host of the pub quiz that we go to every week referred to my boyfriend and me as “foreigners” without any hint of irony. I've come to realize that he's right. Moving to the United Kingdom might be pretty tame in comparison with some places where GC students relocate to do dissertation work—not only is it a solidly developed country, but the people here speak (some form of) English. If I had moved to any other country in Europe, where they at least speak a different language, I'd have a little more migratory street cred. But I find England to be foreign enough for now. **A**

No Papers, No Fear at the DemCon

AMY GOODMAN

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—As the Democratic National Convention was gaveled into session Tuesday, outside in the rain, in the paramilitarized heart of Charlotte, democracy in its finest form found expression. Democracy, that is, if you believe that it's built on a foundation of grass-roots movements: the abolitionist struggle, the fight for women's suffrage, the civil-rights movement. In this city, where one of the first lunch counter sit-ins against segregation occurred, ten undocumented immigrants blocked an intersection, risking arrest and possible deportation while calling on President Barack Obama and the Democratic Party to embrace the immigrant-rights movement and pass meaningful immigration reform.

"We are here to ask President Obama what his legacy will be," Rosi Carrasco said as she climbed down from the "UndocuBus," colorfully painted with butterflies, that the activists traveled in from Arizona. "What we want to say to President Obama is, on which side of the history is he going to be? Is he going to be remembered as the president that has been deporting the most people in US history, or he is going to be on the side of immigrants?" Rosi's husband, Martin Unzueta, said: "I am undocumented. I've been living here for eighteen years. I pay taxes, and I'm paying more taxes than Citibank."

The border state of Arizona has become ground zero in the national immigration crisis, with the passage of the notorious SB 1070 law that sought to criminalize simply being in the state without documentation. Such immigration determinations are under federal jurisdiction, and violations of them are actually civil offenses, not criminal. With SB 1070, Arizona pre-empted federal immigration policy, until most of its provisions were struck down in federal court.


While immigrant-rights activists consider the court's decision a victory, our nation remains plagued by its broken immigration policy. The Arizona law prompted similar bills in Republican-controlled state legislatures across the country. When a draconian anti-immigrant bill was signed into law in Alabama, Latinos fled east to Georgia and Florida, while Alabama farmers, unable to find hired help willing to do the backbreaking work typically reserved for migrants, saw their crops rot in the fields.

This is where movements come in. When the machinery of government breaks down, when politicians and bureaucrats create gridlock, it takes the power of the people to ef-

fect meaningful change, often at great personal risk. Across the United States, well-organized immigrant-rights activists are increasingly engaging in civil disobedience, especially the young. Just as it was young people in North Carolina more than half a century ago who defied the advice of their elders to be more patient in the fight against segregation. Today, many young people have targeted President Obama with sit-down actions in his campaign offices, pressuring for passage of the DREAM Act. Many of these young activists came to this country as children, without documentation.

President Obama showed some sympathy for these "DREAMers" last June, when he announced a decision within the Department of Homeland Security to free 800,000 of them from the threat of potential deportation proceedings: "Imagine you've done everything right your entire life—studied hard, worked hard, maybe even graduated at the top of your class—only to suddenly face the threat of deportation to a country that you know nothing about, with a language that you may not even speak...it makes no sense to expel talented young people, who, for all intents and purposes, are Americans—they've been raised as Americans; understand themselves to be part of this country."

Many celebrated the announcement, then challenged the president to act on his pledge. Several activists got themselves detained so they could enter the Broward Transitional Center, a pre-deportation jail in Florida, and interview detainees. They found dozens of people who are eligible for release under President Obama's policies, but who languish in the jail nevertheless.

Here in Charlotte, outside the convention center, ten brave souls, among them a young woman and her mother, a couple and their daughter, sat down in the pouring rain on a large banner they placed in the middle of the intersection. The banner read "No Papers, No Fear" (in Spanish, "Sin Papeles, Sin Miedo"), with a large butterfly in the center. As the police surrounded them, I asked one of the women about to be arrested, "Why a butterfly?" "Because butterflies have no borders," she told me. "Butterflies are free." 

Denis Moynihan contributed research to this column. Amy Goodman is the host of "Democracy Now!," a daily international TV/radio news hour airing on more than 1,000 stations in North America. She is the author of "Breaking the Sound Barrier," recently released in paperback and now a New York Times best-seller.

Moving and Shaking with the Adjunct Project

CONOR TOMÁS REED

The Adjunct Project wishes to welcome new and continuing students to the Fall 2012 semester at the CUNY Graduate Center! The AP co-coordinators—Zoltan Gluck (Organization and Planning), Conor Tomás Reed (Education and Advocacy) and Alyson Spurgas (Labor Relations)—look forward to working with all of you on a range of exciting projects ahead. Connect with us in Room 5498 at the Graduate Center, online via email at theadjunctproject@gmail.com, or visit our website at cunyadjunctproject.org.

Our Mission:

The Adjunct Project seeks to empower GC student-workers by serving as a resource to:

- ▶ Raise consciousness about academic labor issues inside and outside CUNY
- ▶ Educate GC adjuncts about ways to address these issues
- ▶ Activate GC student-workers to improve their collective position as workers at CUNY.

Furthermore, the Adjunct Project seeks to organize its resources for graduate students around two areas: 1) labor issues and concerns, and 2) teaching resources and pedagogy.

Both of these elements are key dimensions of empowerment at the workplace for graduate student workers.

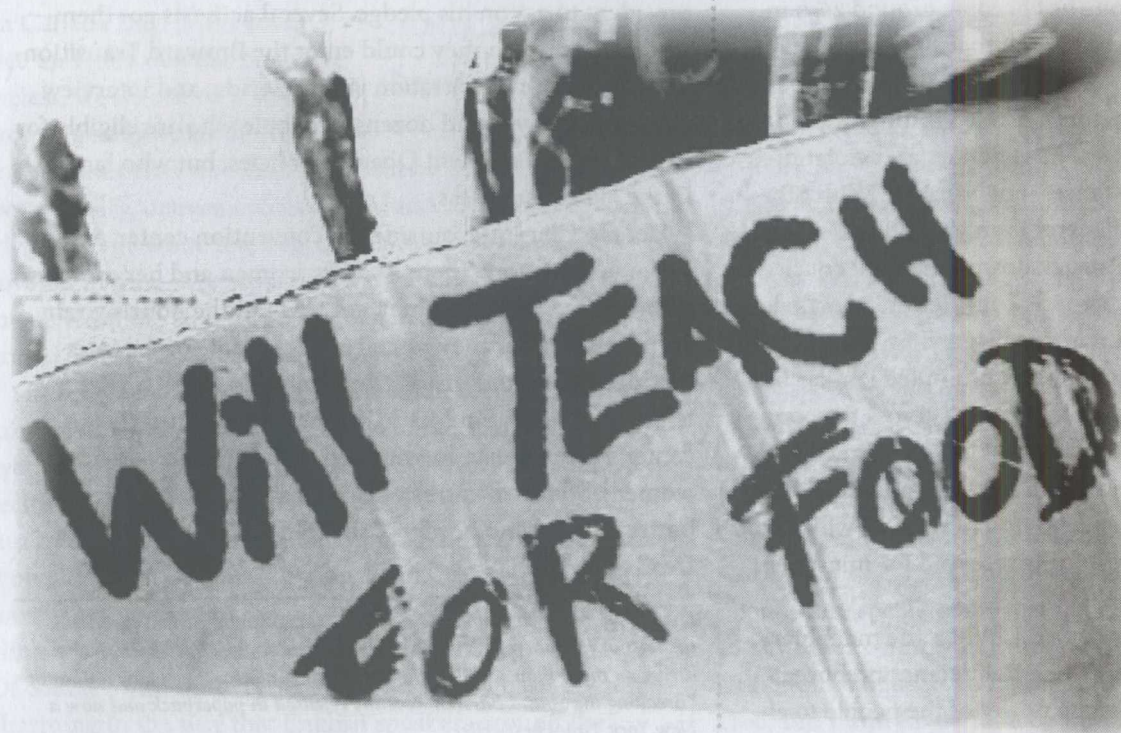
While the Adjunct Project seeks to help graduate students address their immediate labor issues, a long-term goal of the project is to create a new culture at the Graduate Center that challenges the individualistic, atomized, competitive atmosphere of academia. By working together to improve our collective position as adjuncts at CUNY we can promote a culture that emphasizes a different set of values, replacing the academic culture of competitive individualism with one of support and solidarity.

Our Recent Work and Semester Focus

As part of an effort to re-emphasize labor organizing and worker solidarity through #OccupyCUNY and the Graduate Center General Assembly, some of us have begun to put together an adjunct rights workshop or “mobile teach-in” to be debuted at the Free University Week this September 18-22. This adjunct rights workshop/teach-in will potentially reinvigorate many of the resources that the Adjunct Project and the Graduate Center General Assembly have been gathering over the years, particularly those that were

produced during the 2007 and 2008 Campus/CUNY Equity Weeks and also materials that were produced within the last year, for the first #OccupyCUNY teach-in at Washington Square Park in November 2011 through the initial Free University occupation at Madison Square Park on May Day 2012.

As the labor force within universities across the country has become more and more segmented and



public institutions are increasingly privatized, we have consistently amassed data and produced information, art, and theater to expose these issues, educate ourselves and other students about them, and mobilize our energies against these trends. Some of these materials include the CUNY Edu-Factory poster, the Occupy the Octopi infographic, a variety of powerpoints and informational handouts on the adjunctification of the university in general (and the specifics of the situation within CUNY), and the two CUNYtime zines (all of these resources are available at cunyadjunctproject.org).

Recently, terms such as “neoliberalization” and “corporatization” have become increasingly popular within universities around the world, and have become pervasive in spaces outside of the university setting, as well; part of the project of this adjunct issues workshop will be to not simply use these terms and take them for granted, but to creatively get at the heart of what these concepts mean, in addition to opening up a space for serious conversations about educational policing, the perpetuation of a stop-and-frisk culture in our schools, and the school-to-prison pipeline. We hope to engage creatively and usefully with these discourses, and to provide a forum for pushing forward—which includes providing a space to think about what we can collectively do as workers and as students to change our world through education.

This collective work might mean many different things in different contexts to different people—and this is why an adjunct rights workshop or mobile teach-in could be implemented in a variety of places (from a Free University pop-up at a PSC/CUNY bargaining session to the upcoming Northeast Student Power Convergence) and could be a research-gathering, as well as an information-disseminating, tool. It is particularly vital in this moment that we condense our resources and build organizing models that will prevent burnout—honing a workshop such as this one (and utilizing the Free University itself as a flexible tool or a framework that doesn’t need much manpower to run) will be a way to revitalize university activism along a diverse spectrum of issues and political perspectives, spread information and educate, and thus bring more and more students and workers into the fold of organizing.

Models such as the Free University and a mobile adjunct rights workshop/teach-in may be the perfect tools for our current moment and landscape, as these also bring together labor and education and put workers front and center. In the midst of #OWS, occupy-style organizing, a new and exciting focus on student unionism around the world, and, on the other hand, the PSC leadership’s lackluster contract “campaign,” some CUNY contingents have—over the last

year or so—decentered our role as the largest and most exploited constituency in our union’s bargaining unit; but a renewed organizing focus on our contingent worker status and our own exploitation as workers within CUNY does not mean we have to compromise our ideals or kowtow to union bureaucrats.

We can organize as students and as workers and stand in solidarity in both of those domains and reinvent our power in them simultaneously. It is important that we are creative as we move forward, especially if our union leaders are not. Scaffolded, flexible, and mobile organizing tools such as the Free University-as-pop-up-occupation and a mobile adjunct rights workshop/teach-in are examples of how we might creatively and efficaciously work toward our goals in the future.

Towards a Free University Week

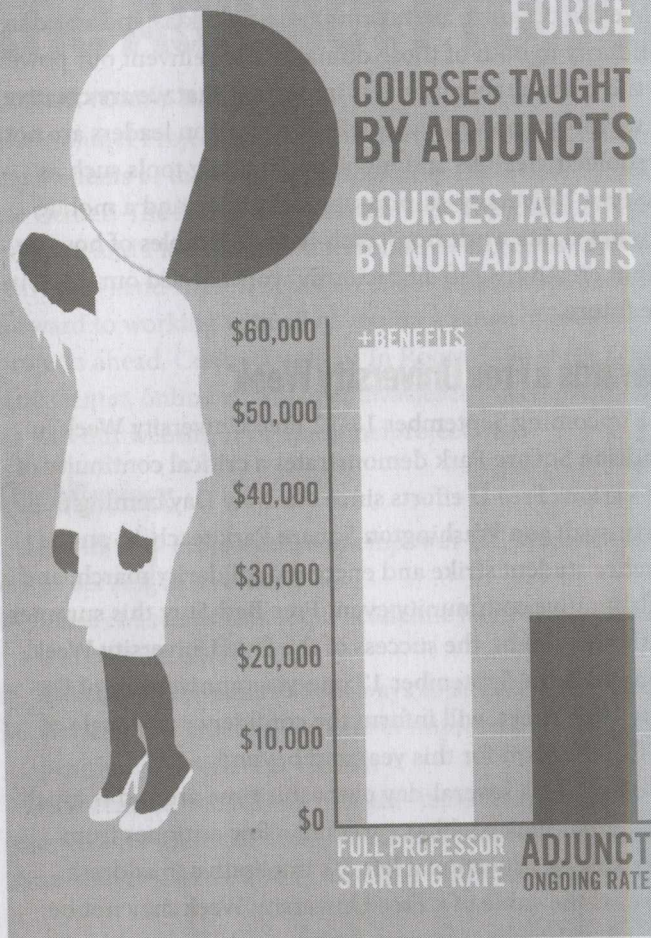
The upcoming September 18-22 Free University Week in Madison Square Park demonstrates a critical continuity of the various Free U efforts since our May Day coming out party, such as a Washington Square Park teach-in on the Quebec student strike and energetic solidarity march, and a collaborative community event Free Bed-Stuy this summer. Without a doubt, the success of the Free University Week, along with the September 17 one-year anniversary of Occupy Wall Street, will inform the confidence and scale of NYC radicalism for this year and beyond.

To be sure, a several-day event this time around is much more ambitious, and has garnered a few critiques from folks among educational left. It’s imperative to address these, as the value of a Free University Week may not be immediately apparent, even for those who may wish to support the general idea. After all, what’s the purpose of having a Free University Week in a general situation of precariousness, low pay, and heavy workloads? How do conversations and activities in a park challenge tuition hikes, student debt, campus militarization, and all the rest that we face?

Such questions and doubts about what alternatives to the educational crisis will work are understandable, given how much we in the US are usually mired in the most immediate defensive positions. But in envisioning another university system, we need to figure out why and how to build a bridge from our abilities to our aspirations. In CUNY, we currently don’t have a movement strong enough to stop tuition hikes, administrators’ pay raises, and police brutality on campus. CUNY is over half a million students strong, but this potential power won’t inherently be realized—a culture of extensively shared radical lessons is needed.

The Free University model is about creating educational

ADJUNCTS ARE A CHEAP, EXPLOITED LABOR FORCE



space as an expression of informative directional action (action can't just be direct, it has to know why and where it's going). It's about highlighting the necessity for serious political education in all that we do as the foundation for a mass movement. Two recent NYC summer reading groups on student unionism and direct action have demonstrated a thirst for political clarities and organizational models. Now multiply that by dozens of workshops, skills-shares, classes, speeches, performances, and activities, and then multiply that by several hundred (potentially thousands!) participants, and we see how transformative a mass outdoor free educational forum can be.

The Free University schedule will highlight, across these several days, a workshop series on radical student and faculty organization models from the past and present. A panel on Thursday, September 20 (at 4:00pm) will introduce the groundwork for student union models from Quebec, Chile, Puerto Rico, and California and discuss ways it

can be precisely laid here in New York City across public and private universities over the next few years. A panel on Friday, September 21, (also at 4:00pm) will feature Tina Weishaus and Jackie DiSalvo, who will share the history of Livingston College in New Jersey, a place that was directly run by students and faculty in the 1970s, and "probably the most radical college that has ever existed in the US before it was dissolved" into Rutgers. Afterwards, at 4:30pm, a former member of CLASSE's executive committee will discuss how Quebecois students coordinated a mass strike to overturn tuition hikes and oust Premier Jean Charest.

More generally, we will delightedly expand the notion of what it means to have a "radical conversation." Daily workshops and activities will focus on arts, culture, and health as powerful vehicles for community education and mobilization. Regular art-shop spaces in the park will create book shields, banners, and screen-prints. We'll host political theater, poetry readings, learning through tangible play, sex education, and conflict resolution. For us to envision and enact fundamental social change, we need to open up a wide view of mutual engagement and growth. If not, we will be continually banished to the dustbin of lost possibilities in waging the same parochially persnickety debates with ourselves, while calling this "political action."

Ultimately, coordinating days of actions alone isn't enough to challenge the crisis in higher education. Nor is, in isolation, being well-versed in various political frameworks. Given the scope of the crisis we are facing, students desperately need to get organized. We need to create political structures that are durable and democratic. With dialogues at the Free University, we can begin to envision—among many possibilities—how building a NYC Student Union over the next few years can present a long-term, sustainable view committed to developing organizational solidity and capacity at a time when student union models have demonstrated considerable power in other countries. The recent victories in Quebec show that immense social gains are possible when infrastructure is in place. The Free University Week can be the starting place for such exciting and necessary projects.

The CUNY Graduate Center is our home base for much of this work that extends outwards into the city and beyond. Developing an intellectually dynamic, politically principled, and mutually nourishing relationship—between GC students, faculty, staff, offices, programs, centers, the communities around our building and where we live, and across the broader CUNY communities that constellate our polyversity system—can generate the potential actuality in our call that another CUNY is possible. Let's get moving together! **A**



SPECIAL SECTION:

Clubs and Organizations at the GC

One of the key pillars of strength at the CUNY Graduate Center is the extensive roster of dynamic student organizations chartered by the Doctoral Students Council. From area studies collectives and clubs for the artistically inclined to political solidarity organizations, there's something for almost everyone affiliated with the vibrantly diverse GC community. Yet given the commuter culture that also inhabits our hallways, not every student is consistently aware of the opportunities afforded by the tremendous energies of our student society. As the primary voice of the student body, this paper intends to bridge that gap. Therefore, beginning with this issue, the *Advocate* will include a monthly section reporting on news and activities of the various student-run clubs and organizations on campus, as well as publicizing information on their upcoming events and gatherings. We're ready for an incredible year of academic, artistic, cultural and political expression and celebration, here at the Graduate Center, and want to make sure that you are too.

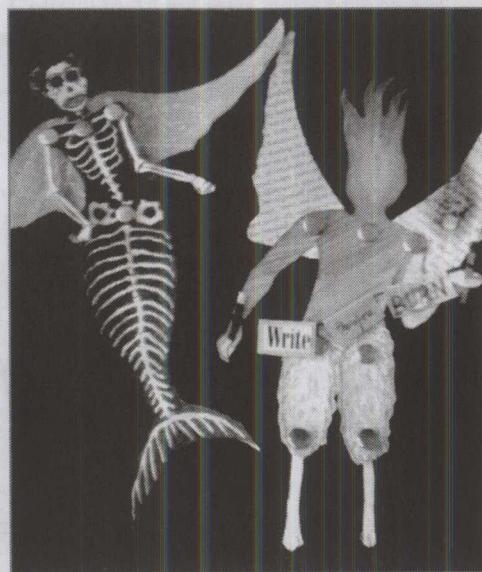
3 TEXT STUDIO

The Text Textile Texture Studio (3Text Studio) is an interdisciplinary guild dedicated to art-making in the tradition of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, late Distinguished Professor of English at the Graduate Center, queer theorist, and fiber artist. The Studio's purpose is to help GC students and other academics practice crafts related to books, texts, or language, as well as to study theoretical and artistic work related to the materiality of language. Possible 3Text activities/media include artist's books, rubber-stamping, paper-folding, cartooning, textile dying/printing, collage—any of which might be deployed in conjunction with group writing, experimental critical writing, and other more “open-ended” modes of text generation. More familiar events such as presentations and discussion are also a distinct possibility.

The first Studio gathering of the fall, on Thursday, September 27, will be dedicated to making hexaflexagons. These invert-able folded-paper “books,” as Sedgwick called them, have two sides, but paradoxically have six different faces. They're fun to make, intriguing to watch in action, and remarkably satisfying to manipulate. Hexaflexagons can also be used as study aids, and are especially useful for memorizing groups of six.

3Text Studio events are open to all Graduate Center students (who may also bring a guest), Graduate Center faculty and staff-members, and doctoral students from other institutions. **No special skills or experience are required to fully participate in 3Text Studio activities.** All disciplines are welcome!

You can see examples of previous Studio projects at www.3TextStudio.wordpress.com. To receive announcements of future events, please sign the online roster on the DSC website, or send an e-mail to text.texture@gmail.com.

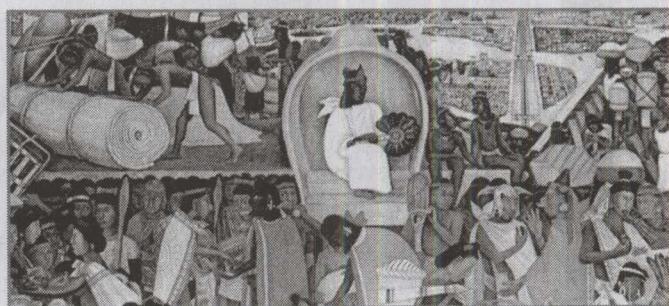


AELLA

AELLA (Asociación de Estudiantes Latin@s y Latinoamerican@s, or Latin@ & Latin American Students Association) is a student organization at CUNY's Graduate Center whose main mission is to advocate for the interests and defend the rights of its membership. Because of a common colonial history of oppression and resistance, AELLA aims to express and represent the different racial, ethnic, and national elements that compose the rich cultural traditions commonly referred to as Latin@ and Latin American.

Accordingly, AELLA will struggle against all forms of discrimination and will promote the solidarity among students and between different student associations at CUNY Graduate Center and other related colleges.

In AELLA, our stated goals are: a) To promote and advocate for the rights, unity, and interests of the Latin@ and Latin American students at the Graduate Center. b) To promote and support research and diffusion of Latin@ and Latin American issues. c) To help and promote the search of fellowships and funding,



and develop research about Latin@ and Latin American issues. d) To create and support existing Research Centers, Library and Data Bases for Latin@ and Latin-American issues. e) To create a multilingual publication. f) To organize events and cultural activities about Latin@ and Latin American issues and with other organizations with similar objectives. g) To improve GC's curriculums and develop proposals to request more courses regarding the Latin American region and Latin@s/Latin Americans experiences. h) To help improve the Latin American, Caribbean and Latin@ Studies program at the Graduate Center as offered by the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) program. h) To create a clearing house to provide and share information regarding job placement. i) To develop means for economic assistance to students. j) To organize and promote academic and social activities, events and periodical meetings. ... and much more.

On the Spring 2012 AELLA sponsored the following AELLA Series of events, consisting of Graduate Center students' presentations, invited organizations, screenings, refreshments, and more!

Upcoming meetings: Once a month at 6:30pm in Room 5414! Please, come and join us! Wednesday, October 24; Wednesday, November 28—AELLA Series; Wednesday, December 12.

Upcoming events: Symposium: Structural Violence and Migrants in the Global Frontier: Central- America, Mexico and North-America. October 4, 5, and 6, 2012. Graduate Center, CUNY—365 Fifth Avenue. Sponsored by: AELLA, Popol Vuh Itinerante, Indie Production Company Tres Gatos and Reverend Hoover. <http://jornadasmigracion.blogspot.com/>.

CRITICAL PALESTINE STUDIES ASSOCIATION

The Critical Palestine Studies Association is a brand new chartered organization at the CUNY Graduate Center focusing on Palestine and relevant matters. The association comprises a diverse and interdisciplinary group of scholars linked by our shared passion for issues related to Palestinian society, culture, and politics. This autumn, we expect to host a number of talks with prominent scholars working on Palestinian issues and to begin planning for a potential mini Palestinian film festival in the near future. We'd like to develop an agenda according to the particular interests of our members, so please join by signing up at <http://cunydisc.org/node/9418>.

Our first meeting will be held at a time to be determined later this month. Feel free to email either Kristofer Petersen-Overton (kpetersen-overton@gc.cuny.edu) or Kareem Rabie (krabie@gc.cuny.edu) for more information. Also, you can follow us on Twitter at @CPSA_CUNY.

THE CUNY INTERNATIONALIST MARXIST CLUB

The CUNY Internationalist Marxist Club works to bring GC students the undiluted programmatic and analytical heritage of Marxism as a guide to revolutionary action, promoting "Marxist education, solidarity with the world-wide struggle for emancipation of the workers and oppressed, and awareness of the connection between these issues and the struggle to defend public education."

Recent activities include helping build revolutionary contingents in solidarity with the Quebec student strike and locked-out Con Ed workers, actions against police repression at CUNY and the NYPD's racist "stop and frisk" program, and mobilizing for the city-wide May Day march as part of an Internationalist contingent calling for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, the defeat of US imperialism, occupying closing schools, and the continued fight for a revolutionary workers party!

The group built forums on student and teacher struggles from Quebec to Puerto Rico and Chile; the long shore workers' fight in Longview, Washington; and "Marxism and the Occupy Movement," bringing *class-struggle* politics into debates on OWS, unlike left currents that tail the *populist* notion that an undifferentiated "99%" could "get money out of politics" in capitalist America with its two-headed property party of

Democrats and Republicans.

Working “in accordance with the Trotskyist principles of “The Internationalist,” the GC organization is part of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs born out of a 2001 campaign to stop CUNY’s attempted “anti-immigrant war purge” against undocumented students. It helped spike a Board of Trustees witch hunt against playwright Tony Kushner, authored the exposé “Look Who’s Trusteeing at CUNY,” in the *GC Advocate*, and calls to abolish the BoT, reestablish open admissions and free tuition, get all cops off campus, and for the university to be run by elected councils of students, teachers and workers. It works closely with Class Struggle Education Workers (edworkersunite.blogspot.com), a Left opposition group in the NYC teachers union and CUNY Professional Staff Congress that has organized against racist school closings and led a struggle against education unions’ endorsing Barack Obama despite the Democratic president’s drive to weaken public education.



The Club's weekly study group discusses key Marxist works as they relate to the world we live in today. These have ranged from the *Communist Manifesto*, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* and *Value, Price and Profit* by Marx and Engels, to Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* and *State and Revolution*, Rosa Luxemburg's *Reform or Revolution*, Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* and *The Revolution Betrayed*, Bolshevik leader Alexandra Kollontai on communism and women's liberation, James P. Cannon's "The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement," and Claude McKay's speeches to the Communist International on black liberation. The study group has also viewed films, read Ousmane Sembene's classic novel on the role of women in Senegalese class struggles, and organized a trip to MOMA to see Diego Rivera's vibrant revolutionary murals.

Currently the group is reading a series of works on Marxism and the black freedom struggle, kicking off the fall semester with a screening of *Finally Got the News*, on Detroit's League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and a forum on "Class and Race, Education and Revolution in Brazil."

Write us at cunyinternationalists@gmail.com. For more on the CUNY-wide Internationalist Clubs, see www.internationalist.org/joincunyinternationalistclubs.

DOMINICAN STUDIES GROUP

DSG (Dominican Studies group) is an interdisciplinary group at the CUNY Graduate Center that welcomes students and faculty from all departments to share interests, ideas, and information about Dominican culture and its Diaspora. We acknowledge that there has been an increase of students with interest in Dominican studies in the areas of literary criticism, anthropology, sociology and music. Hence, we believe that a specialized group in the area of Dominican studies will stimulate the growing interest in the field. Our primary goal is to enhance the study of Dominicans in the United States and to provide a common ground where ideas can be introduced, grow and exchanged. The idea emerged from three graduate students of Dominican descent. The three founders stem from different wings of graduate study: Anthropology, Ethnomusicology and Hispanic and Luso Brazilian Literatures and Languages.

Last year we had a series of literary events. During the Fall 2011, our guests, Dominican writer Aurora Arias and Associate Professor Carlos Decena discussed the crude reality of sex tourism in the Dominican Republic and its impact on literature. During the Spring 2012, Josefina Báez, a Dominican-York writer, read from her latest work, *Levente No. Yolayorkdominicanyork* and spoke about the complexities of Dominican transnational identity.

This year we will offer a series of music related events, as well. During the fall, an expert on afro-Domini-

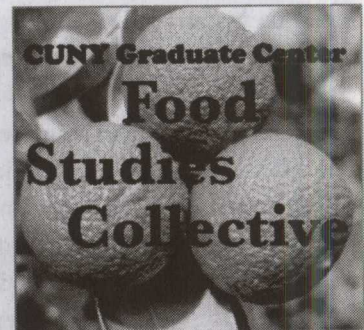
can music will discuss the revival of afro-Dominican rhythms by mainstream musicians and the role of the Dominican Diaspora in keeping afro-descendant traditions alive. Spring will be dedicated to bachata, its history and development through the lens of Giovanni Savino, a New York City based photographer and documentary maker.

EARLY MODERN INTERDISCIPLINARY GROUP

The Early Modern Interdisciplinary Group (EMIG) works to bring together early modern scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds and to promote scholarship on the early modern period that reflects such academic diversity. To that end, EMIG invites scholars from within the CUNY system and beyond to the Graduate Center to deliver papers and to discuss their research with graduate students and faculty. EMIG holds graduate student seminars each semester, round-table discussions organized around a theme during which graduate students from various disciplines can share and discuss their work with one another. Finally, EMIG hosts an annual academic conference, usually held during the spring semester.

FOOD STUDIES COLLECTIVE

The Food Studies Collective is an interdisciplinary group at the CUNY Graduate Center that invites students and faculty from all programs to share interests, ideas, and information about the social, political and environmental dynamics of food systems, food practices and cultures, as well as food theory and pedagogy. Our primary purpose is to foster an intellectual and social community of scholars that encourages interactions across disciplines and between faculty and students. Events: The group meets regularly throughout the school year to plan events such as guest speakers, workshops, seminars, colloquia, film screenings, CUNY based food projects, networking and parties. Through these activities we aim to create a space for connecting and collaborating with food scholars within and outside the Graduate Center and CUNY. For additional information please see visit our website at <http://cunydc.org/category/financial-category/expenditures/chartered-organizations/food-studies-collective>, and our Google Groups page at <http://groups.google.com/group/cuny-gc-food-studies-collective>.



THE GRADUATE CENTER COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC COMMUNITY (GCCRC)

The Graduate Center Composition and Rhetoric Community (GCCRC), a DSC-chartered organization, is comprised of a diverse group of students and faculty interested in not only what texts say, but how they say it and how they come to say it—in short, how they are composed. Our meetings feature a range of public activities including frequent scholarly discussions, faculty lectures, and skills-based workshops such as our digital toolkit events where we share tools for composing and teaching in our contemporary world.

This interdisciplinary group is of particular interest to those who are teaching while pursuing their degrees because of our commitment to exploring writing-centered pedagogies, offering a support network for new and continuing graduate student instructors and hands-on training sessions for anyone interested. We lead summer and winter teaching orientations that are particularly helpful for those new to teaching but are open to anyone interested in exploring new approaches in the classroom. As a group we strive to utilize our indi-

vidual strengths to mentor each other, helping each of us grow as teachers and scholars.

The GCCRC aims to foster discussions of writing studies and composition theory alongside our own local classroom experiences; these important connections between theory and practice regularly develop into group members' presentations at national conferences. To that end, we coordinate workshops for conference proposals, mock presentations, seminar papers, and job market materials.

This fall our meetings are on **Monday nights from 6:30-8:30**, and feature speakers and workshops centered around writing studies and pedagogy. Save these dates:

- ▶ 9/10 Meet and Greet the GCCRC
- ▶ 9/24 Jason Tougaw on memoir writing
- ▶ 10/15 Conference proposal workshop
- ▶ 10/29 Mark McBeth's "Masquerade"
- ▶ 11/12 Jessica Yood on turning informal academic writing into publishable work
- ▶ 11/26 Dominique Zino on visual rhetoric
- ▶ 12/3 Amy Wan (topic TBD)
- ▶ 12/17 Peda-Pollyanna (an exchange of effective assignments and activities)

For more information on our topics and speakers, sign up for our mailing list:

COMPRHET-L@gc.listserv.cuny.edu or e-mail us at gc.comprhet@gmail.com

JEWISH CONNECTION GROUP

The Jewish Connection Group was started in fall 2009 by a Biology doctoral student at Brooklyn College. She wanted to develop an organization where Jewish graduate students could come together and share their culture, non-Jews could experience Jewish culture, and people from the community could share the Jewish experience with graduate students from different backgrounds. She was able to fulfill this goal by contacting Chabad of Midtown to become the sponsor of three to four Sabbath dinners per semester. Sabbath dinners take place at the Graduate Center and are open to everyone. We usually have a very nice crowd of between ten and thirty graduate students and people from the community who meet to eat, drink, and socialize. Chabad of Midtown also provides us with a rabbi who helps develop a wonderful spirit among everyone by leading a few prayers, songs, and insightful discussion about the weekly religious passage. Advertisements for these Sabbath dinners can be found on the bulletin boards located by the elevators on each floor at the Graduate Center. In addition, departments send out regular reminder emails. If you would like to add your email address to our listserv, please send your name and email address to Frances Victory at victory.frances@gmail.com.

GC POETICS GROUP

The GC Poetics Group is an interdisciplinary collective at the CUNY Graduate Center made up of students and faculty from all departments who are interested in poetry and poetics. In a spectacle-weaned culture of instant gratification, poetry is publicly regarded, at best, as a dead art, and, at worst, a gaud or trinket. But poetry's marginality can also be envisioned as a strategic advantage, affording the poetic register radical mutability with respect to dominant zones of discourse. The purpose of our group, then, is to play to this advantage: to provide an institutional context in which a variety of poetry events, discussions, and other transgressions can happen, and to foster a diverse intellectual and social community dedicated to creative writing and scholarship, and the imaginative amalgams of both. We are particularly concerned with poetry as a means by which to exacerbate the contradictions inherent in political discourse, and to imagine alternative modes of discursive participation.

Thus, the Poetics Group not only offers a forum for engaging the sundry talents and interests of the many poets and scholars of poetry from across the Graduate Center's curriculum, but also serves as a way of connecting the institution to other poetry communities in New York City and beyond. While the group is open to all Graduate Center students and faculty, the activities we organize—readings, interviews, panel discussions, performances—are open to the public, and we welcome participation from other CUNY faculty and students, as well as anyone else who is interested in poetry in New York City. After all, poetry intends to *make more world*, and if poems fail to actualize the possibilities they describe, they nonetheless can instruct us “to be more keenly interested while [we’re] still alive,” as Frank O’Hara wrote of the work of Larry Rivers: “And perhaps this is the most important thing art can say.”

There is typically one Poetics Group event per month, and in addition to bringing writers from a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, we also host a student poetry/prose reading at the end of each semester. This September the group will host “Blueprint for Poetry,” a reading and conversation about intoxication, virtuality, and poetic form, with poet Cyrus Console and scholar Michael Clune; in October we’ll welcome University of Georgia professor Jed Rasula to the GC to celebrate the launch of his anthology, *Burning City: Poems of Metropolitan Modernity*. Looking further down the line, Washington University professor, and translator of John Ashbery, Ignacio Infante will join us in the spring, and the GC’s own Erica Kaufman will talk shop with British poet, performer, and visual artist, Maggie O’Sullivan. More information about our events, past and future, can be found on our blog: <http://opencuny.org/poetics/>. Our current co-chairs are Leah Souffrant (co-founder), Erica Kaufman, Bradley Lubin, Josh Schneiderman, and Kyle Waugh. If you’d like to contact the group, or join our listserv, please write to: gcpoetics@gmail.com.

POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES GROUP

The Postcolonial Studies Group (PSG) is an interdisciplinary, student-run organization at the CUNY Graduate Center. We stage events loosely related to the field of postcolonial studies/ transnational studies. This field encompasses both the study of the history, cultures, arts and literatures of postcolonial peoples, as well as theories of postcoloniality and of the transnational.

Our past events have included lectures and panels by CUNY and visiting scholars—students and faculty alike—as well as panel discussions, and film screenings. Each event also has a social component, since these events offer an opportunity for those working in various disciplines to come together, network, and consider working together in future.

We are open to GC students, though we also welcome the participation of all CUNY faculty and students, as well as those from other institutions. Our events have always been free of charge, and our only means of support thus far has been our DSC funds.

We maintain an active listserv with over 100 members; our active participants have included students in departments including English, Art History, History, Urban Education, Comparative Lit., Anthropology, Philosophy, Psychology and Theater.

In 2007 we held a summer reading group for the first time, in which students considered a number of short works of postcolonial theory. In the summer of 2008, we expanded this to three month-long groups examining one key text each. Since then, the group has convened for summer sessions, reading three major theoretical texts in the field over the course of three months. We also introduced a monthly Postcolonial Studies Colloquium Series, which will continue its fourth year in the 2012-2013 academic year. Please see our website for more info <http://opencuny.org/psg/>. Dates and event info to come!

Anyone who wishes to help organize our events is welcome, though currently the coordinators are CUNY GC English program students Ian Foster and Tracy Riley. For information on how to join our listserv PSG-L please email traceysrily@gmail.com or ianfoster@gmail.com.

THE PRISON STUDIES GROUP

The Prison Studies Group is an interdisciplinary group that seeks to engage in and promote critical and scholarly examination of the prison, criminal, and juvenile justice systems—local and global, contemporary and historical. To this end, we coordinate several events every year, including an annual graduate student conference. We also invite speakers to discuss their work and research, host film screenings, run the “Books through Bars” drop-box in the Mina Reese Library, and provide a space to workshop one another’s research and writing. We hope this year to provide more resources for our members, including bibliographies, an updated contact list of local and national organizations, a book/film lending library, and syllabi and curriculum shares. There has been discussion of a regular reading group, and we have recently begun a current events/issues blog (<http://opencuny.org/prisonstudiesgroup/>). Through our efforts, we hope to raise awareness and encourage productive scholarship, research, and teaching of mass incarceration and the larger Prison Industrial Complex. Email us to get involved and share your ideas! Join the listserv and find out about our upcoming events: prisonstudiesgroup@gmail.com.

Social and Political Theory Students’ Association

SPTSA (Social and Political Theory Students’ Association), is a fifteen-year-old DSC chartered organization at the Graduate Center, providing an inter-disciplinary forum for research, discussion, and networking relating to scholarly and professional pursuits in social theory. Over the years, SPTSA (pronounced “schpit-sah”) has brought together students and faculty from various programs, including but not limited to Comparative Literature, Economics, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, Theater, and the Women’s Studies Certificate Program for a variety of activities ranging from talks and workshops to film screenings, writing groups and wine and cheese events. In the 2012-2013 school year, SPTSA will host or co-host a number of talks and seminars to include visits from Carol Gilligan, Virginia Held and Carol Gould. In addition, SPTSA has been focusing more energy on professional development events over the last few semesters—a commitment that continues this year with a number of workshops directed at political theory PhD students.

UDAAN-INDIAN STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS ASSOCIATION

A home away from home.....

The City University of New York (CUNY) is one of the largest public universities in the United States, and its campus spreads far and wide across our city’s five boroughs. Being so spread out makes it difficult for the students from different CUNY campuses to come together and develop cultural and intellectual interaction.

In 2010 a group of friends came together to form Udaan-ISRA, a chartered organization under the Doctoral Student Council (DSC), to convene Indian students and others at CUNY who are either doctoral students or postdoctoral fellows. For the past two years, Udaan-ISRA has been actively organizing cultural events each semester (Utsav and Navrang) to share our rich Indian culture among friends. During these semester activities we prepare and serve lots of yummy Indian food, and host music, dance performances and celebrate Indian festivals. To enjoy the summer sunshine, we also organize recess events like trips to cricket tournaments and outdoor picnics for our members.

Udaan-ISRA values its members (friends) and their participation in the various organized events. We keep our members posted of our upcoming activities during our bi-annual meetings and through email, our Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/isra.cuny>) and our website <http://opencuny.org/isra/>. Udaan-ISRA membership is free and easy. Just send an email to cuny.isra@gmail.com or sign up on the Udaan-ISRA page at the DSC website, <http://cunydc.org/organizations/udaan-isra>. 



How The University Was Killed, In Five Easy Pieces

THE HOMELESS ADJUNCT

In the last few years, ominous conversations have been growing about the ways in which our universities are failing. There is talk about poor educational outcomes apparent in our graduates, out-of-control tuition, and crippling student loan debt. Attention is finally being paid to the enormous salaries for presidents and sports coaches, and the majority of faculty's low-wage, migrant-worker-like status. There are now movements to control tuition, forgive student debt, create more powerful "assessment" tools, offer "free" university materials online, and combat adjunct faculty exploitation. But each of these movements focuses on a narrow aspect of a much wider problem, and no number of "fixes" for these individual aspects will address the real reason that universities in America are dying.

To explain my perspective here, I need to go back in time. Let's go back to the years immediately after World War II, the 1950s, when the GI bill and affordability (and sometimes free access) to universities created an upsurge of college students across the country. This surge continued through the 1960s, when universities were the very heart of intense public discourse, passionate learning, and vocal citizen involvement in the issues of the times. It was during this time, too, when colleges had a thriving professoriate, and when students were given access to a variety of subject areas and the possibility of broad learning. The Liberal Arts stood at the center of a college education, and students were exposed to philosophy, anthropology, literature, history, sociology, world religions, and foreign languages and cultures. Of course, something else happened, beginning in the late fifties and continuing into the sixties: uprisings and growing numbers of citizens taking part in popular dissent—against the Vietnam War, against racism, against destruction of the environment in a growing corporatized culture, against misogyny, against homophobia. Where did that revolt incubate? Where did large numbers of well-educated, intellectual, and vocal people congregate? On college campuses. Who didn't like the outcome of the 1960s? The corporations, the warmongers, those in our society who

would keep us divided based on our race, our gender, and our sexual orientation.

I suspect that, given the opportunity, those corporatized groups would have liked nothing more than to shut down the universities. Destroy them outright. But a country claiming to have democratic values can't just shut down its universities. That would reveal something about that country which would not support the image they are determined to portray—a country of freedom, justice, and opportunity for all. So, how do you kill the universities of the country without showing your hand? As a child growing up during the Cold War, I was taught that the communist countries in the first half of the Twentieth Century put their scholars, intellectuals, and artists into prison camps, called "re-education camps." What I've come to realize as an adult is that American corporatism despises those same individuals as much as we were told communism did. But instead of doing anything so obvious as throwing them into prison, here those same people are thrown into dire poverty. The outcome is the same. Desperate poverty controls and ultimately breaks people as effectively as prison. Indeed, some research suggests that it works even *more* powerfully.

So: here is the recipe for killing universities, and you tell me if what I'm describing isn't exactly what is at the root of all the problems of our country's system of higher education. (Because what I'm saying has more recently been applied to K-12 public education.)

Step One: You de-fund public higher education.

Anna Victoria, writing in *Pluck Magazine*, discusses this issue in a review of UC Berkeley English professor Christopher Newfield's book, *Unmaking the Public University*: "In 1971, Lewis Powell (before assuming his post as a Supreme Court Justice) authored a memo, now known as the *Powell Memorandum*, and sent it to the US Chamber of Commerce. The title of the memo was 'Attack on the American Free Enterprise System,' and in it he called on corporate America to take an increased role in shaping politics, law,

and education in the United States.” How would they do that? One, by increased lobbying and pressure on legislators to change their priorities. “Funding for public universities comes from, as the term suggests, the state and federal government. Yet starting in the early 1980s, shifting state priorities forced public universities to increasingly rely on other sources of revenue. For example, in the University of Washington school system, state funding for schools decreased as a percentage of total public education budgets from 82 percent in 1989 to 51 percent in 2011.” That’s a loss of more than one-third of its public funding. But why this shift in priorities? Newfield posits that conservative elites have worked to de-fund higher education explicitly because of its function in creating a more empowered, democratic, and multiracial middle class. His theory blames explicit cultural concern, not financial woes, for the current decreases in funding. He cites the fact that California public universities were forced to reject 300,000 applicants due to lack of funding. Newfield explains that much of the motive behind conservative advocacy for de-funding public education is racial, pro-corporate, and anti-protest in nature.

Again, from Victoria: “(The) ultimate objective, as outlined in the (Lewis Powell) memo, was to purge respectable institutions such as the media, arts, sciences, as well as college campuses themselves of left-wing thoughts. At the time, college campuses were seen as ‘springboards for dissent,’ as Newfield terms it, and were therefore viewed as publicly funded sources of opposition to the interests of the establishment. While it is impossible to know the extent to which this memo influenced the conservative political strategy over the coming decades, it is extraordinary to see how far the principles outlined in his memo have been adopted.”

Under the guise of many “conflicts,” such as budget struggles or quotas, de-funding was consistently the result. This funding argument also was used to re-shape the course offerings and curriculum focus found on campuses. Victoria writes, “Attacks on humanities curriculums, political correctness, and affirmative action shifted the conversation on public universities to the right, creating a climate of skepticism around state funded schools. State budget debates became platforms for conservatives to argue why certain disciplines such as sociology, history, anthropology, minority studies, language, and gender studies should be de-funded.” Through the argument that they were not offering students the “practical” skills needed for the job market, this platform was a powerful way to emphasize what now is seen as a vocational focus rather than an actual higher education and to de-value those very courses that trained and expanded the mind, developed a more

complete human being, a more actively intelligent person and involved citizen. Another argument used to attack the humanities was “their so-called promotion of anti-establishment sentiment. Gradually, these arguments translated into real—and often deep—cuts into the budgets of state university systems,” especially in those most undesirable areas that the establishment found counter to their ability to control the population’s thoughts and behavior. The idea of “manufactured consent” should be talked about here—because if you remove the classes and the disciplines that are the strongest in their ability to develop higher level intellectual rigor, the result is a more easily manipulated citizenry, less capable of deep interrogation and investigation of the establishment “message.”

Step Two: You deprofessionalize and impoverish the professors (and continue to create a surplus of underemployed and unemployed Ph.D.s).

Vice President Joseph Biden, a few months ago, said that the reason tuitions are out of control is because of the high price of college faculty. He has no idea what he is talking about! At latest count, we have 1.5 million university professors in this country, 1 million of whom are adjuncts. Two-thirds of professors in America are hired on short-term contracts, most often for one semester at a time, with no job security whatsoever—which means that they have no idea how much work they will have in any given semester, and that they are often completely unemployed over summer months when work is nearly impossible to find (and many of the unemployed adjuncts do not qualify for unemployment payments). So, one million American university professors are earning, on average, \$20K a year gross, with no benefits or healthcare, and no unemployment insurance when they are out of work. Keep in mind, too, that many of the more recent Ph.D.s have entered this field often with the burden of six figure student loan debt. A recent *Huffington Post* article discusses the long-term mental and physical destruction caused when people are faced with poverty and “job insecurity”—precarious employment, or “under-employment.” The article says that, in just the few short years since our 2008 economic collapse, the medical problems of this group have increased exponentially. This is the horrible state of insecurity that America’s college professors have experienced now for thirty years. It can destroy you—breaking down your physical and emotional health. As an example: the average yearly starting salary of a university professor at Temple University in 1975 was just under \$10,000 a year, with full benefits—health, retirement, and educational benefits (their family’s could attend college for free). And guess what? Average

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pay for Temple's faculty is still about the same—because adjuncts now make up the majority of faculty, and earn between \$8,000 to \$14,000 a year (depending on how many courses they are assigned each semester since there is no guarantee of continued employment)—but unlike the full-time professors of 1975, these adjunct jobs come with no benefits, no health care, no retirement, no educational benefits, no offices. How many other professions report salaries that have remained at 1975 levels?

This is how you break the evil, wicked, leftist academic class in America—you turn them into low-wage members of the precariat—that growing number of American workers whose employment is consistently precarious. All around the country, our undergraduates are being taught by faculty living at or near the poverty line, who have little to no say in the way classes are being taught, the number of students in a class, or how curriculum is being designed. They often have no offices in which to meet their students, no professional staff support, no professional development support. One million of our college professors are struggling to continue offering the best they can in the face of this wasteland of deteriorated professional support, while living with the very worst kind of economic insecurity. Unlike those communist countries, which sometimes executed their intellectuals, here we are being killed off by lack of healthcare, by stress-related illness like heart-attacks or strokes. While we're at it, let's add suicide to that list of killers—and readers of this blog will remember that I have written at length about adjunct faculty suicide in the past.

Step Three: You move in a managerial/administrative class who takes over governance of the university.

This new class takes control of much of the university's functioning, including funding allocation, curriculum design, and course offerings. If you are old enough to remember when medicine was forever changed by the appearance of the "HMO" model of managed medicine, you will have an idea of what has happened to academia. If you are not old enough—let me tell you that Once Upon a Time, doctors ran hospitals, doctors made decisions on what treatment their patients needed. In the 1970s, during the infamous Nixon Administration, HMOs were an idea sold to the American public, said to help reign in medical costs. But once Nixon secured passage of the HMO Act in 1973, the organizations went quickly from operating on a non-profit organization model, focused on high quality health care for controlled costs, to being for-profit organizations, with lots of corporate money funding them—and suddenly the idea of high-quality health care was sacrificed in favor

of profits. This meant taking in higher and higher premiums and offering less and less service, more denied claims, more limitations placed on doctors, who became part of a "managed profession." You see the state of healthcare in this country, and how disastrous it is. Well, during this same time, there was a similar kind of development—something akin to the HMO—let's call it an "EMO," Educational Management Organization, began to take hold in American academia. From the 1970s until today, as the number of full-time faculty jobs continued to shrink, the number of full-time administrative jobs began to explode. As faculty was deprofessionalized and casualized, reduced to teaching as migrant contract workers, administrative jobs now offered good, solid salaries, benefits, offices, prestige and power. In 2012, administrators now outnumber faculty on every campus across the country. And just as disastrous as the HMO was to the practice of medicine in America, so is the EMO model disastrous to the practice of academia in America and to the quality of our students' education. Benjamin Ginsburg writes about this in great detail in his book *The Fall of the Faculty*.

I'd like to mention here, too, that universities often defend their use of adjuncts by claiming that they have no choice but to hire part-timers, as a "cost saving measure" in an increasingly de-funded university. What they don't say, and without demand of transparency will never say, is that they have not saved money by hiring adjuncts—they have reduced faculty salaries, security, and power. The money wasn't saved, it was simply re-allocated to administrative salaries, coach salaries, and outrageous university president salaries. There has been a redistribution of funds away from those who actually teach, the scholars—and therefore away from the students' education itself—and into these administrative and executive salaries, sports costs, and the expanded use of "consultants," PR and marketing agencies, and law firms. We have to add here, too, that presidential salaries went from around \$25,000 to \$30,000 in the 1970s to the hundreds of thousands, even to millions of dollars today—this includes base salary, delayed compensation, discretionary funds, free homes or generous housing allowances, cars and drivers, and memberships to expensive country clubs.

Step Four: You move in corporate culture and corporate money.

To further control and dominate how the university is "used," a flood of corporate money changes the value and mission of the university from a place where an educated citizenry is seen as a social good, where intellect and reasoning is developed and heightened for the value of the

individual and for society, to a place of vocational training focused on profit. Corporate culture hijacked the narrative. The university was no longer for the development of your mind. It was where you went so you could get a "good job." Anything not immediately and directly related to job preparation or hiring was denigrated and seen as worthless: philosophy, literature, art, and history of other areas of study.

Anna Victoria writes that "many universities have relied on private sector methods of revenue generation such as the formation of private corporations, patents, increased marketing strategies, corporate partnerships, campus rentals, and for-profit e-learning enterprises. To cut costs, public universities have employed non-state employee service contractors and have streamlined their financial operations."

So what is the problem with corporate money, you might ask? A lot. When corporate money floods the universities, corporate values replace academic values. As we said before, the humanities get de-funded, and the business schools get tons of money. Serious issues of ethics begin to develop when corporations begin making donations and form partnerships with science departments. That money buys influence over not only the kinds of research being done but the outcomes of that research. Corporations donate to departments and get the use of university researchers in the bargain, not to mention the ability to deduct the money as donation while using the labor, controlling and owning the research. Suddenly, the university laboratory is no longer a place of objective research. As one example, corporations who don't like "climate change" warnings will donate money and control research at universities, which then publish refutations of global warning proofs. Or, university labs will be corporate-controlled in cases of FDA-approval research. This is especially dangerous when pharmaceutical companies take control of university labs to test efficacy or safety and then push approval through governmental agencies. Another example is in economics departments. Movies like *The Inside Job* show how Wall Street has bought off high-profile economists from Harvard, or Yale, or Stanford, or MIT, to talk about the state of the stock market and the country's financial stability. Blatantly false papers were presented and published by well-respected economists who were on the payroll of Goldman

Sachs or Merrill Lynch.

Academia should not be the whore of corporatism, but that's what it has become. Academia once celebrated itself as an independent institution. Academia is a culture,

Our students have been denied full-time available faculty, the ability to develop mentors and advisors, faculty-designed syllabi which changes each semester, a wide variety of courses and options.

one that offers a long-standing worldview which values on-going, rigorous intellectual, emotional, psychological, and creative development of the individual citizen. It respects and values the contributions of the scholar, the intellectual, to society. It treasures the promise of each student, and strives to offer the fullest possible support to the development of that promise. It does this not only for the good of the scholar and the student, but for the social good. Like medicine, academia existed for the social good. Neither medicine nor education should be a purely for-profit endeavor. And yet, in both the case of the HMO and the EMO, we have been

taken over by an alien for-profit culture—our sovereignty over our own profession, our own institutions, stripped from us.

A corporate model, where profit depends on maintaining a low-wage work force and charging continually higher prices for their "services" is what now controls our colleges. Faculty is being squeezed from one end and our students are being squeezed from the other.

Step Five: Destroy the students.

While claiming to offer them hope of a better life, our corporatized universities are ruining the lives of our students. This is accomplished through a two-prong tactic. The First Prong: you dumb down and then destroy the quality of the education so that no one on campus really learns to think, to question, or to reason. Instead, they are learning to obey, to withstand "tests" and "exams," to follow rules, and to endure absurdity and abuse. Our students have been denied full-time available faculty, the ability to develop mentors and advisors, faculty-designed syllabi which changes each semester, a wide variety of courses and options. Instead, more and more universities have core curricula which dictate a large portion of the course of study, in which the majority of classes are administration-designed "common syllabi" courses, taught by an army of underpaid, part-time faculty in a model that more closely resembles a factory or the industrial kitchen of a fast food restaurant than an institution of higher learning.

The Second Prong: You make college so insanely un-

affordable that only the wealthiest students from the wealthiest of families can afford to go to the school debt free. Younger people may not know that for much of the twentieth century many universities in the United States were free—including the California state and CUNY systems—you could establish residency in six months and go to Berkeley for free, or at very low cost. When I was an undergraduate student in the mid to late 1970s, tuition at Temple University was around \$700 a year. Today, tuition is nearly \$15,000 a year. Tuitions have increased, using California as an example again, over 2000 percent since the 1970s. 2000 percent! This is the most directly dangerous situation for our students: pulling them into crippling debt that will follow them to the grave.

Another dangerous aspect of what is happening can be found in the shady partnership that has formed between the lending institutions and the financial aid departments of universities. This is an unholy alliance. I have had students in my classes who work for financial aid offices. They tell me that they are trained *not* to say “This is what you need to borrow,” but to say “This is what you can get,” and to always entice students with the highest possible number. There have been plenty of kick-back scandals between colleges and lenders—and I’m sure there is plenty still-undiscovered shady business going on. So, tuition costs are out of control because of administrative, executive and coach salaries, and the loan numbers keep growing, risking a life of indebtedness for most of our students. Further, there is absolutely no incentive on the part of this corporatized university to care.

The propaganda machine here has been powerful. Students, through the beliefs of their parents, their K-12 teachers, their high school counselors, are convinced by constant repetition that they have to go to college to have a promising, middle-class life. They are convinced that tuition debt is “worth it”—and learn too late that it will indenture them. Let’s be clear: this is not the fault of the parents, K-12 teachers, or counselors. This is an intentional message that has been repeated year in and year out that aims to convince us all about the essential quality of a college education.

• • •
So, there you have it.

Within one generation, in five easy steps, not only have the scholars and intellectuals of the country been silenced and nearly wiped out, but the entire institution has been hijacked, and recreated as a machine through which future generations will all be impoverished, indebted, and silenced. Now, low-wage, migrant professors teach repetitive courses they did not design to students who travel through

on a kind of conveyor belt, only to be spit out, indebted and desperate, into a jobless economy. The only people immediately benefiting inside this system are the administrative class—whores to the corporatized colonizers, earning money in this system in order to oversee this travesty. But the most important thing to keep in mind is this: The real winners, the only people truly benefiting from the big-picture meltdown of the American university are those people who, in the 1960s, saw those vibrant college campuses as a threat to their established power. They are the same people now working feverishly to dismantle other social structures, everything from Medicare and Social Security to the Post Office. Looking at this wreckage of American academia, we have to acknowledge: They have won.

But . . . these are victors who will never declare victory. The carefully-maintained capitalist illusion of the “university education” still benefits them. Never, ever, admit that the university is dead. No, no. Quite the opposite. Instead, continue to insist that the university is the only way to gain a successful, middle-class life. Say that the university is mandatory for happiness in adulthood. All the while, maintain this low-wage precariate class of edu-migrants, continually mis-educate and indebt students to ensure docility, pimp the institution out to corporate interests. It’s a win-win for those right wingers. They’ve crippled those in the country who would push back against them and have so carefully and cleverly hijacked the educational institutions that they can now be turned into part of the neoliberal/neocon machinery, further benefiting the right-wing agenda.

So now what?

This ruination has taken about a generation. Will we be able to undo this damage? Can we force refunding of our public educational system? Can we professionalize faculty, drive out the administrative glut and corporate hijackers? Can we provide free or low-cost tuition and high-quality education to our students in a way that does not focus only on job training, but on high-level personal and intellectual development? I believe we can. But only if we understand this as a big picture issue and refuse to allow those in government, or those corporate-owned media mouthpieces, to divide and conquer us further. This ruinous rampage is part of the much larger attack on progressive values, on the institutions of social good. The battle isn’t only to reclaim the professoriate, to wipe out student debt, or to raise educational outcomes, although each of those goals deserve to be fought for. But we will win a Pyrrhic victory at best unless we understand the nature of the larger war and fight back in a much, much bigger way to reclaim the country’s values for the betterment of our citizens. (A)

The Summer in Dance



MEREDITH BENJAMIN

While summer may not be high season for dance in New York, it does bring us a wealth of opportunities to see dance outdoors, as well as visits from world-renowned international companies. Below, some highlights from the summer in dance:

The Choreographer as Sisyphus

The program notes for Gallim Dance's "Sit, Kneel, Stand," reference a quote from Camus: "One must imagine Sisyphus happy." Andrea Miller, Gallim's founder and choreographer, addressed Camus's challenge by imagining the

interminable Sisyphean task as that of the choreographer, to hilarious effect.

As the audience filtered in, Troy Ogilvie writhed, blank-faced, through a series of disjointed movements along the front of the stage, hopping up onto the stage as the curtain rose. The six dancers she joined were dressed in shorts or skirts and boxy, cropped tops, which hung about their bodies. In the upper left corner of the stage was a sculpture-like pile of white folding chairs.

The piece quite literally announced its comic intention, as Francesa Romo strode onto the stage making exaggerated presentation-like movements and yelled, in a high-pitched

Above: Beth Gill's *Electric Midwife* at South Street Seaport. JULIETA CERVANTES

ce: "This is how we gonna start!" After her exit, a section straightforward dancing to the sounds of birds tweeting provided a stark contrast to the overblown physical comedy, a pattern that would recur throughout.

That pile of chairs took on life as Jonathan Royse Windham began to fret, in sometimes-audible mumblings, about Arika Yamada and the chairs upon which she was dancing. His body seemed hardly under his control, as he wound himself in extreme positions after trying to execute simple movements or struggling to control his leg after it flew up at an extreme angle. When he managed, after much struggle and muttering, to shift a chair, allowing Yamada to continue her dance uninterrupted, Windham broke into ecstatic celebration: think of a gymnast sticking-the-landing.

Much to his relief, after Yamada was carried off by Milvie, Windham joined Mario Bermudez Gil and Dan Irlczak, and attempted to keep up with their complex choreography. His exaggerated awkwardness foregrounded the way in which the movement in the piece often seemed to originate externally. It were as if the dancers were removed from their bodies, exploring, observing, and occasionally attempting to control what happened there.

Assuming the role of choreographer, Romo returned her high-voiced persona, and attempted to make her dancer, Gil, achieve the shapes and effects she desired. Her frustration only increased as they continued, and his large body became the Sisyphean boulder in relation to her tiny frame. Like Windham, Romo possesses an incredible

comedic instinct, with zany facial expressions to match. The counterpoint to her increasingly hysterical frustration was once again Yamada, who danced with an unflappable, oblivious fluidity, while Romo lamented her inability to control or even touch her: "Lady! Stop lady! ...Wrong way lady!"

At times, Romo herself was the one dancing, using her dancer or his limbs, as little more than a prop. The adjustments she made to Gil echoed the way that the dancers adjusted or manipulated each other throughout the piece: sometimes mechanically, sometimes tenderly. What is the choreographer's role in relation to the movement that continues outside of, and impervious to, her efforts?

How does one end a piece about interminability? Miller answered this conundrum with a playful, shrieking game of tag. Tag of course, has no definite end—it always begins again when a new player is deemed "it"—and yet this detracts not at all from the pleasure involved. The dancers' game of tag also returned to the idea of the transfer of movement from one body to another, which had been so central to the piece. Here, perhaps, was a suggestion of how Sisyphus might be happy.

River to River Festival

The River to River Festival does not simply transpose the experience of seeing dance in a theatre to an outdoor venue, but asks choreographers to imagine, or re-imagine, their works in a delightful variety of unlikely spaces around Lower Manhattan. Placing dance in these contexts brings



he works into direct contact with the city: offhand comments from unwitting passersby, the sounds of traffic, and commentary from a tour guide on a Circle Line cruise are not simply distractions, but part of the performance.

I got off the subway at Wall Street on a sunny Thursday afternoon, looking around for evidence of where Maria Hassabi's *SHOW* might be happening. The streets and sidewalks were filled with the crush of workers and tourists that is the Financial District, and then suddenly, two women, their gazes locked, sunk down to the sidewalk in a low, intertwined crouch. These slight performers, dwarfed by the buildings around them, seemed to draw in and focus the dispersed energy of the street as their performance materialized.

Hassabi and Hristoula Harakas were clad in skinny gray jeans and gray sleeveless tops, accentuating the grayness of the space around them: cobblestone, concrete, and somber buildings. With painstaking control, they moved in and out of positions—standing, lying down, crouching—at a glacial pace, their taut, muscular limbs visibly engaged. The two remained in close, even tense, engagement with each other, never straying more than inches apart, even as their gazes eventually turned outwards.

Staring out at the audience has become a contemporary dance cliché, but in this setting, it took on a stronger valence: there were potential audience members on all sides of the dancers, complicating the power dynamic between performer and audience. The audience was not a single entity that could be directly addressed.

The backdrop made for a strange juxtaposition: this intimate, focused dance took place in front of the New York Stock Exchange, which was draped with a gigantic American flag. I couldn't help but think of Occupy Wall Street and the imagery of which included, after all, a dancer atop Wall Street's bull) as these dancers literally occupied this symbolic stretch of sidewalk. I overheard a bit of conversation between businessmen in which one asked another, "What's the yield?" as he swerved to avoid the performers. There were a few people who sat and watched the piece in its entirety, but most stopped only for a few minutes, intrigued. There is real value in this casual availability of performance: it demands little of its audience, but tempts them with the promise of much more if they do choose to engage, however briefly.

After a final standing pose, the two dancers turned and walked off down the street, as if merging into the flow of pedestrian traffic. They had emerged out of this hubbub, and concluded by returning to it. The yield? Impossible to quantify, but I left feeling stirred by this fleeting materialization of a performance within the gray chaos.

While *SHOW* was very much of the streets, Beth Gill's *Electric Midwife* took place on the very edge of Manhattan. Pier 15, jutting out into the Hudson River from the South Street Seaport, provides an incredible setting, with the Brooklyn Bridge and the Brooklyn Heights skyline as the backdrop. While this venue drew a more intentional audience than *SHOW*—a large crowd gathered before the performance—it also had its incidental observers: I heard a child playing on the level above ask "What is that?" and a Circle Line tour operator point out the "modern dance" to his passengers.

The six dancers, all women, entered in pairs, dressed in solid-colored layered pants and tops and white sneakers. Upon arrival, each pair assumed a different pose, forming a tableau. The only sound was the water all around us. Eventually, two of the dancers turned to each other and lifted their arms in unison, as if holding opposite ends of the same string. This initiated the symmetrical movement that would characterize the entire piece, the dancers mirroring their partners on the opposite side of the stage. Dancers mirroring one another is one of the most basic components of classical ballet choreography, and yet what a different valence it took on in this context! The neat grid the performers danced upon accentuated the geometric qualities of the structure.

I'm not sure at what point I became aware of the score (by Jon Moniaci), but I suddenly realized that the low-frequency sounds were not the rumbling of airplanes overhead, but were coming from the speakers. As the score eventually intensified, so did the dancing, becoming quicker, bigger, taking up more space, and advancing all the way to the front of the "stage" for the first time. Swinging—of limbs and bodies in all directions—became the dominant motif.

In the final section, the dancers began to move off the grid that formed their stage, as the score became more melodious and the choreography involved more contact between the dancers: a hand resting on a shoulder, a head leaning on a standing leg. Two of the dancers periodically ran to the side, leaning out over the water as they hit the pier's railing—literally testing the boundaries of the performance space—and then calmly walked back to the center. With this expansion beyond the grid, there was also less focus on the creation lines and angles, as movements became more fluid.

As dusk approached, the dancers left the stage, two-by-two as they had entered. They descended the steps toward the water and disappeared to a level below, leaving us looking at the bright moon over the Brooklyn horizon.

Paris Opera Ballet's Giselle

The Paris Opera Ballet's production of *Giselle* was the highlight of their first New York appearance in sixteen years, as part of the Lincoln Center Festival. The scenery for the first act (by Alexandre Benois of the Ballets Russes) looked like cut-outs from a richly-illustrated storybook. As the action began with the entrance of the village peasants, the strength of the corps de ballet was immediately evident—the choreography was characterized by ease and grace. Throughout the ranks of the company, I was enthralled by the women's beautiful arches and the remarkable way they articulated their feet in each step and jump.

Dorothée Gilbert, as Giselle, was technically stunning without being overtly showy. Her exquisite dancing added to, rather than distracted from, her portrayal of Giselle as a radiant, fun-loving young village woman. Albrecht, danced by Josua Hoffalt, did not have much dancing in the first act, but what we did see—long, elegant lines and jumps in which his legs beat with exquisite clarity—left me eager for his second act solos.

As Giselle begins to realize that her supposed lover is in fact, nobility, and engaged to one of his own class, there are two instances which might be called “freeze frames.” As everyone on the stage remains frozen in their place, Giselle breaks off, conveying to us the progression of her so-called “madness.” These scenes make it clear that her consciousness is no longer operating on the same level as those around her. Time is slowing down for her, and she is having difficulty perceiving herself as part of world as others see it. After Giselle collapses into Albrecht's arms at the close of the mad scene, the gravity of his actions dawn on him for the first time, as he looks around at a sea of unsympathetic faces.

The second act opens with a group of men in the forest, soon scared away by the entrance of a few threatening *wilis*—spirits of women who died before their wedding day. As they forcefully announced their presence, furiously echoing the pantomimed motion for dancing from the first act, it is clear that these are no mere white wisps, but spirits to contend with.

As the corps de ballet of *wilis* enters en masse, led by their queen Myrtha, their shared training at the Paris Opera Ballet School shines through in their perfect synchronicity and symmetry—each arabesque is the same



height and shape as the one behind it. All of the women, from Gilbert through the corps, evoked the image of the Romantic ballerina to perfection: the slope of the shoulders, the forward lilt of the torso, and the demure position of the head. In their uniformity, they are at once ethereal and terrifying.

Gilbert had a number of breathtaking moments in this act, from the way she carried her arms, to more virtuoso effects like lightning fast bourrées and seemingly weightless jumps. Hoffalt was an impeccable partner, invisibly assisting Gilbert as she floated in and out of his arms. He was stoic during an impressive series of *entrechat sixes* (jumps in which the legs beat three times) and truly looked as if he were dancing for this life against exhaustion. In their variations and *pas de deux*, Gilbert and Hoffalt were so thrilling that the frequent applause was almost distracting, but the two never strayed from their intimate mood: she, resigned and yet determined to save him; he, desperate in his inability to hold on to the love he acknowledged too late. Ⓐ

Above: Dorothée Gilbert as Giselle.

AELLA ¡La Casa Por la Ventana!

Wednesday October 24th, 2012



Cúrate en Salud con picadera caribeña, mojitos y salsa. Visítanos en el 5114 de 6:30pm en adelante. Nurse yourself back to health with Caribbean snacks, Rum Mojitos and Salsa music. **Visit us at Room 5414** from 6:30pm and on.

Meet us, join us & create new events with us!

After our Open-house, our next meetings/events will occur on November 28th and December 12th at 6:30 pm in Room 5414. Please, come and join us!

Contact us:

Room Number: 5486 (5th floor) Graduate Center

Telephone number: (212) 817-7876

Email: aella.gradcenter@gmail.com

Photo by: Giovanni Savino, Graphic Design: Realengo Studio.

Summer Theatre in NYC

The NY International Fringe Festival and the Public's Mobile Unit *Richard III*

- ▶ *Pulp Shakespeare*. Written by Ben Tallen, Aaron Greer, Brian Watson-Jones, and Jordan Monsell (with contributions from Brian Weiss and members of the Pulp Bard Wiki). Directed by Jordan Monsell. At FringeNYC. 14 August 2012.
- ▶ *Richard III*. Written by William Shakespeare. Directed by Amanda Dehnert. At the Public Theater. 17 August 2012.
- ▶ *Independents*. Book by Marina Keegan. Music by Stephen Feigenbaum. Lyrics by Mark Sonnenblick. Directed by Charlie Polinger. At FringeNYC. 20 August 2012.
- ▶ *BANG! The Curse of John Wilkes Booth*. Written and Performed by Scott Baker. Directed by Richard Harden. At FringeNYC. 21 August 2012.
- ▶ *Being Becoming*. Malini Srinivasan and Dancers. Choreographed by Malini Srinivasan. At FringeNYC. 23 August 2012.

DAN VENNING

Although the theatrical season is usually said to go from September to May (much like the academic year), there is plenty of theatre available in New York during the tourist-heavy summer season. Broadway theatres remain open, and two annual New York theatre offerings attract aficionados from near and far. One is the New York International Fringe Festival, now entering its sixteenth season. The Fringe presents around 2000 performances over the span of sixteen days: this year it featured 187 shows at nineteen off-off Broadway venues across the city. The shows run almost constantly for these two weeks: as soon as one show is done, the next show starts setting up for its performance in the same space. The Fringe bills itself as the “largest multi-arts festival in North America,” and it certainly is, at least in terms of its number of productions. It is barely possible to get more than a small taste of each year’s festival, and this summer I saw four productions at the Fringe. Another annual theatre tradition is Shakespeare in the summer, which includes a number of participating organizations such as Shakespeare in the Park, the New York Classical Theatre, and others. The Public Theater, a staple of the summer festival, was founded as the New York Shakespeare Workshop in 1956, when Joseph Papp began producing plays with the express purpose of providing free Shakespearean productions for the masses. Starting in 1957, Papp also used the

“Mobile Theater,” a flatbed truck with which he toured Shakespeare to the outer boroughs to bring theatre to those with less access to the arts. The Mobile Theater lasted only into the mid-1960s, but it was brought back two years ago and I also saw the Public’s production of *Richard III*, staged for this newly-revived “Mobile Unit,” based on Papp’s original impulse for free Shakespeare for the public.

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The first show I saw at the Fringe was, in fact, Shakespearean in style, language, and theme, but definitely not written by Shakespeare. *Pulp Shakespeare*, which won awards in Los Angeles in 2011 when it was first presented, is, as its director and coauthor Jordan Monsell notes in the program, a sort of theatrical mashup. The plot is that of Quentin Tarantino’s 1994 film *Pulp Fiction*, but the play is set in Elizabethan England, and written in Shakespearean style. This central idea is wickedly clever and works throughout, although many of the jokes require a thorough knowledge of Tarantino’s film. Early on in the film, Vincent Vega (John Travolta) and Jules Winfield (Samuel L. Jackson) have a discussion about the Quarter Pounder with Cheese in France; in *Pulp Shakespeare* this becomes a conversation between Vincent de la Vega (Aaron Lyons) and Julius Winfield (Dan White) that begins with “knowest you not the French name for a cottage pie?” These parallels are executed aptly throughout the show: in the film, Vincent and Mia Wallace (Uma Thurman) go to a 1950s themed restaurant; in *Pulp Shakespeare* Vincent and Lady Mia (Hannah Beck) go to an overpriced restaurant where their waiter, affecting a hunchback, is doing a Richard III impression. The boxer Butch Coolidge (Bruce Willis) becomes the knight Sir “Butch” Coolidge (Christian Levitano), who fails to throw a jousting match as he had promised the criminal Lord Marcellus Wallace (Ving Rhames in the film; here Nathaniel Freeman). Such parallels abound throughout the entire show. The authors (Monsell, Ben Tallen, Aaron Greer, and Brian Watson-Jones) clearly worked hard to make sure each scene, character, and moment of dialogue both related to Tarantino’s original and simultaneously worked in the Shakespearean idiom.

Pulp Shakespeare works well because Tarantino’s film is indeed quite Shakespearean in style (excepting the fact that Shakespeare never wrote scenes outside of chronologi-



: Ron Cephas Jones in *Richard III*. JOAN MARCUS.

cal sequence, as Tarantino does throughout *Pulp Fiction*). Both Tarantino's film and Shakespeare's plays are filled with philosophical dialogues between well-rounded characters having conversations that are not necessarily about the action at hand. In both Shakespeare's dramas and *Pulp Fiction*, these conversations can lead swiftly to brutal and exciting scenes of violence (and the actors show how a sword in the hand of an Elizabethan hitman can be just as scary as a handgun three centuries later). For seeing and understanding this parallel, and communicating it so clearly to the audience, the authors deserve great praise. Similarly, Shakespeare's plays were originally performed without significant set pieces, and *Pulp Shakespeare* is very well-suited to the Fringe: a couple of chairs, a moveable table, and an upstage piano are more than enough to signify every setting in the show.

But beyond the fact that the idea works so perfectly, *Pulp Shakespeare* is a success because it is simply great theatre. Monsell's direction is spot-on, the acting is universally strong (although special praise goes to Levitano, who does a spectacularly hilarious impression of the wide-eyed Wilis in the film, and Beck, whose Mia Wallace was every bit as luminous as Thurman's character in the film, even in a long Elizabethan gown). Kelly Bailey (who won an overall FringeNYC award for her designs) created clever, beautifully made costumes, and both Aaron Lyons' fight direction and Stephanie Pease's choreography were terrific (the Elizabethan rendition of Vincent and Mia's participation in a dance competition was one of the most hilarious moments in the show). The show has received almost universal praise and has been well-deservedly extended into the FringeNYC Encore in September. Nevertheless, I thought it was a questionable idea for the creators to preserve the racial identities present in Tarantino's film so precisely (Marcellus Wallace, Jules, and the snitch Marvin are played by black actors both in the film and *Pulp Shakespeare*, while every other major character is white). This is clearly a choice that allows the audience to more quickly identify the characters, but it is not in line with the world created by the play. It means something for the crime lord Marcellus Wallace to be a black man married to a white television actress, or for the hitmen, clearly both friends and colleagues, to come from different ethnic backgrounds in the twentieth-century film. Skin color simply signified differently in the sixteenth century. Make no mistake—I certainly don't object to colorblind casting in this show or Shakespearean performance in general. But by preserving the racial casting of Tarantino's film so precisely, instead of mixing it up somehow, Monsell *calls attention* to the race of individual actors/characters in a way that doesn't make sense within

the established world of *Pulp Shakespeare*.

The Public Theater's production of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, as part of their revived "Mobile Unit," also uses non-traditional casting, but here in a clearly well-thought out manner. Shakespeare's Richard of Gloucester was played by Ron Cephas Jones, a black actor who is extremely gifted in Shakespearean roles; the nine-actor cast (every actor other than Jones and Lynn Hawley, who played Queen Elizabeth, Edward IV's wife, played multiple roles) was made up of actors from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. This was clearly a choice meant to appeal to the diverse audiences to which the mobile show toured, including free performances for audiences in prisons, homeless shelters, centers for the elderly, and other community venues throughout the five boroughs of New York. Indeed, the charismatic Cephas Jones clearly demonstrates why Shakespeare's Richard, a cripple and outcast, declares in his opening monologue that "since I cannot prove a lover / ... / I am determined to prove a villain." Resentful of those around him with more love and privilege, Richard resorts to violence, steeping himself in blood. It is easy to see why, as we were told in a pre-show discussion, one inmate who saw the show said afterwards, "I am Richard."

Amanda Dehnert's production is staged simply, in the round, with few set pieces or props. One of the striking set elements was a cloth tarp depicting the family trees of the Lancasters and Yorks who had taken part in the Wars of the Roses from 1455-85. In an added prologue, an actor explained that history, painting over the names of the deceased kings and lords with red paint. As Richard completes his bloody ascent from Duke of Gloucester to King of England, more red paint is added to that tarp, nearly covering it. Richard is one of Shakespeare's greatest villains. Like Macbeth, he is ambitious, but unlike Shakespeare's Scotsman, who seems to accidentally get carried away by his violent acts, Richard genuinely enjoys murder. For example, towards the end of the play Richard decides he must dispose of his wife Queen Anne (Michelle Beck), whose husband he had murdered before the play begins, in order to marry his own niece Elizabeth (Miriam A. Hyman), the daughter of his dead brother King Edward IV (Kevin Kelly). In the play's second scene, Richard woos Anne in front of the corpse of her father-in-law, King Henry VI (and at the successful close of this wooing, Cephas Jones gives the audience a gleeful thumbs up as he says "Was ever woman in this humour woo'd? / Was ever woman in this humour won? / I'll have her, but I will not keep her long"). In Dehnert's staging, when Richard tells an associate to "give out / That Anne, my Queen, is sick and like to die," he



the Public Theater is indeed living up to its original mission from over a half-century ago.

• • •
The second Fringe show I saw, *Independents*, is a musical, with music by Stephen Feigenbaum, lyrics by Mark Sonnenblick, and a book by Marina Keegan. The show has received some pre-production press because the twenty-two-year-old Keegan died in a car crash five days after graduating

does this while his wife is onstage, clearly getting a perverse satisfaction out of seeing his wife's helpless reaction to the knowledge of her own impending murder on her husband's orders.

Cephas Jones is magnetic, and perhaps even better is Suzanne Bertish as the venom-filled Queen Margaret of Anjou, whose scene with Hyman as Queen Elizabeth was easily the most compelling in the show. The scenes of violence are staged superbly by fight director Thomas Schall. Nevertheless, many parts of the show, which is cut to ninety minutes with no intermission, still drags. In fact, in several sections the text could certainly have been streamlined even further. Some of the problems may be due to uneven acting from the supporting roles, some of whom used bizarre accents for no apparent reason. Moreover, while the doubling is exciting and reminds the audience of the theatricality of the event, at times it is unclear as to precisely which character is onstage. Still, I am very glad to have been able to see the Mobile Shakespeare Unit production, even if it is not really meant to have been staged at the Public Theater itself. The show would have done Joseph Papp proud: Dehnert's production of *Richard III* is both wonderful for those who don't get to see much theatre and also quite exciting for those of us who, like me, *do* get to see a lot. It is a vital Shakespearean production, staged simply and elegantly, with a masterful performance by Cephas Jones. With productions like the Mobile Unit's *Richard III*,

from Yale University in May. Shortly thereafter, her final column for the *Yale Daily News*, "The Opposite of Loneliness," an engaging meditation on the potential of youth, went viral on the internet. *Independents* was first developed while Keegan was an undergraduate, and was revised by her collaborators for performance at the Fringe following her death.

The musical has an intriguing premise: the twenty-something Liam (Jacob Roa) owns a Revolutionary War-era tall ship, where he lives with his best friend Jaimy (Kevin Hoffman), girlfriend Isabel (Summer Broyhill), and a ragtag group of twenty-something drifters. They sail around New England putting on half-assed Revolutionary War reenactments to mask the fact that they sell marijuana wherever they dock. Without clearly defined plans for the future, they subsist on booze, weed, music, and love. When their new intern, Carl (Corey Desjardins) arrives, the crew gets infected by Carl's optimism and his love for historical reenactment and theatre. But all this is thrown into chaos by the return of their compatriot Chris (Chris Burke), who is deeply in debt to unseen dangerous drug distributors.

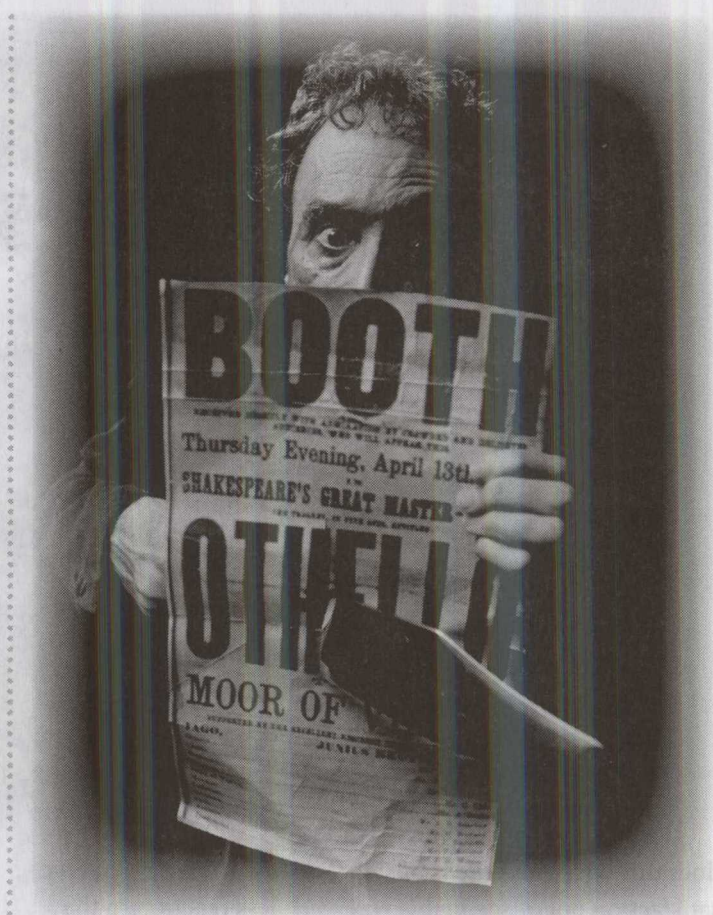
Independents has wonderful faux-folk rock music and lyrics, most reminiscent of the band The Decemberists. While there are many musicals in a variety of popular rock styles (think of the recent emo musical *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*), *Independents* fills a major gap in American musical theatre. Its hipster folk songs are genuinely terrific:

balladic paeans to fleeting youth, tongue-in-cheek comic numbers (one of the highlights is a song about how the original crew of the ship didn't actually fight in the Revolutionary War but spent the time fishing off the coast of Nova Scotia), a witty love duet between Liam and Grace (Lilli Cooper)—as Liam's relationship with Isabel disintegrates (as young love does)—and a terrific torch song for Grace, too.

Independents won one of the four "Best Overall" awards for this year's Fringe, and was also extended into the Fringe Encores. While the music and lyrics are great, and the show deserves much of the praise it has received (the performances are all solid, as the design and Charlie Pollinger's direction), sadly, I felt that the Keegan's book is ultimately a mess, albeit a beautiful one. Some of the characters don't feel fully realized and several plot developments seem somewhat forced. *Independents* is clearly the first work of a young author who had great potential: Keegan was set to begin working at *The New Yorker* in June. The show lacks an 11 o'clock number (a showstopping musical number near the end), instead including a poetic spoken monologue given by a character who has just died. While well-written, this speech is misplaced—it might fit in a straight play, but *Independents* needs a strong, memorable musical number near its conclusion, so that it can go out with a bang, not a whimper. Additionally, Keegan was clearly very influenced by the style of Eugene O'Neill: his nautical plays, the entrance of characters who transform everything, if only briefly, as in *The Iceman Cometh*. It is deeply sad that Keegan didn't live longer, couldn't further develop her own voice, write more plays, or be part of revising this one. Indeed, some of the issues with the book may come from the fact that others had to revise for her: had she lived, *Independents* might have been an even stronger finished project. Keegan's tragedy is highlighted in the show's most heartbreakingly optimistic lyric: "They say the light goes out on everybody / If it does, I'm not afraid / You and I, we're not just anybody / We're not everybody, we don't fade." If Keegan had had more time, she certainly would have made a significant mark upon the theatrical world.

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It is a crapshoot attending Fringe shows: not all are good. **BANG! The Curse of John Wilkes Booth** sounded exciting on the Fringe website: a solo performance containing vaudeville and magic and featuring, according to one advertisement "One Actor! One Twisted Shocker! Verse, Song, Magic, Sideshow Antics and Stand-up Comedy! Discover how your History book lied to you about Lincoln, Booth and just about everybody else. And yes, there's a mummy involved..." [sic]. Perhaps I should have been warned by



the haphazard capitalization and punctuation in this description. The first fifteen minutes of the show, which was written by its performer, Scott Baker, is the most painfully boring thing I have ever seen in the theatre. In this opening sequence, Baker gives a dramatic monologue (in horribly-written blank verse) from the perspective of Booth as he rehearses his impending assassination of Lincoln. The tone of the writing and performance is incomprehensible: I couldn't tell if it was supposed to be serious but wound up being laughable, or if it was supposed to be funny but didn't make me laugh. Either way, it fails. If I had not been seeing the show for review, I would have walked out within this first section.

The remainder of the ninety-minute piece is significantly better, although Baker's show might be better suited for a documentary special on The Conspiracy Channel (were such a television station to exist) than for the theatre. Baker expounds upon the myth that John Wilkes Booth may not have in fact died in Garrett's barn on April 26, 1865, with the body being misidentified, the government covering up Booth's escape, and Booth living out his life in hiding in Texas and Oklahoma. Baker is actually engaging when he speaks in his own voice, and the magic tricks he performs are genuinely clever bits of slight-of-hand. He is a charismatic enough performer that he can convince an audience

that this alternative history *may* be possible—and at least deserves to be examined in more depth (it's worth a Google Search or two). But Baker's writing is uninspired throughout. I'm not sure what Richard Harden did as a director, and worst of all it is unclear if the show has an overarching purpose. I was at least entertained for some portion of the show, but it still felt like an overall waste of an hour and a half.

Fringe shows are not just varied in quality, but also in style. The final Fringe show I saw, after the comic parody *Pulp Shakespeare*, the musical *Independents*, and the vaudeville-inspired solo performance *BANG! The Curse of John Wilkes Booth*, was *Being / Becoming*, a presentation of *Bharatanatyam*, a classical dance form from South India. The show, performed by three dancers (Malini Srinivasan, Kadhambari Sridhar, and Umesh Venkatesan), consists of an entrance procession followed by five dance pieces: "Dance," "Play," "Devotion," "Passion," and "Union." The dances are based on themes from classical Indian mythology. The majority of the dances were choreographed Srinivasan, who won a well-deserved Overall Fringe award for best choreography.

Bharatanatyam (sometimes transliterated in two words, *bharata natyam*) is a modern recreation of traditional temple dances and also descends from the dance-drama form known as *kathakali*, which is still taught and performed in the south Indian state of Kerala. The form requires precise articulation of various parts of the body as well as intense facial expressions, and is performed in colorful traditional Indian attire. Performances of *Bharatanatyam* are designed to evoke the many *rasa*—emotional "flavors" that can be experienced by the audience. *Being / Becoming* is a wonderful example of the *Bharatanatyam* form; it is a thoroughly beautiful theatrical performance that clearly demonstrates why theorists of the theatre, from Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht to Richard Schechner, have found Asian dance theatre so alluring. At the same time, there is something troublingly exoticizing about presenting such a show explicitly for a Western audience. Still, I was very glad to have seen this performance. The dancers were excellent, although I found that Srinivasan to be a better choreographer than dancer. She was not as compelling to watch as her fellow dancers Sridhar and Venkatesan, who were riveting in "Play" as the lovers Radha and Krishna (which ended with Venkatesan's simultaneously hilarious and extremely erotic miming of playing a flute) and "Union" as the gods Shiva and Parvati, the male and female halves of the androgynous Ardhanariswara. Venkatesan, who has been a dancer for twenty-one years, since the age of five,

is a genuine master of the form. Srinivasan's work and her company certainly deserve to be seen by a wider audience.

I only got to sample a tiny fraction of the theatre available in New York this summer. Yet what I did see was extremely diverse in both quality and theme, highlighting the wide variety of theatrical performance available in New York. Crucially, these five productions also demonstrated that theatre of high quality can be presented for very affordable prices. The Fringe shows all cost \$15 (in advance; \$18 at the door), as did tickets to *Richard III*. All in all, this summer made me even more optimistic about the state of theatre in New York, and also gave me a lot to look forward to in the coming 2012-13 theatrical season. **A**

BANG! The Curse of John Wilkes Booth. Written and Performed by Scott Baker. Directed by Richard Harden. Presented by The Drilling Company, NY, Hamilton Clancy, Producing Director. At the Gene Frankel Theatre. August 11, 17, 21, 22, and 25. Tickets: \$15-18.

Being / Becoming. Malini Srinivasan and Dancers. Choreography by Malini Srinivasan, Sri C. V. Chandrasekhar, Leela Samson, and Umesh Venkatesan. Directed by Josh Penzell. Lighting by David Ullman. Lighting by David Ullman. Featuring Kadhambari Sridhar, Malini Srinivasan, and Umesh Venkatesan. At the White Box at 440 Studios. August 11, 17, 19, 21, and 23. Tickets: \$15-18.

Independents. Book by Marina Keegan. Music by Stephen Feigenbaum. Lyrics by Mark Sonnenblick. Directed by Charlie Polinger. Musical Direction, Arrangements, and Orchestrations by Ben Wexler. Sets by Brian Dudkiewicz. Costumes by Isabelle Simone. Lighting by Gary Sloatskiy. Sound by Emily Auciello. Props by Jillian Bartels. Stage Management by Michael Block. Featuring: Summer Bryohill, Chris Burke, Lilli Cooper, Corey Desjardins, Kevin Hoffman, Emily Jenda, Jacob Roa, Tom Sanchez, Ethan Slater, and Adam Weppeler. At Theatre 80. August 11, 15, 20, 23, and 25. Tickets: \$15-18. Extended to FringeNYC Encore Series at the SoHo Playhouse and the Huron Club, Fridays Sept. 7 and 21 at 7pm, Sat. Sept. 8 at 5pm, Tuesdays Sept. 11 and 18 at 8pm, Fri. Sept. 14 at 9pm. Tickets: \$18.

Pulp Shakespeare. Presented by Her Majesty's Secret Players and the New York International Fringe Festival. Written by Ben Tallen, Aaron Greer, Brian Watson-Jones, and Jordan Monsell (with contributions from Brian Weiss and members of the Pulp Bard Wiki). Directed by Jordan Monsell. Lighting by Philip Waller. Sound by Brian Weiss. Costumes by Kelly Bailey. Musical Arrangements by Todd Monsell and Bill Weiss. Fight Direction by Aaron Lyons. Dance Choreography by Stephanie Pease. Stage Management by Philip Waller and Dan Walters. Featuring: Hannah Beck, Curtis D. Davis, Nathaniel Freeman, John Klopping, David Lautman, Christian Levatino, Aaron Lyons, Jordan Monsell, Juan Perez, Liza de Weerd, Brian Weiss, Dan White, and Justine Woodford. At the Cherry Lane Theatre. August 12, 14, 19, 23, and 24. Tickets: \$15-18. Extended to FringeNYC Encore Series at the SoHo Playhouse and the Huron Club, Weds. Sept. 19 at 8pm, Thurs. Sept. 20 at 9pm, Sat. Sept. 22 at 3pm, Mon. Sept. 24 at 8pm, Weds. Sept. 26 at 8pm. Tickets: \$18.

Richard III. Written by William Shakespeare. Directed by Amanda Dehnert. Set and Costumes by Linda Roethke. Music by Amanda Dehnert. Fight Direction by Thomas Schall. Stage Management by Anne McPherson. Featuring: Michelle Beck, Suzanne Bertish, Keith Eric Chappelle, Michael Crane, Lynn Hawley, Alex Hernandez, Miriam A. Hyman, Ron Cephas Jones, and Kevin Kelly. The Public Theater's Mobile Shakespeare Unit. At the Public Theater. August 6—25. Tickets: \$15.

What the DSC Does For You

ANNE DONLON

Recent Initiatives

For a second year, the Doctoral Students' Council provided lunch and hosted an open house for incoming students at the New Student Orientation, on August 23.

New and returning students are welcome to stop by the DSC office during Steering members' office hours, which are posted on the DSC website. Feel free to swing through anytime to chat, ask a question, pass on some information, or buy some discounted movie tickets.

Monique Whitaker, Officer for Health & Wellness, invites students to a DSC Monday Coffee Break during her office hours, Mondays from 2:00pm-4:00pm. Students can drop by the DSC office in Room 5495 to relax and have coffee or tea.

During the Graduate Center's July blood drive, members of the DSC leadership tabled in the lobby, distributing copies of the DSC's resolution to move blood drives off-campus until the FDA lifts the ban on blood donations from men who have had sex with men. The full text of the resolution can be found on the DSC website (cunydisc.org/resolutions), and please see the article about it in this issue of the *Advocate*. We also collected signatures on a petition to Kathleen Sibelius, Secretary for Health and Human Services, to invest in the research necessary to change the policy. The petition can be found on the Gay Men's Health Crisis website.

The DSC has also undertaken an initiative for gender neutral bathrooms to be established at the Gradu-

ate Center. The DSC plenary passed a resolution in support of gender neutral bathrooms last semester. Best practices for gender neutral bathrooms are single occupancy bathrooms with ceiling-to-floor walls, which provides a safe space where all members of the community can comfortably and safely use the bathroom. Such facilities could directly benefit those who are gender non-conforming, transgender, people who require wheelchair access or have other accessibility concerns, as well as parents with children of other genders.

You may have seen the email that IT recently sent, announcing that they're collecting data on student printing (referred to in the email as a "quota"). Printing is paid for with Student Tech Fee money, the distribution of which is determined by the Student Tech Fee Committee, where the majority of the members are student representatives. Evan Misshula, the DSC's Officer for Library & Technology, would like to hear your concerns, any issues, or questions regarding printing. You can contact him at library@cunydisc.org.

There will also be opportunity for discussion of this and other IT topics, at our September plenary, where the guest will be Robert Campbell, Vice-President for Information Technology. All students are welcome to attend.

Services and Affiliates

The DSC awards grants to support cultural events, conferences, performances, professional development activities, publications, seminars, and other projects organized by students. The first round of grant applications should be received no later than

September 20. The Grants Committee will meet October 4, November 1, and December 3.

If you don't already have an account on the DSC website, you may want to set one up to enter the locker lottery, reserve a room for meeting, or sign up for legal consultations with a lawyer.

The DSC continues to support and fund about forty-five chartered organizations, as well as The Adjunct Project, The *GC Advocate*, the student-run digital medium OpenCUNY, and the Fundraising and Alumni Commission (FAC). If you're looking to collaborate with fellow students in the new school year, you can find the current list of chartered orgs and sign the electronic rosters of organizations that interest you on the DSC website. If you don't see the kind of organization you're looking for, you can also find information on how to charter an organization on the website.

The DSC also recognizes Program Student Organizations. If students in your program would like to organize a PSA, they can consult the resources on the website, and email the DSC Steering Committee with questions.

Upcoming Dates

DSC Plenary meetings are open to members of the GC and the public to attend. They will take place at 6pm on the following Fridays in 5414:

- September 21,
- October 26,
- November 16, and
- December 14.

The first DSC party will take place at 8pm on October 26 in 5409 and 5414. All Graduate Center students are invited.


About the DSC

DSC is the elected body of students that makes policy, distributes the student fee monies, and represents students concerns to the administration. Every program is entitled to have program representatives, and being represented on the DSC entitles them to their program's allocation of student fees. In addition to program representatives, there are at-large representatives that are elected from the student body. From these program and at-large representatives, the plenary elects three co-chairs, a

University Student Senate delegate, a University Faculty Senate Liaison, and six at-large Steering Officers in several domains: funding, governance and membership, outreach, health & wellness, student life & services, and library & technology.

DSC representatives should be soliciting students' views on items to be discussed at meetings (detailed in the agenda that is sent out at least a week ahead of the meeting, per New York State Open Meetings Law), issues that the DSC should address, and they should also be reporting back to constituents about what actions

are taken, and what is discussed at plenary meetings. If your program is not represented and you'd like to learn how to establish representation, email membership@cunydisc.org.

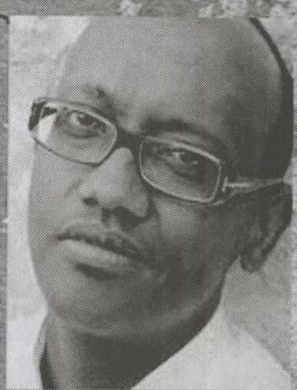
Please contact the DSC with ideas, grievances, and questions. Steering Officers' office hours are posted online, and take place in the DSC hallways on the fifth floor, in Room 5495. You can also stop by and buy discounted movie tickets (\$6.00 for Loews/AMC). You can also get in touch by email (dsc@cunydisc.org), and follow us on Facebook (facebook.com/cunydisc) and Twitter ([@cunydisc](https://twitter.com/cunydisc)). 

The Salon: Writing War A Reading and Discussion Guest Curated by WARSCAPES a magazine of literature, art & politics

Nadifa Mohamed



Abdourahman Waberi



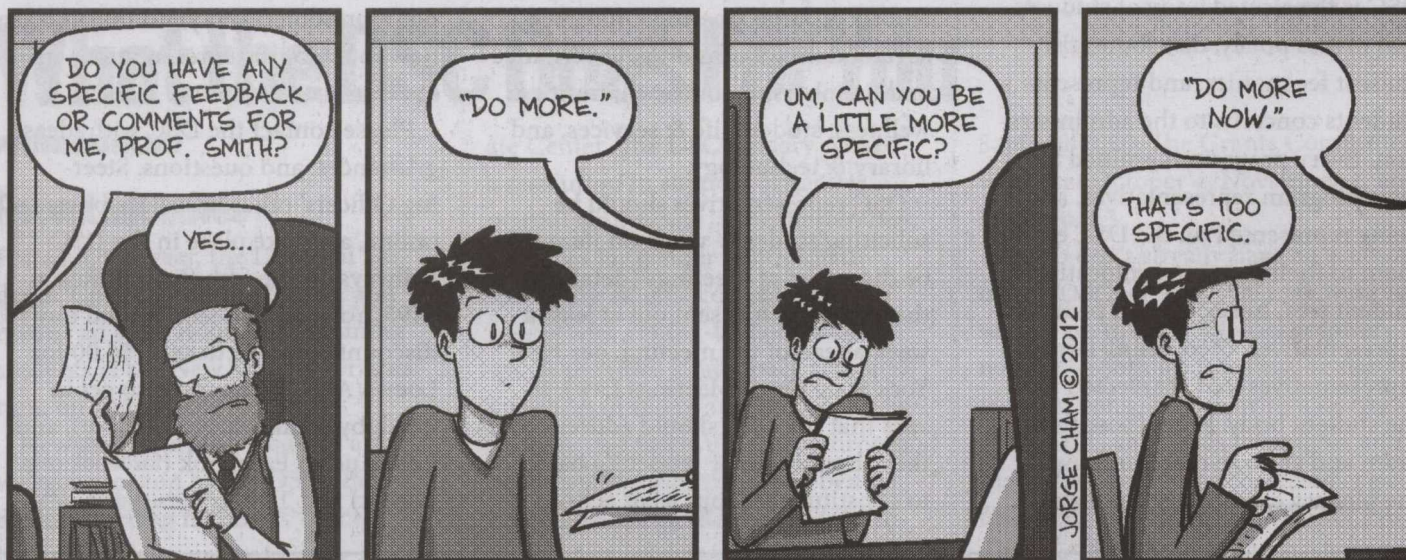
Christian Parenti



Reading
Book Signing
Panel Discussion

Sept 26, 7:00PM at BookCourt, 163 Court Street, Brooklyn
RSVP: the.salon.nyc@gmail.com

The Salon is hosted by Chiwoniso Kaitano-Price & Martin Rowe
Visit Warscapes at www.warscapes.com

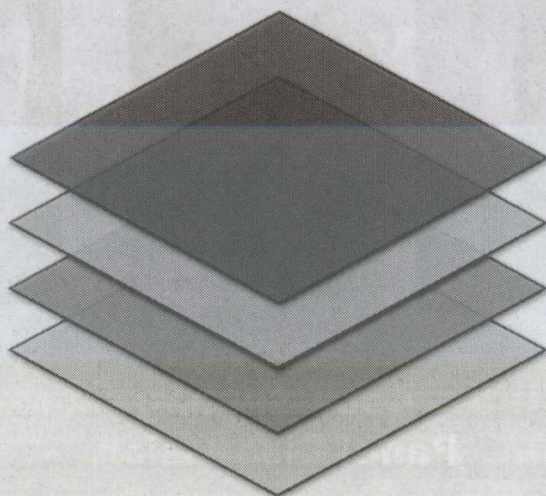


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