



The Case for the Boycott

The vote on the critical question of the academic
boycott, divestment, and sanctions resolution

BY CONOR TOMÁS REED AND GORDON BARNES p. 24

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The Purpose of the Academic Boycott

THE FOUNDER OF THE Jesuit Order, Ignatius of Loyola, is credited with having infamously said, "In a fortress under siege, all dissent is treason." This is the psychology of the besieged: an impossibility to discern the actual contours of a situation. The absolute is self-evident. Any and all potential attacks, no matter how apparent, are transformed immediately into actual attacks which require being dealt with swift punishment if survival is to be ensured. What Loyola is saying is that the besieged mentality knows no freedom.

Under a hail of a machine-gun's bullets, in the sights of a sniper, in the cross hairs of a tank, what freedom is possible? Such violent situations are direct and corporeal threats that certainly impede or hinder all freedom, including the academic type. Academics are fond of detailing the ins and outs, the particularities, of the material requirements and conditions for fruitful academic research. In conditions of war and siege the material attack on those conditions becomes a real, violent, thing.

There are, of course, other hindrances to freedom, including academic, that do not take such a bodily harmful form. Concern for privacy has driven opposition to the heightened use of technological security and surveillance apparatus against civilians in the United States and the world, but does it not also impinge upon freedom? Academics all over the world ask themselves if their emails are being read when they write or research controversial topics, if their views will be held against them or if their research will be found subversive. Fear arises and in its presence, understandably, all actions are taken with pause. Is this a condition in which academic freedom may thrive?

It would be narrow minded to think that this situation can only happen in the sphere of the state. Not only state surveillance and state censorship work against freedom. In an academic setting, many threats to freedom abound, from the economic to the political. In the United States we know this to be the case, especially in regard to the pernicious effects on academic freedom of the precarious labor of adjuncts. And there is one political issue in particular that has recently proved to be highly volatile and controversial, which actually instills fear of reprisal for expressing the "incorrect" position: that of the conflict between the state of Israel and the Palestinian people.

If we are to defend academic freedom, we must not only fight against those who would impose their particular way of thinking on everyone, but also resist the temptation, the ease of classifying enemies and friends, provided by the besieged

mentality. Yet, in the present state of higher education in the United States, it is not hard to feel besieged. Especially if one holds views critical of the state of Israel. Presently, the discussion of this particular issue instills fear in academics all around the country. Not only fear of being scolded for holding an unpopular position, but actual fear for one's position or possibility of having a career.

In the most famous recent case, a professor lost his appointment to the University of Illinois, after his hiring had been all but done, for forcefully expressing his views on social media about Israel's most recent military intervention in Gaza. The student senate president at Ohio University was harassed and received death threats after a performance art piece against the bloodshed in Palestine. The chaplain for the Episcopal Church at Yale University was forced to resign after a three-sentence letter to the New York Times was found to questionably relate state violence and anti-Semitism. Lists of academics being called a "threat to Jewish students" for supporting the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement have been published, in a reminiscence of McCarthyism. Attempts to pass legislation seeking to limit academic protests against the state of Israel have been made in the New York State Assembly. Here at CUNY, as recently as last year, the New York City Council threatened to defund the University over one department cosponsoring an event about the BDS movement, in an action that former Mayor Michael Bloomberg compared to North Korea. Also at CUNY, the student organization Students for Justice in Palestine has faced continued unfair treatment from the administration in an effort that has been perceived as an attempt to hinder its activities.

All of these events should give us pause when debating the BDS movement and academic freedom. There is not a single instance of academics in the United States being targeted or harmed for their support or solidarity for the state or the people of Israel. Yet there is an impending fear that expression of solidarity and support for the people of Palestine, even in the context of a military intervention that has left thousands dead, may be punished. This is the state of threats to academic freedom in the United States. In spite of this bleak reality, those who wish to express their solidarity with Palestinians should not fall prey to a siege mentality: the purpose of the movement for justice and freedom for Palestinians is not to make enemies out of some but to support the oppressed.

Too often, the debate around the academic boycott

makes invisible those who are most harmed. If the debate is to have a meaningful relation to arguments about of academic freedom, its perspective must be broadened. Regardless of the fact that the call for BDS is not an attempt to cut all ties and collaboration with individual scholars, but with institutions directly related to the state of Israel because of its violations of international law, the movement is portrayed as an attack on the academic freedom of Israeli academia. Concentrating only on the effects a call for boycott has on the free collaboration between academics from the United States and Israel is too narrow a scope.

Rather, the argument about the boycott and academic freedom should primarily take notice of the situation of academia in the Palestinian territories. In a situation such as the one existing in Gaza is academic freedom not grossly impaired? There, it is not the stance and vocal protest of activists that impedes collaboration with scholars, but the state of Israel's continued embargo and blockade (with the support and complicity of other countries such as Egypt) and its periodic military interventions, helped by billions of dollars in military aid from the United States, the latest of which left over 2,000 civilians dead. Understood in this broader sense, the call for an academic BDS of Israel is certainly about defending and expanding academic freedom: namely making it extensive and guaranteed to Palestinian scholars and students.

Recently, a motion to pass a resolution in support of the academic boycott against the state of Israel has been debated in the Doctoral Students' Council. After an initial debate, the DSC tabled the motion, underscoring one of the problems that supporters of BDS face, in the Graduate Center and elsewhere: that is, making clear what the BDS movement actually stands for and dispelling myths and cartoonish representations in order to persuade. Here, the burden falls on those who support the academic boycott to convince others,

not on all to agree as if its justification was self-evident.

The purpose of the academic boycott, which is part of the broader non-violent BDS movement, is clear: to prevent and combat, within academia, the normalization of the systematic violation of Palestinian rights and of international law by the state of Israel until it changes its policies. Jewish, or even Israeli, students and scholars should not feel targeted for who they are when activists demand boycott or sanctions against the state of Israel. In fact, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, one of the primary organizations organizing the call for BDS, clearly states that it:

“rejects on principle boycotts of individuals based on their identity (such as citizenship, race, gender, or religion) or opinion. If, however, an individual is representing the state of Israel or a complicit Israeli institution (such as a dean, rector, or president), or is commissioned/recruited to participate in Israel's efforts to “rebrand” itself, then her/his activities are subject to the institutional boycott the BDS movement is calling for.

“Mere affiliation of Israeli scholars to an Israeli academic institution is therefore not grounds for applying the boycott.”

Targeting Israel for its relation to the Jewish people would be clearly anti-Semitic. As would be targeting individuals because of their identity. But this is not what the BDS movement is about. It has nothing to do with the relation of the Jewish people to the state of Israel. The movement is only about that state's oppressive and repressive actions against Palestinians and its continued disregard of international law. What is at stake is not the right of the state of Israel to exist, but the right of the Palestinian people to justice, life, and freedom. ☹

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 upcoming 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 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: <http://opencuny.org/gcadvocate>. 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 the Editor at gcadvocate@gc.cuny.edu.

BDS Debated, Adjuncts Go Unpaid

Doctoral Students' Council and the Boycott

AT THE FIRST PLENARY of the Doctoral Students' Council on 12 September, Sean Kennedy put forward a resolution to boycott Israeli academic institutions as a response to the call of Palestinians for support and emancipation and the recent Israeli incursions into Gaza. A similar resolution was presented in May 2014, though this did not pass. As part of the broader boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign against the Israeli state as well as businesses with ties to Israel, the proposed DSC resolution, if passed, would endorse a "boycott of Israeli academic institutions and the divestment from Israeli companies." DSC representatives split into three different camps, those in favor of the resolution, those opposed, and those who were undecided.

Debate on the issue lasted approximately two hours with the eventual decision made to table the vote until the next plenary session in October. The *Advocate* editorial committee encourages its readership to contact their program representative to voice your opinion on this critical issue. For analysis of the plenary session, the BDS movement, and what is at stake for the Graduate Center, see the editorial in this issue as well as the article on page 24. What follows is the text of the proposed resolution.

• • •

PROPOSED RESOLUTION FOR THE Endorsement of Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions:

WHEREAS Palestinian civil society has issued a call for a campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel as long as it violates in-

ternational law and Palestinian rights;

WHEREAS Palestinian students and academics have little recourse to address violations of their rights to free speech, assembly, association, and movement;

WHEREAS Israeli institutions of higher learning are a party to Israeli state policies that violate human rights and negatively impact the working conditions of Palestinian scholars and students;

WHEREAS in the recent (July-August 2014) war on the Gaza Strip dubbed "Operation Protective Edge", Israeli universities declared they "embrace and support" the efforts of the Israeli Defense Forces, the same efforts which resulted in the deaths of 2,131 Palestinians, over 500 of whom were children, and 71% of whom were civilians;

WHEREAS Israeli professors and students at Israeli universities who speak out against discriminatory or criminal policies against Palestinians are ostracized and ridiculed if not publicly shamed, or worse;

WHEREAS academic institutions in the United States, Europe, and around the world, such as the American Studies Association, the Association for Asian American Studies, and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, have endorsed the boycott of Israeli academic institutions;

WHEREAS these decisions, which were arrived at freely and democratically after engaged discussion and debate (sometimes several years in duration), have been greeted by condemnation, such as the statements of 250 university and college presidents, including the AAUP, and draconian

attempts to curtail free speech, such as the bills proposed by New York and Maryland state legislators in the spring of 2014 to ban the use of state funds to academics and institutions that associate with professional institutions that or that themselves endorse the boycott;

WHEREAS in announcing the City University of New York's condemnation of the American Studies Association endorsement of the boycott, then-Interim Chancellor William P. Kelly also announced "a new joint MBA program between the Zicklin School at Baruch College and the College of Management Academic Studies in Rishon LeZion";

WHEREAS the Doctoral Students' Council (DSC) of the Graduate Center, CUNY, democratically represents students and their interests;

WHEREAS the DSC wishes to support Palestinian students and academics in their struggle against the Zionist policies of the Israeli state and its restrictions, a struggle that is frequently deprived of access to materials, resources, and discussion by the Israeli state;

WHEREAS the DSC understands that the boycott of Israeli academic institutions is not the boycott of or prohibition of collaboration with individual Israeli scholars, nor does it engage or support any other ethnic or religious discrimination;

WHEREAS the DSC understands that academic freedom in Palestine and Israel is contingent upon free and open exchange and movement for Palestinian students and scholars and visiting students and scholars in and out of the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel;

Be it RESOLVED that the DSC hereby endorses the boycott of Israeli

academic institutions and the divestment from Israeli companies, and calls for the end to the partnership between Baruch College and the College of Management Academic Studies;

Be it further RESOLVED that the DSC condemns the statements of university presidents that denigrate, ostracize, and intimidate scholars and students engaged in open debate on this issue.

Be it finally RESOLVED that the DSC condemns any and all legislative efforts to curtail the right of scholars and students to engage in academic boycotts as it is a basic aspect of free speech and association.

Graduate Center Professor Elected Head of ASA

RUTH MILKMAN, PROFESSOR OF sociology at The Graduate Center, CUNY has been elected president of the American Sociological Association. The ASA was founded in 1905 and is a non-profit association serving sociologists in their work, advancing sociology as a science and profession, and promoting contributions to as well as the use of sociology by the general public. Milkman will serve as president-elect for one year before assuming the role of president in August 2015. Citing women, labor, and immigrant rights movements as sources of encouragement, Milkman will aim to “foster synergies between sociologists and progressive social movements” once her tenure as president begins. Her current research focuses on work and organized labor in the United States, and she wishes to build upon this background in an effort to more effectively insert trained sociologists into ongoing public debates.

Milkman has previously served as the chair of the ASA Section on Labor and Labor Movements as well as on the editorial board of the ASA’s journal, *Contemporary Sociology*. In addition to her work at The Graduate

Center, she is also research director at the Joseph F. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies.

Adjuncts, Demand your Pay!

FAILURE TO PAY ADJUNCT faculty on time at the start of the semester has been a chronic issue for most CUNY colleges. Last academic year, for example, more than 33% of Queens College’s adjuncts were not remunerated in the first pay period of the fall semester. Almost 100 were unpaid by the second pay period, more than one month into the semester. The response of CUNY administration when this happens is to either do nothing, or to offer “advances” which in all actuality are not advances on payment, but back pay. Furthermore, the option of an “advance” is not well publicized and many adjuncts are kept in the dark as to the availability of these funds.

On 14 March, CUNY Central circulated a memo that instructed college administrators to advance “every effort...to ensure adjunct faculty are paid on time.” CUNY Central also circulated a list of “best practices” to guarantee timely payment for adjuncts. The new guidelines include the designation of a given staff member to track adjunct appointments, to monitor the progress of paperwork, and to take action if there is a problem. As if an increased bureaucratic regimen is the remedy for withheld wages!

The new standard of dealing with late payment of adjuncts is not to actually pay them, but to notify them that the check for a given pay period will be late, and that there exists an emergency fund (in certain circumstances). The Professional Staff Congress has endorsed this piecemeal reform, which came out of an investigation around the late payments at Queens College last academic year. The reform, if it can be labelled as such, is nowhere near sufficient and does not address

the disordered hiring of adjuncts nor their extremely limited terms of employment. In regard to the fall 2014 semester, the first pay date for adjuncts at senior colleges was 18 September, and the last is 24 December. At most of CUNY’s community colleges the first pay date was 12 September and the last is 19 December, though there are some differences. For a complete list of semester pay periods, visit the PSC website psc-cuny.org.

Graduate Center Gets PSC Chapter

THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS, the union that represents faculty, staff, and graduate student throughout the CUNY system, has a new faculty chapter at the Graduate Center. Full time, part time, and graduate employees at the GC will all be represented by the new chapter. The Graduate Center PSC chapter had been defunct for some time and is eager to begin organizing at the Graduate Center now that it has been reconstituted. The immediate goals of the new chapter, according to Michael Handis and Penelope Lewis (Chapter Chair and Vice-Chair), are to work towards “settling our long-overdue contract, signing up members to the chapter, and [to] begin meeting with the Graduate Center administration about working and learning conditions here at the GC.”

The first meeting of the new Graduate Center PSC chapter will be held on 6 October in room 4202 at the Graduate Center. There is also a town hall event around the contract negotiations on 22 October as well as a membership drive, which ends 31 October. If you have not signed the authorization of dues form, you are not a part of the union. And if you wish to join the union please fill out the necessary form, which is available from the Adjunct Project office (room 5498) or from the PSC directly. ☺

A View from the Left Wing

Reflections on the 2014 World Cup

arman azimi

FOUR YEARS AFTER SINGLE-HANDEDLY—PUN intended—saving Uruguay from sure elimination at the quarterfinal stage of the World Cup, Luis Suarez was once again at the center of controversy. In South Africa in 2010, Suarez had illegally stopped a last-gasp Ghanaian shot, which would have surely been the winner, with his hand. While Suarez was rightly ejected from the game for his transgression, Uruguay eventually went on to win the match on penalties. This time in Brazil, in a goal-mouth tussle with Italy's Giorgio Chiellini, Suarez again allowed his emotions to get the better of him and lunged at Chiellini head-first, comically biting his opponent's shoulder. Suarez had a reputation for biting opponents and had been sanctioned for doing so twice before, but never on such a stage; it would not be hyperbolic to call it the bite that was seen around the world.

Suarez amusingly claimed Chiellini's shoulder had collided with his teeth and soon apologized. Yet the humorous nature of the incident eluded many. Instead, it was taken as a criminal act, the reaction from pundits and fans alike unforgiving. The outpouring of outrage included such overly dramatic characterizations of Suarez' bite as "intolerable," "inexplicable," and "shocking," while a perusal of social media revealed fans calling it a "hideous" act. Former Leeds United midfielder Danny Mills called for the "longest ban on the planet," and the Mirror's David McDonnell balked at "the full horror of Suarez' latest act of thuggery." A near unanimous chorus of fans and pundits condemned what they saw as savage behavior and called for FIFA to impose a harsh sanction on Suarez for his misdemeanor, with some even calling for a lifetime ban.

While it would be interesting to interrogate, in the vein of The Graduate Center's own Talal Asad (see *On Suicide Bombing*), why a relatively harmless bite, which falls on the lower end of the scale of football-related aggression, should evoke so much horror compared to acts of greater brutality or harmfulness that occur on and off the pitch in the

world of football. It does not need to be stated that football, which tends to be derided in the United States for being less "macho" than American sports, is in fact a highly aggressive game, where players at the peak of physical fitness collide with one another—often with malicious intent—while wearing little more than symbolic shin-guards. A regular series of horrific ankle-breaking tackles, however, tends to elicit little more than expressions of regret. The utter disregard of footballing authorities toward players who have suffered from concussions—clearly demonstrated during the summer when Uruguay's Alvaro Pereira was allowed back on to the field mere moments after being knocked unconscious—gave rise to the feeblest protest, and mostly from Taylor Twellman, a former American professional who was recently forced to cut his career short after suffering from a series of undiagnosed concussions. Suarez's bite provoked far more rage than blatant racism (in the form of monkey chants and bananas thrown at black players in Spain and Italy among others), institutional racism (demonstrated by the shocking absence of black managers in European and American leagues), sexist attitudes (evinced by a sense of dismissiveness among males at every level of the game towards female referees, female managers, and women's footballing ability in general), or the plight of migrant workers in the Qatar—the prospective host of the 2022 World Cup—would ever do.

In response to the fire storm over the Suarez issue, FIFA, while undoubtedly apprehensive at the prospect of losing a player who could generate more revenue for its already substantial coffers, had no choice but to ban Suarez for four months from all football-related activities, a penalty which even Chiellini labeled "excessive." The chairman of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee claimed that Suarez's "behaviour cannot be tolerated on any football pitch, and in particular not at a FIFA World Cup when the eyes of millions of people are on the stars on the field." There was no shortage of irony, and indeed a surplus of perversity, in an organization like FIFA—an exploitative, transnational corporation and neo-colonial entity run by wealthy white men and, unsur-



prisingly, rife with corruption—condemning Suarez for violating standards of fairness, sportsmanship, and civilized behavior. After all, FIFA itself does far more to harm the sport, its participants, and its fans, not to mention the lives of ordinary people in countries who are recruited to host its international tournaments, than Suarez’ bite could ever do.

From a spectator’s perspective, the 2014 World Cup in Brazil was, without a doubt, one of the most enjoyable World Cups in recent memory. Despite the widespread protests by Brazilians angered at the Rousseff government’s lavish spending in the face of ever-increasing inequality and rising poverty levels, documented thoroughly by Dave Zirin in his important *Brazil’s Dance with the Devil*, Brazil was still able to welcome the world with an infectiously festive atmosphere. The tournament proceeded without any mishaps, with the workers killed in various accidents and infrastructural collapses soon forgotten—the last death coming but a few months before the opening ceremony. Fans were able to focus purely on the football without distractions, and the football itself was magnificent.

There was an unusual degree of unpredictability about the matches, with small nations capturing the imagination of neutrals and partisans alike, and infusing the tournament with an intoxicating sense of romance. A number of European giants fared poorly. The strongest team of the last decade, the all-conquering Spain, was shockingly and unceremoniously eliminated after its first two matches in the group stage. South American teams engaged and frustrated in equal measure. Brazil, touted to take home the trophy come 13 July, never really convinced and, facing Germany without the talismanic Neymar, were thrashed 7-1, one of the most bizarre results in recent memory. An underperforming Argentinean side progressed to the final thanks to repeated moments of individual brilliance from superstar Lionel

Messi. Underdogs Chile and Colombia won many hearts with their high energy, fearlessness, and supremely skillful play. Chile—mere moments away from defeating Brazil in the second round, the hosts progressing through the lottery of penalties after having been saved by the crossbar in the last minute of regular time—and Colombia were arguably the most entertaining teams of the tournament before their subsequent elimination at the hands of Brazil.

The performance of the World Cup’s Central American minnows proved especially inspirational, with Costa Rica heroically taking four points—a win and a draw—against Italy and England respectively, defying all odds to emerge from their group in first place and dump out both perennial favorites. Mexico’s coach, Miguel Herrera, became a household name with his energetic touchline antics that matched his team’s spirit and endeavor, qualities that saw Mexico draw against the host nation and still emerge from the group after impressive wins against Cameroon and Croatia.

Among the African teams, Algeria, of whom not much was expected, gave the eventual winners, Germany, a real run for their money in a round-of-sixteen clash that the Germans were lucky not to lose. Asia’s representatives did not fare well, but of the four, *Team-e Melli*, the Iranian national team, widely labeled as whipping boys prior to the tournament, gained both new fans and considerable respect for holding Argentina at bay for 90 minutes, and even coming close to winning the match. Their performances allowed Iranians—suffering as the result of the United States’ imposed sanctions—to divert themselves, briefly, away from the harsh reality of their economic and political plight.

Moreover, and perhaps most remarkably, football fever truly gripped the United States. The USMNT’s impressive group stage performances against Portugal—which became the most watched sporting event in ESPN history, exclud-

ing American football—and Ghana, and goalkeeper Tim Howard's record-breaking sixteen saves in the second round clash with Belgium, allowed a sense of euphoria to flourish, giving Americans a feeling of optimism that perhaps a new frontier, one in which they had so long been unable to exert dominance, was opening for them to conquer. Commentators and fans alike dared ask the question most nations do not dream of: "How soon before we win the World Cup?" Manifest Destiny is, of course, alive and well.

The semifinals dashed any feelings of romanticism, however. All illusions of parity were dispelled as the tournament drew to a close and order was restored: favorites Brazil, the Netherlands, Argentina, and Germany contested the latter stages, with Germany finally emerging as deserved winners. The group round had seemed to offer hope that football might be on the verge of becoming a fairer game, that the playing field between the European nations and those of the Global South—Argentina and Brazil are notable exceptions—was being levelled. But equity between Europe and the rest is, despite FIFA's slogan "My Game is Fair Play," only ever a mirage in the modern game, as exemplified by the case of the pay dispute that disrupted the preparations of the Ghanaian national team.

Before their final group match against Portugal, news emerged that the Ghanaian players had missed a day of training and were threatening to go on strike over unpaid bonuses. It is important to note that footballers are usually not paid for representing their national teams; they are employees of their clubs and only receive money at the international level as a reward for World Cup qualification or win bonuses. Each World Cup, FIFA disburses a sum to the national federation of each of the thirty-two competitor nations, which is then meant to be distributed to the players. Most football associations pay their players beforehand, as they can afford to wait for FIFA to transfer the sum later. However, the Ghanaian Football Association, lacking the funds to be able to pay its players prior to the tournament, waited for the money to arrive from FIFA before doing so. Thus, unlike most of their fellow-professionals at the World Cup, Ghana's players were left unpaid. This issue has commonly afflicted various African teams, including Nigeria and Cameroon in the latest edition of the World Cup, and it generated an atmosphere which hindered Ghana's preparations and diverted their attention away from the games ahead. How is a team expected to perform on such a stage in those conditions?

Unsurprisingly, most commentators laid blame at the feet of "player greed" and "typical" African characteristics such as corruption or a tendency toward chaos, the broader context being largely ignored. If we think historically, we can trace the current financial problems facing the Ghanaian

and other African football associations to the impoverishment wrought by decades of colonial exploitation and the subsequent neoliberal policies imposed on African states by the West, the World Bank, and the IMF. The legacies of colonialism, which are considered irrelevant by FIFA are manifested in very real ways in the world of football. In typical liberal fashion, FIFA officials hail the virtues of separating sports from politics, as if that were ever possible.

Nowhere are the legacies of the colonial era more visible than in the successes of a number of European national teams, for whom recruiting talent from former colonial holdings has been critical. In France, for example, questions have been raised surrounding the high number of non-white players on the team, with some managers being accused of secretly imposing quotas on the number of non-white players allowed in the squad, and Jean-Marie le Pen (the former leader of the right-wing populist *Front Nationale*, who recently suggested that the current Ebola outbreak could "solve" France's immigration "problem") complaining that the team was no longer "French." While the specifics of that particular debate are not worth addressing here, it is important to note that what is ignored is just how much of France's recent footballing success has been due to players born in former (and current) French colonies. Two stalwarts of France's best ever footballing side, which won the 1998 World Cup and the following European Championship, Lilian Thuram and Patrick Vieira, were born in Guadeloupe and Senegal respectively. The parents of Zinedine Zidane, France's greatest ever player, emigrated from Algeria before the outbreak of war.

France is certainly not an anomaly in this regard, with some of the most prominent European teams exploiting former colonial connections to bolster their ranks. England's brightest talents and best performers at this summer's World Cup were Raheem Sterling and Daniel Sturridge, both of Jamaican descent, with the former having been born in Kingston. Likewise, the entertaining Dutch national team included such players as Leroy Fer, Georginio Wijnaldum, and Nigel de Jong of Curaçaoan, Surinamese, and Indonesian-Surinamese descent respectively. Eusébio, a man who was until recently—due to the emergence of Cristiano Ronaldo—unequivocally considered the greatest athlete in Portuguese history. His story perhaps most acutely highlights the contributions of colonial exploitation to European footballing success.

Eusébio was born in 1942 in Mozambique, which remained a Portuguese colony until the overthrow of Salazar in 1975. As such, Mozambique did not have a national team and at age eighteen Eusébio was brought to Portugal and his prodigious talent was harnessed in the service of

Graduate Center Student Runs for Political Office

Q & A with Brian P. Jones

francisco fortuño bernier

A LITTLE BEFORE NOON on 12 September, on the steps of Tweed Courthouse in Lower Manhattan, Brian P. Jones—a third year doctoral student in the Urban Education Program at the Graduate Center—declared his candidacy for Lieutenant Governor of New York. Running alongside Green Party gubernatorial candidate Howie Hawkins, their campaign platform is articulated as a “Green New Deal for New York” with many attendant concerns, including those relating to: education, economic democracy, sustainable agriculture, criminal justice reform, women’s, worker, immigrant, and LGBT rights as well as civil rights and racial justice. A longtime member of the International Socialist Organization, Jones is running as an independent with the Green Party of New York State. Jones taught elementary school in New York City public schools for nine years prior to pursuing his PhD and has been active in the struggle against the privatization of education, budget cuts, and school closures. He is one of the founding members of the Movement of Rank and File Educators and co-narrated the film *The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman*. His current research focuses on the history and politics of the black struggle for education in the United States. Francisco Fortuño Bernier conducted this interview on 18 September 2014.

FRANCISCO FORTUÑO BERNIER (FF): You have been a teacher, an actor, a union activist, and presently are a doctoral student here in the Graduate Center. And now also a candidate for Lieutenant Governor of New York State together with Howie Hawkins for the Green Party. Could you describe briefly your careers as politically active and conscious people? In your own case, how would you say you gained awareness of the problems that have led you to political and union activism?

Brian P. Jones (BJ): I decided I was a socialist many years ago as an undergraduate student. I joined a huge movement on my campus to increase financial aid and minority admis-

sions—something that directly affected me—and that was my first time participating in a mass action. Soon afterwards, when I met socialists, their basic ideas made sense to me. They said progress was about people in large numbers uniting and fighting in their own interest—that resonated with my experience. About ten years later I became a teacher, and tried to apply those ideas to the struggle to defend and improve public schools. I helped to found a new caucus in the teacher’s union because it seemed to many of us that the union needs to be democratized and needs to wage a more aggressive fight against what many call corporate education reform.

FF: In general terms, how do you describe the social and political situation of the United States and the State of New York in particular?

BJ: We’re facing several crises—a jobs crisis, a housing crisis, a criminal justice crisis, a health crisis, and, on top of them all, an ecological crisis. The mainstream politicians have no solutions because they won’t listen to the majority. A majority of the population supports building renewable energy infrastructure, supports single-payer healthcare, supports raising the minimum wage, supports feeding the hungry, and housing the homeless. The Democratic and Republican parties have no intention of doing those things. They are both neoliberal parties, which is to say that they are committed to a bipartisan consensus about restoring profitability through privatization, union busting, deregulation, and tax cuts for the elite. Their answer to the dire circumstances some communities are facing is more police—which never solves the underlying problems. The Democrats are committed to making the United States “energy independent” which means more fossil fuels, with a sprinkling of “green” projects on the side for show. We’ve heard some politicians make promises to the Left, but they end up governing [as centrists] or to the Right, not because we want them to, but because their funders—the 1%—demand it. It seems to me that’s why most people don’t bother to vote.

FF: What would you say are, presently, the issues that



make a vote for Hawkins and Jones so imperative?

BJ: We have to stop pulling carbon out of the ground and releasing it into the atmosphere as matter of human survival. We have to stop immediately. Governor Cuomo has already received millions of dollars from the fossil fuel industry and plans to continue hydrofracking. By contrast, Howie Hawkins and I are pledging to ban fracking immediately, and to begin the work of making New York a 100% renewable energy state by 2030. That would take an enormous amount of labor, which is why this plan would simultaneously solve our unemployment crisis by creating roughly 4.5 million jobs. We have had the technology to do this for some time, it's just a matter of the political will to confront the wealth and power of the fossil fuel industry. If we want to keep breathing air and drinking water, it's the only sane thing to do.

In many other ways, our campaign is about making New York livable for the working majority. We are calling for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, single-payer health care, the legalization of marijuana, fully funded schools, and free tuition at CUNY and SUNY. If we returned to a more progressive tax structure (taxing the rich for example) we could generate tens of billions of dollars in revenue to pay for all of these initiatives and more.

FF: Would you say that your experience as an activist and as a school teacher in New York led you to get involved in electoral politics? Do you see a difference between being an activist and a candidate?

BJ: Yes, it was my experience as a teacher and education activist that led me here. New Yorkers are angry at Governor Cuomo for cutting school budgets and attacking teacher unions. Cuomo has been a champion of privatization—through supporting the spread of high stakes standardized testing, attacks on teacher unions, and forcing New York City to give charter schools free rent in public school buildings. So Howie asked me to join him in order to bring the energy of the education movement into the campaign.

It's true that grass-roots activism and campaigning for office are not exactly the same thing. However, I don't ever want to counterpose them. We have local activists speaking alongside me nearly everywhere I go because we want this campaign to amplify their voices, too, not just mine. I would never say to people, "vote for me, and everything will be taken care of" because it's just not true. Even when we are elected, we will still need strong unions and strong grass-roots organizations. There's no progress without struggle. I hope this campaign makes all of the organizing work people are doing stronger.

FF: You have described the Hawkins/Jones ticket as the only progressive campaign in New York State. Progressive is sometimes used to mean a broad range of political

positions, from the radical Left to more traditional liberal forces. What would you say is the meaning of the term "progressive" in the United States in 2014? Who do you think should identify in the present context with this term and why?

BJ: It's true that in the United States "progressive" is a broad label. The fact is that the Democratic Party has run away from any promise of progressive reform—reforms that benefit ordinary people. For every crisis, the Democratic Party proposes a stingy market mechanism. They won't entertain single-payer health care, instead there's a mandate to purchase private health insurance. They won't contemplate bailing out regular people like they bailed out the banks. Instead of student loan debt amnesty, there's more information made available to students so they can be better loan shoppers. They won't invest in public schools so that every child can have small class sizes and rich curricula and resources. Instead they pour resources into measuring schools so that they can rank them and foster competition between them. I think there's a pretty broad group of people who are becoming fed up with this state of affairs. We want to appeal to that broad group, not just to the radicals.

I want to be clear, however, that while we are appealing to a broad progressive and working-class sentiment, we are not afraid to take controversial stances that are in keeping with our principles. When Israel was bombarding Gaza this summer, our campaign released a statement in solidarity with Gaza and against the slaughter. On 4 November we will be the only politicians on the ballot who pledge to divest New York State from Israel's murderous occupation of Palestine.

FF: How do you approach liberal voters, who may be socially committed but more used to supporting the Democratic Party, as to give them reasons to vote for your candidacy?

BJ: There are many people who are supporting us, but still support the Democratic Party. I hope this campaign increases the ranks of people who are ready to swear off the Democrats forever. But it's hard to leave unless you have somewhere else to go. That's why it helps to have third party campaigns based in social movements that can encourage and foster political independence. Some people are coming over to our camp out of frustration with the Democrats, but too many still don't know that an alternative exists.

FF: Likewise, what would you say to people who do have a great sense of political or social commitment and awareness, but regard either the voting process or existing political parties (including the Green Party) as part of an unjust establishment? I have in mind activists and militants who may be sympathetic to your discourse, but may be highly skeptical of the system in which you are participating. How would you approach or convince these

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BJ: I think those people are right to be skeptical. The electoral system is highly rigged against real change. I'm guessing Howie Hawkins and I will be the only non-millionaires on the ballot on 4 November.

At the same time, I think the people who are fed up with the two-party system and with the electoral process need to understand that there are still a lot of people who look to this system for hope. The Democratic Party portrays itself as "the party of the people" and then asks our movements to modify their demands in order to not embarrass their candidates. We had a stronger anti-war movement under Bush than we have had under Obama. Meanwhile the unions waste millions of dollars on Democratic Party politicians that could be used to sponsor working class candidates and actual organizing campaigns. The whole "lesser evil" argument has the effect of narrowing our political horizons and lowering our expectations. Radicals may prefer to ignore the electoral system and focus on grass-roots activism, but the electoral system continues to have an effect on grass-roots activism—whether we like it or not. I would not want to build up a principle about this either way—that we must always run candidates, or that we must never run candidates. I don't see why we should, in principle, cede this terrain to the 1%.

One last point—a problem we always face in grass-roots activism is building links and connections between various struggles and between various issues. I hope that our campaign offers activists an opportunity to do just that. Our platform is essentially a collection of the best demands of New York's unions and social movements. Joining this campaign gives you an excuse to talk to your friends, coworkers, neighbors, and classmates about all of it—the New Jim Crow, the climate catastrophe, neoliberalism, the schools... all of it.

FF: Recently, radical or progressive candidates and electoral campaigns have gained wide recognition and met unusual success. Probably the most renowned of these efforts was Kshama Sawant's victory, as an openly socialist candidate, in the Seattle City Council. Sawant has endorsed your campaign, and you are also an openly socialist candidate and a member of a socialist organization. Would you say that efforts such as these are made possible by the changing social conditions in the United States? Or would you say that it is more due to some sectors of the Left having reassessed the importance of electoral processes as part of working class struggle?

BJ: Howie Hawkins, our candidate for governor, also calls

himself a socialist, by the way. A poll from his hometown of Syracuse puts Howie in second place behind Cuomo, with the Republican in third place. The reason is simple. Wages are stagnant. Good jobs are hard to find. Record numbers of people are locked up for drug possession. Schools are facing budget cuts. Everyone is in debt up to their eyeballs. And if they keep up the fossil fuel extraction, we won't be able to drink the water or breathe the air. People are beginning to think that things are radically wrong, which is why radicals don't seem so scary.

FF: An important issue of the Hawkins/Jones campaign has been a focus on attacks against education. How would you describe the present threats to public education in NY? And against higher education institutions



such as SUNY and CUNY? What are some of your proposals for dealing with these problems?

BJ: A new study says that New York has the most segregated schools in the nation. Meanwhile Cuomo's budgetary schemes have robbed roughly \$9 billion from all of the schools during his time in office. The solution to this is not privatization and philanthropy. Desegregation and equity requires us to add more money to the pot, not simply to reshuffle the existing resources between the schools. Instead of schools competing with each other or against homeowners, we need to tax the rich to fully fund our schools.

We are simultaneously facing the neoliberal restructuring of higher education. Tuition is going up, and so is the use of adjunct professors. It's time to restore free tuition at CUNY and introduce it at SUNY. This is not a utopian dream. We had free tuition at CUNY for 125 years. It's ridiculous that young people graduate from these schools tens of thousands of dollars in debt. Reversing the decline of tenure lines will have a huge impact on the quality of higher education in this state—and would make New York a leader in reversing the trend nationwide. ☺

This Woman's Work

The Misogynistic Realities I Face as a Female Professor

melissa marturano

THROUGHOUT MY SIX SEMESTERS of experience as a teacher at CUNY, I have come to realize that my professional interactions with my students are guided and informed by misogyny. The microaggressions I face from predominantly male students are endless, but in this article I want to share the clearer and more disturbing illustrations of this phenomenon and speak to the broader political implications of these sorts of interactions for female professors.

I have been asked out on dates by several male students and received flirtatious emails from several more. Some students are even ruder and ask me bluntly about my sexual orientation. Male colleagues tell me that they too experience this, but sexual harassment towards women fits into a larger framework of misogyny, street harassment, and rape culture. I doubt my male colleagues experience daily sexual harassment from men on the street (and yes, I mean daily). Whether with my students or with strangers, I simply do not want to be objectified in any way. They should respect my right to exist in public without feeling entitled to my time, body, space, and attention.

One student even tried to impress me by telling me that he only dates feminists while explaining what a big “feminist” he is. Too frequently men have interpreted sex-positive thought among feminists to mean that they have the right to prey upon us because we are “more sexually liberated than other women.” Here, my feminism just becomes a sexual invitation and a means for exploitation. About a year ago, I received an email in all caps from a former student threatening me after I failed to recognize and greet him when I passed him by in the hallway. The same week another of my male students found my social media accounts and sought my attention there when he felt it has not been adequately given to him in class.

Students have, moreover, openly attempted to police my appearance in class. While students talk to one another during group work in class, I have overheard a few of them discussing how my expression of femininity confuses and

upsets them. “Why does she dress like that if she does not shave her legs?” “She would be much hotter if she wore makeup.” “I think she might be a dyke, but she doesn’t have short hair.” I have even received comments about my body on teaching evaluations when students were asked to comment on the course material and my abilities as a teacher.

Some of the most glaring examples of misogyny from my students have transpired during meetings concerning academic misconduct. Each semester, I have encountered instances of students’ academic dishonesty, an unfortunately common experience for teachers of writing-intensive, core curriculum courses. Whenever I suspect academic dishonesty, I schedule a meeting with the student in question to review the paper and to reiterate the consequences of the violation. Many of these meetings can be downright strange and volatile. Students sometimes cry and beg, which can quickly escalate into yelling. Male students in particular feel they can verbally and physically intimidate me into letting them off the hook. For example, during one such meeting in my third semester of teaching, one student threw down his chair, approached me aggressively, and screamed in my face when I refused to accept his excuses for committing blatant academic dishonesty. Looking back at this episode, I believe that the situation only de-escalated because the door was ajar and someone was approaching our side of the hallway.

The inappropriate interactions in these meetings speak generally to the additional emotional labor that female professors must endure. Because of my gender, students expect me to be moved by their crying and also by their intimidation tactics. They expect me to assume the role of a nurturer, and ignore that I have a right to personal boundaries and safety. This same entitlement manifests when students ask me out, harass me, and police my body. It is maddening that even at work I must resist narratives that cast me as the mother, the object.

I have found that I react to these situations with my male students in many of the same ways I do with other men who have objectified me and disrespected me throughout my

life. With fear, with timidity, with the wish that it could all just go away, with the feminine affect I have been socialized to take on in order not to bruise the male ego further. Even after that student physically intimidated me, I remember smiling and softening my voice to conciliate him, an instinct I have used time and again to protect myself against male aggression.

When I share these stories with my male colleagues, they are most often surprised and sometimes assume the role of devil's advocate, which brazenly shows their complete disregard for my experiences. The misogyny I experience while I teach (or anywhere) is not a debate or a game. Both their surprise at and their refusal to concede the misogyny of these stories demonstrates an inability to understand how gender affects the ways men and women differently navigate teaching and relating to our students. The American Association of University Women cites on their website that one third of female professors have reported that they have

faced sexual harassment by men in the workplace (which is a potentially conservative estimate because many women do not report it). Ninety-four percent of college-age women, according to a recent study by the American Psychological Association, have reported feeling sexually objectified multiple times a year and that these experiences continue into later adulthood. And the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in 2010 reported that more than one third of American women over their lifetimes will experience physical violence, abuse, sexual assault, or stalking from men (most likely from individuals that they know). For female professors, these realities do not vanish when we teach. The stories I have shared rest on a continuum of gendered violence and terror.

I hope this article raises awareness of the unique burdens and struggles of female professors and helps everyone to understand that misogyny only further exacerbates the stresses often inherent in university teaching. ☹

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A View from the Left Wing

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Mozambique's colonial masters. The combination of grace, pace, power, and a lethal right foot that Eusébio possessed had not been seen before, and during the 1960s he effectively eclipsed the legendary Pele, both at club level (when Eusébio, playing for the famous Lisbon club Benfica, scored a hat-trick against Pele's Santos as a nineteen year old) and at the national level (when Eusébio led the Portuguese team to its best ever finish, a third place at the 1966 World Cup, defeating Brazil 3-1 along the way).

While some may cite the previous examples as evidence of the positive aspects of globalization, Europe's embrace of multiculturalism, and the cosmopolitanism of football, it would not be without justification to consider these and other such footballers simply another resource that colonial powers extracted from colonies, exploited, and put to use for their own good. Eusébio is touted as a symbol of Portuguese greatness, yet Portuguese rule in Mozambique is glossed over or elided entirely. The fact that the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique was beginning its guerilla campaign against Portuguese rule as Eusébio was bringing unprecedented prestige to Benfica and the national team, or that African teams had been offered one berth—consisting of a play-off against an Asian team in the 1966 World Cup, are not popularized by FIFA or many associated with Portuguese football. What amounted to a half-berth in 1966 prompted Kwame Nkrumah to spearhead an African boycott of the tournament. While African teams were effectively blocked from competing in the World Cup, the greatest African player the world had seen was bringing glory to the European



continent. The proudest moment in Portuguese footballing history was a product of decades of direct imperial subjugation, preceded by centuries of Portuguese involvement in Mozambique. European countries have reaped the rewards of a bloody, oppressive history, and gained sporting success at Africa's expense. Until disparities between former colonies and former colonial powers are addressed, Pele's prediction that an African team will win the World Cup will never be realized.

It is not only the legacies of colonialism, however, that should concern us. For while FIFA condemned Luis Suarez for tarnishing the image of a game followed by millions if not billions, FIFA not only repeatedly defiles football's image and reputation but also degrades the sport itself, having transformed it into a multinational business with profit as its ultimate motive. ☹

From Ferguson to New York



cuny internationalist marxist club

Stop Racist Police Terror

WHEN A POLICE OFFICER in Ferguson, Missouri shot down Michael Brown and cops left his body lying in the street for hours, it set off an explosion of mass anger. Young and old, the population of this more than two-thirds black town had had it with the white cops and their racist bosses who lord it over the place like it was a plantation. No matter what the rulers tried, they couldn't squelch the protests. From the start, St. Louis County police deployed the military arsenal they had been building up to put down black unrest.

It didn't work—in fact it backfired. Shock built nationwide at images resembling upheavals against bloody dictators in the Middle East, Palestinians rising up against Israeli occupation, or mass protests in the black Soweto Township in apartheid South Africa. The snarling dogs recalled Birmingham in the most violent phase of repression against the civil rights struggle. Militarized policing drew particu-

lar attention, with liberal Democrats and even right-wing Republicans lamenting it (after lavishly funding it). All the firepower didn't stop nightly protests by angry youth fed up with police harassment, and now the murder of a young black man as he held up his hands saying, "Don't shoot!"

Next came the curfew. While Obama made hypocritical speeches about protecting the right to protest, his fellow Democrat, Governor Jay Nixon, ordered protesters off the streets, supposedly to stop looting. Protesters defiantly stood their ground until the barrages of gas and gunfire drove them away. Then the results of the independent autopsy came out: Michael Brown was shot six times, twice in the head. Militant protests broke out again. This time the cops attacked demonstrators hours before the curfew went into effect. The Nixon ordered in the National Guard. Mass arrests followed, together with denunciations of "outside agitators."

We stand with the embattled people of Ferguson, Missouri, and hail the courageous youth who have refused to be intimidated by everything the racist rulers have thrown at

them. The fact that they have fought back against the police has thrown the ruling class into a national crisis. The police murder of Michael Brown reverberated around the country because this is no local issue. It came just weeks after Eric Garner was choked to death on Staten Island by New York City police. Across the United States, cops kill over 400 people a year, and won't be stopped by calls to limit their hardware. Systemic police violence must be fought by mobilizing labor, black, and immigrant power as well as youth opposed to racist repression nationwide.

Because racist police brutality and cop terror is endemic in American capitalism, it can't be stopped by a few reforms. For gunning down Michael Brown, Darren Wilson definitely belongs behind bars for a long time. Many are calling for him to be arrested, indicted and tried, while chanting "No justice, no peace." But we know there is no justice for the oppressed in the capitalist courts. The ruling class stands by its "special bodies of armed men" (in Engels' famous phrase), who serve and protect the interests of capital. Their job is to keep poor and working people down, which is exactly what they've been doing in Ferguson.

What happened in this white-ruled black Missouri suburb is not just the result of local racism. It directly reflects militarization of police forces throughout the United States. How was it that Bearcats and mine-resistant ambush-protected armored vehicles, sound cannons and heavy-duty weaponry suddenly showed up on West Florissant Avenue in Ferguson? Along with helicopters circling overhead, they

come from the Departments of Defense, Justice Department, and Homeland Security under a program that sends billions of dollars of equipment to local police in the name of fighting "terrorism." As Ferguson was turned into a war zone, a reporter recorded a protester shouting at a line of police, "You gonna shoot us? Is this the Gaza Strip?" In fact, high-level police officials from the area have traveled to Israel to receive lessons on occupation. For its part, the NYPD has its own office in Tel Aviv.

The result of these programs is that run-of-the-mill police actions across the country increasingly resemble military operations, with the general population as the enemy. While this has been intensified by the "war on terror" since 2001, it dates back to the creation of SWAT teams in the late 1960s and the "war on drugs" starting in the 1980s. From the beginning, it's been a bipartisan effort. Ruling-class critics were mainly concerned that paramilitary tactics in Ferguson weren't working. If protesters had been shocked-and-awed into submission, there wouldn't have been a peep from Washington. As soon as the National Guard was brought in, the complaints stopped.

However, the greatest threat is not that this is a boondoggle, but that the authorities are gearing up for internal war. They publish studies on it, formed a military North American Command to prepare for it, and used the 2013 Boston Marathon attack as a practice run for locking down an entire metropolitan area. Internal war against whom? The target is poor, black, Latino, immigrant, and working people

who dare to resist. Moreover, the police recipients of Pentagon largesse are contractually required to use all that stuff within a year of receiving it. So what's happening in Ferguson was no one-shot deal, we'll see those images again, most likely soon.

With the election of Barack Obama there was a lot of talk about a "post-racial America." The reality is very different. In fact, in recent years there has been a rise in racist reaction. This is the core of the rabid rightist opposition to Obama, despite



his capitulation to right-wing pressure at every step. It is accompanied by mounting attacks by police, security guards, and vigilantes against blacks and immigrants. Last year there was the NYPD murder of Kimani Gray in East Flatbush, Brooklyn and the racist verdict freeing the killer of Trayvon Martin in Florida. This year it is the NYPD murder of Eric Garner, the Missouri cop killing of teenager Michael Brown, and an ever-growing list across the country.

What we're facing is not some crooked cops run amok, a few bad apples, an out-of-step police chief. It's a whole apparatus of racist repression in the service of imperialism, "the highest stage of capitalism." The increasing virulence of the attacks reflects entrenched local racism, certainly, but also the worldwide economic depression since the 2007-08 financial crash, and endless wars of terror waged by the United States in the Middle East and around the world.

Today, as clouds of tear gas and volleys of flash-bang grenades engulf Ferguson, many young people have marched in protest, as they did in 2013 for Trayvon. Whole sectors of the population may be beginning to see, as our placards have proclaimed, that "Imperialist War Abroad Means Racist Repression in the U.S." The key question is how to fight this escalating racist-capitalist assault. What's needed above all is revolutionary leadership. In this fight to rip racist oppression out by its roots—in this country born from chattel slavery—the struggle for black liberation is and has always been central. To put a stop to racist police brutality and murder, we must fight for revolution, a socialist revolution to overthrow capitalism.

National Crisis Sparks Protest at CUNY

ON 3 SEPTEMBER, A "Speak-Out Against Racist Repression from Ferguson to New York" was held at CUNY's Hunter College campus. This report is followed by edited excerpts of some of the speeches.

The police murder of Eric Garner in Staten Island, followed by that of Michael Brown and the military/police occupation of Ferguson, Missouri, brought a wave of outrage across the United States and around the world. Anti-racist young and working people of all ethnicities took to the streets in solidarity with the Ferguson protesters and the families of Brown, Garner, and others targeted by deadly police brutality. A backlash emerged, with collections taken up for the officer who gunned down Michael Brown. In New York, "support our police" forces raged against the teachers' union for joining a march in solidarity with the Garner family. Faced with the unending horror of racist police terror, the question was posed, in the words of the old miners' song: "*Which side are you on?*"

The Obama administration did its job for the ruling class, which decided some time ago that it would be useful to have

some "black faces in high places" to help administer the system of racist oppression called capitalism in the United States. Having funneled high-tech weapons to police across the country, while waging ever-expanding wars abroad, they tried to head off protests with speeches about non-violence (for the oppressed only). Meanwhile, Nixon mobilized the National Guard to try to terrorize the black people of Ferguson. Attorney General Eric Holder, seconded by Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, worked to drown mass indignation in illusions about police "reform." These are the same illusions pumped out every time revulsion against systemic police violence has reached crisis proportions.

At CUNY, police harassment is a fact of life for innumerable students. Activists building for the Speak-Out noted students' responsiveness to the point that police brutality is endemic because "U.S. capitalism is racist to the core" and has been since its origins in chattel slavery. Nor is CUNY a stranger to repression, as shown in the crackdown against last year's protests against the hiring of ex-general David Petraeus and the Trustees' push for the suppression of "expressive conduct" aimed against the most basic rights of protest. Reflecting this, hours before the September 3 Speak-Out, organizers' table inside the Hunter campus was shut down by campus police.

The Speak-Out drew upwards of 75 participants. Immigrant restaurant workers came down from the Bronx as part of a delegation from the Laundry Workers Center organizing group. A group of African American workers from the New York Blood Center, located near Hunter, was drawn to the protest. Apart from the Internationalist Clubs, which initiated the event, and Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW), the CUNY "left" was almost completely absent. However, many people who had never participated in any kind of protest before stepped forward to voice their views and experiences.

Portia, CUNY Internationalist Clubs and CSEW:

"Join with us today in this Speak-Out Against Racist Repression, from the murder of Michael Brown and the racist occupation of Ferguson, Missouri to the case of Eric Garner and all those killed by the NYPD. It's not a case of 'some bad apples' in the police—this is a system of racist police brutality built to enforce capitalist power. In Ferguson, anti-racist protesters were facing assault rifles, tanks, and all kinds of military equipment, to back up the police power that killed an innocent teenager just because he was black. We see this repeated over and over again. These killings happened within a short time in 2014, but this goes back centuries in this racist capitalist country that was built on slavery. We need to speak out against the system that causes the murders of black and Latino youth in order to protect its profits, to protect its choke hold on the working class and other op-

pressed groups.”

The rally discussed the facts behind each of the names on a poster listing some of those killed by the NYPD, among them Kimani Gray, Ramarley Graham, Anthony Baez, Eleanor Bumpurs, Patrick Dorismond and Alberta Spruill, an African American city worker who died of a heart attack when police kicked down her door and threw a flash grenade into her apartment in Harlem. When we reached the name of Sean Bell, an African American woman student spoke out:

B., Hunter student: “Sean Bell got shot up on the day of his bachelor party, coming out of a strip club in Jamaica, Queens. Fifty bullets were shot into his car....They said he had a gun, but he didn’t. For that he got killed, a few hours before he was supposed to get married. So: for Sean Bell!”

Continuing down the list of names, one of the rally organizers asked, “How many of you remember the case of Amadou Diallo?”

A woman student responded: “I live up there, on Wheeler Avenue, and he just lifted up his wallet right outside his apartment and they shot him down, as many shots as it would take to kill an elephant: 41 shots. They searched his body and there wasn’t anything except his wallet. None of the officers went to jail. So then they open up a clinic named after Amadou Diallo, and where they killed him, they named that street Amadou Diallo Place. I used to watch what the [NYPD Street Crimes Unit]—people used to call them “the goonies” back then—was doing. Luckily they didn’t catch me. They went around in black unmarked cars, with about four white police officers in the car.”

Mario, Internationalist Club: “A few months before the Ferguson incident, a young man was detained. His name was Victor White III. It is amazing how this young man died. He was arrested [on March 3 in Iberia Parish, Louisiana], and the police searched him but found nothing on him. They handcuffed him and put him in the back of the police car. All of a sudden this young man was dead! They said he killed himself. How in this world can a person handcuffed behind his back, who had been searched, shoot himself in the right side of his chest? His name must have been Houdini. He was 22 years old. Remember his name, Victor White III, look him up. Enough is enough!”

Morgan, CSEW: “We live in an upside-down system. It’s a system that set itself up violently, and we live on top of that violence. The U.S. has a ‘Defense’ Department that’s the greatest aggressive force in world history, an offensive juggernaut, an imperial system. The ‘Justice’ Department is based on violent repression. Michael Brown is seen as a violent individual because he’s black, but the violence comes overwhelmingly from the ‘Justice’ Department and the prison complex. When protesters try to point out that

this ‘normal’ tragedy shouldn’t be normal, there’s further violence with deployments of the military. They want you to accept this kind of capital punishment, with unarmed people murdered by police—people called ‘violent,’ coded as ‘dangerous,’ and put to death.

The problem is who is in power. We need people who experience the brunt of this system to marshal the power that they do have. This is the point about potential union power. When we go on strike we’re going to be shutting things down in a system that wants it to be ‘normal’ when they kill people. When we go on strike they will call it illegal, since we have the Taylor Law in New York State: if you’re a transit worker, or a teacher, it’s illegal to go on strike. They say it’s essential services so how dare you shut it down—just like the bank bailout was ‘essential,’ just like their wars are ‘essential services’ because you need to ‘defend’ capital’s expansion as it takes over resources and destroys populations.

What we need is a new system, where we are in power. Who is ‘we’? Those who are not in control of capital, those who work, who work extremely hard, or are unemployed, those who have suffered in this system, are put in prison, have been disenfranchised. When they are in power, it will be a system we can all live in, and we can respect each other for the first time in history. And that’s why we need a revolution.”

Hunter student: “When I was 17 I was arrested; I fell in with the wrong crowd of guys one night. I got off with a slap on the wrist, even though I resisted arrest because they were undercover officers. The same police department gunned down an unarmed black teenager named Denzel Curnell; that was earlier this year [in Charleston, South Carolina]. The same police department that laughed and said “boys will be boys,” because I’m white, and it was in the South, later gunned down a boy who was about the same age as myself. Why does “boys will be boys” only apply to white boys such as myself, and how long does police violence have to go on until things change?”

Gordon, GC Advocate editor: “I can offer you all an anecdote about my personal experiences as a black man with the police in this country. My parents are from Jamaica and as I was growing up here in the United States, my father would always tell me that every time I interacted with the police I would have to be respectful, do what they say, really toe the line, because otherwise I would run the risk of suffering severe bodily harm. I don’t imagine that many white folks—and I grew up in a mostly white neighborhood—got that kind of talk from their parents. So if we fast-forward a few years, I was living in Philadelphia. Similarly to [the Alberta Spruill case], there was a police unit which came to my apartment at 4 a.m.; they didn’t use a flash-bang grenade, thankfully, but they broke down the door. They didn’t have



a warrant. They put me under arrest, and I was handcuffed. They said I “knew” what I did. They showed me a picture of a black man—clearly not me, with a different complexion, he was older, he was bald, he had a different weight. They looked at his picture, they looked at me, then they uncuffed me and said ‘Well, it’s all the same to us.’ And then they left.

A year before that I was also arrested, for what one of my friends called ‘being black in public.’ This was also in Philadelphia. I was walking to meet a friend after work, and I saw a black man being brutalized by the police. They were accusing him of resisting arrest. The arresting officer was a white man, he had called him a ‘nigger.’ The fellow that was being placed under arrest said, ‘OK, I don’t want to be arrested by you, have someone else arrest me.’ Then they tased him three times, and he was charged with ‘terroristic threats,’ which in Pennsylvania means up to three years in prison, because he supposedly threatened to fight the police officer. A 16-year-old girl filmed the tasing and was punched in the face [by the cops] and her phone was smashed on the ground. I and the arrested man’s brother were arrested for allegedly ‘inserting ourselves’ into a police investigation. The judge pressured us to plead guilty or no contest, but we both

pleaded not guilty. When the trial date came around we were told the charges had been dropped for lack of evidence. We both testified for the arrested man, and he got off, because it was a ludicrous charge. He was lucky that he survived being tased three times in the space of about two minutes.

Police brutality, particularly against blacks and Latinos, is not something that’s unique to New York or is an anomaly in Ferguson. It is something that is part and parcel to the social system which we currently inhabit. So—it needs to go.”

Gerónimo, worker at Liberato Restaurant and activist with the Laundry Workers Center (translated from Spanish): “My name is Gerónimo; I am a Mexican worker at a restaurant in the Bronx. We are here to support you and for you to support our struggle too. I’ve been working about eight years in a restaurant where they were not even paying us minimum wage. We’re fighting against this. We’re fighting for all the workers, in any restaurant or any other kind of work. Many people work 60 hours or more without getting overtime. In my case, I work 54 hours a week but they’ve never paid me overtime. We support you students, we hope that you too will win in your struggles, and we thank you for your support.”

Will, Hunter student: “I haven’t experienced police brutality against myself, but I can say something about the capitalist system that we live in. I’m sick and tired of living in a society where I have to go into debt in order to get an education. And then lots of us will be forced to do something we don’t like as a job, in order to get out of debt. Student debt is the only kind of debt that you can’t get out of, ever. If you declare bankruptcy, you still have to pay your student debt back. If you die, it goes to your spouse or your children.

We need to make huge changes in this capitalist society to get ourselves free. The police brutality against people of color in this country is the same kind of brutality that this country perpetrates on other people of color overseas. It’s just oppression so the people in power can make more money. It’s the same kind of oppression that’s been going on since the founding of the United States. First slavery, then slavery was overthrown and it became Jim Crow; then that was overturned and now it’s locking people up or killing people on the street. Things are not changing, and they won’t change unless people stand up and have their voices heard.”

Hunter student: “The Michael Brown shooting and the killing of so many young black men is a crisis for our generation, whether you’re white, black, Latina, anything—you should be concerned about this attack on people of our age group. You can pretend that you’re ignorant, that you don’t want to look up anything about it or get involved, that it’s ‘too political’—but it’s a crisis. When someone your age has a likelihood of being shot down for no reason, you should be afraid and you should be angry.”

Hunter student: “It’s called police brutality, but it’s really a war being waged against people of the cities by the police. That warfare is waged not only through physical violence but economic violence, like gentrification, running people out of their homes, out of their neighborhoods. It’s a systematic approach of oppression. And that war won’t end until people do something about it.”

Sándor, CSEW: “Where ‘race’ and racial oppression come from is the capitalist system. This isn’t just ‘a theory.’ It’s what you find out when you look at history. Michael Brown was killed in Ferguson, Missouri. The Dred Scott case originated nearby. Dred Scott was a slave in Missouri whose owner had taken him to a free state. He sued for his freedom and the case went up to the Supreme Court, where Chief Justice Taney famously declared that black people ‘had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.’ We go from the Dred Scott case to the killing of Michael Brown and that of Eric Garner here [In New York City], with a death sentence on the spot. First they kill them, then they try to kill their character.

On August 23 a march was held for Eric Garner’s family. Union leaderships often don’t do what they should, but in this case the United Federation of Teachers supported that march in solidarity with the Garner family, as did the CUNY faculty/staff union. The Patrolmen’s Benevolent Associa-

tion launched a campaign against the teachers union, saying how dare they take an ‘anti-police’ stand by marching that day. A lot of teachers say: How could we not stand with our students? Who is being targeted by stop-and-frisk? You can see it at CUNY too, at the subway exit at Hostos Community College in the South Bronx, and lots of other places.

For unions to take a stand against racist police brutality is important, but it’s only a beginning. How many petitions have there been about these issues—and what have they accomplished? But what if the unions didn’t just go to a march but actually used their power against racist terror? For example, the people who drive the subway and the buses—their sons and daughters continue to be targeted by the police under Mayor de Blasio and his appointee Bill Bratton. The next time the NYPD carries out one of these racist murders, the transit workers and other unions should shut the city down. Wall Street can’t get its workers if there’s no subway. We’re talking about the power of the working class. We won’t get anywhere with illusions in the Democratic or Republican parties—only by exercising that power.”

Hunter student: “It’s no coincidence that as the National Guard was called in to occupy Ferguson, the occupation of Gaza turned extremely violent. Working people have to be walled off by the state, and when those walls don’t work the state will use violence to keep those working people down.

You can see that clearly when the military National Guard was called into Ferguson to restore ‘order’ and when the Israeli Defense Forces were sent into Gaza to kill Palestinians. The state will always use violence to defend profit, from this part of the world all the way to other parts of the world. The struggles of minorities in this country are intimately linked to Palestinian struggle and those all across the world for people who are oppressed.”

Amy, Hunter College: “As a Hispanic woman, I’ve been living in the Bronx the majority of my life. All too many of us are more comfortable leading our own individual lives than caring about what’s going on. Yet we’re witnessing systematic violence against the very people who have been here since slavery. Then there’s the social question of how people are divided up: light-skinned against

How Do I Love Thee?

aya de leon

A love poem from the Ferguson, MO police dept. to Black residents: An informal emulation of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Sonnet 43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee with the blooming red rose of police bullets to thy firstborn sons.
Like a coy and unsigned suitor’s note leaving thee to wonder exactly who sent these flowers.
I love thee in the full knighthood of riot gear body armor that exposes only my amorous motives.
I love thee with the sharp cracking kiss of a baton on your tender temple, wrist, shoulder...
I love thee with the seductive siren perfume of tear gas.
I love thee with the steady, rumbling march of tanks on residential city streets.
I love thee with the warm, heavy-armed embrace of curfew and martial law.
I love thee with the sly lover’s denial in public, all the better to heighten my passion in night’s clandestine shadows.
And when thou would protest against my love with smoke and gas-choked breath,
I shall but love thee better after death.

This poem was originally published by the Feminist Wire (thefeministwire.com) on 22 August, and is reproduced here with permission of the author.

dark, I have money and you don't—these are all derived from capitalist ideas. You are idolizing the very thing that's oppressing you!"

Rally organizer: "Those that organize against racist police terror—or against the oppression of women, or against wage theft and other things discussed here today—are usually radicals. Being radical means getting to the root of things. That's what we have to do to the bottom of racist police brutality. We'd like people to think about the idea that racial oppression and police violence are related to capitalism; about connections between racist repression here and imperialist war abroad, between racial oppression and the oppression of women; and what we mean by class struggle and socialist revolution."

A discussion followed on the struggle against the militarization of CUNY and how ROTC and military recruiters target working-class students:

B., Hunter student: "That's how they got me—ROTC. I bumped into a recruiter outside of my house. He was doing all this convincing, to get me straight from high school. I actually did it, but thank God I got out of it. I don't think you should be fighting for something when you don't understand what it's about. I signed up right around the time the war started. We were being sent to Iraq. I found out that 250 people from my unit ended up passing away. I feel like you should be informed, rather than letting these people brainwash you with all these promises that aren't really going to happen. We could make a difference if we stand together and fight together."

Allison, Internationalist Clubs: "This isn't just some issue of police 'reform.' We don't need 'nicer' police, we don't need 'better training' for police. The police are trained. And we're not only talking about situations like Ferguson and the situation with the killing of Eric Garner. We're not talking about a few renegade cops being more aggressive than necessary. We're talking about police officials traveling to Israel to learn occupation tactics. We're talking about police being supplied with military equipment and armored cars, even in places in rural Maine.

This isn't just about 'excessive militarization' of the police force. This is the nature of the police, the armed force of the state. And we don't need to make sure that the police 'Serve and Protect,' because they already do. The police do

not serve and protect 'the people,' not black, Latino, immigrant workers. The police serve and protect exactly what they were created to serve and protect: the capitalist system. And capitalism thrives on racism. Just as the U.S. imperialist operations in other countries serve the interests of capital abroad, the police serve to repress those within this country who pose a threat to the existence and stability of capitalism. But I also wanted to say that this system is not eternal. It's actually very sick, and we need to do more than try to patch it up and treat the symptoms. We need to put forward a revolutionary program that can challenge and overthrow the existing system itself, because that is when we will begin to see the end of tragedies like this, and the end of racism."

A rally organizer spoke about how the origins of the police in the U.S. lie in the "slave patrols," established by the



slave owners in the South. Charleston, South Carolina then created a uniformed, armed paramilitary force in 1783 to control the city's large slave population, with other Southern cities following suit. Half a century later, Boston established the first paid police force in the North, followed by New York. The speaker also pointed out that the system of armories, like the one on 67th Street across from Hunter College, was set up in the wake of the Great Labor Uprising of 1877. In St. Louis, Missouri, one of the hubs of that mass labor revolt, black and white workers united in militant struggle that led the capitalist class to build up its repressive forces against the threat of social revolution. This is vividly depicted in the documentary "1877: The Grand Army of Starvation," produced by CUNY's American Social History Project. 🇺🇸

For further analysis, visit www.internationalist.org and edworkersunite.blogspot.com. For information on future activities, write cunyinternationalists@gmail.com.

CUNY and the Boycott

On the Proposal for the DSC to Boycott Academic Institutions in Israel

conor tomás reed and gordon barnes

IN APRIL 2013, THE Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) became the first United States academic body to pass a resolution boycotting formal relations with Israeli universities. In December, the American Studies Association (ASA) and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) also passed boycott resolutions, followed by the Critical Ethnic Studies Association (CESA) in July 2014. These resolutions were adopted in response to the 2005 call from Palestinian civil society to boycott academic institutions in Israel, as part of a wider Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israeli occupation of Palestinian people's land, resources, and cultures. Each resolution pointed out that the boycott does not apply to individual Israeli students, scholars, or disciplines, but Israeli academic institutions that are complicit with the state's violence against Palestinians.

The response to the resolutions—especially towards the ASA, whose membership contains 5,000 scholars, many of them highly distinguished in the academy—was largely characterized by a flurry of reactionary Zionist sentiment buttressed by liberal condemnation of the suppression of “academic freedom.” University administrations across the United States condemned the ASA resolution, including former Graduate Center President and then-CUNY Interim Chancellor William Kelly, who used the opportunity to announce a new partnership between the Zicklin Business School at Baruch College and the College of Management Academic Studies in Rishon LeZion, which has “set itself the goal of creating robot-powered applications particularly for the military and security forces” of both Israel and the United States.

Kristofer Peterson-Overton's article on “Academic Freedom and the Boycott” in the February 2014 issue of the *Advocate* eloquently points out the inherent fallacies in attempting to prevent the academic boycott on grounds of the

purported suppression of academic freedoms. If anything, pro-Palestinian activists and scholars have been restricted in their expressions of academic freedom. This is most saliently evinced by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's decision to rescind an offer of employment to Steven Salaita after his tweets criticizing the Israeli state and its supporters this summer during Operation Protective Edge—which resulted in 2,143 dead (including 578 children) and 11,100 wounded in Gaza—galvanized anti-Palestinian UIUC donors to press for what in effect was a termination of employment. Additionally, various chapters of the student organization, Students for Justice in Palestine, have experience repression on campuses across the United States.

The recent resolution (see page 5 for full text) proposed by an ad-hoc group of students from several CUNY Graduate Center programs, DSC chartered organizations, and political affiliations, is in fact part of earlier expressions of academic freedom and in-depth dialogue, not an attempt to squelch the open exchange of information and ideas. The politics behind the resolution had been discussed in a widely publicized, co-sponsored, and attended April 2014 Graduate Center event, “BDS and Academic Freedom,” as well as previously in various events around CUNY, such as a February 2013 Brooklyn College panel featuring Judith Butler and Omar Barghouti on the “BDS Movement for Palestinian Rights” (both of which detractors from inside and outside the university vehemently tried to shut down). An earlier iteration of the resolution had been discussed and widely supported in the May 2014 DSC plenary, although the meeting did not have quorum to conduct a vote. It is a democratic decision, following all of the formally recognized student government proceedings, which will ultimately demonstrate that the student body of the Graduate Center stands in solidarity with oppressed peoples in Palestine, and against the atrocities committed by the Israel Defense Forces in particular and the Israeli state in general.

Clarity after the Dust and Bluster Settle

THE FIRST DSC PLENARY of the year was held on 12 September. Over one hundred people crowded into a DSC room to witness and participate in the debate over the resolution. *Haaretz*, a liberal Israeli newspaper, sent a journalist to cover the proceedings. That whole week, DSC officers had fielded an avalanche of threatening phone calls, emails, and tweets urging them to abandon the resolution. Members from such varied DSC chartered organizations as the Adjunct Project, AELLA, Africa Research Group, Africana Studies Group, Comp Comm, Critical Palestine Studies Group, CUNY Internationalist Marxist Club, GC Poetics Group, Immigration Working Group, Jewish Connection Group, Middle Eastern Studies Association, Postcolonial Studies Group, Prison Studies Group, QUNY, Space Time Research Collective, and Women of Color Network, and representatives from CUNY for Palestine, Hillel, Stand With Us, Students for Justice in Palestine, and the Israel Campus were also present for the debate.

The plenary was chaired under Robert's Rules of Order, open to the public, with speaking rights restricted to those with credentials (though DSC representatives could cede their time to members of the audience). Prior to the boycott resolution debate, the plenary heard several concerns about sexual harassment in GC housing and the need for Title IX awareness, a potential pattern of women students of color's fellowships being revoked because of vague "progress challenges," graduate student representation in the Professional Staff Congress and in contract negotiations, and NYSHIP's potentially illegal switch of mental health coverage to the company Value Options.

During the preceding week, opponents of the resolution argued that GC students who observed Shabbat were being left out of democratic participation by the DSC plenary being held on a Friday night. However, when the aforementioned issues were discussed, not once was a concern over democratic representation raised. It was only aired when the boycott resolution was brought to the table. This makes the opponents' accusations especially disingenuous, as if Sabbath-observing students would only care about the academic boycott, but not sexual violence or union democracy. It is also important to note that DSC plenaries have been scheduled, for at least the last several years, on Friday nights with no condemnation of the practice until now. When the boycott resolution came up for discussion, DSC Co-Chair of Communications and chairperson Dominique Nisperos facilitated the decision to allot 20 minutes of speaking time in support of the boycott, 20 minutes for those opposed, and 20 minutes for undecided representatives.

Those in favor of passing the resolution were randomly selected to speak first. Sean Kennedy ceded his time to me,

Conor Tomás Reed, who spoke first on behalf of those who supported the resolution. I pointed out that the resolution wasn't being put forth in a vacuum. The American Studies Association, Association for Asian American Studies, and Native American and Indigenous Studies Association—bodies comprised of thousands of colleagues in the academy—have all voted to support this boycott. Palestinian civil society (unions, schools, community and legal organizations, religious groups, neighborhood associations, cultural clubs, etcetera) have made a broad call for global solidarity to support BDS. Furthermore, I pointed out that the United States government funds the state of Israel, over three billion USD per annum, and Israeli academic institutions provide research, scholarships, funding, personnel, and ideological backing to the Israeli military as well as to occupation and settlement projects. I cited the recent "Operation Protective Edge" Israeli incursion into Gaza in July-August of 2014 as placing the urgency of this issue in stark relief, and then reiterated that the boycott does not target specific individuals or disciplines, but academic institutions. I also highlighted that the resolution does not restrict travel into Israel—indeed, one CUNY Professor, Sarah Schulman, had honored the boycott call by creating a "solidarity tour" in Israel and Palestine, as detailed in her 2012 book *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International*.

Robert Bell, the representative for the Middle Eastern Studies Program, spoke next, further stressing that the nature of BDS was not intended to stifle debate, but to target institutions within Israeli society that are complicit with the oppression of Palestinians. Nirit Ben-Ari spoke next, after Balthazar Becker, an English Program representative, ceded his time. Ben-Ari, an alumna of the Political Science Program, had lived in Israel and worked at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and voiced that many Israelis support the boycott. She reminded the audience not to conflate criticism of Israel with anti-Semitic rhetoric and that conscientious people should support the academic institutions boycott as a "basic act of democracy that is non-violent." She also acknowledged that anti-occupation Israelis, in such groups as Boycott from Within, have been some of the most ardent and articulate proponents of the boycott. Ben-Ari concluded that support of the DSC resolution was a moral act that students at the Graduate Center could take to support oppressed Palestinians.

Velina Manolova of the English Program then considered the reasons why a body such as the DSC was involved in such a debate. She pointed out that the resolution has no chance in stopping the oppression of Palestinians, but that it was a measure through which bigwigs in government would feel pressure from their constituents to rethink their relationship with the Israeli state. Manolova also pointed to the

issue of Palestinian and BDS activists at CUNY being intimidated, as well as being spied upon in recent months. Colin Ashley, of the Sociology Program and former DSC Co-chair for Business, spoke next, again reiterating that the proposed boycott was against structures rather than people. He argued that real lives are at stake and that power between Israelis and Palestinians is grossly asymmetrical. Ashley pointed out that this inequity stifles voices and any modicum of social parity, and that BDS “evens the playing field.” He emphasized that Palestinian lives and voices in this situation, where power is unequal, has real consequences in academic access and processes. Ashley concluded that the resolution was a necessity if the GC student body was in favor of supporting



the voices of the oppressed and marginalized.

Sean Kennedy of the English program, another one of the principal individuals behind the resolution, urged the DSC representative to take a stand on the issue and mentioned those students not able to attend but were in favor of such a resolution being passed, namely Rayya El Zein, one of the original authors of the resolution. Erik Wallenberg of the History Program spoke last. He suggested utilizing the term “apartheid” to describe the Israeli social, political, and economic subjugation of Palestinians, and likened the contemporary BDS movement to the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa in the latter part of the twentieth century. Wallenberg went on to discuss the Salaita case and why it was important now, more than ever before, for the DSC to “stand on the right side of history” and challenge the United States’ facilitation of Israeli aggression against the population of Palestine. He also recognize that Palestinians don’t have “academic freedom” under imposed “apartheid” conditions, are offered only limited mobility, are forced to use bombed-out schools, and have few, if any, academic fellowships.

Those opposed to the resolution spoke next. Anick Boyd of the Comparative Literature Program ceded her time to

Asaf Shamis. Shamis, also an alumnus of the Political Science Program, eschewed the notion that the debate was specific to “pro” versus “anti” Palestinian agendas. Rather, he stressed that the “real issue” is academic freedom. Shamis claimed that the current resolution endorsed the restriction of knowledge based on nationality. Erin McKinney-Prupis of the Public Health Program spoke next. She led with the technological and medical advances achieved by Israeli doctors and how such achievements were ostensibly accomplished in conjunction with support from academic institutions within the United States. McKinney-Prupis went on to mention some 60 ongoing joint-research projects between Palestinian and Israeli scholars. She stated that she found

the resolution to be anti-Semitic and felt “targeted as a Jew” and that the resolution, if passed, would drive a wedge between Israeli and Palestinian students. McKinney-Prupis also argued that any sort of BDS legislation would fail to achieve peace and questioned why Israeli institutions are targeted in the resolution when other states also violate human rights.

Yuval Abrams of the Philosophy Program spoke next on behalf of those opposed to the resolution. Abrams criticized BDS in general and the DSC resolution in particular

for failing to “foster discussion.” While recognizing that Palestinian students and scholars have their rights violated, he did not see the tactic of boycotting of Israeli universities as a remedy, arguing that Israeli academic institutions are powerful engines for social change and are a powerful arena of left-wing thought. He also mentioned that Israeli academics traveling to the United States need funding from their universities, so communication and fiscal matters should remain open on an institutional level. Abrams questioned whether restricting the movement of people is beneficial in achieving peace. He also pointed to CUNY’s current partnerships with Israeli universities as a way to expand dialogue, rather than severing it.

Cosim Sayid, also in the Philosophy Program, spoke after Abrams. Sayid was “shocked” to receive the resolution, which he sees as opposing academic freedom, citing other problems at CUNY that should be of more immediate concern. He criticized the DSC for allegedly jumping “petitions and other democratic means,” putting the resolution on the plenary agenda. Sayid expressed fears that the success of the resolution would prove deleterious to the DSC’s relationship with the new president, chancellor, as well as with the board

of trustees. Citing the University of Haifa, where 33% of the student body is Arab, Sayid stated that the political situation in the region “doesn’t sound like apartheid.”

Naomi Perley, a Music program representative, spoke briefly, reiterating earlier claims, before ceding her time to Eric Alterman, a professor at Brooklyn College. Alterman began his talk by stating that even if he agreed with the boycott, he would not pass it on Shabbat. He likened the proponents of the resolution to “communists making decision behind closed doors in the middle of the night.” Alterman contested the idea that the boycott does not impact individuals, arguing that scholars need institutional support to attend conferences. He also put forth the idea that any BDS measure was actually “pro-occupation” as it singles out Israel for opprobrium and makes it difficult to find a two-state solution. Alterman summed up the speeches on behalf of the opposition camp by stating that the resolution would foster contempt of free speech, that the proposed resolution, as well as BDS in general, was “about doing away with the state of Israel,” and finally, that it would have been an act of self-disrespect to vote for such a measure.

Undecided representatives spoke to the plenary last. Elyse Steenberg of the Music Program worried as to the professional consequences of endorsing the resolution, principally for research and future career positions. Laurie Hurson of the Environmental Psychology program, while leaning towards supporting the boycott (though with some issues in the wording of the current resolution) pointed out that she was at the plenary to represent her constituents, many of who are undecided. She went on to request more time to speak with people in her program. Liza Shapiro, David Nagy, and Ian Haberman, representatives from the Comparative Literature, Philosophy, and Economics Programs respectively, went on to echo Hurson’s desire to have more time to discuss the resolution with their constituents.

What followed the speeches of each of the three camps was a general conversation about direct democracy versus liberal representative democracy. This was arguably a tactic for certain DSC representatives to justify tabling the decision until a future meeting without actually talking about the specific issues of the boycott resolution. It seemed that a good share of voting participants in the room didn’t sufficiently gauge themselves and their programs in order to decide on the matter, and were concerned with receiving any backlash that may occur. However, one Anthropology student, who couldn’t speak before the allotted discussion time ended, later explained that their program representative had promptly used the previous week to share the resolution with their fellow students, gather opinions, answer questions, and be prepared to give a fully informed vote at the plenary. It remains unclear why this active representa-

tive democratic process wasn’t more widely practiced across the programs. Soon after a majority vote was made to table the resolution until the next DSC plenary, most of the room cleared out, which made the boycott opponents’ accusations regarding democratic participation doubly disingenuous. Those who did remain honored the sometimes long, tenuous, often unsung, but exceedingly crucial project of democracy.

Anti-racism, not Anti-Semitism

AS ARDENT SUPPORTERS OF this boycott resolution, we underscore our condemnation of one of the most slanderous and misguided accusations waged thus far—that the resolution targets Jews. For the record, Jews at the Graduate Center—alongside Afro-Americans, Arabs, West Indians, Eastern Europeans, Latin Americans, South Asians, and more—contributed to writing the resolution, spoke on its behalf, and aptly identified the historic significance of taking a(nother) concrete stand against a Eurocentric nation-state that espouses a violent nationalist ideology predicated on racial supremacy, hyper-spatial policing, forced expulsions, and ethnic segregation. As Ben-Ari pointed out in the plenary, we should not conflate criticisms of the Israeli state with anti-Semitism. The criticisms put forth in the current resolution, and of BDS movements more generally, do not address some essentialized “Jewish character,” but hold accountable the actions of the state of Israel as a polity. The claims of an ethno-religious bias in the resolution are a misreading, whether intentional or mistaken, and actually elide the poly-ethnic alliances that Graduate Center students are creating in support of BDS.

Furthermore, Alterman’s red-baiting comments about midnight show trials, while not representative thinking of all those who opposed the resolution, willfully obscured an abundant record of Jewish left-wing radicalism, while demonstrating through his most callous attempts at fear-mongering that, to some, this critical debate is more about preserving the status quo in Israel than ameliorating the oppression of Palestinians. Alterman’s selective snapshot of Jewish political history refuses to recognize the communist, socialist, anarchist, anti-fascist, and anti-apartheid Jews who led social movements in the United States (including CUNY!) and around the globe. This longer perspective is needed to understand why, in 1914, as Arthur Lieberman documents in *Jews and the Left*, Zionist organizations in the entire United States numbered in total about 12,000 members—the same number of Jewish members in the Lower East Side branch of the U.S. Socialist Party. To equate Zionism with Judaism erases entire generations of Jewish ideas, actions, and political traditions who oppose(d) the kinds of atrocities that the state of Israel currently conducts and

tries to justify.

More recently, a public stand taken by over 350 Holocaust survivors, their descendants, and victims of the Nazi Genocide, in a statement to *The New York Times*, also offers a crucial alternative reading on the politics espoused by Jewish people. The statement concludes:

“We must raise our collective voices and use our collective power to bring about an end to all forms of racism, including the ongoing genocide of Palestinian people. We call for an immediate end to the siege against and blockade of Gaza. We call for the full economic, cultural and academic boycott of Israel. ‘Never again’ must mean NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE!”

Jews and Israelis represent a growing number of BDS’s most incisive advocates who call for social justice movements to confront all Israeli institutions that perpetuate the suppression of Palestinian (as well as Arab Israeli and asylum-seeking African refugees’) political, social, and economic rights. Anti-occupation Israelis themselves recognize that Israeli citizens reap varying material benefits of these state-sanctioned inequities, and that therefore their participation in tangible solidarity actions is necessary for a viable solution. The BDS movement recognizes that anti-Semitism and anti-Arabism/Islamophobia are two sides of the same violent bigotry, and that a multi-faceted resurgence of radical coalitional unity against racism is necessary to confront all attacks on people’s ethnic, cultural, and religious identities.

As a result of this anti-racist work, BDS supporters have been able to highlight a nuanced debate involving whether Israel is a colonial-settler regime that reproduces apartheid policies akin to indigenous genocide in the formation of the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; United States colonialism in Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Hawaii; the long history of European colonization of African, India, Latin America, and the Caribbean; and the most noted comparison, the South African apartheid regime. *Hafrada* (the literal translation from Hebrew being “caused separation”), a state policy of Israel since the 1990s, advocates unilateral separation and segregation of Palestinians from Israelis. This policy provides the ideological as well as the material basis for the subjugation, destruction, and theft of Palestinian land and resources. As well, South African Archbishop and Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu stated in 2010, “I have been to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and I have witnessed the racially segregated roads and housing that reminded me so much of the conditions we experienced in South Africa under the racist system of Apartheid.” The flawed assumption (held by some of the resolution’s opponents) that a two-state solution is necessary for peace, justice, and an equitable society evinces a process

that would in fact further segment and box off Palestinian voices, more so than they have already been marginalized. To agitate for a democratic and secular Palestine, a one-state solution, where Jews and Arabs are full and equal citizens with equitable access to resources, employment, suffrage, religious affiliation, and freedom of movement, can advance a unique goal of transformative justice.

Academic Freedom for Whom?

AS STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS, our relations to academic institutions at home and around the globe, far from being taken for granted, should always be critically examined and (re-)constituted according to how our moral and political views coincide or conflict with these institutions. With this “critical university studies” structural analysis, we emphasize that the boycott resolution does not abrogate the academic freedom of Israeli students and scholars. In fact, we identify these students and scholars as key interlocutors in a critical appraisal of Israeli academic institutions’ complicity (ranging from silence to jingoistic cheerleading) in the government and military’s almost ceaseless immiseration of Palestinian life. If anything, the boycott resolution represents the DSC’s more amplified capacity for academic freedom, in that it demonstrates a careful thought process of deciding which institutional ties, if any, should be made.

In particular, as the resolution mentions, an urgency to divest the developing institutional ties between the Zicklin Business School at Baruch College and the College of Management Academic Studies in Rishon LeZion moves beyond an ambiguous debate about “dialogue” and actually enters the inter-embedded terrain of moral and financial accountability. The Zicklin Business School’s affairs especially warrant scrutiny, in light of being charged in 2012 with fixing students’ grades so that they could maintain high-profile Wall Street internships. Perhaps instead of creating new academic partnerships, CUNY should more amply fund all of its existing colleges.

But why, we must ask, does prevailing discourse tend to rush to defend the academic freedom of Israelis, while saying nothing of Palestinian students, scholars, disciplines, and universities? As Curtis Marez, former president of the American Studies Association, wrote in a widely circulated New Year’s Eve 2013 op-ed in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* defending the ASA’s academic boycott,

“If there is any group whose academic freedom is being denied, it is the Palestinians. The Israeli occupation prevents Palestinian academics from accessing outside institutions of higher learning and professional conferences, hampering their ability to do their work, while Israeli authorities make it difficult for foreign academics to travel to Gaza and the West Bank.”

As for Palestinian students, their universities are directly targeted for Israeli military bombing campaigns, as the Islamic University in Gaza endured in 2008 and 2014, which they can't rebuild because Israel limits the amount of concrete that comes into Gaza. Palestinian students face daily checkpoints that impede movement to and from school, cannot travel from Gaza to the West Bank to attend lectures and conferences, are denied entrance by Israel into the United States on Fulbright scholarships, and hold graduation ceremonies that honor the names of scores of killed classmates. It's time to dramatically reframe the debate: the academic and political freedoms of Israelis—and of ourselves—must never come at the expense, indeed the erasure, of the academic and political freedoms of Palestinians.

To go further, as Graduate Center students who are also contingent academic workers, this debate on academic and political freedoms must be reframed as a labor issue. The precarity of our own positions in a university that is public, urban, multi-racial, poor, and increasingly militarized and surveilled, likens our experiences much more to Palestinians than Israelis. We too face checkpoints, harassment, political repression and exploitation, paltry resources, distant wealthy administrators, occupying police and security forces, and the growing names of the dead and dying, albeit on a much less catastrophic scale. When we demand better living, working, and studying conditions, our claims for justice resonate within a broader chorus of the oppressed.

To “strike” against occupation—and what increasing numbers of people characterize as apartheid—with this academic boycott is to join our colleagues in several academic associations that have lucidly recognized their labor power in this movement, as well as to stand alongside the International Warehouse and Longshore Union (ILWU) that refused in August 2014 to unload Israeli Zim ship goods in Oakland, to embrace the historical actions of the 1955-1956 Montgomery Bus Boycott and 1965 United Farm Workers grape boycott (among so many others), and to join the efforts of such cross-industry coalitions as U.S. Labor for Palestine.

Enact Democracy at the Graduate Center

IN HINDSIGHT, WE ASSESS that the undecided representatives in the DSC plenary, more than the resolution's opponents, are the most crucial faction who will determine whether the resolution will pass. Those still undecided have taken the step to become intellectually and politically animated by debates that will determine not just the future of the Palestine-Israel conflict, and the United States' intimately

implicated role in it, but our own moral compasses in the academy. Altogether, had a vote been taken, the boycott could potentially have been defeated. So even though DSC members voted to table the resolution until a future meeting that would not conflict with Shabbat (a first in DSC history), this is arguably a positive development for supporters of the resolution.

We now have more time to talk with people in departments, do info tablings on campuses, write newspaper op-eds, and activate the many students/faculty/staff BDS advocates in the Graduate Center who were not in the room.

The question of democracy in the DSC is certainly important, and did have a place in the debate, although not at the expense of discussing what stance the boycott intends to enact. We recognize that some of the wording in the resolution warrants further clarification, as should certain provisions and their methods of implementation. In spite of this, the philosophical, political, and labor foundations of

The boycott resolution demonstrates a careful thought process of deciding which institutional ties, if any, should be made.

the resolution remain exceedingly legitimate.

While BDS measures alone will not liberate Palestinians, the endorsement of the DSC resolution amplifies the wider cause of human rights and dignity in the face of horrific state violence. BDS offers a way for those of us in the United States to directly support the Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation and repression, as well as Islamophobia and targeted surveillance of Arabs and Muslims in the United States, and an essentializing notion that would assume all Jews support Israel's actions. Endorsing the resolution is a moral decision that supports, on multiple levels, the oppressed and ostracized and it takes a stand on the historically marginalized issue of neocolonialism.

The next time that this boycott resolution comes to a DSC plenary, it should be voted upon and roundly passed. The road to collective liberation is long (66 years since the Nakba, 71 years since the Warsaw Ghetto uprising), and so this is one step of many in creating a vibrant political culture that can affirmatively support human life and dignity for everyone, but especially for those who are most oppressed by—and most resilient against—militaries and nation-states guided by ethnic supremacist ideologies like Israel and the United States. We encourage you to reach out to your DSC program representative and tell them what you think of the resolution so that they can knowledgeably—with principle—vote on this important decision. 🌍

Devalued Option

New Mental Health Insurance Carrier ValueOptions Offers Less Value and Fewer Options

**christina nadler, jennifer prince,
and jennifer chancellor**

WHEN THE NEW YORK State Health Insurance Plan (NYSHIP) made an abrupt change of course, switching Mental Health and Substance Abuse (MHSA) carriers, after having stated there would be no change, and did not notified its enrollees until days after the change had gone into effect, many were left trying to figure out what this change meant for them. Over a month later, there was still a lack of clear and concise information from NYSHIP or the new carrier, ValueOptions, about their services or the transition from OptumHealth. Students continue to struggle not only with the transition, but also with the inadequate service provided by ValueOptions.

Mental health and substance abuse care is important, especially for graduate students, who have higher rates of depression and anxiety than the general public. Despite the commonness of mental health disorders in graduate school, it is hard for most people to talk about these issues because of the shame and stigma surrounding them, and because they are generally considered private. Consequently, it can be difficult to organize around mental health concerns, since doing so would require to bring a personal matter to a public and professional setting. This has proven true in our efforts to resolve the problems created by the switch to ValueOptions. The people affected by this change, however, are a vulnerable population who need a path cleared for them. Instead, NYSHIP has dropped several major obstacles on the road to students' mental health and recovery.

In the fall of 2013, students enrolled in NYSHIP began to hear rumors of their mental health coverage changing to a new carrier. By December, we were told that the switch would not take place and were issued by mail the benefits booklet about our coverage, which indicated OptumHealth would remain our provider. On 6 January 2014, students were mailed a notice that our carrier had in fact changed five days prior. This switch caused numerous difficulties for The Graduate Center students. The most immediate issue

affected students seeing OptumHealth in-network providers who suddenly found their therapists were no longer in network. ValueOptions offered a path for providers to become in-network, but because of the poor reputation of the company among some circles of providers, many chose not to be in a network known for low reimbursements and payment delays.

Students choosing to remain with providers with whom they had built relationships but were no longer in-network now found themselves having to submit their own claims, and this was no easy task. Customer service representatives gave differing information, as some students were told to submit one claim form, other students were told to submit another. One ValueOptions claim form even requests that the member make every effort to print in red ink, in order to expedite service. ValueOptions also has different claim form standards than OptumHealth. For example, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) code that must be included on every form needs a second decimal; whereas OptumHealth accepted code 123.4, ValueOptions requires a provider to indicate a more specific diagnosis, such as 123.45. If this difference in routine was accidentally overlooked by the student or provider when filling out the claims form, the result was a denial of the claim.

When students began submitting claims, there were reimbursement delays, as the company was not adequately prepared to start providing service. Customer service representatives indicated they were taking longer to get reimbursements mailed out since this was the first time students were being entered in their system. Some students and providers had to resubmit claim forms up to three times by mail, because they were denied for missing decimals or had signatures in the wrong place. These delays meant that the reimbursement checks students had been expecting before their next payments were due to their providers were delayed, and students were either burdened with having to use savings—in the rare instance an underpaid graduate student had any—or ask their providers to provide services without

payment until the claim check arrived. Though one expects mental health care providers to be empathetic, it is unreasonable and exploitative to assume that they should work without pay. As students, we are faced with issues of late pay, an epidemic within CUNY's payroll system, and we should not be driven to force our mental health providers into this arrangement as well. Additionally, some students found that they could no longer be reimbursed at the rate that they had been by OptumHealth, putting both them and their providers in a difficult situation. To preserve the intimate bond between therapist and patient, a clear and consistent system of monetary remuneration is necessary. The work of treatment should occur without the unfair and awkward negotiation of an unexpected pay decrease for a caring and hardworking provider, the menace of discontinuation of therapy altogether, or the burden of having to take on additional student debt to pay the differential. The stress of the process on both patient and provider, in addition to the potential disruption to sometimes life-saving treatment, is unacceptable.

Those who were actually able to make it this far with continued treatment encountered a new hurdle: the Outpatient Review, a form one must fill out to receive authorization for continued mental health coverage after the initial fifteen in-network sessions, or after the first ten sessions with an out-of-network provider. This form is much more invasive than the OptumHealth form, asking about participation in community groups, for example. Furthermore, ValueOptions will only authorize 12 sessions at a time, whereas OptumHealth was flexible. Filling out this form every 12 sessions brought students continued anxiety that their treatment might be discontinued on a technicality. One student reported that she had called to confirm with ValueOptions that her provider needed to submit this form after a certain number of sessions.

She was told that sessions had been pre-authorized, and the form was not required. Yet, when the student submitted a claim, it was denied. After calling ValueOptions again, she was told by another customer service representative that she indeed needed to submit the Outpatient Review, and that, if she mailed it right away, the claims would be reviewed. The final hurdle, if not a complete barrier to mental health coverage, is that once that student did submit the new Outpatient Review for continued session authorization, she received a letter stating that ValueOptions was going to discontinue covering her treatment. Harold Levine, a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine and Director of the Northeast Service Center of ValueOptions had reviewed the case and decided that treatment was not necessary. Levine's "review indicates further treatment does not meet the clinical criteria of [the] benefit plan because [the] provider's treatment plan is not appropriate to [the] condition." To be clear, this denial of

coverage was issued in reference to sessions the student was explicitly told on the phone were already authorized. Not only was this student left terrified that she would lose vital mental health coverage, but she was also left without reimbursement for months of sessions that she had been told would be covered.

Though ValueOptions has since reversed the above decision on appeal from this particular student, there is no way to know how many have faced similar problems and have not received an adequate resolution. Gathering accurate information on how many students have been hurt by this company has been, and continues to be, a difficult process due to the aforementioned shame and stigma.

It is unethical that ValueOptions would employ these bureaucratic tactics to effectively withhold mental health services from those they are supposed to serve—not only CUNY and SUNY student workers, but also other New York State employees and their families. What is more, one particular aspect of this strategy, the prior authorization requirement applied to psychotherapy benefits, even appears to be illegal.

The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA), a federal law that compels insurance plans to provide their enrollees equal access to physical and mental health services, "requires group health plans and health insurance issuers to ensure that financial requirements (such as co-pays, deductibles) and treatment limitations (such as visit limits) applicable to mental health or substance use disorder (MH/SUD) benefits are no more restrictive than the predominant requirements or limitations applied to substantially all medical/surgical benefits" (U.S. Dept. of Labor 2010). Because NYSHIP has a prior authorization requirement for psychotherapy under ValueOptions that does not exist for the vast majority of physical medicine services covered by the Plan, it is in violation of MHPAEA standards. OptumHealth, the previous mental health benefits provider for NYSHIP, also required prior authorization for therapy visits exceeding a set number of sessions at one time, but discontinued the practice in 2011.

In a letter dated 3 March 2014, Seth P. Stein, Esq., Executive Director and General Counsel for the New York State Psychiatric Association (NYSPA), brought this matter to the attention of Governor Cuomo and asked for his assistance in rectifying the inequity imposed by ValueOptions' prior authorization requirement. The three authors of this article wrote to Stein on September 5, asking whether he had received a response from the Governor's office and what, if any, next steps the NYSPA had planned. At the time of this article's publication, we have not received a response.

Prior attempts to resolve problems with ValueOptions within CUNY were met with bureaucratic issues just as

frustrating as that encountered in dealings with ValueOptions itself. When NYSHIP reversed course and informed enrollees of a new Mental Health and Substance Abuse plan five days after it had gone into effect, the Doctoral Students' Council (DSC) learned about the change through an email from The Graduate Center's NYSHIP Coordinator, Scott Voorhees. Voorhees and DSC representatives, including the writers of this article, scrambled to find out more information to benefit students covered by NYSHIP and their families, but the botched rollout along with contradictory information from ValueOptions' customer service representatives complicated the task. During the first two months of 2014, students who were experiencing problems with ValueOptions were sending emails and meeting personally with the DSC and Voorhees. While a sympathetic ear, as NYSHIP Coordinator Voorhees is actually not allowed a direct line to the New York State Department of Civil Service officials in Albany who manage NYSHIP. Rather, all communication must be made from CUNY Central's University Benefits Office. That's right. In a troubling game of telephone, when the NYSHIP Coordinator wants to relay student concerns to NYSHIP, he must first contact CUNY Central, which then contacts NYSHIP, which responds to CUNY Central, which responds to Mr. Voorhees, who can then relay a response back to the student.

It became clear in forwarded emails shared by students with the DSC that CUNY Central and ValueOptions were trying to handle each problem individually, failing to recognize that the same problems were frequently recurring among the student population. So we met with Scott Voorhees on 12 March 2014, and outlined the known systemic problems and general concerns with the new plan. He agreed to arrange a meeting between us and CUNY's then-Director of Employee Benefits, Linda Sarubbi. On 26 March, we outlined our concerns again in our conversation with Sarubbi and urged her to recognize the large-scale failures of ValueOptions. We requested that she act in her capacity as Director of Employee Benefits to advocate on the graduate student workers' behalf with NYSHIP and ValueOptions administrators. She agreed, and then agreed to follow up with us by 4 April to share the responses she received. 4 April came and went with no response. On 7 April, 17 April, and 27 May, we sent emails to her, each with greater urgency, highlighting continued negative student feedback about ValueOptions. During that time and throughout June as well, we, along with Scott Voorhees, called her office, asking for the feedback that was promised. Calls from the DSC were never answered; of course messages were left each time. On 17 July, the DSC found out via Scott Voorhees that as of 1 July 2014, Sarubbi no longer worked for CUNY.

When The Graduate Center student employees received

insurance coverage for the first time in 2007, it happened because the CUNY plan was attached to an already existing SUNY graduate student employee plan. So on 14 March, the three authors of this article began to develop a plan of action on ValueOptions that went beyond CUNY. On that day, we reached out to student government representatives at the various SUNY colleges, as well as the Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU) of SUNY. While no student government representatives responded, we did get a prompt reply from Dr. Mia Jorgensen, Executive Vice President of GSEU. A meeting between us, Jorgensen, and GSEU's legal counsel, resulted in an inquiry to the State about the legality of a de facto change in employee benefits because of the switch to ValueOptions. Further collaboration led to a meeting in Albany with the New York State Department of Civil Service on 25 June 2014.

This meeting with government representatives including Gail Kilmartin, Employee Relations Associate from the Governor's Office of Employee Relations, and the GSEU's official contact person for NYSHIP concerns, proved that the State's handling of MHSA coverage specifically, and CUNY generally, is inadequate. Here we learned of the context of ValueOptions receiving the contract, a process in which the contract was first awarded to ValueOptions in the fall of 2013, then rescinded because of an inquiry into the awarding of the bid by one of the losing companies, then reversed again and granted to ValueOptions in the waning hours of 2013. Because of the contract bidding controversy, ValueOptions has only been temporarily awarded NYSHIP's MHSA contract. In fact, the State is currently reviewing bids on a new, five-year contract that may or may not be awarded again to ValueOptions and could possibly take effect in the spring or summer of 2015.

At this meeting we also gave voice to the major and systemic CUNY and SUNY graduate student worker concerns about their current MHSA coverage. Kilmartin called our expression of these concerns "venting," a word she later apologized for having used after our objections to the implications of that term. She also insisted that she was only the contact person for SUNY in Albany. When we inquired as to who was the CUNY contact, if not she, she said that she was not sure. We highlighted the urgency of the matter and implored her to contact us as soon as possible with that information. In a phone call with Kilmartin on 15 September, she assured us that she and the Department of Civil Service were still working on figuring out the answer to the question of CUNY's NYSHIP representation in Albany.

While dismayed by the lack of accountability and responsiveness exhibited by the CUNY administration and the New York State Department of Civil Services in our recent interactions with them, we continue to push for change on

multiple fronts. On 12 September 2014, at the first fall semester plenary meeting of the Doctoral Students' Council, a resolution was unanimously passed demanding that ValueOptions discontinue its use of the aforementioned prior authorization requirement, particularly the invasive Outpatient Treatment Review form, and that the complaints against the company be taken into consideration in the MHSA contract bidding process and in the awarding of the new contract. The full text can be found below, copies of which were sent to CUNY Chancellor James Milliken, The Graduate Center President Chase Robinson, NYSHIP Coordinator Scott Voorhees, William McGowan, CUNY University Human Resources Operations Coordinator, Yvonne Rodriguez, CUNY Deputy Director of Employee Benefits, Gail Kilmarlin of the Governor's Office of Employee Relations, Seth Stein, General Counsel of the New York State Psychiatric Association, Mia Jorgensen, Executive Vice President of GSEU, Heyward R. Donigan, President and CEO of ValueOptions, and Governor Andrew Cuomo. Also, we continue to seek legal advice on possible actions from Community Legal Resource Network. Bill Schimmel, General Counsel for the Graduate Student Employees Union at SUNY, has been helpful throughout our efforts to address the inadequate mental health care coverage provided by ValueOptions, though attempts to reach out to the legal department at the union representing CUNY graduate student employees, the Professional Staff Congress, went unanswered.

The DSC still seeks narratives regarding GC students'

experiences with ValueOptions, in hopes of building our case that the problems described in this article are systemic, rather than limited to a few isolated incidents. If you have a story you wish to share, you may do so anonymously through the contact form on the DSC Health and Wellness website: <http://opencuny.org/healthdsc/contact/>, or send an email to the DSC's Officer for Health and Wellness, Charlotte Thurston, at wellness@cunydisc.org. Your name will not be made public without your express permission. If you are feeling bold and want to both register a complaint and help chip away at the stigma that still surrounds mental health issues, consider also tweeting @ValueOptions. If nothing else, it will provide catharsis while you wait hopefully for the authorization of your next therapy visit.

Updated as the Advocate went to press: Our investigation into ValueOptions has led to finding information conveyed by a customer service representative, though not publicly distributed at this time. ValueOptions will be discontinuing the use of the Outpatient Treatment Review form for authorizations starting 1 October 2014. According to the customer service representative, the new program, called an Enhanced Outpatient File, requires fewer forms, and an enrollee will have all their sessions authorized unless ValueOptions decides that their treatment falls outside of the norm, in which case they will request further information from the MHSA provider. It remains to be seen if this change in procedure will benefit patients who may be found to vary significantly from the norm. ☹

DSC Resolution in Support of Equitable NYSHIP Mental Health and Substance Abuse Insurance Coverage (unanimously passed)

WHEREAS, THE DOCTORAL STUDENTS' Council represents students from all programs at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York; and

Whereas, 2500 Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York students and their families/partners are NYSHIP insurance policy holders as of 2012; and

Whereas, ValueOptions became the mental health and substance abuse (MHSA) issuer for NYSHIP insurance holders on January 1, 2014; and

Whereas, there has been no technical change in mental health and substance abuse benefits, yet the implementation of mental health coverage and reimbursements has significantly changed; and

Whereas, graduate students often suffer from mental health issues such as depression and anxiety; and

Whereas, the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAE) states that MHSA benefits cannot require treatment limitations that are more stringent than those of the medical and surgical benefits of the plan; and

Whereas, ValueOptions violates the MHPAE by requiring the prior authorization form solely for MHSA claims, as recognized by the New York State Psychiatric Association; and

Whereas, the previous MHSA provider for NYSHIP, OptumHealth, had imposed the prior authorization requirement but later discontinued this practice; and

Whereas, since July 1, 2014, CUNY has no Director of Employee Benefits and no liaison or representative in the New York State Department of Civil Services; therefore

Be it resolved, both CUNY's Employee Benefits Office and the New York State De-

partment of Civil Services must coordinate to have adequate representation for graduate student employee needs; and

Be it further resolved, ValueOptions must discontinue use of the prior authorization form or else the New York State Department of Civil Services must change the NYSHIP MHSA issuer to one which does not use the form; and

Be it further resolved, that the New York State Department of Civil Services takes these violations as well as ValueOptions' failure to provide adequate health coverage into account during the next MHSA contract bidding process and in the awarding of a new MHSA contract; and

Be it finally resolved, New York State and the City University of New York recognize their obligation to provide adequate mental health and substance abuse coverage to students and act on their obligation by addressing this issue immediately.

Advances in the Workers Cooperative Movement

alexander kolokotronis

“**W**HEREAS THE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLE of ‘one person, one vote’ ought equally be applied to economic enterprises as to political institutions.” This declaration was not issued by a group with utopian pretensions or by a collective of far-flung ideologues. It was issued in an official proclamation by the Office of the Public Advocate for the City of New York. Similar proclamations were issued by the Manhattan Borough President and Mayor Bill de Blasio himself. All three city government offices concluded their proclamations by declaring 21 June 2014 the “Worker Cooperative Day”—the same day the 1st Annual NYC Worker Cooperative Conference took place. When speaking of extending “the democratic principle of ‘one person, one vote’...to economic enterprises,” the proclamation is referring to worker cooperatives. But what are worker cooperatives?

Worker cooperatives are worker-run, worker-owned enterprises. Worker cooperatives operate according to the principle of one worker, one vote, and thus constitute a democratically owned and operated business. Nonetheless, the actual structure of a worker cooperative can take on varying forms. One form can be majoritarian direct democratic. Here, worker-owners decide on all work-related matters through simple or super-majority vote. Another form is consensus decision-making where the member-body must agree in unanimity to proceed with an action or initiative. Other options include forming committees and working groups delegated to handle particular tasks. Lastly, worker-owners may elect a board and management structure, which often includes the possibility of directly recalling those elected before their term is up. Often worker cooperatives hold a combination of any number of these forms. For example, a worker cooperative may choose to elect a management structure to handle a range of tasks, however, when it comes to matters of hiring or firing workers that must be handled by the member-body as a whole.

Variety in democratic structures helps meet one frequent objection to the viability of worker cooperatives: size and scale. Many assert that if the democratic framework is viable for economic enterprises, this can only be the case

for small businesses. As the objection goes, democratic frameworks are simply untenable for large scale firms. Yet, a cursory overview of worker cooperatives shows this to be patently false. For instance, Mondragon, the largest worker cooperative in the world, founded in 1956, is composed of approximately 80,000 worker-owners. In a sense, Mondragon Corporation is a cooperative of cooperatives, as it is a federation of 110 worker cooperatives which range from finance and industry to retail and even a university. Large worker cooperatives are not restricted to Europe though. The Seikatsu Consumers’ Club Cooperative in Japan started its first worker cooperative in 1995, and today it is composed of approximately 600 worker cooperatives with 17,000 workers.

The United States is not excluded from the burgeoning worker cooperative movement. The United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives estimates that there are 300-400 worker cooperatives in the country. The largest of these is Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA), a Bronx-based home care provider which has 2,300 workers. New York, the Bay Area in California, Ohio, New England, and Jackson, Mississippi are presently the most significant sites of worker cooperative development in the United States. Chokwe Lumumba was elected mayor of Jackson on a platform of worker cooperative development and participatory governance. Despite his sudden death, shortly after taking office, the goal of creating a “Mondragon of the South” is still being pursued by groups such as Malcolm X Grassroots Initiative and Cooperation Jackson. As indicated by these examples, worker cooperatives aren’t only tenable, they are preferable and growing. And there are a number of reasons for this:

Reduced Income Inequality

WORKER COOPERATIVES ARE ALSO distinguished by their decreased pay-scale ratios between highest to lowest paid workers. Whereas in some of the largest corporations this ratio can exceed scales of 1000-to-1, in Mondragon the most imbalanced ratio in any of its worker cooperatives is 9-to-1, with the average ratio throughout the entire federation being 5-to-1. Consistently across all worker coopera-

tives the ratio rarely exceeds 4-to-1. This marks a radical departure from the astronomical increase in economic inequality since the late 1970s. In the context of income inequality and transnational corporations, it is important to point out that, according to bloomberg.org, the highest pay disparity within just the S&P 500's index of companies is that of 1795-to-1 from JC Penny. JC Penny's average worker's pay and benefits amounted to \$29,688 in 2012, while in that same year the CEO's pay and benefits totaled \$53.3 million.

Increase in Pay

IN A NUMBER OF cases worker-ownership has resulted in pay increases. As noted in a recent article by Laura Flanders in YES! Magazine, one worker at Si Se Puede!, a Brooklyn-based cleaning cooperative, has seen her pay increase enormously: from \$6.25 per hour (before being a part of Si Se Puede!) to \$25 per hour. Particularly among cleaning workers one finds near-identical increases in pay upon transitioning to worker-ownership. At CHCA workers earn \$16 an hour, which is twice the industry rate. According to Hilary Abell, the cooperatives supported by WAGES (Women's Action to Gain Economic Security, a California Bay Area-based group that seeks to empower women through worker-ownership) members' family incomes increased 70–80 percent on average, and many members have health insurance and paid time off for the first time in their lives.

In addition to wage and salary increases, worker-owners have a right to a share in profits of the business they collectively own. Yet, a periodic doling out of profit-shares is not the only way for worker cooperatives to allocate profits. Worker cooperatives can maintain a reserve of capital for rainy-days or future reinvestment. They can also allocate a portion of their profits to funds that aim to create and incubate new worker cooperatives. This is characteristically done by federations and networks of worker cooperatives. Examples of this include Mondragon and the strong worker cooperative sector in the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna, which contains approximately 5,000 worker cooperatives.

Voice and Say

ADVOCATES OF ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY, such as economist Richard Wolff, political scientist Robert Dahl, and philosopher David Ellerman, have made the point that if we truly value democracy, it should be extended to the workplace. Although the workplace is where most people spend the majority of their lives, any say over working conditions and operations is kept to a minimum, even if they are in a union. In contrast, due to the democratic structuration of worker cooperatives, conditions for direct input by individual employees are made possible. Workplaces benefit from the inclusion of multiple perspectives. In their piece “Democ-

racy and Development: Decentralized Planning in Kerala,” published in *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*, T. M. Thomas Isaac and Patrick Heller note that “popular involvement increases problem-solving efficiency through better and more rapid feedback and increases accountability by multiplying the points of scrutiny.”

The desire by employees and the need by enterprises for increased involvement and input by individual workers has been recognized by transnational corporations and increasingly corporatized public sector workplaces. One need only look at Google and Silicon Valley technology firms to witness the burgeoning trend of giving workers autonomy in the workplace. In the United States, public sector workplaces, public libraries, and schools have been placing workers into “teams” to generate a sense of attachment and ownership of a given workplace. Yet, the problem with this trend—which extends far beyond technology firms, public libraries, and schools—is that this attempt to create a sense of ownership has not and is not being met with actual ownership. Worker cooperatives not only foster this sense, but structurally actualize it.

Worker cooperatives also close gender gaps in workplace voice and management. In February 2014, the International Organisation of Industrial, Artisanal and Service Producers' Cooperatives reported that in Spain “women hold nearly 50% of cooperative jobs, and 40% of the positions of responsibility, which is above other business models. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union in India comprised of 1.7 million members, has 105 worker cooperatives. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Ela Bhatt—founder of SEWA—stated, “We centre our reforms on work, because we believe employment is empowering. It helps women develop their identity, and when they become organized they build up the courage and confidence to talk to the police, the courts, bankers or their husbands as equals.”

In the United States, worker cooperatives have served as a way to empower immigrants. One example of this is Si Se Puede!. The Brooklyn-based cleaning cooperative is owned and operated by over 50 Latina immigrants. Newer worker cooperatives in New York include EcoMundo, as well as Pa'lante Green Cleaning. In addition, there is the Caracol Interpreters Cooperative, primarily focused on English and Spanish interpreters. WAGES is also a significant part of this tendency to empower immigrants through worker cooperatives.

Sustainability and Resiliency

TIED TO THE OBJECTION that worker cooperatives are untenable is the notion that due to the democratic frame-

work worker cooperatives lack longevity and sustainability. This has proven to be untrue. In fact, worker cooperatives carry greater longevity, as well as resiliency in times of economic crisis. In her report *Pathways to Scale*, Hilary Abell refers to a study in British Columbia that demonstrates cooperatives of all types have greater longevity than conventional firms. Abell notes that “the five-year survival rate of cooperatives in two Canadian studies was 64–67 percent, compared with 40–50 percent for conventional business startups in Canada.” She also notes that “a 2005 study in the United States found that 100 percent employee-owned companies were roughly one third as likely to fail when compared with all public companies.” It is important to note this superior percentage has consistently proven itself, despite having to operate within an overarching hostile socioeconomic environment. The current social context sees worker cooperatives in stark minority, having to exist amidst within a range of cultural, political, and economic conditions that work against constructing democratic workplaces and spaces. Worker cooperatives thrive even within a predominantly undemocratic global economic system.

Contributing to the sustainability of worker cooperatives is their low turnover rate. CHCA has an employee turnover rate of 15 percent. This is in contrast to an industry that averages anywhere between 40 to 60 percent in turnover. With worker-ownership it is no surprise that workers are unlikely to fire themselves, let alone jump-ship to another firm. As a result, these democratic firms come up with more creative and flexible ways of dealing with difficulties. Workers may collectively agree to temporarily decrease their pay, whether by way of shortening the amount of hours worked by individuals or through lowering wages or salaries.

Since the 2008 financial crisis, worker cooperatives have not only weathered the storm, but have come up with creative and flexible ways of responding to it. Typically, the solutions are worker-centered. Mondragon’s handling of the closing of Fagor is an example. In late 2013, Michael Peck of Mondragon USA noted that displaced workers from Fagor would “receive 80 percent of their salary from the Mondragon Mutual, Lagun Aro, with the entire Corporation helping to pay for these additional unemployment resources” while Mondragon looked to identify new positions for these workers to be potentially placed at.

Increased Efficiency and Productivity

ONE OF THE MORE intuitive advantages of a worker cooperative is the garnering of higher productivity levels from workers. Having both ownership and a say, workers have a far greater stake and motivation in producing for the enterprise they work for, and a sense of community is fostered amongst workers by a combination of ownership

and participation. Beyond this, there are other reasons for increased efficiency productivity in some worker cooperatives. For instance, worker cooperatives tend towards leaner management structures, since workers who have a stake in an enterprise require less oversight from hierarchically appointed managers to make sure they are staying on task. In fact, much of this is offset by workers monitoring each other, because most workers, if not all, have a stake in the business. Workers who have an equal share and say in a firm will have less antagonistic feelings and notions towards the enterprise as a whole.

Eco-Friendliness

UNLIKE CONVENTIONALLY STRUCTURED FIRMS, worker cooperatives have a greater capacity to account for issues and aspects of life falling outside of the profit margin. This includes the environment. Owners and major stockholders of conventional firms often live hundreds or even thousands of miles away from the work site they hold ownership in. As a result, pollution and insufferable working conditions are easier to create and perpetuate inasmuch as stockholders are rarely, if ever, present at these work sites. Let alone having to work under horrid conditions, or live amidst a health-hazardous environment, stockholders can easily avoid witnessing the destruction being leveraged on a community and ecosystem. By placing ownership in the hands of workers themselves, worker cooperatives are unlikely to foster or perpetuate such destruction. Workers of a given community hardly prefer to pollute and destroy the area they live in. Also, there is greater possibility of dialogue between whole communities and individual enterprises. In addition, many worker cooperatives have an explicitly green focus. In Ohio, Evergreen Cooperatives has launched a number of eco-focused and friendly worker cooperatives. One of these is Evergreen Energy Solutions, which designs and installs solar panels. And this is no outlier. In 2003, Omar Freilla founded Green Worker Cooperatives, a Bronx-based incubator of eco-minded worker cooperatives and sees workers’ control as a means of protecting the dignity of workers as well as the environment.

Developments in New York City and at CUNY

ON 28 JUNE, THE New York City Council passed its budget for Fiscal Year 2015. Included in it was the historic \$1.2M Worker Cooperative Development Initiative. In terms of scale, the initiative is the first of its kind in the United State. Its purpose is to lend support to twenty existing NYC worker cooperatives and to foster the creation of twenty-eight more. The initiative was actively pushed for by a coalition of fifteen groups, eleven of which are recipients of the budget

allocation: the NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives, Federation of Welfare Protestant Agencies, Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative, Center for Family Life, CUNY Law CED Clinic, Democracy at Work Institute, Green Worker Cooperatives, the ICA Group, Make the Road New York, the Working World, and the Urban Justice Center. Four other coalition groups include: SolidarityNYC, Center for Working Families, Consortium for Worker Education, and Student Organization for Democratic Alternatives.

The Student Organization for Democratic Alternatives (SODA), is a student group advocating and actively striving to build participatory democratic institutions, like worker cooperatives, participatory budgeting, and a range of other institutions commonly grouped under what is known as a “solidarity economy” (often called the “third sector,” as it is comprised of institutions that can neither be categorized under the public or private sector). In their push for the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative, SODA received national attention through the United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives. Beyond its involvement in NYC politics, SODA is taking part in the Second Annual International Map Jam. This year’s Map Jam aims to connect various solidarity economy institutions in 100 cities. Founded in April 2014, SODA is starting its first chapters at Queens College and Hunter College, and is looking to expand. Among its stated policy goals is the creation of business major-concentrations and MBAs in social entrepreneurship.

Through this, students would be able to receive an education in founding and working in enterprises such as worker cooperatives. In fact, Christopher Michael, founding director of the NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives and PhD candidate at The CUNY Graduate Center, is teaching a social entrepreneurship course at Baruch College. Another policy goal of SODA is to shift contracting done by universities and colleges to and through worker cooperatives. Also, as done at Brooklyn College, SODA would like to see the spread of participatory budgeting on college-campuses, wherein the student-body would allocate funds through a process of direct democracy. Ultimately, SODA sees coordination with other off-campus and on-campus groups as

necessary to any constructive program. SODA not only sees worker cooperative advocacy as an end in itself, but also as a means to organize students in the long-run.

CUNY is particularly apt for organizing students through the vision of a system of economic democracy, since large swathes of the CUNY student-body are of a similar low-income background that the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative intends to uplift, and since worker cooperatives can be a means of pooling scarce resources so that ownership is made possible amongst those who otherwise would not have the opportunity. Characteristically, students hold limited capital. Pooling capital and mapping out a multi-year plan to achieve ownership through founding a worker cooperative is more tenable than a student becoming a business owner on their own. SODA is not the only “solidarity economy” actor at CUNY. The Community Economic Development Clinic of CUNY School of Law is a recipient of funds from the City Council initiative and a key force in worker cooperative development. Also, as part of its Economic Democracy Project, the Graduate Center for Workers Education began holding a series of events this semester on participatory democracy and worker cooperatives.

Potential

ONE OF THE STRONG points of worker cooperatives and the “solidarity economy” is their ability to facilitate, rather than stamp out, diversity and heterogeneity. This does not only include the diversity of human cultures and perspectives, but the diversity of life on earth. As implicitly shown above, the vision of creating and proliferating participatory democratic institutions works hand-in-hand with a number of other movements related to gender, race, class and the environment. Such a vision can combine the power of these movements while allowing, and even developing, the individuality and distinctness of each one. It is a platform that can even revitalize overly-defensive flat-footed groups, such as the disconcerting amount of labor unions, which have offered no alternative vision to privatizations and union-busting. Students have an opportunity here. There are connections to be made, efforts to be coordinated, and institutions to be built. ☺

BECOMING LEVANTINE

Egypt through the Lens of the Department Store in Jacqueline Kahanoff's *Jacob's Ladder*

Amr Kamal analyzes Jacqueline Kahanoff's 1921 novel, *Jacob's Ladder*, to examine the different types of Egyptian cosmopolitanisms that encompass different classes and communities. *Jacob's Ladder* could be considered a pioneer work in the consideration of the concept of Levantinism, which later gains popularity, after decades of dismissal, in Israeli literature and culture.

Graduate Center, Room 9207 • October 9, 2014 6:30 pm • Free admission • <http://memeac.gc.cuny.edu>



The Looming Threat of Cosmic Death

greg olmschenk

TO MANY, THE EARTH seems ancient and permanent. At a third the age of the Universe, the Earth is indeed ancient. It's also true that while humans could very well extinguish life on Earth accidentally or purposely, destroying the ball of matter orbiting around the Sun is nowhere within our capabilities. Yet, the Earth is far from permanent. Furthermore, even our Milky Way galaxy and the entire Universe will eventually die. These events are so far off there's no conceivable reason to plan for them—humans may well have gone extinct long before they occur—but, using the tools of science, we can foretell these futures, and perhaps the prediction of these events can give us a little perspective in our own lives.

With billions of stars of every age and size out there for us to observe, we're able to map out how stars live and die in great detail. Our Sun is an average star of average size with average brightness. At about 5 billion years old, our host star is about halfway through its life. The Sun's stable condi-

tion comes from a balance of the opposing forces of gravity and pressure. Gravity is always pulling the Sun to collapse inward on itself, while the heat, light, and pressure push outward. This outward force that keeps the Sun from collapsing comes from the fusion of hydrogen to helium in its core. If the gravity of the Sun increases—say, by an asteroid adding mass by plummeting into it—the core will become more compressed, hydrogen fusion will increase, more energy will be produced, and the outward pressure will once again match the force of gravity. This equilibrium insures that the Sun keeps a relatively regular size during most of its life. Yet, only the core is hot enough for fusion to occur. Since helium is heavier than hydrogen and the Sun is not hot enough at 15 million degrees to fuse helium in its core, the helium slowly accumulates in the center of the star. Eventually, the hydrogen in the core will run out, fusion will cease, and gravity will win.

Collapsing inward on itself, the matter inside the Sun will experience such friction and pressure that the core tem-

perature will reach 100 million degrees. This is hot enough for helium fusion to begin and the entire core will become ablaze. Bursting back into life, the Sun will expand to 250 times its current diameter. In doing so, it will engulf the inner planets. As the top layers of the Sun sweep outward, Earth's atmosphere will evaporate and the oceans will boil away. Anyone living to witness the event would see the Sun filling the entire sky. Once the flames consume the Earth, what's left of the charred planet will spiral in toward the center of the Sun. After ingesting the Earth, the Sun will run out of helium to fuse. When the Sun collapses this time, there will be no fuel it can burn to renew itself. The feeble white dwarf that's left over will only slowly radiate out any residue heat, similar to the hot embers in a spent campfire. Whoever inhabits Earth at the time of the Sun's death will likely need to leave the planet to find a new home. However, even if they do, they'll shortly have an even larger cataclysmic event to deal with.

The Universe is expanding, causing galaxies to recede away from each other at speeds proportional to their distance. Yet, some galaxies are close enough to each other that gravity beats out the expansion. Such is the case with the Milky Way and Andromeda galaxies. Instead of drifting apart, these two galaxies are on a collision course. Both of are large galaxies, with the Milky Way containing 300 billion stars and the Andromeda galaxy holding 1 trillion.

At first, this might sound like a cosmic car wreck with billions of stars smashing into each other, but there will be a relatively insignificant number of stellar collisions. The reason is that the distance between stars is just too great for such impacts to be common. Consider, the Voyager 1 spacecraft is leaving our solar system at 11 miles per second. At this speed, it travels the diameter of the Sun in a mere 22 hours, yet it would take it over 70,000 years to reach Alpha Proxima—the nearest star. Space is extremely empty.

Even without stars clobbering one another, the galactic encounter will certainly still be exciting for our previously mentioned inhabitants. As one of Andromeda's stars passes by their new solar system, it can disrupt the billions of comets orbiting peacefully within the Oort Cloud of the host star and send them raining down toward the planets. If any of the invading stars come a little closer, they can move the habited planet's orbit further in or out leading to boiling or freezing oceans. The passing Andromeda star may just fling the inhabited planet entirely away from its host star and into interstellar space. There's even a slim possibility that the incoming star will steal the planet and keep it as its own, but there's almost no chance the planet will still be the right distance from its new star to retain whatever climate it had. Similar to the planets being catapulted away from their stars, the stars might be cast out of the galaxy. Other than

the night sky becoming starless, this wouldn't have much of an immediate impact for the people on a planet orbiting that star. However, without a galaxy to call home, it will be difficult to travel to another star when the need arises. The end result of the collision of the two spiral galaxies will be one giant elliptical, blob-like galaxy.

Again, there's no reason why civilizations can't survive this encounter as well. They could pick a planet they have calculated will emerge unscathed, they could voyage to another galaxy, or they could simply get lucky. Despite their efforts, there is one more catastrophe that so far has no known escape: the death of the Universe. The Universe is expanding. Not only that, it is accelerating in its expansion. The galaxies which are not close enough to have gravity outweigh the expansion will continue to drift apart and the further they move away the faster they go. Just as the sound of a race car changes pitch depending on whether it's approaching or retreating, light coming from these galaxies will have longer—or redshifted—wavelengths the faster they move away from us. To detect or receive energy from this light, we need an antenna proportional in size to the wavelength. Since this redshift is increasing, we'll need progressively larger antennae. Over time, the antennas will need to be the size of an entire planet to continue detecting these departing galaxies. Wait even longer and the antennas will have to be longer than the length of the observable universe, making the light impossible to detect. The other galaxies in the night sky will have disappeared forever.

In the galaxies that are close enough for gravity to hold them together, the lights will slowly burn out. Each generation of stars leaves less fuel for the next generation to use. Most stars, like the Sun, will not leave any stellar gas for the next generation. All their atoms will be locked into dead stellar remnants like white dwarfs. Only enormous stars explode in supernovae that spread clouds of gas for the next generation to use. Though, even the stars which do detonate leave behind black holes or other stellar remnants which devour huge portions of gas never to be used by another star. Worse still, the new stars that do form will already have a higher content of heavier elements than their predecessors. These heavier atoms fuse less efficiently and require more input energy to do so.

The majority of the light produced by stars will fly out into space toward the other galaxies which can now no longer receive it. This means the amount of energy in each galaxy will continue to go down. All movement will eventually be lost to friction. Gas will liquefy, liquids will become solids, and all motion will cease. Everything will get colder and darker, continually approaching a state of zero energy. This is the way our universe ends. Not with a bang, but a whimper. ☹

Are People the Problem?

A Critical Response to Russ Wellen's Review of *Countdown*

erik wallenberg

THE FEAR OF HUMAN overpopulation has been around for centuries. The familiar cry that it is the poor and those without power that need to be controlled is similarly long-standing. In 1798, Thomas Malthus wrote a pamphlet arguing for repeal of the Poor Laws of England, citing overpopulation as the reason. Since the 1960s, the threat of overpopulation has been given a green veneer. Paul and Anne Erlich made the case against aid to poorer nations and immigration to the United States, arguing it was the only way to save the Earth. In our current moment, with the effects of climate change beginning to show, Alan Weisman's *Countdown* attempts to revive some of these notions. Russ Wellen, in his review of Weisman's book, sees climate change and overpopulation as two sides of the same coin (*GC Advocate*, Feb. 2014, pg.27-30). Calling humanity a "virulent bacterial infection," albeit with the distancing phrase of "from a certain perspective." Wellen takes issue with the "deniers" who he claims have been so successful that "outside the animal world, the term 'overpopulation' is seldom used anymore." Up front I confess that I am both a denier and an animal.

Thomas Malthus' pamphlet, "An Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society, with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers," is often misunderstood. Malthus did not say the world was overpopulated or that it ever likely would be. He was arguing that if society continued to feed the poor and house the homeless (arguments made by Godwin, et al), the population would rise too high to feed everyone, leading to undue suffering and likely to trouble for those running society. Such an argument is not all that unfamiliar today, you only need to listen to the arguments against providing universal healthcare, unemployment benefits, or welfare as rights in this society. Malthus is indeed alive in our modern day.

The ideological motives of Paul and Anne Erlich are harder to pin down. Self-professed environmentalists, their politics are a mix of liberal and conservative ideas. This is the lesser recognized reality of environmental politics

generally, overpopulationists and nuclear energy advocates included. For 40 years, Paul Erlich's "population bomb," which became an "explosion" by the 1990s, has failed to materialize. And yet he has held to his position and predictions to this day. The prophesied mass famines and human die-offs resulting from world-wide food shortages have not ensued. Food riots and starvation have of course been a recurring feature of our world, but never because of a lack of food, but rather because of social and political barriers to food distribution. This reality reinforces Barry Commoner's argument made in *The Closing Circle* and other publications, as well as in extensive debates with Erlich, that the crisis in the environment is not biological and technical but stems from problems of social and economic organization.

In his review, Wellen equates climate change denial with overpopulation denial. The reality is that, if you look at the economics, both climate change and population can be made sense of. Not all populations are equal. The resource usage of someone in a developed nation cannot compare to that of an individual in the developing world. Americans make up 5% of the world population, and yet the United States uses 20% of the world's energy resources. So which populations of people do we have too many of? And we can't stop here. Within each of these disparate societies, there live individuals who wreak much more ecological damage than others. It is a much more complex process than simply saying too many people is the problem, or even too many people of a particular country or type of society. Instead, attempting to establish an optimal worldwide population in a world wracked by inequality is a fool's errand, as Ian Angus and Simon Butler have shown in their book, *Too Many People? Population, Immigration, and the Environmental Crisis*. The oft professed solution of women's education and access to contraceptives is also a gross simplification of what will be required of societal changes to make contraceptive use agreeable for women around the world. Taking away women's right to control their fertility, either to limit it or expand it, is a gross violation of human rights. We should be focused on changing economic and social conditions so reproductive decisions can be made by women without duress.

Finally, the question of race looms over the specter of overpopulation. Whether we are talking about the “Yellow Peril” of a hundred years ago (making a disturbing appearance in the pages of the *Advocate* with an utterly offensive choice for a picture, an endless crowd of young Asians which accompanied Wellen’s review) or the teeming hordes of Indians that Erlich feared, or the Arabs and Jews that Weisman tells us are fighting it out in the Middle East by overbreeding, racism, overt or unintentional, always accompanies the overpopulationist argument. Poor countries with high populations are always singled out as the example of the clear problem. But the world is not so simple. The most densely populated country in the world is Monaco, generally not the example of an overcrowded society that we are told to worry about. The open air prison that is the Gaza Strip, blockaded on all sides by Israel and Egypt and regularly under attack, is hardly a good example of ordinary, let alone ideal, conditions for human society. The conflation of social

and political crises with biological inevitability hardly makes for a convincing case that overpopulation is the problem.

Similarly, making the problems of Niger simply about malnutrition and disease, as Weisman does and Wellen endorses, denies the centuries worth of social and political reality that have shaped that society. This argument is in fact a gross simplification of Niger’s history, and unfortunately falls into a crude form of environmental determinism.

An ideal human population on earth cannot be abstracted from the reality of a social, political, and economic system that has created a massive wealth disparity around the planet and impacts every facet of human life, including reproduction and the use of resources. In *The Myth of Population Control*, written in 1974, Mahmood Mamdani argues that, without social change, promoting population reduction is “a weapon of the political conservative.” This is a lesson that we all, including Weisman and Wellen, should have learned by now. 🌐

MIND GAMES ANSWERS

Check out the puzzle column on our Back Page.

number (since for every k , $2k+1$ is an odd number). In order to find the outlaw, we simply need to unravel the process until we reach an even number which signals the outlaw.

For the first case in which Player 7 passes 189 to Player 1, we calculate the following:

► Number passed by Player 6: $(189-1)/2=94$

We stop the calculations at this point since Player 6 has passed an even number to Player 7, meaning that Player 6 is the outlaw.

For the second case in which Player 7 passes 183 to Player 1, we calculate the following:

► Number passed by Player 6: $(183-1)/2=91$

► Number passed by Player 5: $(91-1)/2=45$

► Number passed by Player 4: $(45-1)/2=22$

We stop the calculations at this point and declare Player 4 the outlaw.

In general, with N players, we follow the exact same unravelling procedure until we reach an even number which is the mark of the outlaw.

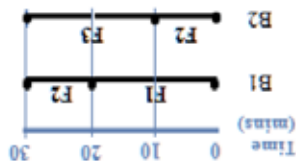
This solution results in a total of 40 minutes for all three to get ready, and leaves one of the bathrooms idle in the last 20 minutes. We can improve on this solution.

Suppose we assign F1 to B1 for 20 minutes as we did before, but assign F2 to B2 for only 10 minutes by the end of which we assign F3 to B2 for 10 minutes. Using this scheme, by the end of 20 minutes F1 will be ready, and F2 and F3 will each need 10 more minutes. Assign F2 and F3 to B1 and B2 respectively for 10 minutes.

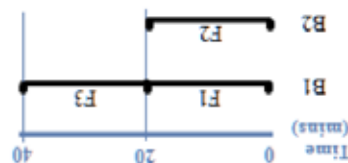
The total in this solution is 30 minutes which is the most efficient arrangement possible since the bathrooms are not idle at any time.

Puzzle #3

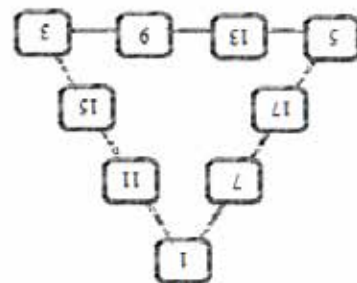
Note that except Player 1 and the outlaw, every player passes an odd



Let F1, F2, and F3 denote the flatmates and B1 and B2 the bathrooms. The first solution that comes into mind is to assign F1 to B1 and F2 to B2 for 20 minutes and then wait for another 20 minutes for F3 to use either B1 or B2.



Puzzle #2



Puzzle #1

Here is one solution:

The Nuances of Brazilian Intellectualism

► *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth Century Brazil* by Paulina L. Alberto. University of North Carolina Press (2011), 416 pages

mila burns

WINNER OF TWO OF the most prestigious literary prizes in Latin American History, the Roberto Reis Award (Brazilian Studies Association) and the Warren Dean Memorial Prize (Conference on Latin American History), Paulina L. Alberto's *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Brazil* is a discussion of the idea of Brazilian racial harmony. The author approaches this over studied topic in a path-breaking manner. An adaptation of her Ph.D. thesis at the University of Pennsylvania, the book looks at people of color's interpretations of the discourses that were formative of Brazilian national identity in the twentieth century.

The introduction is an impressive analysis of the myth of racial democracy, its origins, consequences, and interpretations. Alberto traces a concise history of the perception of racial harmony in Brazil, from the late abolition of slavery, in 1888, to the end of the twentieth century. After

a long acceptance of this idea prior to the 1970s, strengthened by Gilberto Freyre's bountiful writings, black intellectuals began to argue that "ideologies of racial harmony had effectively prevented even politically committed black Brazilians from challenging or indeed fully grasping the deep racial inequalities and pervasive racism they encountered in the century after

abolition." The tardiness of the emergence of a Brazilian Black Movement, then, is the result of the perpetuation of the myth, not of the absence of racism.

When discussing the origins of the idea of racial democracy (which she purposefully avoids reducing to a myth), Alberto offers answers to important questions, such as the

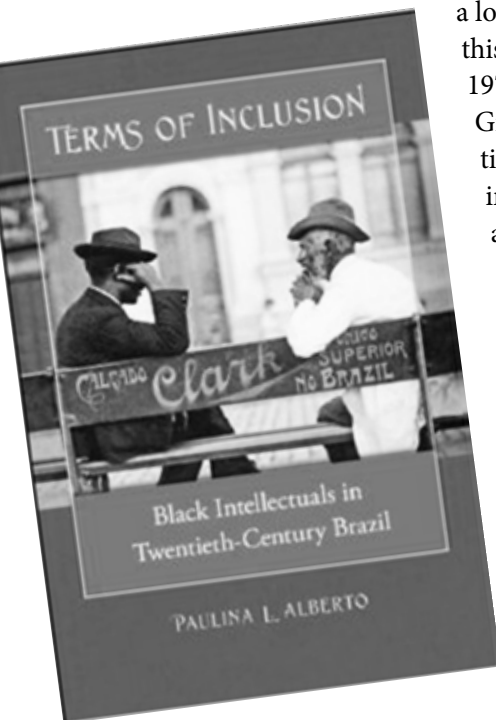
difficulties of establishing Indian slavery, the colonial legal system, the economic cycles and the demands for slave labor, the prominence of scientific theories of white superiority, the discussion of class and racial discrimination, the origins of black identity, and, more than that, the construction of Brazilian national identity.

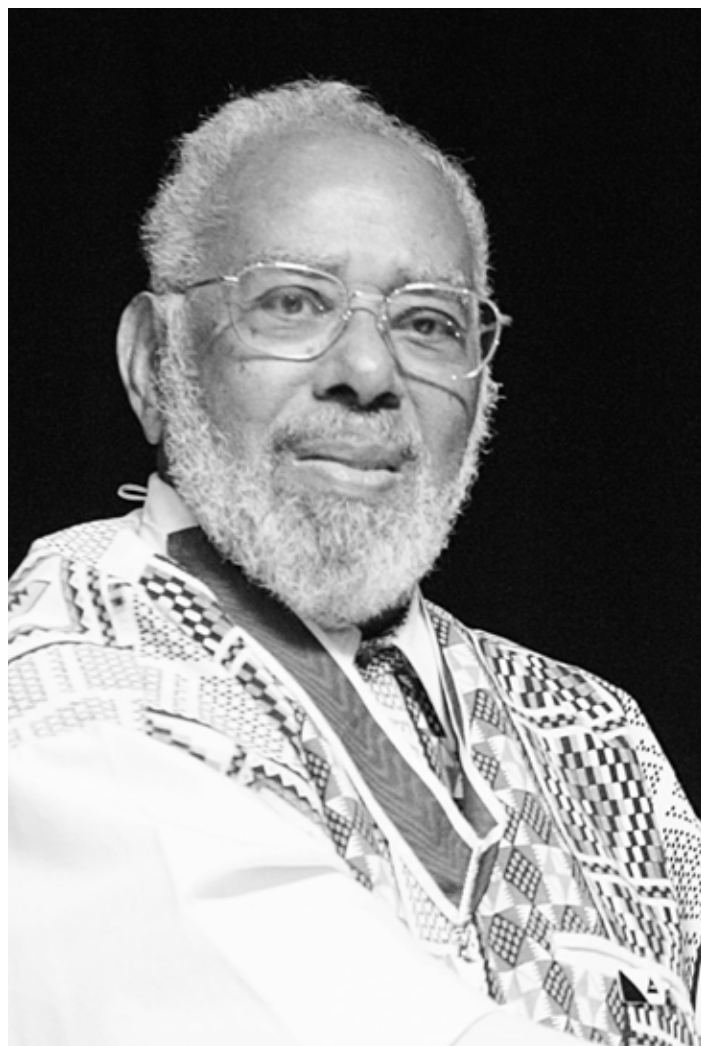
The various shifts in the interpretations of theories of racial democracy in Brazil are narrated through the ideas of several intellectuals, especially Abdias do Nascimento. Considered the most important leader of the Black Movement in Brazil, he developed his activism on different fronts. As a scholar, an artist, and a politician, Nascimento himself changed his interpretation of the idea of racial harmony in Brazil. In the 1950s, he claimed the country was a "lesson" to other societies. In the 1970s, however, he concluded that ideologies of racial mixture and inclusiveness were debilitating myths, a claim that permeated historiography until the 1990s, when a group of scholars questioned the revisionist version as derived from the United States experience.

It is precisely here where one of the main challenges of the book lies: Alberto writes to an American audience about Brazilians' perceptions of race. But, since social constructions, by definition, are built by societies, definitions of race, then, differ from one social group to another, from one country to another, and, in even smaller scales, maybe even from city to city.

The lack of historical works on racial categories in Latin America and the United States promotes a hiatus for social scientists working with race. Alberto tries to avoid this problem by adding at the end of the introduction a quick note on terminology, and she advises the reader that she uses some of the shared racial categories found in Brazilian society. Nevertheless, all over the book she delineates Brazilians' perceptions according, of course, to Brazilian categories. And, since the central figure of her narrative, Abdias do Nascimento, changed his racial perceptions after living in the United States, one wonders if it would have been more fruitful for Alberto to present a comparative framework for her analysis.

Alberto attests that since its birth the idea of racial democracy had been questioned outside of scholarly debates. The book relates the political struggles of black intellectuals to events of Brazilian history in which race and racism were contested. Her main sources are publications of the black press, such as *O Getulino*, *A Voz da Raça* and *Tribuna Negra*, but she also relies on other publications to build a vision of





black public opinion. Nonetheless, she often refers to the work of American and Brazilian scholars, such as George Reid Andrews, Thomas Skidmore, Emília Viotti da Costa, and João José Reis.

The first chapter investigates the impact of the project of “*braqueamento*” (whitening) and the subsequent wave of immigration to Brazil, especially to São Paulo (here, again, the question of local versus national applies). The central figures of this chapter are members of a small middle class of color of São Paulo and Campinas, a group constantly threatened by job instability and low pay. Racial fraternities become an important resource for resistance over the course of the 1920s. The topic is further explored in the second chapter, which describes the 1926 campaign to build a monument to the Mãe Preta, a representation of African wet-nurses who cared for the children of powerful whites during the colonial period. The project was endorsed by the black press in Rio and São Paulo, bringing to the national arena the definition of Brazilian citizenship as a “cross-racial fraternity.” The third and fourth chapters address the changes in racial definitions from the Getulio Vargas election and dictatorship to the end of the Estado Novo in 1945. With a populist

Above: Abdias do Nascimento.

platform that promised to erase political and social structures, Vargas defined the *mestiço* as the main representation of Brazilian citizenship. The “*nacionais*,” previously seen as second-class citizens, were now the epitome of national identity. This process, however, happened in different ways in Rio, São Paulo, and Salvador. Finally, the sixth chapter narrates the repression of black thinkers during the military dictatorship between 1964 and 1985, when racial democracy became an “official state ideology,” used to shut down discussions about racism and to claim that Brazil had “no minorities.”

Alberto argues that “the history of Brazilian ideas of racial inclusiveness, then, is really the story of how black (and white) thinkers in different parts of Brazil sought to make their temporally and geographically specific visions of interracial relations appear both national and timeless.” This statement raises two questions: First, is it possible to argue that this is a national history, even though the author focuses on three cities, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Salvador? Alberto develops a comparison between the three cities, and points out the differences in strategies of questioning the idea of racial harmony. In São Paulo, she argues, activists relied in the division between blacks and whites, unlike in Salvador, where African heritage was central, or in Rio de Janeiro, where miscegenation developed an important tool of negotiation. But, the second question, can an intellectual history have such a limited scope?

Finally, by framing the book as a work of intellectual history, another question appears: Can we consider it bottom up history? Alberto demonstrates that, contrary to what many believers in the idea of racial democracy in Brazil thought, black intellectuals were actively negotiating equality. This group, however, is part of a small black elite. Furthermore, the preponderance of men among these intellectuals raises the question of the role of women in this story. The figure of the Mãe Preta, combined with central figures in African religion and Brazilian cultural arena, such as the “*tias*” of the samba schools, offers the idea that their role was probably much bigger than demonstrated in Alberto’s work. So, can *Terms of Inclusion* be considered bottom up history?

In the company of a prolific group of young Brazilianists working on race (Micol Seigel, Marc Hertzman, and Yuko Miki, to cite a few), Alberto debates how ideas of race and identity shape citizenship in Brazil. The book shows that there is not one definition of race; that there are multiple state definitions, white definitions, and black definitions (among others), from the early Republic to the present day. And it renders visible how these definitions were used by all of them, including black intellectuals, to claim equality and inclusion in the nation, and at the same time, to reaffirm their distinctions. ☺

The Odyssey of Adventure

► *Coolie Woman* by Gaiutra Bahadur. University Of Chicago Press (2013), 312 pages

alison klein

“COOLIE WOMAN,” BY GAIUTRA Bahadur, is an impressive achievement. In it, Bahadur traces the voyage of her great-grandmother Sujaria, who traveled alone from India to British Guiana under indenture while four months pregnant. A blend of memoir, ancestral biography, and historical commentary, the book pieces together scraps of information about Sujaria’s life while also exploring the general experiences of indentured laborers, particularly the women. The book is an effective example of the relatively new genre of auto-ethnography, in which the author explores their own experiences and connects them to broader societal issues. *Coolie Woman* offers a wealth of information about the system of Indian indenture as well as individual stories of the laborers and their descendants, striking a fine balance between the two.

Sujaria was one of 500,000 Indians who voyaged to the British colonies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to labor on sugar plantations after slavery was abolished. Fewer women indentured than men, in part because of societal stigma against female laborers, and so the average male to female ratio was four to one. The scarcity of women on the estates led to some shifts in traditional gender roles, such as an increase in independence and the ability to choose a partner, but also led to an increase in women’s vulnerability. *Coolie Woman* explores these and other complex topics relating to indentured women in the Caribbean.

The book is divided into three sections: “Embarking,” “Exploring,” and “Returning.” The first section, “Embarking,” frames Sujaria’s voyage as one of a series of family migrations. Bahadur describes her own journeys, beginning with her family’s move from Guyana to the United States when she was seven, then detailing her return to Guyana as an adult, and finally recounting the trip that she took to India, attempting to track down information about her great-grandmother. In each of these places, Bahadur wrestles with questions of identity and belonging: in the United States, she faces anti-Indian sentiments, while Guyana is no longer truly home, and in India she is reproached because she and her family members do not live there anymore. The cyclical nature of these journeys hints at the question, were these migrations born out of Sujaria’s decision to leave India? Are the descendants of migrants fated to migrate themselves, restless

and rootless and searching for home? “Embarking” concludes with the seed of the book—Gaiutra Bahadur’s father telling her about her great-grandmother, who gave birth to Bahadur’s grandfather on board the ship *The Clyde* in 1903. We are drawn into the drama and mystery of the story, just as Bahadur was.

In the middle section, “Exploring,” the memoir element of the book retreats, and Bahadur turns to the experiences of the laborers. Each chapter focuses on one aspect of what Sujaria would have experienced: the depot, the voyage, and the years of indenture. For each stage, Bahadur includes what information she uncovered about her great-grandmother’s experience, and then more broadly describes the history of indenture and the experiences of the laborers, based on archival research, autobiographies, testimonials and interviews. For example, in the chapter “Her Middle Passage,” she shares what she knows about Sujaria’s ship voyage—that Sujaria gave birth on the ship, and that she and her baby survived.

She then reports the official British policies for maintaining the safety of the laborers on board, statistics on laborers’ deaths, accounts of sexual abuse of women, and the story of a female laborer who, like Sujaria, gave birth to a baby, but whose baby died on the voyage. A noteworthy aspect of her style in this section is to ask a series of rhetorical questions, wondering about her great-grandmother’s experience. Some readers may be frustrated that Bahadur does not answer the questions she poses, but the lack of answers points to the challenges of trying to know the story of one’s ancestors, particularly those who are written out of history because of their gender, ethnicity, caste, or class. Additionally, the unanswered questions are balanced out by Bahadur’s ability to craft scenes that vividly evoke the experiences of the laborers, as when she describes the dim, lantern-lit ship quarters where the women slept.

In the final section, “Returning,” Bahadur’s own story melds with the stories she has uncovered in her research. Here she describes her investigative trips to Guyana, Scotland, and India, and what she has learned about the descendants of those involved in the indenture system. This section contains one chapter that feels less pertinent than the others: “Every Ancestor,” in which Bahadur researches a Scottish overseer whose descendants had loose ties to her family. It serves to show the other side of the migration - the experience of the colonizers who traveled to Guyana to manage

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Subtle Message, Broad Response

► Kara Walker's *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby*.
At the Domino Sugar Factory, May–July 2014

melissa phruksachart

THE EXPERIENCE OF KARA Walker's exhibition *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby* begins in the palm of one's hand. Publicity photos of the great sphinx had been disseminated online long before the installation opened on 10 May. Photography was openly encouraged at the exhibit, and people were invited to share their photos online with the hashtag #karawalkerdomino. The organization that commissioned the work, Creative Time, now features a "Digital Sugar Baby" on its website consisting of these crowd-sourced images of the sphinx, indexed anatomically. This juxtaposition between the work's incessant digital mediation by visitors and its suggested meaning—a comment on the "sugarcoating," in Walker's words, of the violences of American history—is what gives *A Subtlety* its secret force.

Upon entering the Domino Sugar Factory, viewers were unapologetically primed about the social, historical, and political stakes of the work through Walker's longer subtitle, "an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the Occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant." This grandly signaled the factory ground as the site of mediation between "our sweet tastes" and enslaved black bodies purposely positioned as Other. Walker asserts that these "unpaid and overworked artisans" (she does not call them laborers, or even enslaved, archly insisting upon the skill and value they transmitted into their work) "refined" our tastes as they did our sugar, the two being directly tied. As any reader of the *Little House on the Prairie* series can tell you, processed white sugar was more expensive and reserved for when guests came, while cruder forms of brown sugar and molasses were for everyday use. The title also flags the multiple forms of "artisanal" work involved here—physical labor in the cane fields and culinary and affective labor in American kitchens. Through this eloquent phrase, Walker succinctly mourns and honors her subjects. Cleverly, she leaves viewers to do with this as they will.

Before reaching the base of the thirty-five-and-a-half-foot high mammy-sphinx encrusted in white sugar, the spectator walked through the exhibition space and around life-sized statues of black children—pickaninnies—hauling baskets of sugar. While the sphinx is pure white, the boys

are dark brown, made of a resin that resembles hardened molasses (curiously, there are no ants). The properties of the material are such that these young attendants slowly decomposed over time; when I visited on 28 June, many had already smashed to the floor. These were of great interest to visitors, who eagerly took photos of—but rarely *with*—them. At life size, they perhaps seemed too real, too innocent, although Walker says she based them on some "goofy" figurines she bought on Amazon.

On the contrary, it was not the case with the marvelous sugar baby. It seemed that nearly everyone who passed through stopped for a photo in front of the sphinx, most calmly smiled, the same way you might when posing in front of the hundreds of attractions that dot the city. Others invariably took the bait and posed so as to be captured playing with the sphinx's breasts or pudendum while others laughed. (See Stephanye Watt's "The Audacity of No Chill: Kara Walker in the Instagram Capital" in Gawker or Nicholas Powers' "Why I Yelled at the Kara Walker Exhibit" in the 30 June digital edition of *The Independent*). Although I dislike such reactions, I think Walker anticipated this response, understanding this piece not just as a sacred monument to the past, but also as a vicious mirror of the present.

Undoubtedly, *A Subtlety* generates meaning not only through the observation of the objects assembled, but through the way in which the audience interacted with it. While sexual degradation of the mammy-sphinx was one noxious response to the piece, most folks did not engage with it this way. As I said, they smiled, they posed with their children. For most, the camera rendered the sphinx both distant and intimate. For instance, one could see photographers on the lookout for a worthy angle or cool shot of a pool of resin next to the broken head of a child.

It is worth noticing that the piecemeal aestheticization of these laboring bodies was puzzling. The crowd on the day I attended was, for a New York City art event, unusually diverse in age, race, and class, a result of the exhibit's free admission, provocative form and subject matter, and heavy publicity. Clearly, many sections of the city (and beyond) were drawn to something *A Subtlety* promised to offer: resolution? tribute? education? mere spectacle? I tried to eavesdrop on conversations, but most seemed cheery and superficial: "If I said lunch, would anybody object?"

What does it mean that *A Subtlety* became, for some, a space of joy and relaxation? Indeed, a healthy dose of children numbered along the attendees. It's not that this exhibit



was not suitable for children, but I did wonder what these nouveau Brooklyn parents thought their children would get out of attending. The kids mostly scampered around the large, open warehouse, unaffected by the decaying child-figures around them. The memory of three smiling white girls in their summer play dresses, posing for a photo in front of the sphinx's left flank, still gnaws at me.

But I'm not trying to ultimately argue that the installa-

tion should have produced "proper" affective responses; nor do I want to claim that I read everyone's minds and concluded that no one apprehended the piece correctly. I also don't want to make the case that photography is in and of itself an alienating medium (hello, Walter Benjamin). Rather, this work was not just about representing in a new way its purported subject matter, it also raised questions about what we do with the opportunity to experience such a confrontation with "history." Several groups took this conversation even further. An ad hoc event, "The Kara Walker Experience: WE ARE HERE," urged people of color to gather at the exhibit on 22 June "so that we can experience this space as the majority." "Subtleties of Resistance," which took place on 5 July, crowd sourced a series of critical dialogues and performances around Walker's themes inside the Domino.

Nato Thompson's curatorial statement for Creative Time summarized: "Walker's gigantic temporary sugar-sculpture speaks of power, race, bodies, women, sexuality, slavery, sugar refining, sugar consumption, wealth inequity, and industrial might that uses the human body to

get what it needs no matter the cost to life and limb." Yet, what Thompson misunderstands is that this is not the point of Walker's work, it's merely its point of departure. What *A Subtlety* made tangible were the perverse desires with which people want to see these themes brought to life again and again, merged with the eerie nonchalance they leave behind once they've Instagrammed it. *A Subtlety* is not merely an intellectual prompt, it is a moral challenge. 🌀

DSC Hits the Ground Running

THE DOCTORAL STUDENTS' COUNCIL has already started the semester off by improving services for students across the campus.

Free Legal Consultations

FREE LEGAL CONSULTATIONS FOR Graduate Center students have opened for the year and can be reserved online at cunydisc.org/works.

New Book Scanner

A NEW BOOK SCANNER has been placed in room 5487 for student use at the request by the Committee on Library and Technology. Students may now scan and save documents and books without having to venture into the Library. The committee is also following up with Information Technology services regarding the department's acquisition of former computer classroom C415B.

Initiatives Grant Fund

STUDENTS MAY ALSO BEGIN applying for up to \$650 in funding for interdisciplinary student-led initiatives. The Grants Committee has set its coming application deadlines for the year on the following dates: 10/1/14, 11/21/14,

1/16/15, and 3/20/15. The committee has updated its policies and this year grants may not be used to purchase food from Restaurant Associates.


Plenary Meeting Actions

THE DSC CONVENED ITS first plenary meeting of the year on 12 September 2014. The body passed a resolution calling for New York State and the City University of New York to recognize their obligation to provide adequate mental health and substance abuse coverage to students. Since ValueOptions became the mental health and substance abuse (MHSA) issuer for NYSHIP insurance holders on 1 January 2014, it has applied treatment limitations beyond those require of medical and surgical plans. Specifically, ValueOptions illegally requires prior authorization for mental health and substance abuse claims. The DSC is duly concerned about this issue given that graduate students often suffer from mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. The urgency of this shortcoming is exacerbated by the fact that CUNY currently has no Director of Employee Benefits and no liaison or representative in the New

York State Department of Civil Services as it approaches the bidding process to award a new MHSA contract.

At the 12 September Plenary, the body also heard from students presenting a resolution in support of a boycott of Israeli academic institutions and companies. Voting on the resolution was tabled and will be taken up at a future meeting.

The body also heard presentations on three new proposed chartered organizations and a Program Student Association (PSA). At the next DSC Plenary meeting on 24 October 2014 the body will vote on the chartering of The Mentoring Future Faculty of Color Group (MFFC), The GC Chapter of the International Socialists Organization (GC-ISO), and The Students of the State (SOS). The Plenary will also consider recognizing the Computer Science Student Association.


If you are interested in chartering an interdisciplinary student group, or in gaining DSC recognition for your PSA, please contact the Co-Chair for Student Affairs, Amy Martin, at ccsa@cunydisc.org. 

Coolie Woman

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the plantations - and it points to the fact that many Guyanese are descended from multiple ethnicities. However, the overseer's connection to Bahadur's family is tenuous, and one might wonder, why stop there? Why not research ancestors from Africa, or Portugal, or China, as well? Despite this, "Returning" is the most powerful section of the book, as it evokes the ongoing impact of indenture. Particularly moving is the chapter "Surviving History," in which Bahadur describes the pervasiveness of domestic violence in Guyana, including brutal assaults and murder. Bahadur attributes this to a culture of violence developed under imperialism, slavery, as well as indenture, the persistent poverty of Guyana,

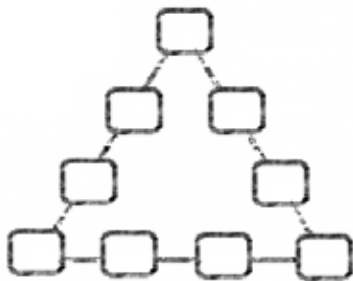
and a pattern of impunity for assaulters. This chapter, more than any other, demonstrates the vital relevance of Bahadur's research.

While historians such as Walton Look Lai, Verene Shepherd, and Patricia Mohammed have written thorough and thoughtful accounts of indenture and women's experience of it, *Coolie Woman* offers a different perspective. By interweaving her family's stories with her research on indenture migration, Gaiutra Bahadur highlights both the human stories of this system and its lasting effects on Guyanese society. Extensively researched and poetically written, *Coolie Woman* is a fascinating read for those interested in the history of people of Indian descent in the Caribbean, gender relations and labor, and the impact of British imperialism and indenture. 

MIND GAMES BY MARYAM GHAFARI SAADAT

Puzzle #1: Arrange Numbers

Arrange the odd numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, and 17 in the triangle below such that the sum of the numbers on every side would be 30.



Puzzle #2: Bathroom Time Allocation

Three flatmates who share two bathrooms are getting ready for a night out. Each of them needs 10 minutes to take a shower and another 10 minutes to use the sink. What is the minimum amount of time in which all three of them could be ready to leave?

Puzzle #3: Detect the Outlaw

Suppose a group of 7 players (including you) are gathered around a table, and are numbered 1 through 7. Starting from you (player 1), each player passes a number to the person sitting on their right, until Player 7 passes a number to you. All players except the outlaw obey the following rule:

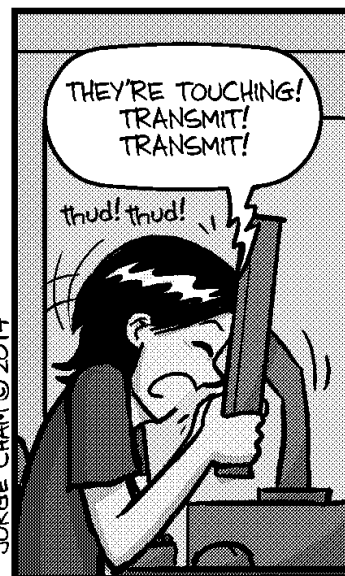
- ▶ Player 1 (i.e. you) passes 2 to Player 2
- ▶ Player 2 passes 5 to Player 3 (calculated as $2 + (2+1)$)
- ▶ Player 3 passes 11 to Player 4 (calculated as $5 + (5+1)$)
- ▶ and so forth.

In general, aside from Player 1 who always passes 2 to Player 2, each player takes a number k from the previous player and passes $k + (k+1)$ to the next player. The outlaw takes a number m from the previous player and passes $2 \times m$ to the next player.

If Player 7 passes 189 to you, which player is the outlaw? What if Player 7 passes 183 to you? Can you propose a procedure for a more general case in which the number of players is an unknown number N ? Ⓐ

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PH.D. COMICS BY JORGE CHAM



WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

Check out the new Advocate listserv! It's at GCADVOCATE-L