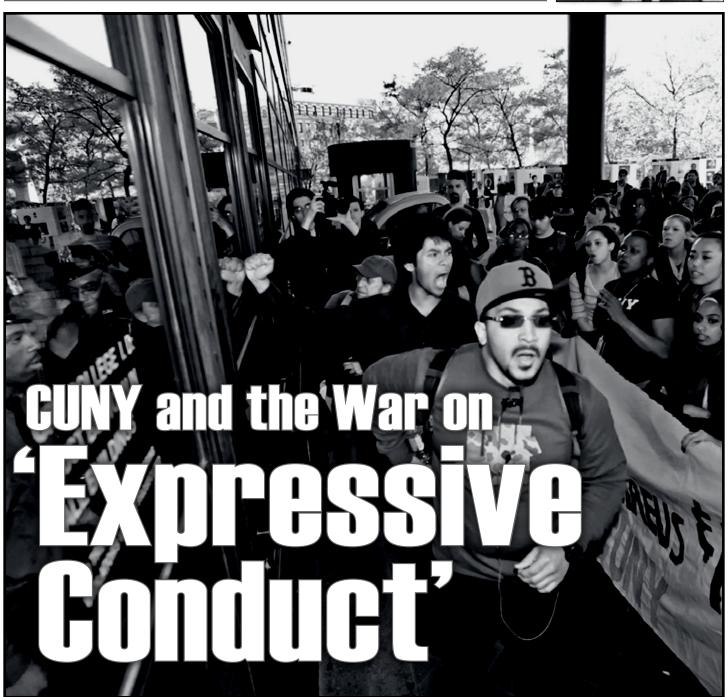
# CUNY GRADUATE CENTER CONTROL C





**ALSO INSIDE:** 

Recoiling Against the Boycott of Israeli Universities (p. 15) Does Spike Jonze Hate Women? (p. 32)

## Advocate

February 2014

http://opencuny.org/gcadvocate advocate@gc.cuny.edu

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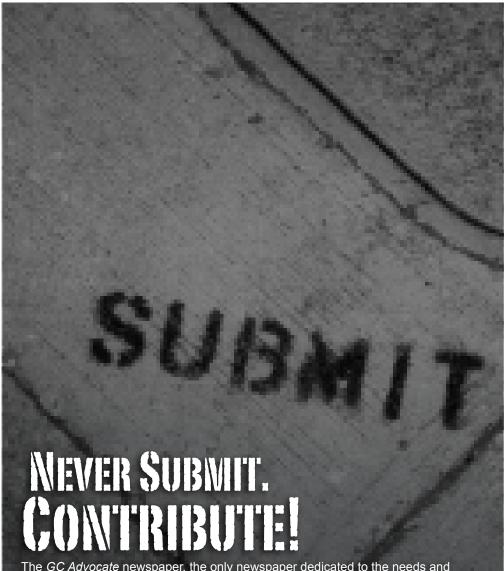
#### **PUBLICATION INFO**

The *GC Advocate* is the student newspaper of the CUNY Graduate Center. Publication is subsidized by Student Activities Fees and the DSC.

The *GC Advocate* is published six times a year, in September, October, November, February, March, and April. Copies are distributed near the end of the month.

#### SUBMISSIONS

The GC Advocate accepts contributions of articles, illustrations, photos and letters to the editor. Please send queries to the email address above. Articles selected for publication will be subjected to editorial revision. Writers who contribute articles of 1,000 words will be paid \$75 and those who submit longer articles requiring research will receive up to \$150. We also pay for photographs and artwork. Please email for details.



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 advocate@gc.cuny.edu.

#### FROM THE editor's desk

### The New Chancellor and You

WHILE WE WERE AWAY on the Grad Center's winter break, the CUNY Board of Trustees announced their decision for a new CUNY chancellor. James B. Milliken, the current President of the University of Nebraska system, will replace the current interim chancellor—our own dear, former Graduate Center President Bill Kelly.

We hope that Chancellor Milliken will be able to stand up for students and adjuncts in his new position, in the face of politically motivated public funding cuts and increased tuition burdens.

As interim chancellor, Bill Kelly inherited the unenviable situation with the Pathways attack on faculty governance, a bug-ridden CUNYFirst centralized computer records roll out, and the growing militarization of the campuses (for examples, see the articles in this issue).

While not perfect on this record, Bill did manage to oversee a walking back of parts of the Pathways heavy-handedness. In a letter dated February 3 on the topic of the first annual review of Pathways, Bill outlined three major concessions:

- "Beginning in fall 2014, colleges can determine how many hours to allocate to courses in the Common Core and will have discretion to allocate hours to courses as they choose, in keeping with college practices." This would mean that fights like the one waged by the Queenborough Community College English department to protect their four-hour courses, despite the Pathways threehour requirement, are hopefully a thing of the past.
- "Efforts will be made to ensure that every college is fully aware of the waiver process." While not really a change, it is good to remember that programs are graciously allowed to seek permission from the University for the privilege to determine their own curriculum.
- ▶ "Faculty members serving on the CUNY-wide Common Core Course Review Committee (CCCRC) will be chosen through college governance processes."
  While still working within the framework of a system

that was put in place without the approval of the campus faculty governance bodies, the course review will at least start following the principle of faculty governance.

All of this is a way to sincerely say "thank you, Bill" for working on this crazy—perhaps illegally established and definitely unethically implemented—Pathways and Common Core system and choosing to listen to some of the faculty concerns. But there is still much work to be done to ensure that the curriculum at CUNY serves the best interests of the students and is decided in accordance with the principles of faculty governance.

"JB," as a quick internet search tells us that our incoming chancellor likes to be called, has big shoes to fill. Not just Bill Kelly's but our Chancellor Emeritus Matthew



Goldstein, who is still drawing a salary from both CUNY and JPMorgan Chase. JB will be operating in the shadow of the corporatization of CUNY, which, yes, brought in lots of money, but also cost the system in terms of tuition hikes, unheard of numbers of courses being taught by contingent faculty, and consolidation of power within the Board of Trustees. While JB has a history of progressive

connections—from ties to the ACLU to the Legal Aid Society—his liberal past will be tested by his reaction to these regressive practices.

While at the University of Nebraska, JB penned a letter defending the principles of academic freedom. Bill Ayers, retired Distinguished Professor of Education and Senior University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was invited to speak at an event at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in November 2008. Ayers was to give the keynote for an educational conference, a perfectly reasonable expectation for someone with over four decades of published commitment to education. However, the then-prevalent attacks on Ayers in the media for his association with the revolutionary left created a problem for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Right-wing threats began pouring in. Some of the threats were violent, but most were merely political. The Republican governor even demanded that Professor Ayers be dropped from the event. Of course, this was in the midst of a very contentious presidential election that saw Ayers's name used as a dogwhistle to tie then-candidate Obama to the revolutionary left. The University decided to bend to this political pressure and uninvite Ayers due to "security concerns." Did death threats sent to the school from people opposed to Ayers stifle academic discourse? Or did academics take a back seat to politics?

After the cancellation of the keynote, President JB published a defense of academic freedom, stating: "While the immediate controversy over Ayers' scheduled appearance may be over, the importance of recognizing that a university is a place for the open exchange of ideas, free of outside political or popular pressure, remains." While it is all well and good to "recognize" the importance of

academic freedom, such recognition does little good if not paired with action to protect that freedom.

JB will likely have a chance to put his desire to "recognize" freedom of discourse into practice very soon once he comes to our fair CUNY system. He will be tried very early in his tenure if the Board of Trustees attempts to reintroduce the draft proposals on "expressive conduct" or "expressive activity." In this issue of the *Advocate*, Stefanie A. Jones and Dominique Nisperos examine the implications of these not-very-secretly drafted proposed policies. While Michael Stivers looks at the possible test run of these types of policies, in how City College handled protests over the closing of the Morales/Shakur Center.

The threats to academic freedom that JB will face as chancellor are not just coming from within the CUNY system. Even the New York state government has taken up the question, attempting—but failing—to establish a convoluted boycott on boycotting boycotts. In this issue of the *Advocate*, our own Kristofer Petersen-Overton attempts to dispel the mischaracterizations that led the state to draft their ill-fated bill, questioning whether academics should be allowed to choose with which countries and universities they personally would like to be affiliated.

As the new chancellor, JB will have to decide whether a public university with a history of advocating for the public good should continue in that tradition. Or whether it should continue down the road of over-riding faculty governance decisions, arresting students for exercising their first-amendment rights, and chilling academic discourse. Hopefully, this is a chance for the university to take a step back from the overreaches that have characterized our institution recently, and work on building what could truly be called the "premier public university."

### The GC Advocate is seeking a Managing Editor

The *Advocate* seeks candidates for the open position of managing editor. The managing editor shall serve on the editorial board with the Editor-in-Chief. Applicants must be matriculated Graduate Center students.

The successful applicant must be highly capable of independent work. The managing editor shall be responsible for: copy-editing submissions from contributors and assisting with the general content and production schedule of the newspaper.

Interested applicants should submit a copy of their C.V. and a letter of interest to Gordon Barnes (gbarnes@gc.cuny.edu). Compensation will range from \$700 to \$900 per issue, depending upon budgetary restrictions.

#### **cuny news IN BRIEF**



# **New Directions? Or Continuity?**

#### A "Unanimous" Choice?

LAST MONTH, ON JANUARY 15, the CUNY Board of Trustees appointed James Milliken as the new chancellor of the university. The board of trustees voted unanimously to elect Milliken. Benno C. Schmidt Ir., the chairman of the board of trustees noted that the committee reviewed upwards of fifty candidates, interviewing a dozen of them for the position. As the PSC noted just prior to the vote, none of the potential finalists were made public to the CUNY community. Milliken, trained as an attorney, is set to take over William Kelly's role by June 2014.

Milliken will be entering CUNY as chancellor having previously served as the president of the University of Nebraska since 2004. Milliken's salary is set to be \$670 thousand, according to the *New York Times*. That's an increase of more than \$90,000 over the salary of previous

chancellor, Matthew Goldstein.

Though he stated that he was "honored" to head the "premier public institution" in the United States, he has remained mum on any potential policy directions. There has been much speculation as to the direction that Milliken intends to take CUNY. Specifically, there are concerns around whether or not he will respond to the overwhelming opposition to CUNY Pathways and the Common Core. PSC president Barbra Bowden has urged the incoming chancellor to "listen to the faculty and respect our knowledge." Additionally, CUNY students, faculty, and staff opposed to the militarization of the university will be interested in what political orientation Milliken will adopt.

Though he has not broadcast any policy agendas, Milliken's public record is of concern to the broader CUNY community. Prior to his

tenure at the University of Nebraska, he was a research assistant to Norman Dorsen, the president of the American Civil Liberties Union at the time, and also worked for the Legal Aid Society. Milliken is ostensibly in favor of affirmative action, and has been billed as an "internationalist". Terrence Martell, a professor at Baruch College, chairman of CUNY's faculty senate, and part of the search committee for a new chancellor, stated that Milliken understands the needs of CUNY's student body "providing opportunity to people who don't have opportunity." Faculty and union leadership seem to be tepidly supporting Milliken's appointment, and are hopeful of a better working relationship than with current Interim Chancellor William Kelly. Despite this optimism, the individuals and groups opposed to the militarization of CUNY (the appointment of David Petraeus to Macaulay Honors Col-



lege as an "adjunct" last July and the reintroduction of ROTC on CUNY campuses) will find no solace in Milliken's appointment. He has portrayed himself as "military friendly". Milliken has a twitter account (@jbmilliken) that is relatively active and quotes some arguably progressive individuals (Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela for example), yet despite the veneer of progressivism, Milliken's appointment to CUNY as chancellor does not necessarily portend immediate (or lasting) policy changes or a more democratic university.

### Constricted Pathways, PSC Moving Forward

ON FEBRUARY 3, INTERIM Chancellor William Kelly sent a memo to the presidents and deans of the various CUNY colleges. In it he outlined three changes to Pathways. The common Core is no longer set to a specific limit on course hours (previously a three hour limit for general education courses), though the 30-credit limit on core curriculum will remain

in place. Also, individual colleges now have the option to submit a waiver to avoid Pathways structuring when "a major degree program cannot be accommodated." Lastly, faculty serving on the Common Core Course Review Committee (CCCRC) will be chosen (elected?) "through college governance processes."

The Professional Staff Congress has articulated that "these changes are consistent with demands for greater autonomy" in CUNY and were fundamental changes that the PSC has been agitating for. Furthermore, the union has stated that it does not intend to back down due to some piecemeal reforms, and is still committed to an unbiased review of Pathways and the Common Core, and the eventual repeal of the program.

The PSC is currently challenging Pathways in two ways, the first, against the programs implementation and the other against the actual adoption of the program by the CUNY administration. In regard to the former struggle, the PSC recently

defeated CUNY management to a block union grievance relating to curricular duties and development. CUNY administrator's attempted to dismiss the grievance arguing that issues of governance at CUNY cannot be challenged by the PSC. Their petition to dismiss the grievance was rejected by independent arbitrator Melisa H. Biren.

The grievance charges that Pathways fails to act in accord with CUNY Bylaws and violates preexisting college authority for proposed curriculum changes. The PSC grievance also alleges that Pathways is a violation of academic freedom and that the CUNY administration has taken retribution against faculty members and staff for actively opposing the measure. Because an independent arbitrator ruled in favor of the PSC and against CUNY, the PSC now has a leg to stand on and in the battle over Pathways. This, in conjunction with the recent policy changes outlined by Kelly has buoyed the union's struggle against Pathways. The PSC also has two lawsuits, filed in August 2012, pending against CUNY and the Pathways Initiative. One relates to the CUNY administration exceeding its authority in establishing curriculum standards, and the other on the way in which Pathways was implemented: namely, without a public meeting and with the rejection of the measure by six CUNY campus academic senates.

### CUNY Potentially Underfunded... Again

OVER THE LAST FIVE years CUNY and SUNY have taken nearly \$2 billion in cuts, a correlative action with tuition increases. CUNY's funding from New York State is currently below 1990 levels, whilst tuition having

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- Feb 20th for CUNY senior colleges

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been raised an average of 43% since 2008. Governor Andrew Cuomo's Executive Budget proposal would utilize the recent tuition hikes at CUNY to fill a \$49.5 million deficit in CUNY's State Operating Budget. Improving college programs has been put on the back burner. This immense gap has come to be because Cuomo's decision to refuse funding CUNY for inflationary operating expenses (such as electricity). While programs such as ASAP (Accelerated Studies in Associate Programs), SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) and College Discovery are cut, student tuition is not reinvested in the students. This is a particularly acute problem for CUNY community colleges. SUNY is also being affected by similar practices coming out of Albany.

The New York State United Teachers (of which the PSC is a subsidiary

nity colleges have endorsed this legislative campaign. The NYSUT's plan, named "Keep a New York State of Mind," lays out a framework for the creation of an endowment that would fund new full time faculty and also offer additional student aid and supportive social programs for students. The plan also calls for increased operational aid to CUNY and SUNY four-year colleges and raises to the community college base aid, heavier investment into student financial aid and opportunity programs and a reform of the New York State Tuition Assistance Program.

PSC President and Barbara Bowen and First Vice President Steve London testified on February 6 at a hearing on the proposed state budget for CUNY for the 2014–2015 academic year. Their testimony echoed the concerns of the NYSUT and also added some additional budgetary time faculty is imperative if CUNY is to break away from exploitable adjunct labor. In her testimony, Bowen stated, "Adjuncts have almost no job security and receive inadequate benefits. They are excellent and dedicated teachers, but they are not supported to have the kind of research careers that enrich college life. They are not provided with working conditions that allow them to provide the time, attention and mentorship to CUNY students in order to succeed."

CUNY hired approximately 1,300 new full-time faculty in the last ten years, but these hires have not improved the student-faculty ratio. In 2003 the average ratio for CUNY was 27.6 students to one faculty member. It is currently at 30:1. As a point of comparison, Rutgers, the University of Maryland, and UConn have student-to-faculty ratios of 14:1, 18:1, and 17:1 respectively. Bowen

and London also advocated for an increase in funding for full-time community college students from \$2,422 to \$2,672 (the 2008–2009 level) and the passage of the New York State Dream Act.

Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget proposal would feasibly spend a possible budget surplus on tax cuts worth \$2 billion, at the same time leaving CUNY (and SUNY) gravely underfunded. Cuomo's budget was passed in January and has garnered considerable criticism from myriad "progressive" groups including the Strong Econo-

my for All Coalition, MoveOn, The Hunger Action Network, Community Voices Heard, the Working Families Party, Citizen Action, and the Alliance for Quality Education.



member) has launched a campaign to end the wanton underfunding of public universities in New York. CUNY and well as SUNY faculty leaders, particularly at the commuamendments. They called for full state funding for CUNY's unmet State Operating Budget and \$40 million in investments for new full-time faculty lines. The need for new full

#### guest columnist

# **People of Color Are Losing the Vote**

#### amy goodman and denis moynihan

"I FOUND MYSELF STANDING in front of railroad tracks in South Florida. I was waiting on the train to come so I could jump in front of it and end my life." So recounted Desmond Meade, describing his life nine years ago. He was homeless, unemployed, recently released from prison and addicted to drugs and alcohol. The train never came. He crossed the tracks and checked himself into a substance-abuse program. He went on to college, and now is just months away from receiving his law degree.

Meade, however, will not be able to practice law in Florida. As a former felon, he cannot join the bar. That is one of his rights that has been stripped, permanently, by Florida's draconian laws. In a democracy, if one wants to change a law, you vote for lawmakers who will represent your views. Yet, as an ex-felon in Florida, Meade also has lost the right to vote for the rest of his life.

It's called "felony disenfranchisement," and is permanent in 11 states: Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, Tennessee, Virginia and Wyoming. It's enforced in differing degrees, like a patchwork, across the U.S. In 13 states and the District of Columbia, you get your rights back upon release from prison. In others, you have to get through your probation or parole. In Maine and Vermont, prisoners retain the right to vote, even while incarcerated.

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder addressed the issue this week at a legal symposium at Georgetown University:

"Across this country today, an estimated 5.8 million Americans—5.8 million of our fellow citizens—are prohibited from voting because of current or previous felony convictions. That's more than the individual populations of 31 U.S. states." Close to 6 million Americans, denied the basic right to vote. Because of the racial disparities in our penal system, African-American and Latino men are vastly disproportionately denied the right to vote. Holder continued, "The current scope of these policies is not only too significant to ignore—it is also too unjust to tolerate."

The Georgetown event was co-sponsored by The Leadership Conference, a coalition of civil-rights, legal and human-rights groups. Last September, the group released a report titled "Democracy Imprisoned." In it, the group writes, "Florida's disenfranchisement rate remains the

highest and most racially disparate in the United States." It is no coincidence that this key swing state is home to more than 1 million of the nation's nearly 6 million disenfranchised. Former Florida Gov. Charlie Crist eased the laws, making the application for the reinstatement of rights automatic. But in 2011, his successor, Republican Gov. Rick Scott, imposed a waiting period of at least five years for anyone to apply to the clemency board. Meade told us on the *Democracy Now!* news hour: "Even after applying, the processing time for the application takes upwards of six years. So, in reality, an individual will have to wait anywhere between 11 to 13 years just to see if they have a chance, a shot, at getting their rights restored." Crist has switched parties to run for governor as a Democrat against Scott.

Law professor Michelle Alexander opens her ground-breaking book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, with the story of Jarvious Cotton: "Cotton's great-great-grandfather could not vote as a slave. His great-grandfather was beaten to death by the Ku Klux Klan for attempting to vote. ... His father was barred from voting by poll taxes and literacy tests. Today, Jarvious Cotton cannot vote because he, like many black men in the United States, has been labeled a felon and is currently on parole."

At a national level, bills are being proposed that would guarantee voting rights for ex-felons, with both Democrat and Republican support. After Holder, Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky spoke at Georgetown, advocating for full voting rights. But it is still an issue over which states exert enormous control.

Desmond Meade is not sitting around waiting for his rights to be handed back to him. He is organizing. He currently serves as the president of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, with close to 70 groups pushing for reforms of the state's disenfranchisement laws:

"It's about humanity. It's an all-American issue. It's not about Democrat or Republican. It's about the common decency of letting an individual or helping an individual to reintegrate back into their community so they can become productive citizens and enjoy life."

We can all be thankful that the train he was waiting for that fateful day never came.

#### guest columnist

# When a University Hospital Backs a Surgical Robot, Controversy Ensues

#### charles ornstein

AS HE WAS FLIPPING through the *New York Times Magazine* a few Sundays ago, former hospital executive Paul Levy was taken aback by a full-page ad for the da Vinci robot

It wasn't that Levy hadn't seen advertising before for the robot, which is used for minimally invasive surgeries. It was that the ad prominently featured a dozen members of the surgery team at the University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences System. "We believe in da Vinci surgery because our patients benefit," read the ad's headline.

"While I have become accustomed to the many da Vinci ads, I was struck by the idea that a major university health system had apparently made a business judgment that it was worthwhile to advertise outside of its territory, in a national ad in the *New York Times*," Levy, former chief executive of the prestigious Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, told me by email.

As Levy scanned the ad further, he noticed that at the bottom the ad bore a copyright for Intuitive Surgical Inc., the maker of the da Vinci system. It included this line: "Some surgeons who appear in this ad have received compensation from the company for providing educational services to other surgeons and patients."

Ads for prescription drugs and medical devices are common, and some feature physician testimonials about why they believe the product works. Physicians also deliver promotional talks for drug and device makers, something *ProPublica* has covered extensively in their Dollars for Docs series.

But a whole hospital department? Levy wondered: Was this kosher?

"I was stunned that a public university would allow its name and reputation to be used in that way," he wrote. "The next day, I did a little research on the university's own website and confirmed that my initial reaction was correct: The ad violated the University's code of conduct and administrative procedures, and likely state law."

Da Vinci robotic systems aren't cheap. The *Wall Street Journal* reported last year that they can cost up to \$2.2

million each, and questions have been raised about their value. A study found that deaths and injuries caused by the robots are going underreported to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. And the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists said in a statement last year: "There is no good data proving that robotic hysterectomy is even as good as—let alone better—than existing, and far less costly, minimally invasive alternatives."

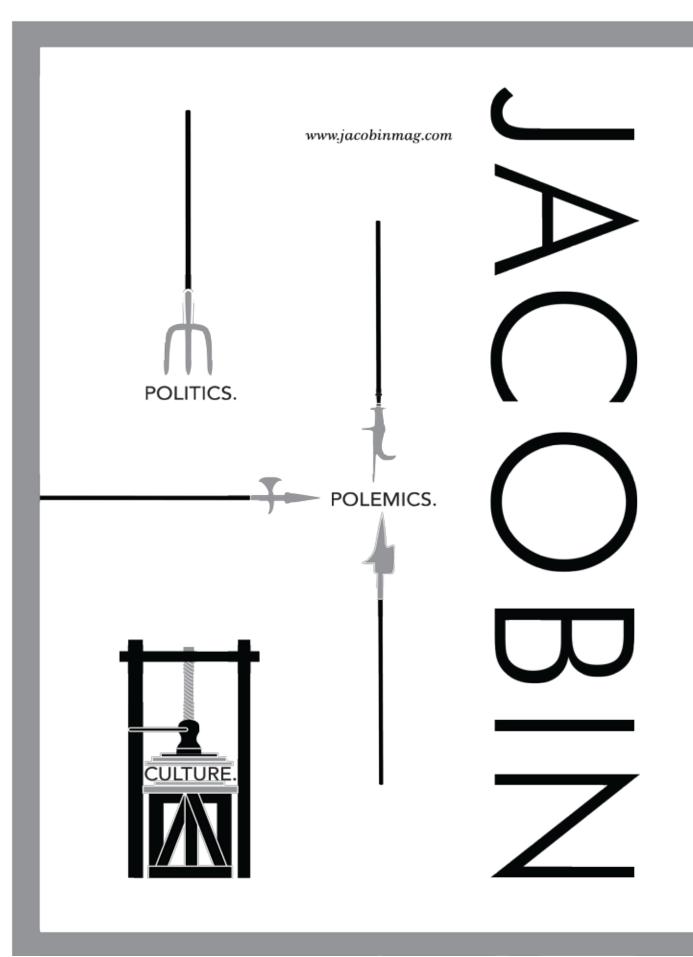
Levy, who runs a blog called Not Running a Hospital, began writing a series of posts about the ad. The first, called "Time to Fire Somebody," ran on Jan. 22. "The University has allowed its reputation to be used in a nationally distributed advertisement produced and owned by a private party, in benefit to that party's commercial objectives. This is not consistent with 'exercising custodial responsibility for University property and resources," it said.

Levy subsequently wrote a post noting that some of those who appeared in white coats in the ad weren't doctors; one wasn't even a medical professional, instead serving as the administrative director of the University of Illinois at Chicago Robotic Surgery Training Center, according to her LinkedIn profile.

Levy found that the university's campus administrative manual appears to prohibit such advertising: "In general, the University cannot permit its image to be used in any commercial announcement, in a commercial or artistic production, including the World Wide Web or in any other context where endorsement of a product, organization, person, or cause is explicitly or implicitly conveyed," the manual says.

Subsequent posts focused on the hospital's board of trustees, Intuitive's disappointing earnings, and the compensation received by the dean of the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Chicago for serving on the board of directors of drug maker Novartis. Levy forwarded the posts to the president and trustees of the university and suggested that they investigate.

Then, one day this month, Levy received an email from Thomas Hardy, the University's executive director of university relations. It said the ad was paid for by Intuitive,



the da Vinci maker, and that neither the university nor those pictured were compensated for appearing in the ad. Nonetheless, Hardy's note continued,

"We asked Intuitive to suspend the ad, and the company agreed, immediately upon learning of concerns expressed about it. Our request was based on a business decision; we were concerned that the ad was not benefiting UI Health. Out of an abundance of caution, we decided to review circumstances surrounding the publication of the advertisement. We will use this opportunity to conduct a methodical assessment of policies, guidelines, procedures and practices, and where corrective changes are required we will take the appropriate action."

The president of the University of Illinois system asked his vice president for research to investigate the matter and report back to him by March 15 if policies had been violated.

By writing about the issue, Levy appears to have made an impact on how the university navigates commercial relationships.

But the university and Intuitive are not patting Levy on the back.

In response to questions from me, Hardy reiterated what he had told Levy and also pointed me to a *Boston Globe* opinion column that faulted Levy for lapses in judgment in a personal relationship with a female employee while he led Beth Israel Deaconess. Levy was fined \$50,000 by the hospital's board of directors.

When I asked Hardy how this was relevant, he wrote in an email, "I believe if you're attributing claims and accusations to the blogster, your readers deserve to know his reported background so they can make an informed decision about his credibility . . . Wanted to make sure you have the pertinent information."

Levy said he had admitted his errors publicly and apologized.

Intuitive spokeswoman Angela Wonson said in a statement that she believes the ad was appropriate and that the testimonials from university staff were unpaid.

"Medical schools and their affiliated hospitals are our customers and play an important role in training surgeons. In the past year, there has been much misinformation about robotic-assisted surgery, spread largely by plaintiffs' lawyers as well as segments of the health-care community threatened by our groundbreaking technology. Intuitive's advertising campaign is intended to educate both the medical and patient communities by using factual information from independent, peer-reviewed studies that prove the safety of our system. The University of Illinois, which uses our technology, and the people featured in the advertisement agreed to appear without compensation. Those who use our technology see first-hand the outcomes resulting from its use. Their unpaid testimonials of da Vinci surgery are credible and sincere."

Levy first questioned the value of the da Vinci in a blog post in 2007, but a year later, he wrote about how his hospital bought one anyway. "Why? Well, in simple terms, because virtually all the academic medical centers and many community hospitals in the Boston area have bought one. Patients who are otherwise loyal to our hospital and our doctors are transferring their surgical treatments to other places," he wrote.

Other medical device companies also use doctors in their ads and videos. Hologic Inc., which makes a 3D mammogram machine took out an ad in a trade journal last year featuring the staff of Methodist Hospitals in Merryville, Ind. And Accuray, which makes the CyberKnife, a competitor for the da Vinci system, includes physician testimonials in videos on its site. One video features a physician from Beth Israel Deaconess. The videos do not disclose if the doctors have been paid.

"Accuray does not typically reimburse physicians to participate in the video testimonials on the website and they are not considered company spokespeople," the company said in a statement. "Some of the physicians and/ or their institutions may have received payment for other activities, such as speaking at an educational or medical conference, or for conducting research."

Beth Israel spokesman Jerry Berger said its doctor, Irving Kaplan, "was approved under the policy we had in place when the video was shot in 2011. He was not compensated for the appearance."

Levy said he has a financial relationship with Early-Sense, which makes equipment to monitor heart rate, respiration and patient movement. He sits on the company's advisory board. It is not a competitor to Intuitive.

Charles Ornstein is a writer for ProPublica.

# Social Illness

# Reactions to Patient's Tweets Broach a Brave New World of Health Visibility

#### collette sosnowy

N JANUARY, A HEATED conversation erupted online over how much information a person should publicly share about their illness. At the center of the discussion is a woman named Lisa Adams. Adams has Stage 4 breast cancer and is pursuing an aggressive regimen of treatment in the hopes of staying alive long enough to see her three children grow up. She blogs regularly and often tweets (@adamslisa) several times a day, sometimes during treatments at Memorial Sloan Kettering hospital. Currently, she has more than 167,000 tweets. She already had

a sizable following when she was thrust into a much larger public discussion when she became the subject of an article written in the *Guardian* by columnist Emma Keller.

The article, entitled "Forget Funeral Selfies: What Are the Ethics of Tweeting a Terminal Illness," documents Keller's morbid fascination with following Adams's Twitter stream. She paints Adams's desire to publicly share her experiences as the act of a desperate woman and questions if Adams is sharing too much information. Despite the title of the article, Keller poses no ethical questions,

but rather makes her discomfort with Adams's choice to tweet and blog about her illness the focal point.

When a backlash erupted online, the *Guardian* removed the article from its website, although thanks to a web that never forgets, the piece is still accessible

on the Internet Archive. Most respondents to the article defended Adams, and Adams herself tweeted her own reactions, clarifying what she saw as inaccurate information, and expressed gratitude for her countless supporters.

Adding fuel to the fire, Bill Keller, Emma Keller's husband and former editor of the *New York Times*, published his own opinion piece in the *Times*, entitled "Heroic Measures." In the article, he wonders if the cost of Adams's health care is warranted, if our culture is too obsessed with eking out every moment of life,



and if it wouldn't be better for her to graciously accept death, as did his seventy-nine-year old father-in-law who died from cancer in 2012. Scores of people, from bloggers/tweeters/social media users, to newspaper columnists, to TV and radio talk-show hosts criticized

the callousness, inaccuracies, and misrepresentations in both articles. Many also noted that some of the points the Kellers seemed to be trying to raise could be the basis for fruitful conversation, but that they had gone about it tactlessly and insensitively.

The Kellers' articles and the reaction they provoked highlighted a discomfort with, and reluctance to hear about, serious illness that is prevalent in our culture. Long after feminists, mental health activists, and other groups pushed back against medical and cultural patriarchy and demanded a voice, we are more supportive of these public presentations in theory than in practice. More specifically, we are selective about what we want to hear, how we want to hear it, and who we want to hear it from. This critique has been made, especially around breast cancer memes of girlish pink and a warrior narrative, which uses a vocabulary of warfare—such as arming oneself with information, battling disease, and either being victorious over illness, or graceful in defeat. In portraying the stories of lives affected by illness, social media offers a forum through which these social constructions can be reproduced, refuted, or made more nuanced.

As Meghan O'Rourke writes in the *New Yorker*, both of the Kellers' articles lack historical context, and that "a public deathbed is nothing new" and hardly unique. Even in recent years, narratives of illness are common and often praised as courageous and touching, but these have primarily been long-form and singular pieces. What draws attention to Adams is perhaps the frequency of her tweeting, so that the openness with which she shares her life has the feeling of being in real time. Because her communication frequently includes raw subjects like radiation treatments and death alongside the mundane, readers are challenged to think about the nuances, conflicts, and discomforts of serious illness.

As a culture, we tend to place parentheses around the experiences of people with illness, assuming that they live diminished lives. Simply through writing about their lives with illness—that include but are certainly not limited to illness—people challenge cultural stigmas about serious illness and help redirect the cultural narrative. In this way, using social media is an inherently resistant act. However, this is not to say that it is inherently empowering or therapeutic. In fact, many critics point out that problematic social and cultural norms are reproduced online. Despite this, social

media outlets have the capacity to reveal the everyday messiness of life, and in turn accelerate and broaden the reach of this resistance. The Lisa Adamses of the virtual world lead the resistance, perhaps unintentionally, by practicing their right to author their own experiences.

Adams communicates through a highly interactive forum that affords a non-journalist the same reach as the Kellers. The Kellers, on the other hand, used their privileged positions with two major newspapers to comment from on high. This is demonstrated in no better way than Bill Keller's disparaging of Twitter as "a medium [that] encourages reflexes rather than reflection." Whether or not response tweets were reflective, Twitter was used to spread awareness, share links to the original articles, as well as blog responses and news coverage of the issue. At the very least, it is part of a constellation of communication forums that are as, if not more, reflective than a newspaper column. This forum allows multiple voices to join in, rather than a singular, powerful voice. And it allows critical mass to talk back and engage in discussion on a scale that would not otherwise have been possible. Many of the well-crafted blog posts and articles written in response were vastly more intelligent, more reflective, and more nuanced than either of the Kellers' pieces. Furthermore, in dismissing the very medium through which Adams shares much of her experience, Keller comes across as both callous and curmudgeonly. Another advantage of social media is that Adams has a lengthy public record which she and her followers can access to easily and quickly counter the Kellers' misrepresentations.

While I don't share the Kellers' distaste for Twitter, I am not an uncritical enthusiast of social media. I, like other scholars, have argued that social media facilitates shifting the burden of care onto the person with illness. It fails to address existing inequalities in health care despite a discourse of democratizing information through widespread access to digital media. It also fosters new inequalities through expectations that patients will use these tools to self-educate and advocate. However, as the conversation that Lisa Adams inadvertently sparked demonstrates, the impact of social media is far-reaching. Ultimately, the discussion focuses not on who *should* use social media to narrate their experiences with illness, but rather *how* they go about doing it and how we, the public, should react.

# Academic Freedom and the Boycott

#### kristofer petersen-overton

TE REPUDIATE ANY EFFORT to foreclose productive dialogue." Such is the position of CUNY Interim Chancellor William Kelly, who released a short press statement in late December unilaterally reaffirming the consortium's "long association with Israeli scholars and universities." Kelly was responding, of course, to the controversial non-binding resolution recently passed by the American Studies Association (ASA) in favor of boycotting formal ties with Israeli universities. Similar statements have been released or signed by senior administrators at Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Amherst, Duke, Tulane, the University of Pennsylvania, and many more. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), in view of their "long-standing commitment to the free exchange of ideas," has also reaffirmed its opposition—since at least 2005—to academic boycotts.

Politicians have also joined in on the reaction. In late January the New York State Senate quietly passed a bill that would "prohibit any college from using state aid to fund an academic entity, to provide funds for membership in an academic entity, or fund travel or lodging for any employee to attend any meeting of such academic entity if that academic entity has undertaken an official action

boycotting certain countries or their higher education institutions." The bill, which the *New York Times* predicted would have "trample[d] on academic freedoms and chill[ed] free speech and dissent," bore a disturbing resemblance to the "deeply anti-democratic" legislation passed in Israel that today subjects advocates of a boycott to criminal penalties. Fortunately, the New York version has now been scrapped; but the logic behind such moves is clear: it is necessary to boycott the boycotters in order

to stop boycotts. Lost amid the clamor is the very real question of academic freedom itself, which is both poorly represented and widely mischaracterized.

Citing Israel's occupation of Palestinian land since 1967, its relentless expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank, the construction of a wall condemned by the International Court of Justice, the systematic discrimination against Palestinians, and the suppression of basic human rights (including the denial of academic freedom), the ASA voted on December 4, 2013 to endorse "the call of Palestinian civil society for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions." The call is not compulsory and members are expressly encouraged to "act according to their conscience and convictions on these complex issues ... [T]he ASA exercises no legislative authority over its members." Put simply, scholars remain free to pursue their own work,

while the ASA as a body simply chooses not to establish formal ties with Israeli institutions. Even the *New York Times* acknowledges that "the boycott does not apply to individual Israeli scholars engaged in ordinary exchanges," yet most of the outrage mistakenly claims the opposite.

Such wide condemnation is mainly semantic. After all, who could possibly stomach the idea of "boycotting" the free exchange of ideas? The very suggestion smacks of McCarthyism—or worse! This

peculiar interpretation (incidentally not at all what the boycott calls for) has the unfortunate effect of stirring pious indignation among many of the same individuals whose concern for academic freedom does not extend to threats on their own campuses. The *potential* perils faced by Israeli scholars apparently command more attention than the enormous structural threat to academic freedom posed by the exploitation of adjunct labor at home.

Yet even the contrived administrative concern for the

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potential threat to Israeli academic freedom is predicated on a misconception. If we agree with the AAUP's 1940 statement of principles that academic freedom protects the "individual's ability to conduct teaching and research without interference," then even a cursory look at what the academic boycott proposes should dispel any suggestion that the boycott is itself a violation of academic freedom.

Each of us chooses to work or not to work with scholars for any number of reasons. This is a negative liberty we enjoy in the academy. As a negative liberty, unless restrictions are put in place that would impede such freedom, it is presumed to prevail. If academic freedom is sufficiently upheld then we cannot be compelled to work with anyone for any reason. The motives behind our decision are irrelevant. Perhaps I resent you personally; perhaps I think you produce shoddy scholarship; perhaps you hold views I find deeply offensive. Whatever my rationale, however



correct or misguided, it remains *my* decision not to work with *you*. In refusing to establish formal ties with Israeli institutions, the ASA is merely expressing this liberty. Moreover, there's something particularly obscene about the level of debate, the sheer output of concern over the ostensible threat to academic freedom faced by Israeli scholars while the conditions faced by Palestinian scholars inspires far less piety—even while Palestinian scholars are subject to the inevitable impediments and challenges that military occupation brings with it.

The following case highlights this hypocrisy. Brandeis

University recently severed various cooperative ties with Al Quds University in Jerusalem to protest an Islamic Jihad rally that took place on campus, apparently featuring Nazi-style salutes, fake weapons, and photographs of suicide bombers. No one at Brandeis seemed particularly disturbed with the decision to pull out—to effectively boycott Al Quds University—though it means terminating many established academic programs. Yet the entire American Studies at Brandeis department resigned from the ASA in protest of their largely symbolic, non-binding resolution against Israeli institutions.

But let's assume the academic boycott is, as many claim, a violation of academic freedom. If this is the case, then the logical implications of the argument take us to some fairly untenable conclusions. If it is a violation of academic freedom to refuse to work with certain institutions or to cut established ties with those institutions, then

it follows that universities lacking established ties to those institutions are also in violation of academic freedom. I suppose these universities must now be compelled to immediately initiate cooperative endeavors, lest they undermine Israeli academic freedom. This becomes tiring very quickly and obliterates the negative liberty of choosing who or who not to work with, a key element of academic freedom. In a line of reasoning that may have inspired our esteemed state politicians, Indiana University has since withdrawn from the ASA in the name of academic freedom (of course). As Corey Robin writes pointedly, "Indiana University is so opposed to boycotts of academic institutions in

Israel that it is going to boycott an academic institution in the United States."

The reader will have noticed that I avoided any discussion of the justifications motivating the boycott. I also did not discuss the boycott's tactical virtues. As activists and scholars, many of us might disagree with an academic boycott on tactical grounds. Perhaps one feels such a move is counterproductive or will result in negligible gains for the Palestinian struggle. Those are valid arguments and should be taken seriously. Challenging the boycott on grounds of academic freedom is not.

# Panel Discussion

# Academic Freedom and the Academic Boycott

Skylight Room, April 2, 2014 @ 7 PM

Featuring

Lisa Duggan President of the American Studies Association

Nadia Abu El Haj Barnard College

Ashley Dawson CUNY Staten Island

and others

Sponsored by the Center for Place, Culture, and Politics and the Critical Palestine Studies Association

# Not Backing Down

### Protests at City College over Morales/Shakur Expose CUNY at Its Most Oppressive

#### michael stivers

IDWAY THROUGH THE FALL 2013 semester, CUNY's reputation was shaken as a reignited campaign to oppose the appointment of David Petraeus, former CIA head and Director of the U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, had emerged. School administrators like Interim CUNY Chancellor Bill Kelly and Macaulay Honors College Dean Ann Kirschner found themselves on the defensive, playing damage control as hundreds gathered in successive weeks to denounce Petraeus's war crimes during the military occupation of Iraq and the program of extra-judicial assassination by drone strike under the CIA, both of which were (and still are) illegal under international law.

The protests sought to expose and drive out Petraeus, a man implicated with myriad war crimes. Due to the high-profile status of Petraeus, the NYPD quickly increased its visibility. The police force seemed to multiply every week, bringing with them more steel barricades, more suit and tie security officials. During one of the innumerable marches down West 67th street, a tree-lined block just a stones throw from Central Park, six students soon to be known as "The CUNY Six" were violently beaten and arrested by the police for allegedly stepping outside of the small zone deemed acceptable for protest. Video from the protest evidences one student weathering repeated blows to the kidneys after being handcuffed and incapacitated, as multiple officers (at least one in plainclothes) held



him down.

The arrests of these students, whose trials are ongoing, was indicative of, perhaps even expected of, a central administration that has greatly increased its power and reach. The episode makes shockingly clear, particularly for the six arrested students and their supporters, that the CUNY administration is willing to go to great lengths to protect its interests. In this case, it meant unleashing the NYPD against non-violent protestors.

In the wake of the arrests, Kelly published a short statement tacitly in support of the arrests (he did not condemn the use of violence by police) and Kirschner kept silent on the issue. Though the outcry was loud, and the calls to drop all charges principled and frequent, the administration would not be moved. CUNY administration had endured a series of escalating protests and a damaging media campaign. Yet still, the central administration had held onto their celebrity appointment, war crimes not withstanding. Over a number of bitterly embattled and politically draining weeks, CUNY leadership had reinforced its position in attempting to marginalize the voices of students, professors, and others within the broader CUNY community.

Perhaps it should not have been so shocking, when just weeks later on October 20th the Guilliermo Morales/ Assata Shakur Student and Community Center at City College was shut down without notice in the middle of the night and its contents confiscated. In doing so, security had closed the entire North Academic Center or "NAC," the building that houses the Morales/Shakur Center as well as CCNY's Cohen Library. CUNY administrators had recently agreed to keep the NAC open 24/7 during midterms week—a service won by Students for Educational Rights, a group that met frequently in the Morales/Shakur Center. It goes without saying that innumerable students, both affiliated with the Center and not, were as frustrated as they were perplexed when turned away from the library so that security could dismantle the Center at will. Shutting down a library to appropriate a student center is quite an image for a public university funded by the taxes of students and their parents.

The closure is indicative of an ethos that, while by no means new, has been reignited over the past few years. This ethos is one that allows the CUNY administration and the governing Board of Trustees to make decisions unilaterally—even decisions that directly affect students, professors, and other stakeholders in CUNY, without consultation. The Board of Trustees, an unelected fifteenmember body with one student representative, sets the policies for a university system with over half a million students and tens of thousands of faculty and staff. It is no surprise that the interests of those that make CUNY



work every day such as students, professors, parents, innumerable clerical and maintenance workers, taxpayers, and others are seldom considered in policy deliberations and decisions. What is novel, at least relatively in these circumstances, is the direct repression of activism and dissent at CUNY—an administration that not only stonewalls efforts to change the inherently unequal balance of power, but also clamps down hard on the individuals, groups, and networks agitating for such a change. Seizing an independently run student and community center, especially one that consistently and directly confronted the CUNY administration seems a rational administrative decision. The fact that administrators have taken the steps to do so is a window into the power dynamic at CUNY today.

The Morales/Shakur Center had been a site of political struggle and administrative angst at CCNY for decades. It had been won in a 1989 campaign centered on fighting budget cuts. As part of the resolution, CCNY relinquished control over the space and allowed students and community members to manage and operate it independently. In the years that followed, the space was used for a wide range of purposes and projects—a space that became as diverse as the groups that inhabited it. The Center hosted potluck dinners, anti-oppression trainings, a community supported agriculture program, and constant meetings of approximately twenty groups. That activity did not deter CUNY administrators from shutting its once-welcoming double doors, painting over the red fist with an off-white coat, and labeling it the "Careers and Professional Development Institute." A symbolic transformation no doubt.

Also key to this seizure was the fact that Center, according to the charter signed in the wake of the 1989 fight, was independently operated and managed by the group that led the campaign, Students for Educational Rights (SER). Current SER President Alyssia Osorio recounted, "Student Affairs (then Student Services) signed the agreement with SER in 1989 and it has been in effect continuously since then. There are a number of legal documents from the Center detailing this but they are still being held by administration after being confiscated. Requests to unsurveilled access to these documents and to other individual belongings still being held have not been met." City College's Vice President of Student Affairs, Juana Reina, declined to comment on this claim. Deidra Hill, the college's Vice President for Communications and Marketing, said, "We are not aware of any signed agreement."

Despite the administration's seemingly cut-and-dried legal breach, students, faculty, and members of the com-

munity responded to the shut down with a stomach-churning mix of confusion and indignance, blindsided by the violent act. The morning immediately following the seizure, one CCNY alumnus and a frequent visitor to the Center, David Zuker, was arrested when an argument ensued after security refused to return his belongings from the Center.

Students gathered the next day on the briskly cold patio just outside the NAC. After all, the Center had been targeted by administration multiple times since its inception and each successive attempt had failed due to the earnest defense by the CCNY community.

A crowd of hundreds soon developed and students, professors, and those from the community began to speak out against the closure, delving into a range of themes: the dwindling patience for student activism and dissent, the quickly-spreading reach of the administration's tentacles over student and community affairs, and the unequivocal umbrella topic of the day—the militarization of CUNY and its campuses. "Everyone I had ever seen from the Center was there," said Russell Weiss-Irwin, a political science major at CCNY and a member of Students for Educational Rights. "It wasn't just the leaders of the organizations, but anyone that I had ever seen at a meeting, even one."

As the numbers increased, a fire alarm went off throughout the NAC—the building that houses 80% of classes at City. Thousands of students poured out into the patio where the forceful rally was occurring. The organizers of the rally now had a larger audience to speak to. Sheila Bora, a Philosophy student then took control, utilizing the "People's Mic," a tool popularized in Zucotti Park just a couple years ago. She explained the injustice of the seizure, leveraging the voices of an estimated 300 people to speak to what had becomes thousands. Brother Shep, a powerful community ally and member of the People's Survival Program, one of the organizations that also met at the Morales/Shakur Center, then took the stage. Quickly, he urged the group to marc...and march they did.

They began walking away from the NAC, forcing the students who had ended up outside due the fire alarm to either join the both literal and figurative movement or to return to class. Hundreds joined, hooking up with the throngs of people now numbering somewhere near a thousand. After marching a couple blocks north on Amsterdam Avenue, the group turned around and headed back towards the NAC, moving through a side door and

entering the library which had just hours before been under lockdown.

Protestors filed out of the library, concluding the event with another thundering rally in the Rotunda of the NAC, a large, open space in which the continued outrage of students and professors from multiple CUNY campuses echoed wide and far. The range of speakers and political persuasion spoke to the diversity of the center. Gargi Padki, an International Relations major and Roosevelt scholar, had been working on a project against domestic violence out of the Center. Rakim Jenkins, the president of the Black Student Union, also spoke, emphasizing how integral the Center was to his development. Samuel

"The administration

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but this gave them

a reason to do so."

Innocent, the President of the City College Veterans Association, even remarked that while the VA might not agree with all of the claims regarding the militarization of CUNY, they absolutely supported the students in the struggle over the Morales/Shakur Center.

Each impassioned speaker made the illegality and absurdity of the case crystal clear. CCNY administration had seized, shut down, and

repurposed the Center for their own ends without consulting any of the groups that constituted it, thus violating the charter guaranteeing the autonomy of the space. While these testimonies were forceful, perhaps the most compelling aspect was the personal meaning that each person attributed to the Center. It was, as so many recounted, the first place they had felt community at CCNY, a place where they had made their closest friends, an environment in which they had been introduced to people and ideas that had motivated, inspired, and changed them. Many used the often repeated refrain that the Center was "the only liberated space in CUNY," one in which students could acknowledge, discuss, and combat the oppression of women, people of color, and LGBTQ individuals among other peoples and populations.

As the day ended and the adrenaline (temporarily) wore down, the question arose as to why this was happening, or at least, given the power dynamic explained above, why now? Many suspected that the brazen act was political payback for, or at least indirectly motivated by the events at Macaulay Honors College just weeks before in which CUNY's name had been dragged through the mud. Many of the protestors in the early fall had been

CCNY students, including some leaders within the Ad-Hoc Committee Against the Militarization of CUNY—the coalition of CUNY students, professors, alumni, and others that had organized the protests against Petraeus in the fall. The question of how connected these events were may never be fully known but it seems suspect that two of the most violent acts of administrative repression against students took place just weeks apart from each other.

Khalil Vasquez is a member of the Revolutionary Students Coordinating Committee (RSCC) and the ad-hoc committee that had mobilized against Petraeus, both groups that met frequently at the Center. These events "were completely connected," he remarked. "The

administration always wanted to close the center, but this gave them a reason to do so." Further evidence for the political motivations came just weeks later when CCNY's Vice President for Student Affairs, Juana Reina, indefinitely suspended two students, Vasquez and Tafadar "Taffy" Sourov. Both had been members of RSCC as well as integral in the nascent campaign to reclaim the Center. Khalil and Taffy were escorted off campus in front of their classmates without any forewarning and had their IDs confis-

cated. An overreaching response indeed, even aside from the fact CCNY appears to have violated CUNY policy by failing to conduct disciplinary hearings before enacting suspensions. Professors and students remarked that this was the first time in decades that students had been disciplined for their political activism.

It seems highly unlikely that of the hundreds of students in the campaign to reclaim the Center, administration would pick out two of the most active who held clear positions of leadership by random chance. The charges were in reference to an attempt by students to enter the NAC and retake the Center on October 24, days after the massive initial showing. "There's video of the event," says Vasquez. "There were 50 people trying to enter that building—why would they only suspend us two? They clearly targeted us."

While the CUNY administration is not a monolithic body and certainly different administrators act of their own accord, one consistent presence at the Morales/ Shakur Center and at the Macaulay protests was that of CUNY Public Safety. This department is under the control of CUNY's central administration and includes the "SAFE Team," an elite force of officers that moves from campus





to campus to quell and suppress student dissent. Many students observed what they believed to be Public Safety staffers, often in plainclothes, at protests and actions throughout the semester. Seemingly out of place bystanders wielding strangely expensive video cameras also became objects of attention for students, calling out their role as undercover officers filming actions and targeting leaders. "It felt like a police state," said Vasquez. Near the end of the semester, even City College President Lisa Coico told students at her weekly roundtable that she never wanted the closure of the Center to happen like this. Coico's response provided even more validity to the theory, widely held by students, that these directives were coming from higher up than local campus administration, at least from Public Safety or possibly from the Board of Trustees, and maybe even higher. All of this occurred alongside another encroachment of administrative power in the form of a proposed "Expressive Conduct Policy" that would severely limit the rights of students and workers at CUNY to express their views and opinions, political or otherwise. This policy, though tabled for now, soon became another subject of condemnation during the rolling series of protests.

According to RSCC's website, "the City College administration attempted to strike a deal with Khalil and Tafadar, offering to lift their suspension (until the next hearing) and let them resume their classes if they submit to monitoring by security when they are on campus, agree to end their political activities on campus, and not participate on campus in any other way." Sourov and Vasquez rejected the deal. After further hearings, the charges were dropped and their tuition refunded. Both Vasquez and Sourov have returned to classes, though not without suffering another attack. A subpoena from the New York County District Attorney's Office for charges of criminal mischief, obstructing government process, and inciting a riot. Sourov was also charged with attempted assault. The cases are ongoing.

As for the future of the Center, even the students are bit hesitant as to how to move forward. "A lot of students are worried about police repression," said Alyssia Osorio. "They're torn about whether to stay involved and continue to confront [the] administration. For now we're just working on educating people on campus and getting the word out."

Vasquez also acknowledges that this is a long-term fight. "We need a city-wide movement," he noted. "It'll take students, professors, and community members to do so. It'll be a struggle but we want to get it back. In fact we want to get a Center on every campus and we want to do so not only as students, but as people with radical politics fighting for the oppressed in this city." That is, to fight, even in different and new spaces, for everything the Morales/Shakur Center embodied and fought for.

# This Article Is Banned

### by the CUNY Policy on Expressive Conduct

#### stefanie a. jones and dominique nisperos

OR AT LEAST THE past eight months the CUNY Board of Trustees has been considering a CUNY-wide policy prohibiting and policing what is alternately called "expressive conduct" or "expressive activity." The proposed changes would fundamentally curtail the ability of students and faculty to disseminate information, gather in shared CUNY spaces, engage in peaceful protest, and participate meaningfully in their campus life.

The first version, dated July 27, 2013 and entitled "The City University of New York Policy on Expressive Activity," was circulated to the University Faculty Senate and its committees at the end of October 2013, and has since generated significant dissent. A petition written by a group of CUNY students and faculty that has generated well over a thousand signatures (to see it, visit: https:// www.change.org/petitions/the-cuny-board-of-trustees-andcuny-college-administrators-dismiss-the-proposed-cunypolicy-on-expressive-activity). The document's agenda is revealed immediately; it begins with the premise that "freedom of expression and assembly . . . are subject to the need to maintain safety and order" (Draft 1, article 1.1). It also immediately asserts that, "expressive conduct must be carried out so as to ensure . . . the protection of property, and the continuity of the University's . . . business operations" (Draft 2, article 1.1; unless otherwise noted, quotations refer to this more recent draft). The document then expands on the ways in which freedom of expression and assembly should be specifically curtailed.

For those unfamiliar with the document, the Draft CUNY Policy on Expressive Conduct:

► Grants CUNY Central and local CUNY campuses the right to decide "time, place and manner restrictions on

expressive activities" (1.2).

- ▶ Prohibits CUNY employees, including faculty and staff, from participating in anything CUNY might consider a "demonstration" "at times when they are scheduled to perform instructional or other assigned work responsibilities," (2.2) This clause is an unprecedented expansion of the authority of CUNY central and local administrators into the course content and classroom conversation, a threat to all faculty.
- ▶ Limits expression to designated places and times (2.1). These designated area serves as a "free speech pen." In addition, article 2.2 prohibits expressive activity within any University facilities unless a particular campus makes an exception.
- ▶ Directly prohibits "occupying" a University property or facility (3.3).
- The first draft of this proposal requires notice of a demonstration or expressive activity to be given to the building's security personnel, which notice must include "location, date and time" as well as expected participants. After the receipt of this notification CUNY is permitted to apply "time, place and manner restrictions" (draft 1, article 2.1), including changing the date, location, and/or time of the expression. Although this isn't specifically granted in the second draft, notice is still required and administrative or
- ▶ Directly prohibits any action that "threatens to disrupt University functions or operations," or "threaten[s] to destroy University property or other public or private

police interference with demon-

stration is not explicitly prohibited.

- property" without any indication of who decides what activity is considered threatening (3.2).
- ▶ Directly prohibits standing in front of doorways to or from "University property or facilities" (3.2).
- ▶ The first draft directly prohibited "shouting" and "using amplified sound." The second draft still prohibits using unacceptable "amplified sound" or "making loud noise" (3.3). Students who violate these restrictions are subject to discipline including expulsion *as well as* termination of employment *as well as* referral to "external law enforcement authorities" (3.4).
- ▶ Permits the President and campus security to terminate demonstrations, after only one warning or no warning if the demonstration is considered a "threat," including by recruiting police intervention (4.2 and 4.3).
- Limits tabling and the distribution of leaflets or other expressive material (5.1 and 5.2).

These limitations and the means of carrying them out comprise the majority of content of the document. The draft policy includes only information on how CUNY seeks to regulate and punish its students, faculty, and staff, with no mention of how the university will protect free speech, or prevent brutality and abuses of power by the administration or public safety officers. Limiting opposition to the policies and practices of the university is the goal of, and the exact problem with, the CUNY Policy on Expressive Activities/Conduct. Any purported concerns about campus safety or freedom of expression are already decided at the campus level, or within already existing University policies.

This move by the City University of New York is especially wrong-headed given other movements across New York City to undo draconian policing policies. With stop-and-frisk in the news and on Mayor de Blasio's cutting block,

# plified

as the rising number of murders of trans\*
New Yorkers, it is now common knowledge that
the disproportionate policing of young people of color and
trans\* and queer youth is an atrocity of justice right now,
right here in our city. And whom is the City University of

New York meant to serve more than the people of New York? While increased security against expression might make certain older white male elites at 42nd Street feel more comfortable, that comfort is one-sided. It comes at great cost to those most marginalized among the CUNY community and New York City.

Such a policy not only legitimizes the continued use of surveillance and force against the very people that CUNY is supposed to be working for, it actively criminalizes activity that discomfits the CUNY elite. The CUNY Policy on Expressive Conduct cannot be "non-discriminatory" (1.2) because it produces—as well as reproduces—class and race hierarchies within the walls of our schools, and it must not be tolerated. For example, CUNY administrators are permitted to conduct their expressive activity, even at the expense of others conducting their scholarship business (under articles 4.2 and 4.3, the president is permitted to use campus security and the NYPD to halt what is perceived as a threat), while students and faculty (much more likely to be working class and people of color) are instead subjected to such expressions by this policy. In addition to reifying material differences between (particularly white, wealthy, male) CUNY administrators and those students and faculty (particularly working class students and students of color) who serve as lesser citizens, implementation of the policy depends on an idea of who is "threatening," disruptive, and who has the right to use CUNY's space. In practice, the affective impressions of threat, disruption, and entitlement are already classed and racialized. Disproportionately for working class folks, queer and trans\* folks, and folks of color, freedom of expression is regularly under attack because of institutionalized stereotypes that represent these demographics as threatening and disruptive. A CUNY-wide policy on expressive activities should work to support and expand the freedom of expression for oppressed groups, not attempt to counter that freedom in order to

# sound

defend the University's "business operations." These are class, race, and gender relations disguised as "legitimate interests" (1.2).

In addition to these concerns, the Professional Staff Congress's resolution in opposition to the policy raises

# making loud noise

ency as to sort of what the rules were relating to protests

several excellent points. In a re-

cent resolution (http://www.psc-cuny.org/support-freedomdissent-and-assembly), the PSC concludes that "the draft policy (and its successor draft), if implemented, would have an impact on terms and conditions of employment and a dramatic impact on the intellectual, political and moral life of the University." The PSC resolution also provides a brief history of CUNY's violations of civil rights, violations rooted in the suppression of dissent. One noteworthy example is the 1940-42 Rapp-Coudert Committee which "supported by the University Board, interrogated, fired, and imprisoned instructors and staff" because of their perceived political beliefs. Most importantly, the PSC notes that any CUNY Policy on Expressive Conduct would be in violation of the University's commitment to freedom of expression. The Board of Trustees affirmed in 1981 that the "University pledges diligently to safeguard the constitutional rights of freedom of expression, freedom of association and open intellectual inquiry of the faculty, staff and students of the University" (CUNY's Manual of General Policy Section 2.17, http://policy.cuny. edu/manual\_of\_general\_policy).

Fortunately, at a public meeting with students on January 17th, 2014, Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs, CUNY General Counsel, and the author of the Expressive Activities policy Frederick P. Schaffer asserted regarding the Expressive Activities Policy that CUNY will "either produce another draft, or not, if there's a strong consensus that we shouldn't have a policy along these lines." We encourage you to make your views known to Vice Chancellor Schaffer at his office (646-664-9200) or through email (ogc@cuny.edu); or to communicate directly with Interim Chancellor (and former Graduate Center President) Bill Kelly (646-664-9100, or chancellor@cuny.edu).

At this meeting, Vice Chancellor Schaffer also noted the varied campus policies governing "expressive activity" that are already in place, that this proposal would supplant. In more disturbing news, however, when discussing the background of the policy Schaffer noted that "it was actually a group of distinguished professors that asked to meet with" then-Chancellor Goldstein to express some concerns around the police and security brutality at the Baruch protests of November 2011. "One of the suggestions at that meeting was that there was a lack of transpar-

and demonstrations around the university, and that it would be desirable to have a policy." Either Schaffer has misinterpreted the intentions of these faculty to generate the policy's extreme CUNY-wide restrictions on top of already-existing campus policies, or our distinguished faculty are a significant factor in the troubling and unnecessary measures this proposed policy now sets forth. Neither of these is a pleasant thought. We call on those distinguished professors from that meeting to reflect on Schaffer's characterization of their role and to take a stance on the resultant Draft CUNY Policy on Expressive Conduct.

Interim Graduate Center President Chase Robinson expressed reservations about the CUNY Policy on Expressive Conduct at the December 11, 2013 Graduate Council meeting. Indeed, the upcoming agenda for Graduate Council (the academic governing body of The Graduate School and University Center) features a resolution in opposition to the CUNY Policy on Expressive Conduct that was brought from the floor at the December meeting. The next Graduate Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 5, 2014.

While mounting opposition is encouraging, especially in light of Vice Chancellor Schaffer's clear indication that opposition to the proposal will be taken seriously, a cynic might wonder how this opposition could still be twisted to turn a fight against excessive policing in the academy on its head. When the content of academic work comes into conflict with the really existing political conditions of the academy, scholarly rigor (including the rigor of political dissent) must take priority, or the university will be entirely reduced to a tool for corporate or political interests. And then where will we stand with the public during budget season? We would like to propose a New CUNY Policy on Expressive Conduct (let's call it the 02/14/14 draft). It can just read:

The City University of New York fully supports the free exchange of ideas and expression of all points of view for all members of the University community, including political dissent, as integral to the mission of the public university.

We hope that students, staff, administrators, and the distinguished faculty will offer their support.

# Has the Threat of Overpopulation Been Neutralized?

Alan Weisman, *Countdown*. Little, Brown and Company, 2013.

#### russ wellen

TO MANY OF US, overpopulation is self-evident. In the United States suburbs are becoming urbanized, rural areas are becoming suburbs, and there doesn't seem to be an end in sight to the appropriation of forests and open spaces for housing tracts, shopping centers, and business parks. A statistic that snuck up on us, the number of cities in China that number over one million in population stands at 160. Over the next decade sixty more are expected to be added to the list.

It wasn't until 1815 that the world population reached one billion. Today we number nearly seven and a quarter billion, with a million more people born every four and a half days. From a certain perspective, a virulent bacterial infection is rampaging across the earth's surface. Yet, as with global warming, many, maybe even most, deny that it's a problem.

In his acclaimed 2008 book *World Without Us*, Alan Weisman investigated how the earth would fare in our absence after it was depopulated by a catastrophic event. (For a while, even worse. Then, much better.) In an ideal world, his most recent book, *Countdown*, would silence those who doubt that overpopulation is a disaster in the making. But no such luck.

Before we examine Weisman's work, it might be useful to address the deniers. After all, they've been successful to such an extent that, outside the animal world, the term "overpopulation" is seldom used anymore. Weisman, for example, portrays his project as determining and achieving earth's "optimum population," a step up from the chilling techno-speak term "carrying capacity."

Deniers draw their justification from reports such as the one by Deutsche Bank's global strategist, Sanjeev Sanyal, who last year disputed a 2012 UN report that, in 2100, Earth's population will reach 10.9 billion. Instead, according to Sanyal's calculations, the global population will peak at 8.9 billion in 2055 and decline to eight billion by 2200. As with those who deny climate change, those who claim overpopulation is a non-issue do so princi-

pally out of concerns, up-front or disguised, for economic growth.

To begin with, the deniers of overpopulation fear a lower birth will result in a lack of workers to pay for the welfare of the elderly. In an article on Japan, the *Financial Times* reported: "In 1960, there were 11 people of working age for every person over 65. In 30 years' time, there are only likely to be 1.3. . . . The trend of Japan's so-called dependency ratio looks stark." But, the figures are misleading, explains author David Pilling. "What's important is the ratio of workers not to elderly people but to nonworkers, including children and women." Also, in Japan, there "may be more old people but there are fewer (unproductive) children to worry about and more women in the workforce, if still not enough. Crucially, people are working longer." Overpopulation deniers are either unaware of, or conveniently overlook, dynamics such as these.

Other reservations expressed about overpopulation are exemplified by the book *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle* to Control World Population (Belknap Press, 2010). The author, Columbia University historian Matthew Connelly, outlines a 20th-century family-planning movement funded by the likes of the Rockefeller Foundation and the United Nations to control population worldwide. Ostensibly intended to improve women's health and standing in the world, as well as decrease poverty, instead, awash in racism and sexism, the family planning movement not only showed a casual disregard for the side effects of IUDs, such as infections, but employed forced sterilization. But, in a New York Times review, Nicholas Kristof writes: "The family planning movement has corrected itself, and today it saves the lives of women in poor countries and is central to efforts to reduce poverty worldwide."

Regardless, some—especially those situated at that point where far left and far right meet on the political ouroboros as the head of one eats the tail of the other—believe that the likes of the Rockefeller Foundation and the UN sought to control the global population by not only instituting coercive approaches to birth control and sterilization but also by experimenting with HIV and swine flu. To what end? Fewer unwashed masses depleting resources



the elite prefer to keep for themselves. Key to these theories, which qualify as conspiracy, is a 1974 US National Security Study Memorandum drawn up by Henry Kissinger that maintained population growth needed to be restrained in the emerging world lest it lead to civil unrest in countries that the United States sought to develop.

Obviously, the number of people populating the earth and whether or not the elite are trying to cull portions of the masses are two, distinct issues. Unless, that is, said theorists seek to make the unlikely case that global elites have coerced scientists and statisticians to fudge the number upwards to justify harsh population-control measures. In other words, doing the prep work for a "Great Die-Off" can scarcely be conflated with making the case that the earth is over-run by mankind.

Meanwhile, the key reservation expressed about overpopulation explains why the term "Malthuisan" tends to be derogatory these days. In 1798, British clergyman and economist Robert Malthus published "Essay on the Principle of Population," in which he wrote: "The power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man." If food production couldn't keep up with a burgeoning world population, he argued, the price of food would rise and the poor would go hungry.

But, with the onset of the Green Revolution, which came to full fruition in the late 1960s. Malthus became discredited for his failure to sufficiently take into account mankind's ability to innovate. Credited with saving over a billion people from starvation, the Green Revolution comprised the development of high-yield varieties of grains, the use of nitrogen fertilizer, and the modernization of irrigation and crop management. Antedating the association of "green" with saving the environment, the revolution also entailed the distribution of pesticides and fungicides, which were considered critical because the laboratory hybrids lacked the disease resistance of time-tested heirloom grains.

Biologist Norman Borlaug, the inventor of a

strain of disease-resistant wheat, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution to the world's food supply. While pro-growth, free-market advocates took the Green Revolution as a sign that concerns about overpopulation were exaggerated, Borlaug knew that grains could only be tweaked so much. Weisman quotes from Borlaug's Nobel acceptance speech: "There can be no permanent progress in the battle against hunger until the agencies that fight for increased food production and those that fight for population control unite in a common effort." In other words, Borlaug thought his innovations were just buying time until humans could corral their runaway reproduction.

Countdown opens with Weisman jumping feet first into a region that's one of the engines of overpopulation. The rockets that Arabs and Israelis launch at each other have, arguably, been eclipsed by the population bombs that Palestinians and haredim (ultra-orthodox) Jews are setting off. You may be familiar with Yasser Arafat cringe-inducing pronouncement: "The womb of the Arab woman is my best weapon."

Weisman describes the half-million worshipers at Jerusalem's famous al-Aqsa Mosque and the plaza around it during Ramadan. There he meets Khalil Toufakji, a Palestinian demographer, who attempts to explain the rationale behind historically high rates of Arab reproduction. "In America or Europe, if there is a problem, you can call the police. In a place with no laws to safeguard you, you rely on your family. . . . Our mentality goes back to the Bedouins. If you have a big enough tribe, everyone's afraid of you."

For their part, besides leaning on their women to become non-stop baby-making machines to keep Jews one step ahead of Palestinians, Israel's *haredi* seek to outgrow their status as a minority group in Israel and thus supersede the influence of less fundamentalist Jews. But, other Jews that Weisman interviews cite passages in the Torah that admonish us to take care of the world. Haji Fazlun Khalid, founder of the British Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science, tells Weisman

"that Allah is the sole owner of the Earth and everything in it. He loans the world to humans to use, but not to abuse." In Indonesia, Muslim scholars issued "the world's first environmental fatwas, warning that illegal logging, mining, and burning forests are *haram:* forbidden under divine law."

Weisman also travels to the Sahel in Niger, which serves as a buffer between tropical savannas in the south and the Sahara in the north. Niger's poor (most of the population) reflexively reproduce at a rapid rate as a hedge against losing children to malnutrition and disease. But, overcompensating, they wind up with too many mouths to feed, thus a cycle of malnutrition and disease continues.

What then constitutes optimum population? At the First World Optimum Population Conference in 1993, Weisman writes, environmental scientist Gretchen Daily and Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb*, along with his Ehrlich's wife Anne (an author of various books relating to overpopulation, environment and resource allocation), stated that optimum population "did not mean the maximum number that could be crammed onto the planet like industrial chickens, but how many could live well without compromising the chance for future generations to do the same. At minimum, everyone should be guaranteed sustenance, shelter, education, health care, freedom from prejudice, and opportunities to earn a living."

Their goals were far from Utopian, as this quote from a conference statement makes apparent.

"While it is nearly everyone's selfish best interest to narrow the rich-poor gap, we are skeptical that the incentives driving social and economic inequalities can ever be fully overcome. We therefore think a global optimum should be determined with humanity's characteristic selfishness and myopia in mind."

Need a ballpark figure for the global optimum? Weisman writes that if the entire world adopted a one-child policy tomorrow, by the end of the century we'd be back to 1.6 billion, the same as 1900. Though admittedly, in the context of today's world, quoting a number five and a half billion below contemporary estimates makes one feel like he or she tolerates eugenics or, even worse, genocide.

The good news is that, when educated about it, women in the developing world embrace birth control, even to the extent of hiding it from their husbands. Pockets of resistance to large families are now populated mostly by men, who in the developing world, fear for their authority and, in the developed world, fear economic stagnation and decline. To find out more about whether economic growth remains a viable model, Weisman visits Herman Daly, who he calls the "dean of steady-state economists." Daly maintains that, in fact, the model for an economy that doesn't strip the earth of its resources and consign us to a dystopian future is the earth itself with its innate ability to recycle and recover.

In a steady-state economy, the population remains stable and labor only manufactures on an as-needed basis. One means to that end, according to Daly's colleague, Joshua Farley, another economist, is of all things, monetary policy. Today, of course, the principle of fractional reserve allows banks to keep on hand only a small portion of what's actually on their books; the rest is usually either invested or loaned. Or, as Farley says to Weisman, "Banks virtually loan money into existence. . . . And unless the economy continually expands, there is no new flow of money to pay back that money, plus interest."

To stem the insatiable hunger for growth, Farley recommends abolishing banks' ability to lend money that they don't have on hand. The money creator of last resort then becomes the government, which issues it to create goods, works, and jobs, thus redistributing money more fairly. Since the government is no longer borrowing money, taxes wouldn't need to be raised to pay off interest. Needless to say, wealth's current gatekeepers are unlikely to stand for that. But Daly contends, "the alternative to a sustainable economy an ever-growing economy is biophysically impossible."

Much like climate control, with which optimum population is inextricably linked, the damage has already been done. At this point, it's a matter of mitigating the damage.

The following quote typifies Weisman's concerns around population.

"But either we take control ourselves, and humanely bring our numbers down by recurring fewer new members of the human race to take our places, or nature is going to hand out a pile of pink slips."

With his reporting on the state of agriculture, resources, and climate change, as well as optimum population, Weisman turns his book into one-stop shopping on all issues sustainable. In fact, *Countdown* is required reading for all earthlings.

The English Student Association, the English Department. The Doctoral Students Council, Revolutionizing American Studies, and the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean present The 2014 ESA Graduate Conference On the Genealogies and Futures of Diasporic Inquiry Opening Keynote: Prof. David Scott, Columbia Closing Keynote: Prof. Sibylle Fischer, NYU March, 13th-14th, 2014 blackatlanticeurrents.wordpress.com blackatlanticcurrents@gmail.com



Her. Written and directed by Spike Jonze.

#### christina nadler

WRITER AND DIRECTOR SPIKE Jonze, the co-creator of the *Jackass* reality series, has done it again. *Her* is about a guy, Theodore Twombly (played by Joaquin Phoenix), who goes to the beach in brown suede oxfords, wool pants, and long sleeves; in other words, a real jackass. Theodore lives in a huge apartment in the "Beverly Wilshire City Tower" in a futuristic Beverly Hills (filmed

in a digitally white-washed Shanghai) with a great view of the city. He's the type of guy who can go out and buy the latest gadget without thinking about his budget. He's definitely not living off an adjunct's salary.

Many reviews of the movie I've read have focused on the perceived social commentary this film makes—about technology and love, and who we are or could be in the digital age. For some, Theodore can stand in as the "every man" and his story comes off as "our story." For others, like me, his story is not the generic story of "our" near



future. His is a story of misogynistic, white, class privilege that speaks only to a white, male fantasy of our near future, where systems like Siri have developed their own unique intuition and personalities, and nearly all the people of color have left LA. The premises of this film are based in a very specific kind of masculine fantasy that is deeply racialized as white, and steeped in bourgeois mindset. It is not simply accidental that the main character is a straight, white, able-bodied man and his love interest is just a voice. The film, as written and directed, would not

have worked any other way because it relies fundamentally on white, male tropes.

To me, the film is so bad that I cannot even discuss what everyone wants the film to be about. People think *Her* speaks to our relationship with technology, commodity fetishism, digital dualism, artificial intelligence, all while telling a touching love. I wouldn't mind seeing a movie about these things, but there is too much crap in the way for this movie to successfully be about them, and it isn't actually technologically innovative at all—when it

comes to the science fiction, it is pretty weak and filled with holes. This particular review is about the extent to which the audience must first discount a lot of other aspects of the film to come away with having seen a film about technology and/or love.

The viewer's first experiences with Theodore are meant to convey what a sweet and sensitive guy he is. He writes love letters for a living and listens to self-described melancholy songs. He is also lonely and lies awake at night missing his almost ex-wife remembering the good times, like when she playfully strangled him while repeating how she was going to kill him. Yes, those fond memories of someone jokingly threatening your life because they "love you so much." This is the kind of romance Theodore is intolater you see him draft a love letter for a client, describing how his love made him want to punch the world's face. These are just two of many scenes where sex, love, and violence are mixed together. In my experiences talking to people about this film no one saw this as central to the storyline (except for my friend, Monique Whitaker, who was kind enough to see this bad movie with me and help me write this review). But this was not an isolated part of the film; it is central to the way Spike Jonze wrote and directed the characters and the storylines. With an eye for it, you can see this appear over and over again in the film. Jonze is ill equipped to write a love story, or perhaps any

story, that isn't creepy and "rape-y."

When Theodore is lying in bed, his restlessness soon becomes too much to take, and he calls up for some phone sex—remember, the science fiction is weak, so he's basically using a Bluetooth headset that fits in his ear to make a call. The conversation tries to lead the audience to imagine that Theodore is a sweet, lonely guy, though he is actually really creepy . . . and "rape-y." He tells the woman on the phone that if they were in bed together, "I'd have to wake you up from the inside." The fantasy of waking a woman up by putting something into her body relies on a desire for male control, a desire for the power to rape. When someone is sleeping they cannot consent to be penetrated. However, this dialogue is to be interpreted as a sweet and romantic one, almost as the equivalent as a desire to cuddle. The problem isn't that Theodore has violent fantasies or that he would want to play them out in a consensual phone sex encounter—the problem is that none of the violence is seen as violent. I am not averse to watching violent and sexist movies, and even to enjoying them, but what concerns me is that the violence and sexism in Her is so insidious that viewers hardly notice it. Even when it is overt, the reception of violence as violence is detracted by its presentation as comedy. The "comic relief" comes in when this woman he is having phone sex with starts asking him to choke her with a dead cat—the



cat and its death are given no thought. He plays along with this, the audience laughs, and the woman climaxes upon her fantasized death by strangulation with a dead cat's tail.

This is just not funny nor, unfortunately, is it original.

Since the violence operates in the background, likely largely unconscious on the part of the writer/director, actor, and viewer, scenes like this are not seen as central to the film's stated storyline, but they are central to the character development. More "comic relief" follows when Theodore is playing a video game and encounters a small, cute, white alien child. This character, expected to be sweet because of his appearance, instead turns out to be a jackass—a more overt

parallel to Theodore's own story line. He and Theodore go back and forth telling each other to fuck themselves. The alien, then, sticks around as Theodore looks at pictures of a woman he might go out with, a nameless character played by Olivia Wilde. This little alien says she is fat. Yes, the comedy in this movie is on the level of fat jokes. But we shouldn't worry, it's not understood to be offensive because she's obviously not fat, and this little guy is just a jackass. And we, like Theodore, are supposed to laugh at this, and indeed the audience does, which functions as a double violence to the viewer with a critical mindset. This alien child then says "I hate women; all they do is cry all the time." Again, this is supposed to be funny, and the audience laughs. Yet, what the audience might not know is that not only does Jonze write these lines, but he is also the one who voices the alien child. Jonze's misogyny could not be contained: he actually yells out in the middle of his own movie, "I hate women." Hating women is never a punch line. And maybe Jonze should check himself, because if women are crying around him all the time it might have something to do with his treatment of them.

When Theodore does go out on his date with Olivia Wilde's character, who still remains tellingly nameless and is credited only as "Blind Date," he confesses to having looked up information about her. She says, "That's so sweet," and then proceeds to call him a "puppy dog." This so-called puppy dog of a man doesn't want to be a puppy dog, though. Theodore says, "I want to be a dragon that can rip you apart and destroy you, but I won't." Though Theodore won't do this, he still has the misogynist desire

for the power to rip a woman apart and destroy her. Theodore, here, is participating in rape culture—something Jonze seems deeply immersed in. In rape culture, which



this near future is still clearly a part of, the nice guy is the one who can rape you at any moment, but won't. What Theodore said is violent, but my concern is that the audience does not see this as such because it is wrapped up in the general patriarchy of the film that positions Theodore as our only slightly-flawed protagonist. After the date, when Olivia asks him if he was just going to fuck her and not call her he can't help but let his face betray the truth. She responds with, "You're a really creepy dude"—the only moment of true insight in the film—though within the movie the line comes off as out of place, so that she seems a bit like an overly reactionary woman, and Theodore a bit like a victim.

All this is not even to get into the relationship you were likely expecting me to write about, the relationship between Theodore and Samantha, his intuitive operating system—the "her" with whom he engages in a romantic and sexual relationship. Some readers may be saying that I've missed the point; I didn't even talk about the movie's real focus, the core relationship of the film. But this movie is not a love story; it's a white patriarchal fantasy that doesn't speak to more than what it is—which is just that with the technology and weak science fiction just a cover for the same old tired misogynistic tropes. What the film can do, however, is to show us just how much we do not see when we are taking in culture, and how much we are made to overlook to participate in dominant culture. This is not a condemnation of the viewer—this movie, and our unconscious reception of its violence, is white supremacy and patriarchy at work.

#### theater REVIEW

# Repertory on Broadway, Classic/Modern

- Twelfe Night, or What You Will and The Tragedie of King Richard the Third by William Shakespeare. Directed by Tim Corroll, featuring Mark Rylance. 18 January 2014.
- No Man's Land by Harold Pinter and Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett. Directed by Sean Mathias and featuring Ian McKellen, Patrick Stewart, Billy Crudup, and Shuler Hensley. 21 December 2013 and 28 January 2014.

#### dan venning

I DO NOT GENERALLY review Broadway shows for the *Advocate*. While budgets and production values are obviously higher on Broadway, the shows are also aimed at a more mainstream, less politically-minded audience, and thus frequently of less interest to *Advocate* readers. And of course there are the ticket prices: balcony seats can sell for \$75, orchestra seats for twice as much. For most graduate students, this is simply unaffordable, and therefore again of less interest to the *Advocate* readership. Cheaper tickets are available: the nonprofit Theatre Development Fund of-

fers online deals to students and runs the TKTS Booths in Times Square and at the South Street Seaport, which offer discounted same-day tickets to shows that aren't sold out. And many shows offer rush tickets for audience members willing to line up before the box office opens. Some of the most popular shows, instead offer daily lotteries where audience members can try for the chance to purchase cheap premium seats for the day. But these rush and lottery discounts also serve as marketing to increase the hype for shows and help producers sell prohibitively expensive full-price tickets.

Despite my qualms about reviewing on Broadway, the four shows I chose to examine for this article are all being presented there. However, this has not been a normal season for Broadway. First of all, there have been a significant number of high-profile Shakespearean productions on Broadway this season (David Leveaux's production of *Romeo and Juliet* starring Orlando Bloom and Condola





Rashad, Jack O'Brien's Macbeth starring Ethan Hawke, and the productions reviewed here). This past September, in an acknowledgment of the massive amount of Shakespeare being presented this season on New York stages, the New York Times published an article by Charles Isherwood discussing the wide range of Shakespearean productions running this season. But beyond the extensive amount of Shakespeare, this season also presented the opportunity to see two different sets of plays presented in repertory: the same cast alternating between two shows. Notably, one of those pairs is Shakespearean (Richard III and Twelfth Night), the other one consists of a pair of modern classics (No Man's Land and Waiting for Godot). Repertory productions aren't unheard of on Broadway: in the late 1980s, for example, José Quintero staged Long Day's Journey Into Night alongside Ah, Wilderness!, billing them as "The O'Neill Plays," and Joseph Papp produced As You Like It, Macbeth, and Romeo and Juliet on Broadway, billing the three as "Shakespeare on Broadway for the Schools." But repertory on Broadway is definitely an exception, not the rule, and this seemed too extraordinary an opportunity to miss.

While I enjoyed seeing all four productions, I came away feeling that both pairs highlighted how in the

theatre, even with magnificently versatile actors who can thrive in repertory productions, one of the most significant elements remains the play-text on which the production is based. In my opinion, *Twelfth Night*, with its many memorable characters is simply a stronger, more vital play than *Richard III*, which is really just a star vehicle for its delightfully Machiavellian central character. *Waiting for Godot* is a timeless classic, compared to *No Man's Land*, which, although containing still-relevant themes of the fallibility of memory and the ravages of age, now seems to be much more of a dated period piece about the 1970s.

Tim Carroll's productions of *Twelfth Night* and *Richard III* replicate some of the stage traditions of Early Modern England. Even the titles indicate this: they are styled *Twelfe Night, or What You Will* and *The Tragedie of King Richard the Third*, which is how the plays are listed on their title pages in Shakespeare's First Folio of 1623. Designer Jenny Tiramani is a professor of historical dress and her costumes replicate Elizabethan style (she won the 2003 Olivier for her costumes for *Twelfth Night* at Shakespeare's Globe in 2003; this production is a revival of that landmark staging). Tiramani's set resembles the inside of the Blackfriars theatre, with its wood-paneling, onstage

seats for some audience members, and chandeliers with many real lit candles (reportedly, a fire marshal has to be on set for each performance). Claire van Kampen's music, performed by onstage musicians, is Renaissance in style. Most notably, all of the actors are men, a nod to the fact that women did not perform on the English Renaissance stage.

It's worth noting that recreating the original practices of Shakespeare's plays, as Shakespeare's Globe in London frequently claims to do, is something of a chimera: possible to imagine, but in practice unattainable. Even the texts of the plays (or their very titles) are not set in stone. For example, while the title page of *Richard III* in the First Folio calls the play *The Tragedie of King Richard the Third*, the Folio's table of contents avoids the "tragedy" moniker and calls the play *The Life & Death of Richard the Third*—and it is this alternate title that appears at the top of each page in the Folio printing. Just as the text is thus unstable—there isn't a precise, single "original" to be recreated—so too are many original practices unrecoverable.

The candles in these productions are complemented by electric stage lights to ensure visibility. While the actors are all male, in the English Renaissance most female characters, including romantic leads, would have been played by adolescent boys, while here they are portrayed by adult men. But most crucially, the audiences and social environment in which Shakespeare created his plays cannot be recreated. Productions like this, which claim to show audiences how the plays were originally performed, instead hint at something like that lost history, and are entirely a product of a specific branding of nostalgia that is entirely part of the twenty-first century. To some degree, Carroll acknowledges this fact by including a black actor in his ensemble, Kurt Egyiawan, who plays Valentine in Twelfth Night and the more significant roles of Richard's mother and Richmond in Richard III. This single instance of colorblind casting serves as a tacit admission of the fact that these performances are contemporary, not historical, but the fact that there is only a single actor of color also troublingly suggests tokenism, not a genuine commitment to nontraditional casting.

While the project of such "original practices" productions is suspect, their appeal is understandable since they allow audiences to connect viscerally with ideas that are taught or read about but rarely seen onstage. Moreover, Carroll's productions are top-notch. Rylance deserves the lion's share of praise for his virtuosic performances as Richard of Gloucester and Olivia. As Richard (wearing a

prosthetic deformed arm) he tromps across the stage with gleeful abandon, joking with the audience and presenting the character of a brilliant tactician who is grossly underestimated by everyone around him. As Olivia, in contrast, Rylance glides across the stage in a giant poofy black dress. Also particularly noteworthy was Angus Wright as the Duke of Buckingham and Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Wright essentially played them as similar characters: attractive, overconfident manly-men who assumed they were the protagonist of the story, only to learn at the end that they were dupes. For Buckingham, this led to death, for Aguecheek, humiliation. Wright's doubling was one of many ways in which Carroll used casting to allow the plays to speak to one another, illuminating the web of connections between Shakespeare's works, even those of different genres. Samuel Barnett was also excellent as Viola in Twelfth Night and Queen Elizabeth in Richard III—his scene of confrontation between Elizabeth and Richard, in which he portrayed Elizabeth as the only person with enough savvy to play Richard's game, was the best scene in both plays. Sadly, the cast wasn't universally superb—although I had been excited to see him onstage, I have seen many Malvolios who were both more funny and moving than Stephen Fry.

Most critics (and many of my friends, colleagues, and students), although certainly not all, have preferred Carroll's Twelfth Night to his Richard III. I am in agreement with this consensus. Rylance's performance as Richard seemed to break down near the end of the play, when he began playing the tyrant as downright insane, a choice that seemed somewhat weak. With the exception of Fry as Malvolio, Twelfth Night was universally strong—in particular the way that the all-male casting and Tiramani's costumes allowed Barnett as Viola and Joseph Timms as her twin brother Sebastian to look downright identical. This brought the audience further into the confusion of Shakespeare's topsy-turvy comedy. But what many audience members may have found perplexing, and I thought was a strength, was that despite its styled title Richard III was played as a comedy. The fact that the show was not played as a tragedy may have confused some. Rylance's Richard was downright funny as he committed his atrocities. Carroll, Rylance and the whole cast satirized Richard's tyranny as well as the society that allowed him to seize power.

What I found to be the weakest element of the Shakespeare repertory plays was in fact one of the ways in which the plays deviated from tradition. Carroll cut the part of Margaret of Anjou, the widow of Henry VI who hounds Richard throughout the play. Perhaps Carroll felt that she didn't contribute to the comic spirit of the play he intended—she is bitter and viciously vituperative, not in spirit with the comedic aspect of this version. But another reason she might have been cut could have to do with the project of doing the plays in repertory: the actor who most likely would have had to double as Margaret is Fry (who was not in *Richard III*). Perhaps Carroll felt Fry was less suited to such a serious role. Another doubling problem the role might have created is that in Shakespeare's time, the actor who played Margaret may very well have been the boy who also played Olivia—and here that was

Rylance, the star playing Richard. It's normal for Shake-spearean plays to be cut, but to excise the role of Margaret, which is so thematic to the piece, strikes me as excessive and here emblematic of one of the few ways in which the repertory casting didn't work.

The repertory productions of Harold Pinter's *No Man's Land* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* were, like the Shakespearean repertory plays, similarly exhilarating to watch yet not wholly satisfyingly executed. I much preferred *Waiting for Godot* to *No Man's Land*—part of that may have had to do with my seats, which were in a side mezzanine box for *No Man's Land* and in the third row of





the orchestra for *Waiting for Godot*. But I think it had far more to do with the plays.

On the surface, both plays are similar in that they are emblematic of the absurdist tradition: set in somewhat unspecific locations, with characters who are never fully defined, language that doesn't seem always logically connected, and a plot in which little to nothing happens. In *No Man's Land* the setting is a large house in Hampstead Heath, North London, in Summer 1975, owned by Hirst (Patrick Stewart), where Spooner (Ian McKellen) spends

an evening and morning, sharing drinks and stories with Hirst and his assistants Foster (Billy Crudup) and Briggs (Shuler Hensley). In *Waiting for Godot*, the setting is a country road over two evenings (which may or may not be immediately connected), with a withered tree, where the vagabonds Estragon (McKellen) and Vladimir (Stewart) wait for Godot, who never arrives, and pass the time in conversation amongst themselves and with Pozzo (Hensley) and his slave Lucky (Crudup) who pass through each evening.

The "No Man's Land" of Pinter's play seems to be the twilight of old age when memory and mental faculties begin to fade. Hirst, a wealthy literary celebrity, has invited Spooner (a poet and fellow devotee of the arts, who now works as a busboy in a local pub) over for drinks. The two drink excessively, and reminisce about the past. In the first scene, Spooner introduces himself to Hirst, so it seems as if they have just met. Yet later in the play Hirst suggests that he may have known Spooner from Oxford, and may even have had an affair with Spooner's wife. Yet at this point, he calls Spooner by the wrong name. Do the two know each other, or is Spooner simply playing along? At the end of the first act, Foster locks Spooner in the draw-

ing room and shuts off the lights; throughout both acts Briggs thuggishly threatens Spooner. Yet in the second act Spooner obsequiously seeks employment from Hirst. Are Hirst's assistants preying upon him by separating him from his friends, or are they protecting him from predators who would scam him for his money? We never get satisfying answers to any such questions. All that is apparent is that Stewart's Hirst, despite his luxurious settings (including a showy toupee) is mentally unwell, degenerating into some sort of dementia. In the first act, he falls down and has to crawl offstage, unable to stand; the next morning he seems to have no memory of his accident (or much else, for that matter). Despite its place in the absurdist genre and its universalizing themes of the failure of memory, Sean Mathias's production of No Man's Land seems dated to the 1970s and even with its magnificent actors made rather only a slight impression on me.

In fact, the greatest success of Mathias's *No Man's Land* may be the way it is juxtaposed with *Waiting for Godot*. Hirst and Spooner are so painfully alone in *No Man's Land*—Spooner because of his lack of worldly resources, Hirst because of his mental failings, both because they are unable to meaningfully connect with others. The two



tramps of *Waiting for Godot* seem to be in the bleakest of situations, but their friendship and caring for one another even in the face of a heartless world makes them far luckier than the protagonists of *No Man's Land*.

Mathias's production of Waiting for Godot is really Stewart's play, although it also contains superb performances by McKellen, Hensley, and Crudup. As the loquacious Vladimir, Stewart has by far the most text. Yet at the same time as he is constantly talking, seeming as if he knows everything, he uses his physicality and voice to demonstrate how much he needs McKellen's Estragon. Every time Estragon threatens to leave, we see that Vladimir's wordiness comes from an intense need for connection with his friend. As Estragon, McKellen is a generous actor, giving focus to Stewart while fearlessly living within the squalor of Estragon's situation. Stewart and McKellen portray the tramps as perhaps former performers—past vaudevillians or the like—who have fallen on hard times and now subsist on the scraps of their former routines that they can barely perform. But watching these older men (Stewart is 73, McKellen 74) perform is astounding, and even despite their situation they frequently elicit hearty laughter with their lively performances. Hensley's Pozzo seems to be from the same world of performance—his cloak is emblazoned with his name, as if he is some overthe-top medicine showman or absurd carnival ringleader. Crudup, as Lucky, delivers a magnificent and physically taxing performance that is one part balancing-act and one part dance performance complemented by a lightningspeed monologue that must be as mentally taxing as his physical work. These performances are supported by Stephen Brimson Lewis's beautiful ruin of a set and ragged costumes. Lewis's set for No Man's Land is spare luxury (although the ruins are slightly visible at the edges of that set, as if ever-present, even in the world of Hampstead Heath), but in Waiting for Godot Lewis makes the desolation of the country road a visceral aspect of the tramps' existence.

The show is profoundly moving as we see the inevitable human tragedy of Didi and Gogo's endless waiting for a savior who always promises to come, but never will. Yet this sadness is mixed with intense delight during the routines throughout the show, and at the end, when Stewart and McKellen perform a dance routine, celebrating friendship, during the curtain call. (It's worth noting that while affecting, this is also branding: Stewart and McKellen's real-life friendship has been aggressively marketed for this show through images and videos circulating

across the internet.)

Although I was ultimately unsatisfied with Mathias's No Man's Land and found Carroll's Shakespearean productions engaging but imperfect, I'm very glad I went to see this pair of shows in repertory on Broadway. Waiting for Godot was one of the highlights of my theatergoing this season, and seeing these pairs of shows reminded me of how vital theatre can be, and the work done by performers—and by audience members drawing connections between the shows we see. It was also wonderful to see Broadway audiences get excited by Shakespeare in historical dress, or less mainstream plays like works by Pinter or Beckett. Some of this excitement was certainly due to the star actors and the fact that the repertory pairs can be billed as an event, even when audience members don't see both shows on the same day. But still, the fact that the shows are succeeding in their limited runs suggests that literary and classical drama is far from unfeasible on the Broadway stage. However, it is worth closing by noting one unsavory trend on Broadway that all four shows exemplify: all four shows were all-male, and I couldn't help thinking about how they contribute to the disparity of roles for men and women in the theatre. Performing all-male Shakespeare is an interesting experiment, and these plays by Beckett and Pinter's are legally required to be performed by men, but can't help looking forward to a repertory season on Broadway that highlights not just some of the most talented actors in the English language, but some of the most talented actresses as well.

Twelfe Night, or What You Will and The Tragedie of King Richard the Third. By William Shakespeare. Directed by Tim Carroll. Stage and Costume Design by Jenny Tiramani. Music by Claire van Kampen. Lighting Design by Stan Pressner. Choreography by Sian Williams. Stage Management by Arthur Gaffin. Featuring: Samuel Barnett, Liam Brennan, Dominic Brewer, Paul Chahidi, John Paul Connolly, Peter Hamilton Dyer, Kurt Egyiawan, Stephen Fry, Matt Harrington, Colin Hurley, Dylan Clark Marshall, Terry McGinity, Mark Rylance, Jethro Skinner, Joseph Timms, Angus Wright, Matthew Schechter, Hayden Signoretti, and Tony Ward. At the Belasco Theatre. 15 October 2013–16 February 2014. Tickets \$27–\$165.

No Man's Land by Harold Pinter and Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett. Directed by Sean Mathias. Scenic and Costume Design by Stephen Brimson Lewis. Lighting Design by Peter Kaczorowski. Music and Sound Design by Rob Milburn and Michael Bodeen. Projection Design by Zachary Borovay. Stage Management by William Joseph Barnes. Featuring: Billy Crudup, Shuler Hensley, Ian McKellen, and Patrick Stewart. At the Cort Theatre. 26 October 2013–30 March 2014. Tickets \$40–\$137; limited \$30 rush tickets.

art REVIEW

# **Davos Syndrome at the Met Museum**

#### michael busch

THOMAS CAMPBELL, DIRECTOR OF the Metropolitan Museum of Art, arrived in Davos last week with an unambiguous message for the World Economic Forum. In discussions about "Reshaping the World," the theme of this year's gathering of the world's rich and powerful, Campbell argued that culture and the arts have become little more than an amusing sideshow for the elite. "A major, missing part of the dialogue," Campbell urged, "is cultural sustainability. It feels like an add-on. We're the entertainment." Far from blaming the rich for this state of affairs, however, Campbell cried mea culpa on behalf of culture itself. Any "discussion of the culture industry," he said, "needs to be involved at a deeper socioeconomic level. We need to make our case with metrics, framed in a language that businessmen understand."

That a steward of one of the world's premier institu-

tions of high culture should be touting the virtues of the bottom line is itself unsurprising. The commodification of visual art, nearly as old as art itself, has recently ballooned to a scale unimaginable even thirty years ago. Simply witness the outrageous amounts of money that glitzy con men like Damien Hirst can fetch for their work, the sales power that third-rate artists like Jeff Koonz command at auction, or the fact that an otherwise unremarkable triptych by Francis Bacon recently sold for \$142.4 million at Christie's. (Hirst, incidentally, was one of the artists whose work was showcased at the Davos summit this

year.) Museums have responded to these charged market dynamics. The price of admission to many of the museums of most renown, throughout the West especially, has climbed steadily in the past several decades. Take New York, for example. Art enthusiasts there cannot gain entry to places like the Guggenheim, Frick or Whitney for less than \$18. MoMA will run you \$20.

For the director of the Met, however—a museum in New York, accessible to the entire public, where anyone can get in for as little as a penny—to embrace the values of business over those which animate the arts is dismaying. The reasons are many—including the simple principle of it. Jed Perl put it nicely in the *New Republic* recently. "The trouble with Campbell is that he imagines the only way to speak truth to power is in a language you're sure the power brokers understand. But the great cultural arbiters have always taken an altogether different approach. They



have taken it upon themselves to reimagine the nature of power...What the[y] have always done is insist on the power of art in the face of other kinds of power—the power of bottom lines, flow charts, metrics, big data." But this is only part of the problem.

Campbell's rhetorical pivot to the values of the private sector reflects a deeper institutional shift underway at the Met, one that could have profound implications for the public arts. Last fall before leaving office, Michael Bloomberg amended New York City's lease with the Met, which sits on public land. Under the new terms of agreement, the Met was granted powers to charge admission to its holdings, including extra fees for special exhibitions—a radical departure from the original lease that invested the institution with no such rights. The move came after two lawsuits were brought against the museum claiming that the Met's current "suggested" admission structure deliberately misleads visitors into believing that mandatory fees are required for entry.

Leaving aside the issues challenged in court, the Met's newly established right to impose standard admission raises more fundamental concerns about the role of art in public life. At a moment when the barriers to culture and fine arts are prohibitively high across the board—and getting worse—for increasing segments of the population, institutions like the Met have defended the simple proposition that universal access to the arts is necessary for maintaining a healthy polity; that leisure is a right common to everyone by virtue of their being humans. Unlike the majority of other museums across the city, where taking in a show constitutes a form of luxury consumption, the Met opens its world-class collection to anyone interested enough to show up and wander the halls. The possibility of establishing a flat-rate entrance fee, or even instituting admission rates for special exhibitions, undermines the good faith of this proposition, and threatens to extend the capital commodification of art by rendering it the exclusive preserve of the wealthier classes.

For its part, the museum has assured the public that it has no intention of charging mandatory fees, now or in the future. The Met's senior vice president for public affairs, Harold Holzer, told the New York Times that the museum has "no plans to institute" a standard admission, "and no plans to make plans." What the renegotiated lease with the New York City does, Holzer went on, "is preserve the museum's right to do so, which we think crucial in the wake of legal challenges to admissions that pose a threat to a vital part of our operating budget." Campbell

himself underscored his institution's commitment "to maintaining—and further widening—public access to the museum" in a public statement issued shortly after news broke of the renegotiated agreement. But all this amounts to cold comfort.

There's no getting around the fact that running a museum is expensive, and economic pressures that have faced Met administrators in the past are no secret. While reaffirming his commitment to the public mission of the Met, Campbell was simultaneously very clear that his museum's policy of "pay what you want" might well be sacrificed in the name of economic necessity. "The effort to broaden and diversify audiences will continue," Campbell wrote. "At the same time, however, faced with perennial uncertainties about future funding sources, the Met and the City concluded that it makes sense now to consecrate our long-standing and wholly legal admissions policies," including the right to "charge such amounts as the museum shall from time to time prescribe."

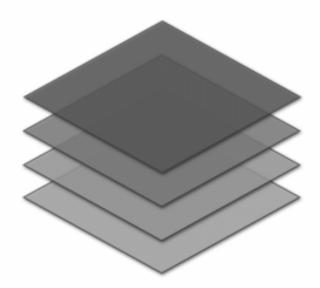
A Met where standard admissions become the norm is not difficult to imagine. It would almost certainly begin to resemble its counterparts along Fifth Avenue, or MoMA on 53rd. These museums have long abandoned the conceit that art serves to nourish the soul. Instead, they have increasingly organized themselves into precincts of commercial activity for the well-heeled and the hip. What efforts are made to engage with the broader public generally come in the form of corporate-sponsored "free Fridays" and the like—massive advertisement schemes where admission rates are temporarily suspended and galleries are converted into frenzied madhouses of people trying to see everything at once. The big winners, of course, are the captains of industry who, fancying themselves benevolent oligarchs, pick up the tab.

This is no future for the Met, and yet a likely one. When the next economic downturn arrives, the Metropolitan will face tough choices to avoid slipping into the red. It's an easy leap to suppose that charging admission will seem like a no-brainer for Met administrators. After all, art lovers pay steep entrance fees up and down Museum Mile, and they will to do so at the Met as well, if required. But institutions like the Met should continue to represent something entirely different. Even as the rest of the art world moves to a place where communion with beauty is attached to a price tag, the Met stands as one of the great monuments to public enjoyment and education. This may not translate easily into "language that businessmen understand." But then, that was never the point.

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#### ask harriet BY HARRIET ZANZIBAR

# **Ex Is Still Marking the Spot**

MY EX-BOYFRIEND AND I broke up last year. Now he wants to go on a double-date with me and my new boyfriend. How weird is that? He claims it's because he wants to be friends and hang out, and this is a safe way to hang without being alone and being awkward. Should I do it?—My Ex is Still Around

THERE ARE LOTS OF things going on here, MESA, that you need to think about a tad more deeply before you embark on this double-date extravaganza with your ex and his new amour—assuming he has one, that is, and that she doesn't accidentally "forget to show" on the night in question, thereby accidentally making your new beau a third wheel and inducing him to seek the earliest opportunity to pop out to get cigarettes and then oddly fail to return, which occurs to you a couple hours later as you're necking with your old flame along with the fact that New Guy doesn't smoke.

Because let's face it, MESA: You wouldn't even be thinking about this if you weren't still hot for your ex and thinking about all those movies where the leading man and the leading woman are "meant for each other," except for the pesky detail that it's now several years after the "mind-bending-orgasms-to-be-revealed-in-flashbacks" and the leading woman has moved on to dating some Baxter who's totally boring and ordinary and completely unable to do anything for her, other than give her everything she needs and make her laugh, and that's totally not what makes for the happy ending in American cinema, chumps. You know what movie had that ending? Forces of Nature. The one where uptight Ben Affleck gets seduced by a winsome free spirit Sandra Bullock for 90 minutes, learns to dance like a go-go boy and ride on the tops of trains, and then goes back home and marries his female-Baxter fiancée anyway? Remember that one? Yeah, me neither.

But we remember all the other ones where it goes the way it's supposed to. I mean, Christ, think about Superman Returns. Lois Lane gets abandoned by Superman, moves on to the totally yummy James Marsden (who's rich, hot, understanding, and even flies her around whenever she wants without directly exposing her to the lungsearing frigidity of the upper atmosphere or "accidentally" dropping her so he can get a quick grope by catching her

as she comically plummets to the earth), they have a kid together (well, not really, but the kid thinks they did), and then Superman shows up and he's just as emotionally unavailable as ever, plus he has a unibrow now, and we saps in the audience are supposed to think, "Aw, what a shame Lois isn't with that space alien who dumped her without saying goodbye and fled the planet just to get away from her for five years, instead of this dope who thinks he's good for her just because he's smart, sexy, loaded, and capable of listening to her for fifteen minutes straight without hearing a cry for help and suddenly ducking out with a lame excuse about having to return a library book by five o'clock because they've gotten really, really strict about overdue fees."

So Possibility A is that you and Mister Ex are both thinking on the same astral plane, which is that this is a great opportunity for you two to get back together without feeling like you're cheating and see if your destinies are realigning back toward each other as Hollywood has taught us to expect. Possibility B is less savory. Possibility B is that Mister Ex is a huge, vindictive prick and has lined up some hot Jessica Alblowya who's everything you aren't just so he can rub it in. Guys are great at this. Since he's already listed, prioritized, and catalogued your every fault while you were together to the point where he could rattle them off while doped up with a case of Phenobarbital and at the same time being progressively eaten alive by marauding packs of ravenous hamsters, it's a no-brainer to find the "anti-you" just to contrive an opportunity to bump into you and say, "Oh, hi, what a funny coincidence running into you outside the building you work in. Hey, this is Gretchen." Not that you're not doing the same thing, but women work it a little differently: our bad breakups with assholes are invariably followed by sequel relationships in which we date someone exactly the same as the last guy, except he's not an asshole. Except of course it turns out, eventually, that we were wrong about that last thing.

Note that Possibility A and Possibility B are not mutually exclusive, which is why I say, hey, bring on the double date, ditch your respective tagalongs, and have the Angry Sex you're both obviously panting for. Just remember it's polite to give your date cab fare before demoting him from "handsome extra" to "crowd without."

Email your troubles to Harriet via advocate@gc.cuny.edu.

### **NEWS FROM THE doctoral students' council**

# The Call Is Out for New DSC Reps

DOCTORAL STUDENTS' COUNCIL 2014-2015 Nominations are open until February 28, 2014 at 11:59 p.m. Students can access the ballot through the link, sent to students' GC email accounts: https://eballot4. votenet.com/dsc/login.cfm. You can nominate yourself or fellow students for the following positions: DSC Program Representative, DSC At-Large Representative, Student Academic Appeals Officer, Faculty-Student Disciplinary Committee Panel, Student Elections Review Committee (SERC), Advocate Advisory Board, and the OpenCUNY Board.

Some information on these positions is given on nomination's page after you login to the Votenet site. More detailed descriptions can be found on the DSC's website at http://www.cunydsc.org/elections.

## Restructuring the Science Program

THE DSC FORMED AN ad hoc committee on Science Program Restructuring. Tony Perri is chair; please contact Tony or the Co-Chair for Communications (ccc@cunydsc. org) if you would like to participate in upcoming efforts or share information on the proposed changes as they would impact your program or campus.

## What's Your Experience of Program Governance?

THE DSC'S GOVERNANCE TASK Force wants to learn more about student representation and program governance—do all programs convene the standing committees stipulated by GC governance? Do all programs have student representation on those committees, per the bylaws? A survey recently went out to all GC students. Please respond to report on your experience of program governance. As an incentive for participation, programs with the highest percentage of students responding will win additional funds for their programs.

#### Grants for Student Activities

GRANTS COMMITTEE WILL MEET to consider grants for student-run activities for the last time this semester at the end of March. In order to be considered at that meeting, applicants must submit their grants by March 21.

### **CUNY Knowledge Grant**

LOOK OUT FOR UPCOMING participatory funding and "CUNY Knowledge Grant" initiatives from the DSC.

#### Safer Sex at the GC

THE HEALTH & WELLNESS Committee has organized the distribution of Safer Sex Materials throughout the Graduate Center. Find a list of locations and more information on these and other resources on the Health & Wellness blog: http://opencuny.org/healthdsc/safer-sex-materials. If you would like to organize a distribution point, contact wellness@cunydsc.org.



## Speak Up at the Upcoming Plenary Meeting

OUR NEXT PLENARY IS Friday, February 21 at 6:00 p.m. in room 5414. Our guests at the beginning of the meeting will be GC representatives on the New York Public Library Central Library Plan Advisory Committee, Professor Steve Brier and student Evan Misshula, as well as the GC Chief Librarian, Polly Thistlethwaite. Please share comments, questions, and concerns through your DSC representatives, or in person.

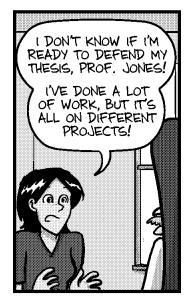
## What the DSC Does for You

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT the DSC's services, resources, representatives, and initiatives at the newly updated website: cunydsc.org. You can also stop by the DSC office, room 5495 (check the office hours calendar on the website beforehand), or reach us via Facebook (/cunydsc) or Twitter (@cunydsc).

Above: Professor Steve Brier, who'll be a guest at the next plenary meeting.

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### ph.d. comics BY JORGE CHAM









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