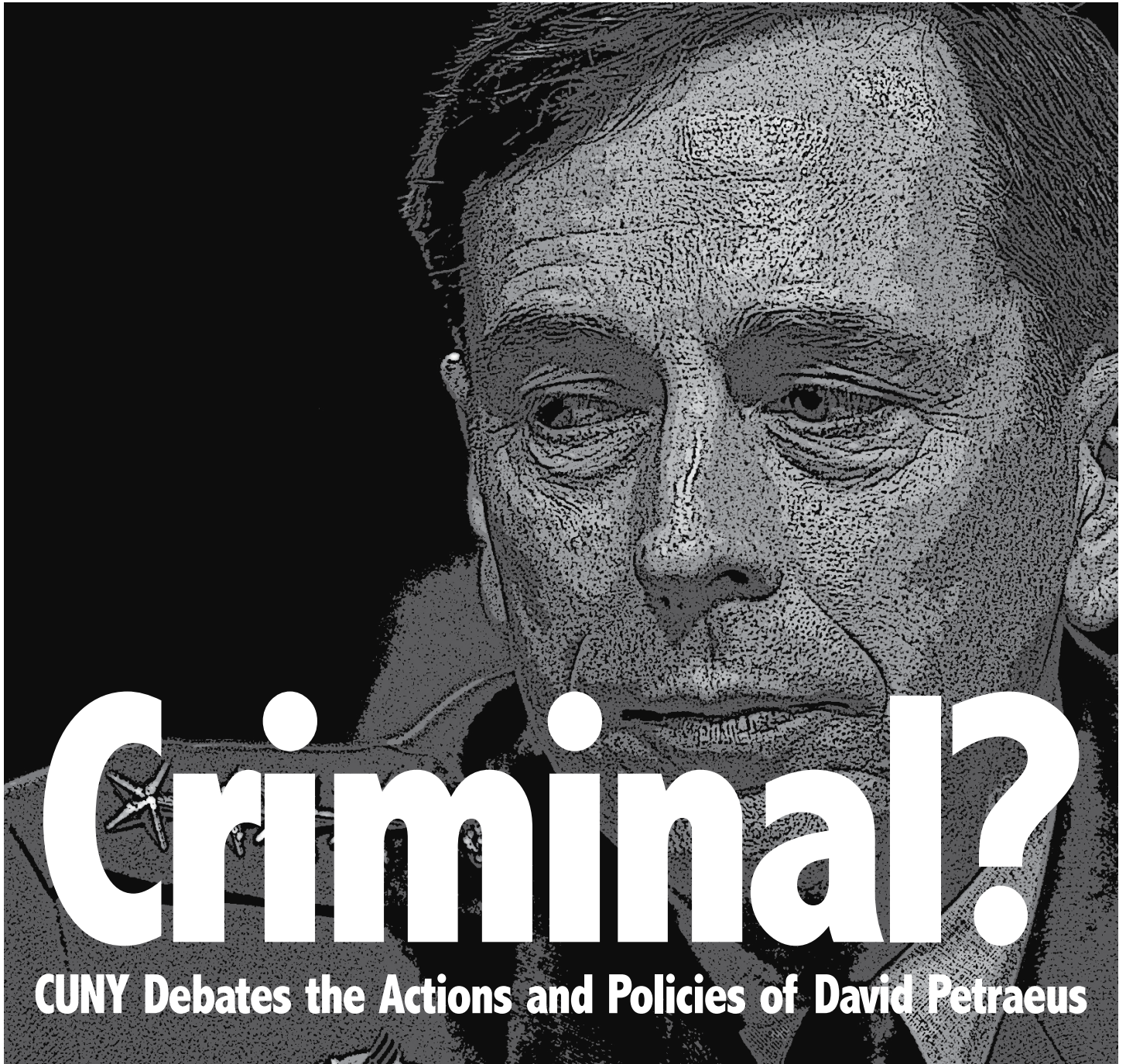


Remembering
Gabriel García
Márquez (p. 7)



Criminal?

CUNY Debates the Actions and Policies of David Petraeus

ALSO INSIDE:

Why Krugman Should Protest his own Appointment (p. 28)
The Unsavory Repercussions of Gentrification (p. 30)

May 2014

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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 up to 2,000 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.

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Diversity at CUNY: Statistics vs. Reality

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF New York is one of the most diverse institutions of higher education in the United States. “Diversity” in this sense refers to the bureaucratic tallying of so-called diverse peoples, that is, non-white males. In terms of raw numbers, CUNY is in fact racially diverse with Asian and Pacific Islanders, Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites respectively representing 18.9%, 24.8%, 28.7%, and 27.4% of CUNY senior and community college student populations. Furthermore, 39.9% of CUNY undergraduates (senior and community colleges) were born outside of the continental United States as of Fall 2012.

These numbers look good, no doubt, for the almost quarter million undergraduates enrolled at CUNY. Diversity is ubiquitous. This diversity is one of the prime reasons why the American Enterprise Institute suggested the re-institutionalization of the Reserve Officer Training Corps at CUNY and the appointment of David Petraeus as an “adjunct” faculty member. The largely working class Afro-American and Latino enlisted personnel of the United States military ostensibly needs racially relevant officers to lead them. This belief, held by certain sectors of the ruling layers in the United States, is part and parcel to the re-militarization of CUNY after militant student action largely forced military recruiters out of CUNY in the early 1970’s. The abstract diversity of CUNY is both beneficial and problematic. Beneficial because at the least it allows for racial, sexual, and gender variation, and problematic for the reason that the AEI has stressed the return of ROTC.

This abstract diversity at The Graduate Center in particular should reasonably demonstrate similar demographic trends. However, there exists a dearth of abstract diversity at the Graduate Center. Total enrollment based on race at the GC in Fall 2013 evinces that almost 70% of incoming students were White, 10.1% were Hispanic, 7.5% were Black, and 12.4% were Asian or Pacific Islander. Of the doctoral degrees granted by CUNY between 2012 and 2013 (excluding Juris Doctorates, which host similar statistics), 69.2% went to Whites, 9% to Hispanics, 5.6% to Blacks, and 16% to Asians and Pacific Islanders. Despite the intricacies and nuance of racial codification and identification, not to mention race mixture (note that the terms used are CUNY’s and not the *Advocate*’s), these basic statistics are troubling given the demographic statistics for all of CUNY and of New York City, in fact it is somewhat appalling. For an institution heralded as a viable option for the working classes of New York in pursuit of higher education, the Graduate Center,

in its effort to compete with the Ivy League and other elite institutions, is doing a great disservice to the national professoriate. Granted that the gender and sexual demographics of the Graduate Center and CUNY student bodies are solid (37% of all degrees granted at CUNY and 42.9% of doctoral degrees went to men), the racial question remains. It is not enough, even in terms of abstract diversity, for the Graduate Center, as part of an idealized CUNY that presumably champions the socially oppressed, to stop at the gender line, the color line must be addressed as well. CUNY is poorly symbolized as people of color are coaxed into becoming cannon fodder for U.S. imperialism whilst the Graduate Center remains, largely, as an intellectual hub for White social democrats.

Moving away from the notion of abstracted diversity, we should consider the levels of tangible diversity at the Graduate Center, specifically around disciplinarily and politics. Clearly, the Graduate Center hosts a wide array of scholarly disciplines, so no reason to criticize this effusively, though there is a disconnect between the students of the physical sciences and those in the social sciences and humanities. The political life within the Graduate Center, however, is somewhat stifling. The majority of the GC student body is politically aware and politically involved (to the extent that doctoral studies allow), but this is not reflected when one enters into the Graduate Center. This lack of political visibility is likely to be structurally endemic to the GC, rather than being the fault of individual students or groups. While the majority of Graduate Center students’ politics range from center-left to the radical left, it seems as though social democrats (White or otherwise) are the most prominent, which at the Graduate Center is not a terrific amount of exposure. For example, 2014 The Left Forum, headlined by GC Professor Stanley Aronowitz and organized through the Graduate Center and supported and endorsed by myriad institutions and organizations, has received very little exposure within the Graduate Center. The Left Forum is a large political gathering of the broad (or segmented) Left. The 2014 Forum will be held at John Jay College from May 30th until June 1st with the theme of “Reform and/or Revolution: Imagining a World with Transformative Justice.” The social democratic character of the event is espoused by its title. Rosa Luxembourgh put the question of reform versus revolution to rest in 1900. Despite the problematic nature of social democracy manifested in the Left Forum, or in other recent “mass” events such as Occupy Wall Street, the CUNY Graduate

Center student body, as well as the CUNY community in general, should have adequate access to information about these, and other events. As it stands, they are not being disseminated in such a level concomitant within a university system that strives to be democratic at its base. Additionally, actions for International Workers' Day, planned by or endorsed by the Graduate Center student groups or the Professional Staff Congress have similarly been poorly publicized. Again, the onus is not on the groups or individuals, but rather the structure of the Graduate Center.

Let it be clear that the *Advocate* does not support the argument of some that the likes of David Petraeus are an added virtue to CUNY due to his divergent political views. Rather, it is the diversity of the Left that we seek to make increasingly visible in a university system that often eschews it. There is a dearth of political visibility, not activity, within the Graduate Center and the recent success in booting ROTC out of Medgar Evers College and the College of Staten Island are a testament to what can be achieved if the CUNY community is politically visible. The problem of political diversity at the Graduate Center is not that it doesn't exist, it is that the varieties of political currents and cultures at the GC are suppressed by the vagaries of certain administrators and functionaries as well as also of how the university is structured. There is often little time as a doctoral student-adjunct to pursue both research and politics, and the broader CUNY administration and bureaucracy (the PSC included) seemingly endorses social democracy and only in a piecemeal fashion.

To address the topic of the Left Forum, the answer is

unequivocally revolution. Reform offers no solutions to the problems endemic to capitalism or public education under capitalism for that matter, it only patches the holes in the sails of a ship that has a fissure in the hull. We should have no convictions that James Milliken will remedy the situation at the Graduate Center and CUNY any more than we should have faith in the administration of Barack Obama to follow through on any its "promises." The Graduate Center community should not endorse whoever is named new president either. The lack of democratic process, obfuscated by pseudo self-governing agendas and programs at the GC will not affect the problem of diversity in the abstract or in a tangible fashion. Only with the ouster of the CUNY Board of Trustees, the undemocratically selected administrators and bureaucrats, and a reconstitution of the entire CUNY system, will it even be possible for the Graduate Center to experience any palpable change in regard to the racial disparity of our cohorts and the issue of political visibility. The Graduate Center does not need liberal or conservative appointees to rectify the paucity of ethnic and political diversity, in a word, reformists. It needs people and groups, which are explicitly revolutionary. Only then will there be the potentiality to transform the Graduate Center and the City University of New York into the institution that most of us expect: A home and tool for the underrepresented, the working class, and those wishing to foment radical, progressive and innovative changes in the school and society in which we work and live. Diversity in the abstract needs to be reified, and the politics of our institution revolutionized for the benefit of the GC and the City of New York. Ⓐ

NEVER SUBMIT. CONTRIBUTE!

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

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

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

To view recent articles and to get a sense of our style, please visit the *GC Advocate* website: <http://opencuny.org/gcadvocate>.

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

Interested writers should contact the Editor at gcadvocate@gc.cuny.edu.

As Workers Grumble, a New Master

May Is Urging

MAY COMES WITH TWO important events: organized laborers fighting for a fair wage, and the election of a new President for The Graduate Center.

This year's May Day the fight for and increase minimum wage includes both poorly paid members of the academia and laborers out of the academic world. On the one hand, the PSC is highlighting a national mobilization to lift the minimum payment for adjuncts teaching a course to \$5,000—MayDay\$5K. On the other hand, labor unions have joined forces with immigrants' rights groups to organize a powerful, inclusive May Day event on Thursday, May 1. There is always good reason to celebrate grassroots labor action, but there is added urgency this year because of the 152 City contracts with public employee unions—including the PSC contract—that have still not been settled. The march and rally is specially focused on low-wage workers, many of whom have been courageously organizing at car-washes and fast-food outlets across the city. Shamefully, academia also has a large share of low-wage workers, especially adjuncts and other contingent employees. Thus, PSC has urged adjuncts and other low-wage academic workers from across the city and state to march.

A New President for the GC

THE DOCTORAL STUDENT COUNCIL has been actively participating in the search for a new president for the Graduate Center. There is a great batch of candidates that are currently being contacted for interviews, coming from diverse institutions across the country and from various academic



disciplines. The committee in charge of the research is seeking for candidates with both strong administrative experience and an impressive scholarly and research background, as well as experience in a public university or urban center. For the committee, another important trait is that the candidates possess an understanding of the uniqueness of CUNY and its historic mission of access and affordability.

Interviews will hopefully be complete in early May. The committee will pair down the candidates to a small handful that will visit the GC in mid May. Candidates will meet with several 'invested constituencies' that include student leadership, EO's, central line faculty, and the Graduate Center cabinet. It is important to recall that there will also be an open community meeting, to which all members of the GC community are invited to attend. Afterwards, the applications of the final handful of candidates will be sent to incoming Chancellor James B. Milliken, who will make a final recommendation to the Board of Trustees. At that time, Invested members of the GC community are encouraged to send their thoughts and recommendations

directly to the Chancellor, since the Board of Trustees will make the final decision based on the Chancellor's recommendation.

DSC: Candidates Wanted

THE DSC ENCOURAGES STUDENTS to make suggestions and to recommend candidates throughout the process, now and after the first handful of candidates is selected.

The names will go public at that time, and, ideally, there should be a great level of student involvement, by submitting their thoughts, concerns, and questions to the DSC steering committee, as it is this committee who will meet with the final candidates in May, and thus is the organism through which students can make their voice heard. But students are also strongly encouraged to be present at the open community meeting to address directly the potential candidates. The Town Hall meeting will be held from 5:30-6:30 on Monday May 5th in room 5414. It will be a forum opened to all, although the idea is to give priority to students and staff, since they are the ones who have had the least opportunity to provide feedback. Of course, faculty is invited and more than welcome to speak. The faculty and student members of the committee are invited to attend the forum so that they can hear the concerns there generated and also to answer the questions of the participating community to the best of their ability.

The agenda of the forum will be:

- 1) Solicit from the community the following: important characteristics they would like to see in the new President, what type of issues they feel the new president must address, and visions for an

improved GC that they would like the new President to take on.

- 2) Go over the timeline of the search process to inform the community of various moments in which they can continue to provide feedback and to whom.

Based on the agenda, the goals of the open forum are: to, first, create a list of priorities, characteristics, issues of relevance and concern, which will

then be forward to the members of the search committee and, eventually, to the President elect; to clarify the timeline and to inform the community of additional opportunities to provide input. It is important to know that at no time will specific candidates or presumed candidates be discussed, since this information is confidential and none of the candidates have gone public with their application.

After the open forum has taken place, students may (and should) send their final thoughts, opinions, and concerns about the final candidates directly to the chancellor as he prepares to make his final recommendation. The DSC also encourage students to contact its leadership at this final stage, since they will also be writing to the Chancellor with their final recommendation. ☺

letter TO THE EDITOR

Objections About Reparations

GORDON BARNES'S ARTICLE ON proposed reparations to CARICOM for slavery reminds me that in the 40s AD, the Roman Empire invaded southern Britain, enslaved some of my ancestors and killed some other Brits who never got the chance to become such. They also flogged Queen Bodicea and raped both of her daughters. I am considering making a claim against my wife whose ancestry goes back to the city of Rome (at least in part) but my difficulty is that many of the guilty Roman soldiers were not real Roman Romans nor even Italian—heavens to Betsy, some of them were probably black.

How should I pursue my claim against the guilty parties, including any such Afro-Romans? Would CARICOM accept an assignment of my claims in full or partial satisfaction of any claim it may have against me? — Brian A. Jones

Gordon Barnes responds: Thank you for your comment. I apologize for not getting to you sooner, but the *Advocate* email address is in the midst of being deleted and reconstituted. From the tenor of your email, I gather that you find the article I drafted to be myopic, untenable, and largely problematic. I invite you to produce a rebuttal article.

As for your queries, I find them to be rather misguided. CARICOM is not asking for individualized forms of reparatory justice. There is not body for which you could attempt to gain reparations (in whatever form) from your wife for the Roman invasion of the British Isles in the 40's CE. Also CARICOM is not claiming anything against individuals, rather it is the states mentioned in my article that they are engaging with. Furthermore, "Afro-Romans" did not exist in 40 CE. Yes, there were people that contemporaneously would be identified as black, or of African descent, etc. Race did not exist in the way that you are using it until around the fourteenth-century (at the very earliest). None of them were

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Italians (possibly some were Etruscans), Italy did not exist. A racialized argument around reparations is null and void for anything predating the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

In addition, the Caribbean economy directly bolstered the European economy (and in some respects still does) from the time of colonization in the late fifteenth century, reaching its apogee in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The antecedents of present European economic development can be directly linked to slavery and the colonial past. Any similar claim (say from Britain against Italy) would be preposterous due to the fact that it is near impossible to conclusively link the exploitation of the British Isles to the current socio-economic situation in Italy. Also, these states did not exist during the time period you discuss, whereas the colonies and metropolitan centers during the epoch of Atlantic slavery, are for the most part all still intact.

Finally, CARICOM, despite the problems with them as an organization and their reparations plan, is not targeting individuals as you allude to. They are targeting those European states that were an indelible feature of slaving in the Atlantic world. So, to answer your inquiries directly, first: you should not pursue any claims because it would be frivolous and have no bearing on extant material reality. Secondly: CARICOM would not answer be involved in such a "reassignment" of claims in full or in part, because they have no claims against you as an individual, thus the question you posed here is not moot. Thank you again for your comments. — Gordon Barnes

I am pleased that you see that my argument is preposterous: that is precisely why I wrote it. Now review the original article and note that it is equally preposterous. I really do not think a rebuttal article is necessary, though I will be happy (and surprised) if my letter is printed. — Brian A. Jones

Alas Enormes: Gabriel García Márquez

José Chevarry

TENDRÍA ONCE AÑOS CUANDO había comprado, de una señora que siempre vendía libros por la esquina de mi casa, una copia, de dudosa edición, de *Cien años de soledad*; mi madre lo escogió de entre los otros libros. “Lee este, es un clásico,” me dijo, entregándomelo. Ella no lo había leído. Recuerdo no haberlo leído inmediatamente, a lo mucho lo habré ojeado, intrigado, más que nada, por el curioso árbol genealógico en la última página (todos se llamaban igual). Recuerdo sólo haberlo empezado semanas después.

Sé que lo leí rápido. Sé que se convirtió para mí, rápidamente, en una especie de horizonte literario. Sé que busqué, en todo lo que leí después, algo comparable al estilo, la prosa, la voz narrativa de Gabriel García Márquez. Sé que por esta razón seguí leyendo.

• • •

El *magnum opus* de García Márquez—la obra que, según la escritora mexicana Elena Poniatowska, “le dio alas a América Latina”—se publicó en 1967, en Buenos Aires. No hace falta señalar que ha sido objeto de placer y estudio por más de cinco décadas, y que su traducción al inglés por Gregory Rabasa en 1970 dio comienzo (junto a obras de similar envergadura de Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa, etc.) al llamado “boom” de la literatura latinoamericana. La introducción de estos autores al mundo anglófono significó, también, el ingreso de la literatura latinoamericana al escenario de la literatura mundial. Por otra parte, tampoco sería necesario recalcar la importancia del “realismo mágico”—la inserción, o más bien, la representación de lo mágico dentro de lo verídico y lo posible—en la obra del escritor colombiano.

Es, sin embargo, la insistencia en catalogar, o mejor dicho, reducir a García Márquez a un género literario lo que no sería justo. En los artículos, reseñas y obituarios de García Márquez que he leído en los últimos días, no falta la descripción de su obra como el mejor ejemplo del realismo mágico. Desde luego, no se podría desatender aquellos elementos y aquellas escenas que tanto vibran en *Cien años de soledad*—la sangre de José Arcadio, asesinado por su esposa, recorriendo las calles de Macondo hasta llegar a su madre; la ascensión de Remedios la Bella, ataviada en una sábana; los diecisiete Aurelianos, hijos del coronel Aureliano Buendía con diecisiete mujeres distintas, asesinados todos la misma noche. Pero enmarcar la obra de García Márquez exclusivamente en ciertos géneros literarios, es decir, pensarla siempre desde aquellas pautas, aquellos registros, lleva el riesgo

de representarla como formulada y predecible. Y la obra de García Márquez es exactamente lo opuesto.

Junto a lo mágico está lo cotidiano y lo habitual. No se trata, para García Márquez, necesariamente de exaltar esto: se trata de ver en lo cotidiano la fortaleza y la perseverancia, pero también la debilidad y la angustia de ser humano. El anciano coronel de *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* se despierta, se viste y sigue su rutina todos los días con exactitud, esperando un cheque que nunca va a llegar; Bolívar en *El general en su laberinto*, moribundo y empequeñeciéndose, sigue bailando y escribiendo, manteniendo vivos sus ideales políticos; en *El amor en los tiempos del cólera*, Florentino Ariza mantiene vivo su amor, después de décadas, por Fermina, su primera novia. Aquí no hay tanta magia como voluntad, fuerza y carácter humano.

García Márquez comenzó su carrera como periodista y señaló varias veces que sus mayores inspiraciones vinieron precisamente de observar lo cotidiano. Su familia y su pueblo influyeron enormemente en su obra. También lo hicieron, sin lugar a duda, sus ideales políticos. Su respaldo al gobierno de Fidel Castro, aún después de los obvios problemas que comenzaban a surgir en Cuba, le trajo críticas de otros escritores e intelectuales latinoamericanos (le estuvo también, por muchos años, prohibido entrar a los Estados Unidos). Su pelea con el peruano Vargas Llosa, haya sido por razones personales o políticas, resalta el constante conflicto político entre los intelectuales latinoamericanos durante las turbulentas décadas de la segunda mitad del siglo XX.

• • •

Así como los personajes de *Cien años de soledad* se desbordan de esa novela y aparecen en otras novelas y otros cuentos, continuando, de ese modo, su vida en aquel universo imaginado, así García Márquez fluye entre gran parte de la literatura (no sólo latinoamericana) que lo tomó como punto de partida. Por eso tanto se ha dicho y escrito sobre su obra. Se vuelve casi imposible, como la obra de todo autor “canónico”, pensarla fuera de las distintas interpretaciones y los diversos parámetros que se le ha dado en décadas de estudio.

Me resulta difícil, de este modo, releer a García Márquez. No podría ahora, de hecho, “conocer” *Cien años de soledad* de la misma manera que Aureliano conoció por primera vez el hielo. Pero quizás, para mí, algo queda, y se repite, de mis primeras lecturas de su obra: la voz narrativa y el lenguaje de Gabriel García Márquez siguen tan presentes y vibrantes, siguen impactándome, y siguen incitándome a leer. ☺

Mentoring Future Faculty of Color

A Brief Conversation with Chris Eng and Melissa Phruksachart

kristina huang

IN ITS PREVIOUS ISSUE, which also inaugurated a new editorial staff, *The Advocate* began with an open letter to the Graduate Center community for contributions from diverse perspectives. “Diversity in the abstract,” they wrote, “as a bureaucratic checkbox is a fiction that must be superseded by diversity as an actual social and political linkage between the academy and society.” Indeed. This sentiment is shared by many in the Graduate Center student community and the following conversation with two other doctoral students, Chris Eng and Melissa Phruksachart, responds to the editors’ call and reiterates the value of a critical consciousness that bridges academic work with social realities.

This conversation serves as a reflection on a particular initiative on critical diversity work at the CUNY Graduate Center: the Mentoring Future Faculty of Color Project. Now in its second year, largely run by a collective of students and their mentors, MFFC set into motion vibrant discussions about the professional and political lives of students of color, and discussions about current academic work in U.S. universities. Professors who have been a part of this lecture series include Daphne Brooks (Princeton), Nicole Fleetwood (Rutgers), Tavia Nyong’o (NYU), Nikhil Pal Singh (NYU), and, most recently, Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman (Brandeis). On Friday, May 2nd, at 2 p.m. in room 5409, Tina Camp (Barnard) will be giving the concluding lecture of this semester.

. . .

Kristina Huang (KH): Both of you are among the collective of students who helped in spearheading the *Mentoring Future Faculty of Color* initiative a year ago. Can you provide a bit of background for this initiative? How did it get started?

Chris Eng (CE): Well, basically the Diversity Project Development Fund was being offered and advertised two years ago, in the fall. Kandice Chuh, one of our mentors, suggested that this (MFFC) might be a good project to put forth. Her recommendation stemmed out of previous infor-

mal meetings, one of which Kandice invited several students of color from the English Program to a dinner to chat about the experiences and challenges in navigating the English Program particularly and academia more generally. It was a space for us to discuss the different programs and structures of support that we found helpful for really starting a conversation about race and diversity on multiple types of level. We also reflected on the various formal and informal relations that we’ve built in our graduate careers thus far. Collectively, we seemed to identify mentoring as a desirable and desired practice that we wanted to further foster, particularly in relation to questions of race and diversity. After applying for and receiving the fund last year, a group of students talked about moving forward and outlined what the initiative would eventually become.

Melissa Phruksachart (MP): We decided we’d invite three to four scholars per semester to have lunch with a small group of students to talk about their experiences navigating academia as a scholar of color. Afterward, they give a public lecture about their current work.

KH: Can you talk about some highlights of what MFFC has done so far?

MP: One of the highlights has been getting to know scholars in an informal setting and hearing about their own struggles in getting through graduate school, the job market, and the early career stages. Most people did not have it easy, and no one could predict that they’d end up in a fabulous position at such-and-such school. I appreciate how frank people have been and how they let us know how difficult it can be for anyone to pursue work in academia.

KH: Yeah, what I’ve found super interesting too is the idea that one’s personal, graduate student journey is part of an institutional history. Our lunches with Daphne Brooks and Nikhil Pal Singh come to mind. I’m thinking, specifically, about how they noted that their politics came out of an intersection of their scholarship, graduate experience, and personal experiences.

CE: To build off of what Melissa and you have been talking about, the reason for inviting these scholars who are amazing and produce all this cutting edge work is to get a chance to sit and talk with them about questions around race and diversity. Doing so is immensely helpful because it gives you an understanding about the struggles they have and continue to experience in their academic careers. This is just to say that after you become a professor, after you “make it,” there are still challenges that you continue to be a part of. The structures and institutional conditions that inhibit critical diversity do not disappear with tenure. And this isn’t something you talk about at conferences and events, right? You usually just talk about research, but the institutional diversity work isn’t something that’s always talked about.

KH: I know you from Hunter College, Chris, when we were undergraduates and I want to ask you to talk about your work there.

CE: I was involved in CRAASH, the Coalition for the Revitalization of Asian American Studies at Hunter College, and it was a colleague who tapped me into the status of

all types of capital. To my mind, that is why students come to college—to gain certain kinds of capital, whether they know it or not. And so, teaching the students of NYC, it was important to me to know where they were located in relationship to social, cultural, and economic capital and to try to think about how I could help them walk the fine line of gaining different forms of capital but also help them to be critical in what it means to be reaching for that. Understanding the diverse contexts of CUNY undergraduate students is really important to me, even on a personal level because I am also a child of immigrants. I feel that I have some sort of kinship with our students on that level, and a responsibility to them.

KH: Relatedly, I’m of the school of thinking that politics and scholarship are not inseparable. I wonder if you can talk about your own scholarship in relation to what you do; if there is any overlap between what you study and your involvement in MFFC.

MP: I’m not sure if MFFC has informed my scholarship as much as it’s influenced the way I see the potential roles



the Asian American Studies program and that nothing was happening. Based on her suggestion, a few of us collaborated and coordinated a series of campaigns and events to raise awareness about the Asian American Studies Program to get more funding and support. That experience was great and in directly diving into these issues, I became aware of the university and the discipline as an important site of struggle for questions relating to social justice, in terms of where and what we get to learn.

KH: I think of CUNY as being a particular and very interesting site for these conversations. And I was wondering, Melissa, if you could talk a little about your experience thus far. Chris and I have both gone through the undergraduate program here, and that has shaped how we approach our work here at CUNY. Can you speak about your experience at CUNY, diversity, and people of color in higher education?

MP: So you’re asking me how this particular location helped me think about those kinds of questions?

KH: Yes, and maybe reflect on teaching at CUNY and the kinds of courses they offer here.

MP: I definitely see the university and higher education as a site of social production and reproduction, in terms of

of an academic—not to only produce scholarship but in other administrative and community functions. I think that’s where this project helped me grow in terms of my work: in terms of understanding how else scholars create spaces for critical discourse in the academy. It’s not just about what you publish.

CE: For me, I think of critical diversity work as labor that operates on multiple levels. And, reflecting upon MFFC and the scholarship that Melissa and I do, it’s very much about the types of conditions or structures that don’t allow for certain questions to be asked or certain bodies to become legitimate or enter certain types of spaces. It seems then that our work on MFFC and scholarship are thus animated by the following question: what are the conditions of possibility, or impossibility for certain questions around racial difference to be discussed, asked, and probed—within the university, either in actual programming but also in terms of the scholarship we produce. Questions of race are so embedded within everything we do in the university, and our work strategizes about and labors toward shifting the current conditions to allow for the flourishing of students of color within and beyond the university. 🌱

Speech and Sanctions

Highlights from the CUNY Forum on the BDS Movement and Academic Freedom

FOLLOWING THE OFFICIAL ENDORSEMENT of the American Studies Association of the call from Palestinian civil society for a boycott of Israel—as part of its now-global Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement—concerns over “academic freedom” have been repeatedly invoked as reasons to oppose academic boycotts. Moreover, official statements by university presidents, attempts by New York, Maryland state legislatures, and now the US Congress, to outlaw such political affiliations demand that the significance of “academic freedom” and its functionality in the US university system be interrogated and reaffirmed.

The panel discussion “BDS and Academic Freedom,” which was held at the CUNY Graduate Center on April 2nd, featured Ashley Dawson (CUNY), Bill Mullen (Purdue), Radhika Sanaith (Palestine Solidarity Legal Support), and Sherry Wolf (International Socialist Review) as speakers, and Christopher Stone (CUNY) as moderator. Over fifteen Graduate Center-affiliated organizations endorsed the event. The panel addressed the question of academic freedom and political affiliation from the different perspectives of academics and activists working with and around BDS in the US academe today. Panelists interrogated how the pursuit of “academic freedom” has been used to both open and close debate, how it frames the call for solidarity with Palestinian students and scholars, structures relationships with dissenting opinions, and how it applies in a US university system increasingly dependent on a contingent workforce of graduate students and adjunct labor.

Below are remarks from Bill Mullen and Sherry Wolf, who have given *The Advocate* permission to reprint them here. Bill Mullen is Professor of American Studies and English at Purdue. He is a member of the Advisory Board for USACBI (United States Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel) and faculty adviser to Purdue Students for Justice in Palestine. Sherry Wolf is associate editor of the International Socialist Review, a member of Adalah-NY, the NY Campaign for the Boycott of Israel and Queers Against Israeli Apartheid, she is also the author of *Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics and Theory of LGBT Liberation*. Conor Tomás Reed transcribed these talks.

“The Palestinians Are Winning”

bill mullen

TO BORROW A LINE from Ali Abunimah’s new book *The Battle for Palestine*, “The Palestinians are winning.”

In just the past month in the U.S., we’ve seen students at Loyola University in Chicago vote for divestment from Israel; we’ve witnessed massive groundswells for divestment at University of Michigan and UCLA; internationally, the student union at the Irish Student University in Galway, students at King’s College, London, and York University Graduate Students Association in Canada have all recently voted for divestment. More than 6,000 people signed a petition for Columbia College Professor Iymen Chehade when his class on Israel/Palestine was cancelled because he showed the in-

dependent joint Israeli/Palestinian documentary *Five Broken Cameras* in his class. Even NBC news covered the suspension of the Northeastern University Students for Justice in Palestine chapter for carrying out non-violent protests against Israeli apartheid on campus.

It’s safe to say that the global Boycott Divest and Sanctions has reached what its co-founder Omar Barghouti has called a “tipping point.” As with South Africa in the 1980s, the struggle for Palestinian liberation has become a mainstream global civil rights movements of our time. No one who believes in global justice can now stand on the sideline. As Howard Zinn once said, “You can’t be neutral on a moving train.”

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Within the U.S., these spectacular events reflect the steady growth of USACBI, the United States Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (usacbi.org).

org). USACBI was launched in 2009 after the Israeli invasion of Gaza in solidarity with the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (pacbi.org).

Both PACBI and USACBI are non-violent, human-right-based initiatives modeled on the Boycott Divest, Sanctions Movement against South African apartheid. Broadly, BDS is meant to bring Israel into compliance with international law, and to recognize Palestinians as full-fledged equal citizens in a newly aligned, decolonized democratic state. Specifically, BDS calls for boycott, divestment and sanctions based on three pre-conditions: an end to Israeli Occupation and colonization of Arab lands and dismantling of the 723 meter long apartheid wall; full, equal rights for Arab-Palestinians in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank; honoring of UN Resolution 194 guaranteeing the right of return for Palestinian refugees forcibly displaced since “*al-nakba*,” or “the catastrophe” of 1947-1949. Today, the United Nations Relief Work Association estimates that there are nearly five million Palestinian refugees worldwide.

For those of us in the Academy, a particular “tipping point” in the struggle against apartheid were the December actions of the membership of The American Studies Association, which passed by a landslide vote of 66 to 33 percent, a resolution to boycott Israeli Universities.

Though the boycott was immediately condemned by University Presidents and the media as a violation of academic freedom, in fact the ASA Boycott violated no one’s academic freedom. The boycott targeted Israeli institutions, not individuals, and was limited mostly to the interaction between the ASA as a professional association, and Israeli Universities.

Instead, what the ASA resolution did do is make a critical link between the role Israeli Universities play in violating Palestinian academic freedom and the suffocation and restriction of their personal freedoms more broadly. The ASA resolution argued specifically that—

“...there is no effective or substantive academic freedom for Palestinian students and scholars under conditions of Israeli occupation, and Israeli institutions of higher learning are a party to Israeli state policies that violate human rights and negatively impact the working conditions of Palestinian scholars and students;”

For example:

- ▶ Israeli Universities provide the military-intelligence establishment of Israel, as Omar Barghouti has noted,



with research—“on demography, geography, hydrology, and psychology, among other disciplines—that directly benefits the occupation.” Israeli Universities also commit acts that contravene international law, such as the construction of campuses or dormitories in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Tel Aviv University is built partly on the former Palestinian village of Sheikh Muwanis.

The Israel Institute of Technology, or Technion, develops weapons that have been used against Palestinian civilian populations in violation of international law. These include weaponized bulldozers used to demolish Palestinian homes, and combat weapons used to kill civilians in attacks on Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza in 2008-09.

- ▶ Scholars and students at Palestinian Universities face restrictions on travel and research and live under constant threat of violence. In December, 2008, the Islamic University of Gaza was partly destroyed by Israeli bombs. Just weeks ago, dozens of students at Al-quds University in East Jerusalem were injured during an Israeli campus raid.
- ▶ Israeli Universities systematically discriminate against Palestinians. While Palestinians make up 20 percent of the population of Israel, they are less than 10 percent of the University student body, and less than 1 percent of campus staff. Palestinian applicants to University are three times as likely as Israeli Jewish students to be rejected.
- ▶ Israeli Universities have tried to repress campus activity perceived as anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian. Israeli historian Ilan Pappé was asked by the President of the University of Haifa to resign after he came out in public

support of the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions Movement. The word *nakba*, Arabic for ‘catastrophe’, has itself been criminalized in Israel.

Given the opportunity, the large majority of Israeli academics have shown little concern for supporting academic freedom for Palestinians. As Haim Bresheeth and Sherna Berger Gluck have pointed out, a few months before the Gaza incursion by the [Israeli Defense Forces] in December 2008, a petition for academic freedom in the Occupied Territories was circulated to more than 10,000 Israeli academics. The petition, requesting that the Israeli government allow Palestinians the same freedom enjoyed by Israeli academics, was signed by only 407 Israeli academics—4% of the total.

The ASA Boycott Resolution was a direct response to these conditions. Yet it was also important as an act of civil disobedience by a group of American scholars protesting U.S. State support for this systemic repression. The ASA resolution stated that the

“United States plays a significant role in enabling the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the expansion of illegal settlements and the Wall in violation of international law, as well as in supporting the systematic discrimination against Palestinians.”

The most obvious evidence of this enabling is the 3 billion dollars in U.S. aid to Israel every year, much of it in direct support of Israel’s military, and the routine veto

of numerous U.N. resolutions condemning Israel’s illegal settlements and other violations of international law. There are features of what is often called the “special relationship” in which the U.S. consistently refers to Israel as the “only democracy” in the Middle East while supporting Jim Crow-like racism against Palestinians and other minorities (including African immigrants to the country.)

But there are still other direct means by which U.S. Universities are complicit.

For example, On 23 January of this year, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* ran a report headlined, “Israel bars Gaza student from travel to U.S. for coexistence program.” The story reported that the Israeli group [Gisha] “says the refusal to issue a permit to the 21-year-old is indicative of a policy shift that is making it more difficult for Palestinian students to study abroad.” The student in question was to have participated in a program at NYU, which made no comment on the report. This was in sharp contrast to NYU President John Sexton’s immediate condemnation of the ASA for its vote in support of the boycott on the basis that it violated “academic freedom.” Meanwhile, NYU has itself opened up a campus in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, a country with a horrific record of human rights abuses, and where, ironically, Jews cannot enter.

More broadly, then, the ASA Resolution was intended to expose a real and ideological conjunction between Israeli and American Universities complicit with Islamophobic racism and repression on one hand, and support for expansion-



ist U.S. foreign policy and regional interests on the other.

We can begin the contours of this conjunction by looking at what Ali Abunimah calls the “War on Campus” against supporters of BDS and critics of U.S. foreign policy. We should recall for example the 2011 trial of ten University of California students charged with violating the California penal code for their nonviolent protest at the 2010 appearance at UC Irvine of Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren. Oren was the spokesperson for the Israeli [Defense Forces] during its military attack on Lebanon In 2006 [that] resulted in more than 1200 dead. The students were arrested, charged, and were convicted of “conspiring” to disrupt his appearance for standing up and saying things like “propagating murder is not free speech.” With hindsight, we can connect that war to the physical attacks on students at this campus for protesting David Petraeus’s appointment to teach at the CUNY Graduate Center after prosecuting a murderous American War in Iraq. In both cases, public institutions of higher education used state intervention—literally the police—to harass, beat, arrest and intimidate tuition-paying students. Needless to say, many of these students were Arab, Muslim or students of color, a profound example of what Ali Abunimah calls a form of “global policing” where Israeli apartheid and the New Jim Crow are yet again partners in each other’s crimes.

In this regard we should also see the fight for BDS and for Palestinian rights as a “tipping point” in the battle against United States racism and imperialism at home and abroad. As Adam Hanieh, author of *Lineages of Revolt: Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East*, has said in a recent interview, “In the case of Palestine...we need to go beyond considering the Palestinian struggle as just a “human rights” issue, but rather see it as integrally connected to the ways that capitalism in the Middle East has formed under the aegis of Western domination.”“One of the central conclusions that can be drawn from this” Hanieh writes, “is that the Palestinian struggle holds immense strategic weight in the political struggles of the region as a whole. Confronting Western domination of the region must necessarily pass through the question of Palestine.” In other words, we need to constantly connect the political dots: between American support for Israeli apartheid, and U.S. drones dropping in Afghanistan, and between U.S. profiteering from Middle East oil, and a planet that is burning its environment to the ground.

So what does all of this mean for us as activists in the University? It means that the Battle for Palestine is quickly becoming our generation’s Vietnam. That one of the roads to freedom from U.S. imperialism runs through Ramallah. That our organizing for BDS as Students for Justice in Palestine chapters, labor unions, LGBT activists against Israeli

‘pink-washing,’ and anti-racist organizers against Israeli apartheid and the New Jim Crow, must be part of a larger fight against a history of racist settler-colonialism, exploitation of workers, and attacks on civil liberties and military aggression all done in the name of U.S. Empire.

It also means that we are at “war” with the neoliberal University itself. The more than 200 University presidents who have condemned the ASA and aligned itself with the U.S. state and apartheid Israel while raising their own salaries, jacking up student tuition and fees, repressing student dissent, and policing curriculum means the University campus is as much as ever a crucial front in the battle for real economic and political justice in our time.

I urge you all today to join this fight. We need more boycott and divestment resolutions now. We need to end U.S. aid to Israel now. We need to [end] stop and frisk now. We need to take our Universities back in the name not just of academic freedom, but [also] of redistributive justice. We must remember that we have nothing to lose but our chains and we have a whole world to win.

The Pitfalls of Neoliberalism

sherry wolf

IN RESPONSE TO THE ASA boycott, university presidents were apoplectic. The peasants, it seems, were rising up and speaking out: faculty who’d long been quiet—at least as a collective—had the audacity to dissent. A typical written rebuke of the faculty came from Johns Hopkins President Ronald Daniels and Provost Robert Lieberman who wrote: “This boycott is a contradiction, one that threatens what it purports to protect: the freedom of thought and expression that is the heartbeat of our academic community.”

This hallowed institution of academic freedom was under attack, and university presidents from across the public-private, geographic, and political spectrum were apparently united in defending this consecrated, venerated, sacred ground of academic freedom.

[This was] because our scholars, our intellectuals, our teachers, our researchers are being denied their right to express unconventional views, go down untrodden paths, pursue controversial hypotheses. Aside from the profound level of ignorance this claim of besmirching academic freedom reveals about Palestinian society, this attack by university presidents expresses either stupidity or dishonesty about what is taking place at our own academic institutions here at home.

Forty years of neoliberal restructuring of higher education in the United States has had a devastating impact on

academic freedom, a concept [that] actually rose alongside of tenure in the early part of the 20th Century. With the privatization of higher ed has come the “adjunctification” of higher ed faculty, that is to say, the destruction of tenure. Contingent faculty labor now comprises nearly 75% of the 1.5 million US teaching and research faculty. Here at CUNY Grad Center, the latest figures I was able to get from the MLA, tell the story of what’s happened throughout universities. Here, at this institution, 65.5% of all full and part-time faculty are neither tenured nor on the tenure track and as such already have no genuine academic freedom. This is not unique to the Grad Center—Kingsborough is at 70% non-tenured, at Hunter 65%, at John Jay 66% and on and on.

Tenure is so central to academic freedom that 75 years ago when the first higher ed union codified its mission, the AAUP called it: The 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure. Let me read the introduction of that statement:

“The purpose of this statement is to promote public understanding and support of academic freedom and tenure and agreement upon procedures to ensure them in colleges and universities.” The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.

“Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. It carries with it duties correlative with rights.

Tenure is a means to certain ends; specifically: (1) freedom of teaching and research and of extramural activities, and (2) *a sufficient degree of economic security to make the profession attractive to men and women of ability. Freedom and economic security, hence, tenure, are indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society.*”

I come to this discussion not only as a longtime Palestine solidarity activist, writer, and public speaker, but as someone who is a faculty union organizer at Rutgers, which like CUNY has one of the largest unionized faculty in the nation. And like CUNY, we fight every day against the encroach-



ments of corporatization and privatization—in a word, neoliberalism.

Let’s be honest, the academy has always been at war with itself as a site of both legitimization of the status quo and ideological exploration that could endanger the establishment. But the stakes have grown higher under the pressures of unprecedented profits and hyper-militarization that are the hallmarks of contemporary neoliberalism. The need to fundamentally transform higher education, especially public education for the middle and working classes, has become imperative.

It is no longer sufficient for the academy to spread and normalize the ethos of neoliberalism in which all studies and personnel are reduced to their economic function: return on investment. Now, academia must pulverize our capacity to dream if imperial subjects are to be sufficiently docile. It’s not a new project, but like global warming it appears to have reached a tipping point.

Henry Giroux fleshes out this theme in his latest work *Neoliberalism’s War on Higher Education*. It seems to me that the systemic assaults on universities are not merely profit-driven, but ideological and structural bulwarks against mass resistance. Giroux argues, “Capital is not only wedded to the production of profits, it is also invested in a form of intellectual violence that legitimates its savage market-driven practices and the exercise of ruthless power.” That means that steep cuts to the study of art, language, and philosophy aren’t simply the result of the inability of these curricula to contribute enough to the bottom line. The humanities are dangerous because they stoke critical thinking, question established norms, and encourage an iconoclasm that threat-

ens power.

Keeping this framework in mind, let us return to the question of academic boycott and Palestine. All too often when we speak of Palestine there is, however unintentional, a political exoticization of the conflict and the struggles of the Palestinian people. Given their brutal daily reality, it's not hard to understand why the human rights abuses of Israel's occupation, the mass punishment of imprisoning a population behind walls and under siege would evince this. But as scholars and activists, or activist-scholars, it's crucial that we also understand the all-too-familiar aspects of Palestinian society because Palestinian society also has undergone decades of neoliberal restructuring. Though Palestine is largely viewed as a "humanitarian issue," the political economy of Palestine forms an essential link to US-Israeli imperial rule and patterns of capitalist development throughout the Middle East,

Recent books by Ali Abunimah and Adam Hanieh lay this out rather well: *The Battle for Justice in Palestine* and *Lineages of Revolt*—Haymarket Books. For decades, a mostly agricultural Palestinian society has been forced off their land, squeezed into urban slums, and when there is work, forced into the lowest stratum of the Israeli labor force.

But in the early 1990s the US, and its client state Israel, had a problem. Arab government, due to their own domestic pressures as a result of Israel's repression of Palestinians during the first two intifadas, was boycotting Israel. In order for the United States to ensure the free flow of goods, resources, and services throughout the region, [it] needed to step in and reshape the Israel-Palestine conflict in such a way as to integrate Israel into the regional trade and economic flows.

The [1993] OSLO Accords were the result of that need. A false non-solution, with the façade of Palestinian autonomy was grafted onto the conflict to woo Arab states away from boycott and toward an integrated Middle East economy with Israel. It worked. The creation of Palestinian "Bantustans" and the 400-mile apartheid Wall were crucial to this, as was the transfer of the responsibility of many aspects of security from Israel into the hands of imperial collaborators in the Palestine Authority. Palestinian labor was largely replaced by Israel with the importation of cheap labor from Thailand,

The need to fundamentally transform higher education, especially public education for the middle and working classes, has become imperative.

the Philippines and Romania. Palestinian labor became, as Hanieh puts it, a "tap" that could be turned on and off at Israel's will. Quite literally, the flow of Palestinian labor could finally be controlled through the faucet of checkpoints and passbooks and an entire infrastructure of codes and regulations that strangled, starved and impoverished Palestinian society. Until the current Syria crisis, Palestinians not only constituted the world's largest refugee crisis, but the world's most dependent population on UN, World Bank, and IMF aid, which is to say total economic control by the West. The Palestinian Authority was transformed not only into the security and torture force for Israel, but the debt collector as well.

As with the United States and elsewhere, neoliberalism in Palestine works to atomize the population, disempower them and turn people away from collective struggle and toward individual consumption, at least for the tiny layer of Palestinians who act as an interlocutor with Israeli and foreign capital. The walls of Ramallah are no longer covered with political graffiti, but ads. And there are [wealthy Palestinians] who help run Soda-Stream's factory in the West Bank with indentured Palestinian labor who describe their conditions as slave like.

But in Palestine, like in the United States, neoliberal structures also work to undermine the conditions of their own existence by

exposing the complicity of those in power, in their case the Palestinian Authority, and compelling a layer of Palestinians to turn toward alternative means of resistance—BDS. BDS has become the new movement to challenge Palestinians' political and economic immiseration.

This is why the academic boycott is such crucial step forward for [them and us]. The very people in this country entrusted by the establishment to inculcate the next generation with neoliberal ideology—professors—are themselves not just victims of restructuring, but now resisters to it.

Israel is an ethnocratic police state whose occupation of Palestine amounts to a colonial settler state. Israel is the quintessence of neoliberal [processes]—human rights violations, colonial occupation, privatization, and the proliferation of a hi-tech, security, and pharmaceutical economy geared toward militarization.

That is why, in my opinion, it is an obscenity for university presidents, United States legislators, newspaper editors, and academics to ask an increasingly precarious professoriate to defend an abstract version of academic freedom at home in the interests of not destabilizing a human rights abuse masquerading as a nation, which is what Israel is. 🇵🇸



Marching for Immigrants' and Workers' Rights

cuny internationalist marxist club

ON APRIL 19TH, THE CUNY Internationalist Marxist Club mobilized students and adjuncts to support immigrant workers at the Liberato Restaurant in the Bronx as they launched an organizing campaign. Initiated by the Laundry Workers Center, the campaign targets wage theft, low pay, on-the-job harassment and other abuses at the well-known eating establishment on 183rd Street not far from Bronx Community College. The CUNY activists joined immigrant rights and labor groups, chanting “Liberato workers: We are with you,” “*Trabajadores sí, explotadores no*” (Workers yes, Exploiters no”) and “*La lucha obrera no tiene frontera*” (The workers’ struggle has no borders).

Prominent among those who came out to support the Liberato campaign were several workers from the Hot and Crusty bakery on Manhattan’s Upper East Side, where a hard-fought organizing campaign and 55-day picket won a solid union victory and benefits virtually unheard of in the industry, including a union hiring hall, in late 2012. Intensive participation in the Hot and Crusty campaign was a key experience for many Internationalist activists.

The topic of immigrant rights and its connection to the unionization of low-wage workers are front and center with the approach of International Workers Day on May 1st. For the Internationalist contingent that the CUNY club is helping to build for this year’s May Day march, these themes are linked to the need for international working-class solidarity. Opposing imperialist war abroad, racism and repression “at home,” the contingent will raise the call “No to militarization of CUNY—ROTC and Petraeus out,” as well as demanding that U.S. imperialism get its hands off the Ukraine and Venezuela. Together with other activists at the City University and elsewhere, it will also take the opportunity to help publicize efforts to win a “\$5K minimum” per course for adjuncts and other contingent academic employees.

With the collapse of “immigration reform” and President Obama accurately characterized as the “Deporter-in-Chief” even by several mainstream rights groups, it is becoming clear to increasing numbers of people that both capitalist parties are enemies of immigrants. On May Day, which should be a day of world-wide struggle against capitalism, the Internationalist contingent will highlight calls for workers action to stop deportations, the call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, and the need to break with the Democrats and build a revolutionary workers party. ☸

For more information, write cunyinternationalists@gmail.com.



Guilty as Charged?

Perspectives on Petraeus and the United States Military



THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE IS compiled from excerpts from statements made at the April 3rd Public Hearing on David Petraeus held at the Graduate Center, CUNY. Stylized as a “People’s Tribunal,” the event was chaired by Bina Ahmad, a public defender at the Legal Aid Society and hosted four speakers representing different groups and interests. The speakers covered a wide range of topics including the militarization of CUNY, the legacy of David Petraeus and his appointment as a CUNY faculty member, the legality and ethics of United States military action overseas, specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the effects of American occupation on the peoples of the aforementioned countries.

Though this event served as a public hearing on Petraeus, the panelists spoke on topics beyond the significance of his role as Army commander in Iraq and Afghanistan and as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (though this was included) to include a wide array of different, yet interrelated, issues. The talks were transcribed by Gordon Barnes and Cristina Pérez Díaz with the permission of the speakers. All of the dialogues have been reproduced with the intent of maintaining the text of the article as close to the original words and phrases of the participants. The question and answer portion of the event, and the discussion afterwards has not been included in this article. Given the tenor of the event and Petraeus’ volatile relationship with the CUNY community, it is no surprise that he (and U.S. imperialism) was roundly condemned. Following this article is a sort of indirect rebuttal by David Viola arguing in favor of Petraeus’ appointment to Macaulay Honors College and the attempt to reinstitute ROTC at the City University of New York.

Participants: Bina Ahmad, The Legal Aid Society; Jeena Shah, The Center for Constitutional Rights; Claude Copeland Jr., Iraq Veterans Against the War; Sándor John, CUNY Internationalist Clubs, Hunter College; Debra Sweet, The World Can’t Wait.

Introduction

bina ahmad

WHY DO WE HAVE “people’s tribunals”? People’s tribunals address the fact that there is a lack of accountability in United States courts for U.S. war crimes. For instance, the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, the drone war in Pakistan, the continuing occupation of Palestine, Guantanamo detainees and indefinite detention; the complete lack of accountability for any of these crimes [is why people turn to tribunals in an effort to gain] answers and justice. Another reason I find people’s tribunals to be important is the utter failure of the United Nations to hold any of these nation states accountable.

There are glimmers of hope with the United Nations with tribunals like the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY and ICTR respectively). So there are glimmers of hope, but those tribunals were brought largely because those nations and actors that they were brought against had very little power in [the current] geopolitical system. Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia are not the United States or Israel,[thus] it was much easier, politically, to hold those tribunals.[People’s tribunals, on the other hand], hold nation states and war criminals accountable when nation-states and the U.N. fail to act. They create a public record and a public shaming, and they don’t let [war] crimes go ignored. People’s tribunals demonstrate support for international human rights in general.

Command responsibility is a customary international law principle. It means that a commander, an army or military commander, is responsible for subordinate troops commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity if three elements exist: a structural element, where there is a superior-subordinate relation, the mental element, which means actual or potential knowledge on the part of the superior of crimes perpetrated or about to be perpetrated by a subordinate, and the third element, the physical element, is failure on the part of the superior to take adequate measures to prevent or to respond to these crimes.

Duty owed to occupied peoples is another customary international legal doctrine which originates from the Hague Regulations, Article 43. [It] requires occupied forces and commanders to uphold a duty to protect and maintain public well being and safety [in] occupied territories. The occupier has an obligation to control one’s troops, other [friendly] troops in the same theatre of operations, and all other elements present in the area. The occupying body also has a duty to stay informed of events taking place on the ground in the occupied area.

Comparatively speaking, the international duties owed

to occupied peoples impose a greater affirmative obligation upon an occupier than command responsibility imposes on a commander. Can we apply [the customary international laws of] command responsibility and the duties owed occupied peoples to Petraeus’ actions and his roles not only as commander in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also as director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Is Petraeus guilty of war crimes or crimes against humanity? Are there any ways to hold [him] accountable through domestic mechanisms? Was there targeting of civilians, or civilian substance and food [producing] areas under Petraeus’ [leadership]? Was there a deliberate targeting of medical personnel? Was there a failure to provide security once these nations were officially under United States occupation [during] Petraeus’ [tenure]?

General Petraeus, at the very least, can be held responsible under command responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity. [He can also be] held directly responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity both under international legal principles and domestic legal principles.

Legal Frameworks and the Prospects for Justice

jeena shah

THE WARS IN IRAQ and Afghanistan combined, by conservative estimates, resulted in direct deaths of at least 330,000 people. Those numbers do not include the numbers of indirect deaths of these wars, including those due to the aftereffects of fighting, unexploded munitions, malnutrition, damage to health infrastructure and environmental degradation. If we count [indirect deaths], the figures are likely four times as high, closer to one million [fatalities]. These figures do not include the toll of the United States’ so called “global war on terror.”

As commander of the 101st Airborne Division at the start of the Iraq War, as author of the Counterinsurgency Field Manual, as United States Commander in Iraq and Afghanistan, and as commander of the U.S. Central Command, and finally as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, David Petraeus’ fingerprints are all over these staggering figures. While those who made the decision to resort to war, such as Bush or Cheney, could be guilty of the crime of aggression, the crime of overthrowing a sovereign government, Petraeus’ crimes are different. Petraeus would be implicated in the way in which he directed the carrying out of these wars and the way he militarized the CIA. And under international law, the crimes he could be held liable for are war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Geneva Conventions provide the governing legal framework for the conduct of war. Every member of the United Nations, including the United States, has signed on to the Geneva Conventions making them a part of customary international law, [thus] binding on every single country. The laws of war are designed to minimize civilian deaths and destruction of civilian infrastructure during an armed conflict. They prohibit military strategies and [technologies] that do not distinguish between civilian and military targets, and they prohibit the targeting of civilian infrastructure, such as homes, schools, places of worship, and hospitals. The law on war crimes specifically, regulates the methods and means of combat and protects persons not taking an active part in hostilities; this includes civilians, prisoners of war or detainees of war, and those wounded or sick in combat. Any grave breach of the Geneva conventions can constitute a war crime; this includes [a] number of acts that international law scholars have broken down into eight categories: attacks against civilians or civilian property, the unlawful taking of life, unlawful attacks on personal integrity, such as torture or sexual violence, limitations on personal freedoms, unlawful plundering of property, including cultural property which Iraq now knows all too well, the deportation and forcible transfer of persons, violations of the rules of combat, [specifically] with the use of prohibited weapons, and violations of the rules [regarding] belligerent occupation.

A crime against humanity can be committed outside of armed conflicts, [though] when committed during war, it substantially overlaps with war crimes. Petraeus could be held responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes. The evidence suggests, strongly, that Petraeus' actions, if not willful, against civilian populations, were at the very least reckless. [His] military strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan required indiscriminate tactics and resulted in some of the highest civilian fatalities, and also fatalities of coalition forces, that the wars [have] seen. The "surge" in Iraq resulted in nearly a four-fold increase in the number of civilians killed by U.S. airstrikes. In Afghanistan, by tripling the number of airstrikes and night raids by Special Forces, and by loosening the rules of engagement, Petraeus' tactics lead to what both the United Nations and the Red Cross described as the worst violence in the preceding decade of war.

Petraeus prolonged both wars, leading to even more civilian deaths and destruction. In Iraq, he trained, armed, and funded sectarian militias, helping to plunge the country into a civil war that is still going on today. [He was involved with] Shia militias to round up, torture, and disappear Sunni men, but also Sunni militias to counter the Shia militias that were created. In Afghanistan he worked to arm and fund Afghan[i] militias, setting the stage for another Afghan[i] civil war. [Petraeus] prioritized military strategy over dip-

lomatic efforts, actually pushing aside and considering all diplomatic transcripts to be secondary to military strategies, [thus] making a political settlement to the war in Afghanistan all the more difficult.

Under Petraeus' leadership, James Steele, a veteran of the proxy wars in El-Salvador and Nicaragua, advised the United States in arming, training, and funding death-squads that ran a network of torture centers. Through the investigation of the BBC and the Guardian, and based on Chelsea Manning's release (through Wikileaks) of the Iraq War Logs, evidence suggests that Petraeus had full knowledge of this torture and the role U.S. forces played in it.

As CIA chief, Petraeus urged the Obama administration to significantly expand the Agency's fleet of armed drones. During his tenure as CIA director, drone strikes conducted by the agency increased dramatically, leading to a significant loss of civilian lives. The current United Nations special repertoire on extrajudicial and summary or arbitrary execution has opined that U.S. drone strikes may in fact constitute war crimes. [This] is just a sample of the evidence that I believe shows that Petraeus could be held responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. He can and should be tried for these crimes right here in the United States. The U.S. has an obligation to hold him, and all those responsible for planning and carrying out these illegal wars, accountable for [what has happened] in Iraq and Afghanistan. We can prosecute them under our laws.

Ben Emerson, the UN special repertoire on counter-terrorism and human rights, has said, "accountability, specifically of Petraeus, and other United States officials responsible for the Iraq war and the subsequent sectarian violence, [is] critical to Iraq's healing." Iraqi civil society organizations and Iraq Veterans Against the War have recognized the same and joined together and initiative called Right to Heal. They are demanding the same exact thing; they are demanding that the United States government acknowledge its wrongdoing, hold accountable those responsible for [the] wars and those responsible for war crimes committed during those wars, and pay reparations to Iraqis for both past and ongoing harms resulting from the war. The same [should] hold true for victim communities in Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, and other sites of the United States' global war of terror.

Petraeus, from Latin America to CUNY

sándor john

THE CUNY BOARD OF Trustees and administration made the provocative political decision to hire, the war criminal,

David “Death Squad” Petraeus, to “teach” at the Macaulay Honors College at the behest of an organization called the American Enterprise Institute. The AEI is one of the foremost and first right-wing business think tanks in the United States.

The AEI said the American military, particularly its officer corps, were underserved specifically in the Northeast. Because in the Northeast there were many “diverse,” this is AEI’s term, populations that needed to be brought into the officer corps. The AEI said [this] in particular [of] the New York City area, and especially [regarding] an institution that they targeted, called the City University of New York. The AEI said that at CUNY it was necessary to reinstate the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, which had been driven out by the militant struggle of students in the early 1970s, enraged by the war crimes of American imperialism in its genocidal war against the peoples of Indochina. AEI said it was time to bring ROTC back to the City University, and to increase the integration of university administrations with the military. The AEI pointed toward a particular individual that embodied their idea of a “warrior-scholar,” General David Petraeus. So when this mouthpiece of the ruling class (AEI), of the capitalist class in the United States, gave its orders to the people who dictate over us at the City University of New York, the board of trustees said “Sir, Yes Sir.” And they appointed David Petraeus, and they sought to bring back ROTC, but they encountered resistance and opposition. In places like Medgar Evers College, a halt has been put to this; at the College of Staten Island, a roadblock has been placed in the way.

But [the ruling classes] are not only interested in counter-insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are also interested in counter-insurgency here at the City University. So they employ their strong-arm methods, and the same NYPD that stops-and-frisks hundreds of thousands of African-American and Latino youth in this city, and beats down and murders in cold blood one person after another are employed [by CUNY]. [The NYPD] carried out a brutal beating of students and other activists for the sole crime of peacefully protesting outside of Petraeus’ gala on September 17th [last year]. The struggle to make all of the charges be dropped is only part of our struggle.

Colonel James Steele, whom the *Guardian* of Britain and BBC Arabic News carried out an extensive investigation on, together with his associate Colonel James Coffman, veterans

of the [Latin American] counter-insurgency terror wars, were brought to Iraq by General David Petraeus in order to carry out the establishment of death squads, which means extermination units. What the Nazis called *Einsatzgruppen*. [These] annihilation squads were established in Iraq together with torture centers. Torture centers, like a library, in a city, where the walls were splattered with blood. This was not an accident, this was not an oversight, and this was not something that just happened. These techniques were planned, organized, and brought to bear under the command of Petraeus as part of an invasion and occupation of both Iraq and Afghanistan, that were criminal not only in their techniques, but [also] in their goals, and in their objectives, and in their outcomes. War crimes are [an] integral part of imperialist wars, which are themselves criminal, and which will not be stopped, and whose authors will never be brought to justice until the system of imperialism is overthrown by the working class all around the world. Only then will [it be possible] to begin to be able to talk about justice by bringing the war criminals to tribunals of their victims in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen.

In a town called El Mozote in El Salvador, the Atlacatl Battalion, trained, armed, instructed, commanded in large part, and overseen by U.S. officers, exterminated the entire village. All that was left of the children and the adults, except for one incredibly courageous survivor [Rufina Amaya] who lived to tell the story, were skulls and washed-out bleached bones. The Atlacatl Battalion was created under the programs of American imperialist counter-insurgency. And who was the man that became the closest U.S. overseer of the Atlacatl Battalion in its subsequent extermination missions against village after village? James Steele. This is why Steele was taken to Iraq. Not despite what he did in Central

America, not because someone had forgotten what he did, but precisely for the opposite reason, because of what he did, in order to bring those techniques to Iraq and to carry out the doctrine of counter-insurgency, which David Petraeus made a career out of perfecting. Steele served together with Coffman, as the eyes and ears of General Petraeus.

The Counter-Insurgency Field Manual [written by Petraeus] is one of the products, like David Petraeus’ earlier PhD dissertation, of his tasks of perfecting and sharpening what had been perceived as too blunt an instrument of counter-insurgency. It is no accident that on the basis of [his] experiences, he was made the head of “Murder Incor-



Above: The memorial at El Mozote, El Salvador.

porated” on a world scale. Murder Incorporated, the biggest criminal [and] terrorist organization in the world, the Central Intelligence Agency, of that biggest terrorist regime in the world, the regime of U.S. imperialism.

The roots of this go back to the retooling and ramping up of counter-insurgency under [John F. Kennedy]. In Kennedy’s campaign, he expressed great alarm over a triangle of subversion that he saw, reaching from the Belgian Congo, where the independence struggle lead largely by Patrice Lumumba had been instrumental in the defeat of the white racist imperialists, to Southeast Asia, places like Laos and Vietnam in particular, to Latin America, where the Cuban Revolution had just won. This was carried forward by his Democratic successor, Lyndon Baines Johnson, after Kennedy established the Alliance for Progress as a counter-insurgency mechanism, on a hemisphere-wide scale. While the Alliance for Progress had some “hearts and minds” aspects, building bridges and the like on a cosmetic level, the heart and soul of it was counter-insurgency. It established more vigorous and effective squadrons, both military and paramilitary, on the model of the Green Berets, to root out and murder people resisting American imperialism. In Vietnam, they had Operation Phoenix, which was an extermination program. In El Salvador, under these auspices, they established one of the first death squads, called ORDEN, which means order. Its successors included the death squad of Roberto D’Aubuisson, known by his handlers as “Blowtorch Bob” because of his favored method of torture. In the 1970s, Operation Condor was established to hunt down and exterminate leftists throughout Latin America. Counter-insurgency in Central America escalated after the victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and spread to the heightening of the genocidal campaign against the Maya population of Guatemala. In El Salvador, it reached a fever pitch under the death squads established, guided, managed, and trained by people like James Steele, who became Petraeus’ man in Iraq.

Petraeus personally went to El Salvador, and part of his career was going to El Salvador and making himself a protégé of General John Galvin, who had been appointed to head the United States Southern Command. When Petraeus visited El Salvador, where he stayed with Steele, he was not just anyone. He was the top assistant to General Galvin, the head of SOUTHCOM, working out of Panama, who was responsible for Steele’s systematic use of death squads in El Salvador and the arming of the contras in Nicaragua, all of which took place under Galvin’s command.

While Petraeus presents himself as an intelligent militarist who wants to rely more on the “host country” in counter-insurgency, in his PhD dissertation he pushed to escalate U.S. counter-insurgency operations, like in El Salvador. He is the theorist and advocate of imperialist counter-insurgency,

of war. These are not questions of the past. These are questions of today. These are questions of the escalation of the terrorist “war on terror” under the present regime of the Democratic president, Barack Obama. This is a bi-partisan campaign of terror, death squads, drones, and torture centers. Nor is this something confined [to the Middle East]. Not only did Petraeus call for and advocate a direct military attack against Syria, he was also present in the Ukraine with Hillary Clinton helping to plan and prepare the way for the present situation in Ukraine where a fascist and far-rightist coup was carried out by people who worship the former death squads of people like Stepan Bandera and the SS.

The voices of the people at El Mozote have been silenced forever, but the cause of exposing those that murdered them and those that murdered people in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in so many other places, is still with us today. The struggle to drive out war criminals from the City University of New York is a part of the broader struggle to defeat imperialism once and for all, and to overthrow, once and for all, the source of these crimes, which is the capitalist system.

The Legacy of David Petraeus

debra sweet

PETRAEUS WAS A MILITARY and political representative of utterly illegitimate, immoral, and unjust occupations in two countries, and there is even more than that. The U.S. went into Iraq with no plan to care for the civilian population. Within a year, every single system was destroyed: the water system, the educational system, the justice system, [and] the medical system. [The U.S.] though they were going straight to Iraq, but in the process they found out differently, and in the process they did something even worse, of which Petraeus was really a part. When the war started in 2003, Petraeus was not in Baghdad, he was with the 101st Airborne in Mosul, [and] he was part of this whole taking-apart of Iraq. Then it gets even more interesting, because Stanley McChrystal (the guy that Obama put in Afghanistan some years later and then fired because he talked shit about Obama, basically, but obviously there was more going on) and Petraeus were in West Point together. They both have the shtick going, which is stock to Petraeus, the “warrior scholar,” not some grunt that is running around shooting (he haven’t even shot anybody before he went to Iraq, apparently, yet he was writing that COINTELPRO [sic] manual), he was the scholar with his degrees, he was devising out how to subvert and control a whole society. And that’s why Petraeus’ career, although it started in 2003, gets more interesting after

9/11 [with] the rise of something called the Joint Special Operation Command (JSOC). This was, after 9/11, the United States government, and I'm talking about the military, and the CIA, and the political leadership [that] decided that "the gloves are off," and [the United States Military establishment is] going to do whatever we need to do.

Petraeus and McChrystal are largely together in the enterprise of switching over what the United States does in these countries to be more and more secret Ops. JSOC was taken out of the straight military command, and they report[ed] directly to Cheney. For many of these secret operations they don't even have to get the permission that you would have to go all the way up through the channels to do. This is Petraeus getting started in Iraq. These people were the "kill team." They were not taking prisoners for the most part; they were killing and torturing people with impunity. Petraeus [became] increasingly involved in this. [Petraeus was in charge of] what became to be known as was "the surge," this was a marvelously successful killing spree that the US military went on. And essentially what they did was that they created a situation where there [had] been largely a sectarian country without a huge amount of violence between Sunnis and Shias (people used to tell me "we didn't even know who was Sunni and Shiite," -it was not a big deal), and [then] here comes the United States, funding both sides (and the surge particularly put a lot of money into funding these Sunni groups), and this was a blood bath on both sides. This was directly the responsibility of the United States, and I would say Petraeus clearly was very involved in this. You read what he says about counter-intelligence and it sounds good. He says, "we are working with the locals, to get them involved so that they can police themselves" -which somehow they were never able to do before the U.S. came. The whole thing reeks of imperialist racism and European chauvinism, but this is what he brought into Iraq.

The surge is "successful," they start withdrawing troops, and Petraeus goes to CENTCOM. It's a step up for him in his career. And at CENTCOM he is doing what? He doesn't have responsibility for Iraq and Afghanistan. He gets responsibility for a lot of small countries. Biggest thing to remember is Yemen, where supposedly Al-Qaeda started to operate. He starts the drone war in 2006. By 2009 you have active, big drone strikes in Yemen. In 2010 what happened? Anwar al-Awlaki, a United States citizen, is assassinated in Yemen [by drone strike]. Two weeks later his sixteen years old son is assassinated by the U.S. government, [again by drone strike]. This is Petraeus. This is Petraeus in his political and military guise, arguing for secret Ops, arguing for targeted kill lists, for assassinations. If you ever see Petraeus' face again, think kill list, this is what this guy stands for. McChrystal, in the spring of 2010 makes his inopportune

remarks to Michael Heisting, from the *Rolling Stone*, he gets his ass fired by Obama in about five days, and then Petraeus is in Afghanistan. And what happens? The night raids spikes, civilian deaths go up, [and] he is presiding again over another surge because he did so well [with] the first one in Iraq. This is the Afghanistan Surge, it is now the Democrats' [turn], this is Obama's surge. This is when we see civilian Afghan[i]s really dying. This is all Petraeus. And at the same time this is all under the guise of COINTELPRO [sic].

Then Petraeus ends his [military] career; he is pulled out of Afghanistan and leaves the military. He resigns his commission after thirty some years, so that he can take over as the civilian running the CIA. If you were my age, you would think about "death squads" when you hear the word CIA. There were some reforms after 1975, and the CIA actually started doing intelligence gathering, but not with David Petraeus. Those days are freaking over with David Petraeus. [The CIA] are back in the business of killing people. This is actually arguing for the CIA to have a much more direct death squad targeted killing role, and we see that the CIA is running its own drone program in Pakistan.

So, this is just a little bit. Whether he can ever be nailed for war crimes, I don't know. Certainly in any one of those cases he would deserve it. But I would argue that he is a fitting political military representative of a completely illegitimate enterprise in all of this.

Perspectives on the U.S. Army in Iraq

claude copeland jr.

I REALIZED ONCE WE actually entered into country, driving through Kuwait, that [U.S. military intentions] were not supporting the people [in Iraq]. Buildings were destroyed; I remember one specific scene, where someone was just burning ammunition in a barrel, [it was] completely nonsensical. Most soldiers when [we arrived] were asking what [departing soldiers] did or what they were looking to do. [In the] Army you get a [Military Occupational Specialty], which is pretty much your job, and [from] everyone I spoke to, we didn't do our job. We went in there and did the most basic things, we would go on patrols, [and] we would help conduct raids.

I was in military intelligence, so my job was a tactical job that was converted from the infantry, held no real use in the Iraq[i] environment. So I was pretty much going around with other [military personnel], going on patrols and raids, and assisting in their acts. Our missions included going into people's houses when we would find out that there was

“violence” there. Sometimes it would be family members going into other houses trying to take their homes, these were cousins of one another. Having to pull people from their home, men, women, and [children], [we would have] to treat them like criminals even though this was their own place. We did not go in with [the training or infrastructure] to approach them in a humane way.

I specifically recall, when we first got there, when we were doing our patrols, there was a curfew that was implemented within the first three months. At nighttime we would always see these young children out, one of them who new a particularly good amount of English explained to us that most of the kids would gather around with each other because they were pretty much orphans, they lost their parents, and some were so young they did not realize what was going on.

You get into [Iraq], you realize the damage that is going on, and you find out what your role is within all this, it’s something that you have to heal from. Like a lot of soldiers, I distracted myself from [reckoning with my role] and really understanding the hurt. This is all a body; you don’t go anywhere and not be affected by it. The [Iraqis] that go through it, I can’t imagine. When you know your role in this, it affects you, you carry it.

After a six-month deployment, which is supposed to be the most extended [deployment], [some soldiers’ deployments are] extend. These soldiers to do another six months, and then you stop-loss some soldiers in particular, especially translators, who were so few, specifically Arabic translators who had to stay, [in some cases] up to two years. [These translators], having to go to areas that they were highly needed, which were quite dangerous, and working with Special Forces or other operations, with the difficulty and stress of it does not allow for any kind of rights for the wrongs that do happen, but you have to consider what kind of risks you are playing at when looking at these peoples mentality. After a while, you [become] desensitized.

Most of my days it was between goings on guard duty, doing patrols, getting a mission to look at, [and] conducting raids and brining in people. [I] would never know what [the detainees] did wrong, we would see the in these detention centers on some of [the] bases just sitting outside, basking in the sun, not even being treated as anyone with any kinds of rights. For “known areas of interests,” if someone thought that [an Iraqi’s] house was a location where weapons were being exchanged [we would raid it]. And it could be anywhere; it could be a house where [military command noticed] high traffic. It wasn’t like we were looking at other military bases or anything, these were people’s homes. It was very difficult.

[In regard to] crimes against humanity and collateral

damage, the only weapon that I know we were told not to use was a grenade launcher [attached to the trucks]. Besides that, collateral damage is [unavoidable] when you disperse people from where they were living without giving them any of the required help. We were helping this one particular town in the first few months to try and get their utilities back, the basic water and plumbing [systems]. They had this [prior to the invasion], it is not like it was anything they didn’t have. We didn’t go there to introduce [these technologies], or to say “here, we discovered plumbing for you, you can have it in your home.” They had it, just like we have it here, and for over a year while we were “working” towards [providing basic infrastructural needs] they still didn’t have any of the basic utilities they needed.

[On another] specific mission we went out and were observing a pipeline, during the day you would never see anyone at it, [but] at nighttime it looked like a crowd and that someone had put out a twitter blast that said “come, the oil is free now.” Seeing them come, we would ask, “are they supposed to do this”? and we would say, “yea, its theirs.” But during the daytime, when they knew they would be exposed, they stayed hidden because they didn’t feel the same level of comfort in working with [U.S. military personnel] to be able to do these things. And to tell you the truth, [many] did not feel that [the Army] were extending a hand to help or to bring back some normalcy.

Iraq was [one of the origins] of civilization, and we would go to places like Hillah, this is where humanity started. We take this for granted, we don’t treat [Iraqis] like we are all together [or] that we are all connected. Once you look past the physical [violence], there is a lot of mental healing that needs to be done for [veterans] and the people of Iraq. I don’t believe any of that has been taken in consideration [by U.S. military leadership]. Any mission that [the United States military] takes should have a clear and successful end. We cannot say that we are going to give someone a government and then take away a government [to do so], you cannot say that you are giving a government that you are building yourself, [the Iraqis] should be included in it. I never saw anything where we got to work with [Iraqis]. The few times I felt any connection with the Iraqi people, was after a while we had Iraqi civilians who did work on our bases, helping with the laundry of all jobs.

I can’t imagine any [place] that does not have any sort of assistance in helping to keep any type of order. [Iraqis] would try and do their best, but considering the damage and how torn the country was from [the 2003 invasion], the [U.S. military] would not have gotten it right on the first try, [even if that was the actual goal of being in Iraq]. [The Army] didn’t try as hard as it could [have], in a lot of ways. ☹

Reform and/or Revolution: Imagining a World with Transformative Justice

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Counterpoints

A Defense of the ROTC and Petraeus

david c. viola

IN THE PAST YEAR, David Petraeus was appointed to the faculty at Macaulay Honors College, and the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) returned to CUNY after a hiatus exceeding 40 years. Petraeus, of course, isn't merely a Princeton PhD, but also a four-star Army General (retired) as well as a former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. These developments and others have sparked a tremendous outcry from some members of the CUNY community that the institution we all hold dear is being "militarized" and sullied by the presence of a so-called "war criminal."

With all due respect to the views of my friends and colleagues, I have to disagree. The reaction to ROTC's return to CUNY evidences a misunderstanding not only of the role that the ROTC plays as an option for the young men and women of our community, but frankly also of the role that our military plays in the world.

The rhetoric surrounding ROTC attempts to reduce the program to a cardboard cutout bad guy, as if it is a program to train assassins and sinister gun-toting belligerents. And that characterization would be far from the truth. Among the myriad careers open to Reserve military officers are opportunities in engineering, health care and business administration, information systems management, public affairs and media production, aviation mechanics and, yes, infantry and other combat arms. Reserve officers learn not only valuable, quantifiable, and cutting edge job skills that they bring back to their personal lives and communities during the 28 days a month when they are civilians, but perhaps more importantly they bring back the senses of responsibility, of duty, and leadership imbued in them by their careers as military officers.

The developing geopolitical world will find Reserve officers (and the military in general) spending more of their career responding to natural disasters and humanitarian crises such as Hurricane Katrina or the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. And yes, they will be ready if and when they are needed to support an armed conflict. In the past few years alone, young men and women I know personally have served

onboard the U.S. Navy Hospital Ships *Comfort* and *Mercy* as they worked their way through various Caribbean and Latin American ports administering critically-needed primary care; an Army officer friend managed a similar operation in Africa, teaching CPR, first aid, and malaria education across Ghana for several weeks. Those nurses, dentists, doctors, and soldiers are all reservists. Not only are they doing good work across our country and across the United States and the world, but they are being repaid for it with impressive resumes, educational benefits, medical and dental benefits, and a well-earned sense of pride.

Please do not misunderstand me, I am not trying to convince anyone at City College, or anywhere else, to join ROTC or the military in general. What I am arguing is that the decision to choose from all available paths in life, including the military, should be up to the intelligent and driven young people of our communities, many of whom have long dealt with the limitations our society still imposes on opportunity predicated on class and the color of their skin. Our CUNY community, with as much diversity as any I've ever encountered, is particularly well served by an institution like the military that has, after a long and sometimes hard path, become among the most egalitarian employers in our society. Who are we to tell each other what we can, and what we cannot, even consider as options for our future? Such response evidences a degree of misplaced paternalism wholly unsuitable for an institution like CUNY. By protesting ROTC on our campuses and military recruitment more generally, members of the CUNY community are advocating the placement of artificial barriers in the course of the young men and women surrounding us; that is no better than the institutional racism in hiring and gendered inequality of pay that we protest from the other sides of our mouths.

The issue of Petraeus joining the CUNY community is no less volatile a subject on CUNY campuses this year. Nobody denies that in the positions he held as a senior officer in our military, and then as Director of the CIA, Petraeus did indeed oversee warfare that resulted in the deaths not only of American, Iraqi, and Afghan combatants, but also of a tragic number of civilians.

However, let us be clear about a few things. First and foremost, David Petraeus is in no way a war criminal. Period. Full stop. In the lively discussions I have recently witnessed at CUNY, many critics have cited at great length the international legal structures and definitions that have codified what it means to be a “war criminal,” frequently quoting directly from the text of the relevant Geneva Conventions. Each of these critics, though, has failed to recognize that that same international legal system that they quote from and rely on so heavily in their attacks has not only never found General Petraeus guilty of being a war criminal, but it has never indicted him (and, more tellingly, has never even considered doing so).

Being a warrior is not the same as being a war criminal. “War criminal” means something very serious, something very definable, and something that we all hope continues to be treated very gravely by the international and national legal bodies my colleagues have gone to great length to point out. By reducing it to a slur and ignoring the legal systems, many members of the CUNY community only selectively acknowledge the definition of the term—when it suits their purpose in defining that “war criminal” as a category exists—and then ignore that those same legal systems have never considered the retired general a war criminal. This devalues the entire system.

The solemn promise of Geneva is why Joseph Kony continues to be hunted. That solemn promise is why American warfighters suspected of war crimes have been held accountable in Afghanistan and Iraq, including senior officers. Some have been cashiered. Some are sitting in prison for life. But war itself is not unlawful, and General Petraeus is by no means a war criminal simply because he faithfully executed the difficult and oftentimes sad duties that we the people, through our elected representatives, tasked him with. What I fear is the day when our military leaders do not salute smartly and carry out the lawful orders of our elected civilian leaders. I have seen that day, in Egypt and elsewhere, and I do not hope for that day to ever come to America. I have enduring faith it never will.

We live in a world that knows warfare, just as did our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Sadly, our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren will know warfare as well. We all wish that were not the case, and in my experience so do most other members of our military. That innocents died in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere while the Petraeus served his country does not make those deaths his fault. If anyone, the fault belongs to us, collectively, for electing the officials who sent our soldiers off to make war. But that is a different debate altogether.

There has been too much name-calling lately; let us tone it down to a respectful level. It is all too easy for anyone lis-

tening to dismiss those who whip out polemics like General David “Death Squad” Petraeus, and “the Imperial American military,” and “terrorist forces in blue (the NYPD)” in what should be reasonable conversations. Think of how immediately and fully we dismiss the likes of people Ted Nugent when they unholster asinine terms like “subhuman mongrel” when speaking of our President. Let us not be the flipside of that ugly and worthless coin.

We are all tremendously proud of the tradition of political awareness and struggle for social justice that is the heart and soul of CUNY. But we should embrace not just political activism on our campuses, but also equally as enthusiastically embrace a diverse and divergent range of opinions and experiences. The freedom of speech that we hold so dear should not include screaming so loud and so shrill that it drowns out any voice not in agreement with our own. Rather, we should embrace opposing viewpoints in our sphere, not only to keep faith with a system that welcomes diversity of opinions, no matter how much they offend us, but also in order to sharpen, hone, and further define our own. Pretending those opposing viewpoints don’t exist by demanding they remain outside our periphery is sticking our heads in the sand; it is creating an echo chamber in our institution where all we hear is the glowing praise of those who agree with us. I’m not so sure how that will help us to grow.

Petraeus has been at the center of world events for more than a decade. He holds a Master’s degree and a PhD from Princeton, and has been trusted counsel to presidents, prime ministers, business leaders, and countless others who have shaped the era in which we live. It doesn’t matter if we agree with his politics or career choices—we don’t have to. That is entirely irrelevant. He still remains one of the most intelligent and impactful men of his generation, and we are lucky to have him, his experience, and his point of view represented at CUNY, a community that for all of its richness is frankly devoid of that experience. Debate and intellectual growth requires engaging with opposing points of view. Let us not cover our ears and shout when we don’t like what’s being said.

The last thing I will say about the return of ROTC is this - think not of the military stealing away our precious young men and women. Think instead of the multiplier effect of training military officers at CUNY—we have a lively, rich, and largely liberal faculty and student body, an atmosphere committed to what we collectively perceive to be just causes. I have hope that these young officers, coming from that cherished CUNY tradition, will help spread those concepts and beliefs, through their leadership of enlisted personnel, and through their ambassadorship to the world that a career in the military really is. Think not of the militarization of CUNY, but rather of the CUNY-ization of the military. 🌐

Funding Celebrity Profs

Paul Krugman and the Prestige Economy of Public Higher Ed

sean m. kennedy

AMID THE RESPONSES TO the recent news of the supremely cushy terms of Paul Krugman's hiring as a distinguished professor at the CUNY Graduate Center, three have stood out:

- 1) that the average adjunct salary per course at CUNY is about \$3,000, and Krugman will earn 75 times that to teach one seminar per year (and no teaching—or any labor—at all in his first year);
- 2) that Krugman's salary of \$225,000 per academic year is either appropriate to his scholarly and public stature or that he's being underpaid at that rate; and
- 3) that his salary is actually a bargain because it will be well returned by virtue of the Graduate Center's enhanced profile and an attendant increase in private donations.

To these responses I'd like to add, that there are 13 different funding levels for students at the Graduate Center, ranging from zero dollars to \$27,000 (as of last fall's data). Krugman's primary attachment will be to the GC's Luxembourg Income Study Center, whose mission is to support the study of, among other phenomena, poverty and income inequality.

The contradiction between these objects of study and the very subjects of poverty and income inequality at the GC is worth continually highlighting. Graduate students at the GC are at the mercy of funding—the funding inequities among us are the direct result of GC decision-making and priority-setting, in collaboration with CUNY Central. Just a few days before Gawker revealed the terms of Krugman's hire, GC Interim President Chase Robinson—who fawned so in his emails to Krugman—told a meeting of graduate

students that, yet again, there was no money available for increased funding—not even for those students who have no funding at all, either because they came in with no funding or because they are now outside the five years of guaranteed funding of the most lucrative packages.

There is, however, \$225,000 a year to give Krugman for just, essentially, hanging around. What if, instead, that money went to the GC students who need it the most? Sure, at an annual rate, Krugman's salary would only equal 12.5 \$18,000 fellowship packages, the deal that many GC students have who entered before the current academic year. But another way to think about it is as 75 \$3,000 grants to students sans funding, so that they could teach one less class as an adjunct, thus allowing a much-needed diminishment in pressure and



the possibility, maybe, to get through another dissertation chapter because of it.

The larger issue, of course, is that the terms of Krugman's hire represent a fundamental contradiction in the hegemony of the "lack of money" that rules the practices

and discussions of public higher education. Indeed, there is always money to be had, at CUNY as elsewhere, whether it's to hire a celebrity professor to add value by virtue of his or her name, or to build a \$350-million "world-class" science center, as CUNY is doing at City College. Note that Krugman is also "world class." CUNY is desperate for world-class status, even if it means running its students, faculty, and staff into the ground.

And this is just to consider the situation of graduate student workers at the GC. The CUNY system at large is rife with inequality due to the state's and university's spending priorities, which reflect the overall neoliberal political economy that has decimated public higher education over the last 40-plus years. Indeed, at CUNY in particular, as much as the 1969 student, faculty, and community occupation of City College was a watershed victory against structural racism in higher education, it also galvanized the reactionary policies that have led to the increased exclusion of working class students of color in recent years.

As for Krugman's salary, whether he's being paid appropriately for his stature misses the point: people should not be paid for their prestige. They should be paid for their labor, and at an equitable rate relative to other workers.

As collectively bargained by the Professional Staff Congress, CUNY's faculty and staff union, distinguished professors earn a bonus of \$25,878 above their salary as a full professor, the highest step of which is \$116,364. That equals a total salary of \$142,242, a figure roughly borne out by a random search of GC distinguished professors' salaries in publicly available data (which yields an average salary of \$156,490, a higher rate due to additional earnings from, say, directing a center). Given that base figure, then, Krugman is to be paid 58% more than the union-CUNY stipulated rate for distinguished professors.

Furthermore—and this part is key—Krugman will only have to teach one seminar a year after his first year at the GC, for a total of one unit, while the "usual workload" for distinguished professors, to quote from Robinson's offer letter to Krugman, "would be four units; one course equals one unit, and a total of five tutorials and/or dissertation advisements equal one unit." Instead of providing this additional instructional labor, however, Krugman is to "play a modest role in our public events" and "contribute to our build-up of LIS and the inequality initiative," which are also his sole responsibilities in his first year at the GC. In other words, Krugman is being paid a premium for his prestige: to show up at events, provide visibility to the Luxembourg Income Study Center, and to generally raise the profile—that is, publicize—the GC and its inequality initiative (whatever that is exactly). Meanwhile, the inequality at the GC goes undressed. Indeed, the terms of Krugman's hire contribute to it:

a 58% higher salary for 75% less instructional labor.

CUNY's last celebrity hire, David Petraeus, cut his salary to \$1 after a similar outcry last summer over his comparably less cushy terms (he had to teach—wait for it—two courses a year). As Petraeus's representative put it at the time, "Once controversy arose about the amount he was being paid, he decided it was much more important to keep the focus on the students, on the school and on the teaching, and not have it be about the money."

And like Petraeus, Krugman has many other lucrative income streams: his *New York Times* opinionating, his best-selling books, and his speaking gigs, to name what surely aren't all his labors in addition to university employment. Indeed, in a rather bitter irony, it would seem that being a professor is actually adjunct labor for Krugman, in the way that it was for most adjuncts back in the day, who taught to supplement their income and not for their entire livelihood, as they must today under the penury of academic capitalism.

Considering the above, is Krugman more or less ethical than Petraeus? A strategically reductionist question, yes, but the ethical thing for Krugman to do is to lower his salary—if not to a \$1, than at least to a rate that reflects his atypical instructional load: \$35,560.50, or 25% of the mandated salary for CUNY distinguished professors. He could then direct the discrepancy between that figure and his offered salary of \$225,000—\$189,439.50—to be used in support of GC students and/or CUNY adjuncts, as former *GC Advocate* editor James Hoff has rightly suggested.

Finally, if Krugman's hire results in more private donations, fine. But to what would those donations go? There is currently no accountability mechanism at the GC (that I'm aware of at least) to measure, on the one hand, incoming donations and, on the other, what those funds are being used for. If Krugman's position at the GC spurs donations that will then be put to student funding, that would be great. But something tells me that's not what's going to happen. Instead, new donations might come in to support the Luxembourg Income Study Center, or the GC's vague "inequality initiative," but students, as ever, will be left in the lurch.

To be clear, I'm not against Krugman per se—I'm against the political economy that rewards elites while immiserating everyone else. For all Krugman's own utility, such as it is, as a scourge against center-right economics, the terms of his hiring at the GC are an unfortunate symbol of all that's wrong with public higher education.

Indeed, it would certainly be in keeping with his own stance against income inequality for Krugman to come out against the inequality of his new employer—and, perhaps, to contribute to ameliorating it. ☹

An earlier version of this piece appeared on the CUNY Adjunct Project's website.

Gentrification and Culpability

The Ups and Downs of Neighborhood Transformation

eric e. bayruns

GENTRIFICATION HAS CHANGED THE demography of inner cities drastically. This change has been particularly stark in New York City. Neighborhoods that were composed of Blacks and Latinos are now composed of primarily whites from suburbs across the United States. In this article, I will consider whether we can hold anyone morally culpable for displacing communities of color. That is, are those people moving into places like Williamsburg, Bushwick, and Harlem doing something wrong or ethically bad?

There seems to be something unjust when minorities that have lived in communities for decades are forced out because yuppies or hipsters start to move in. This seems particularly unjust because these neighborhoods tend to receive both governmental and private investment as minority communities are forced out. Yet, it is not clear that we can hold any of the actors culpable. It will help to identify both actors and their interests or motivation. First, there are Black and Latino communities. These communities' motivation is to stay in their neighborhood. Moreover, in most cases the community has a history of making demands on government to improve their neighborhood. Second, there are real estate owners or landlords. Their interest is to maximize profit or make a return on investment. Third, there are the gentrifiers that begin to move into minority neighborhoods. In many cases, gentrifiers have been priced out of expensive neighborhoods in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Their motivation is to find less expensive housing close to centers of commerce and culture. Their intention or motivation seems, at worst, morally neutral. Fourth, there is the city government or elected officials. They have an interest in land values rising. If land values rise, then tax revenue tends to increase.

There is a proverb that says "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Gentrifiers might not intend to cause the displacement of communities of color. Despite their in-

nocent intentions, their actions are a direct cause of this displacement. We can morally judge gentrifiers using a different criterion. We ought to judge them according to the consequences of their actions. The political philosopher Thomas Pogge has formulated a notion regarding global justice that I believe is helpful here. He argues that all of the world's denizens that participate in the global economic system are morally complicit in the injustice that it produces. In other words, through participation in both our political and economic systems we are morally culpable for, say, the millions of people that die from malnutrition each year, though most of the world's denizens do not intend for millions of people to die of malnutrition.

Our actions may have unintended consequences. One may object that if one does not know that one's actions may have bad consequences, then one cannot be held morally culpable. A reply to this objection is that one must make a reasonable effort to know what the consequences of one's actions might be. If one makes a reasonable effort, then it seems difficult to hold one culpable for one's actions. Pogge's claim seems plausible because there is plenty of information available explaining the causes of global malnutrition (and other such ills of the extant global socio-economic system).

There is a plethora of information available to both yuppies and hipsters regarding the consequences of moving into communities of color. Very little effort is needed for gentrifiers to become aware of the causal relation between their entrance into communities of color and people of color being forced out. At the very least, it is obvious that if yuppies and hipsters move into a community of color, in any sizable number, then shortly thereafter the neighborhood will no longer have the same social, racial and economic complexion. Although I believe that we can hold gentrifiers culpable, there are other actors that can be held culpable as well.


City government is culpable. For example, former Mayors Giuliani and Bloomberg are culpable. They ap-

pointed the members of the Rent Guidelines Board. One of the board's tasks is to vote on whether to allow landlords to increase rent for one-year and two-year leases. If they vote to increase rent for one and two year leases, then they must also determine by what percentage they can be raised. The board's decisions affect rent regulated apartments. According to the Furman Center for Real Estate & Urban Policy, as of 2011 rent regulated apartments comprise over 60 percent of the rental market. The more affluent areas of New York City tend to have fewer rent regulated apartments than less affluent areas. Bloomberg and Giuliani's appointees regularly voted to raise the percentage which leases could be raised. The trend was not only to allow raising rents, but they consistently voted to allow rents to increase by larger percentages. Allowing rents to rise enables further gentrification. Gentrification would have either been halted in some areas, or proceed at a slower rate if rents were not allowed to rise.

If we hold city government morally accountable then, it seems, we can hold voters who re-elected officials that contribute to gentrification accountable. In this way, our actions can have unintended consequences. Through voting

for, say, Bloomberg or Giuliani, one participates in a system that causes injustice. The injustice we are concerned with here is displacing people of color from neighborhoods. One ought to remove oneself from the causal chain that results in unjust effects. To remove oneself from the causal chain, in this instance, one must not re-elect officials who will appoint board members that will increase percentage that rents can be raised.

My account is a simplification. There are many other factors that contribute to the injustice concerned. For example, there seems to be a correlation between a neighborhood having white residents and higher land value. One might say that this is because whites have had a higher socio-economic status. In other words, whites tend to be wealthier. Therefore, businesses will find areas where there are more white people more desirable than neighborhoods of color.

There are innumerable factors such as this that have an effect on displacing people of color. That many factors play a role in displacing people of color shows that this issue is complex. However, it does not show that we should not hold gentrifiers culpable. 

mind games—solutions

Check out the new puzzle column on our Back Page.

$$3 + 14 = 98 - 81$$

Puzzle 3

Since each package has to have at least one item, we put 7 in one package and try to make packages with total values of 7. We obtain the following:

- Package #1 7
- Package #2 6+1
- Package #3 5+2
- Package #4 4+2+1
- Package #5 4+2+1

In order to find the minimum number of packages with these properties, we need to first examine if it is possible to split the items into two groups of equal values. But this is clearly not possible, since the total sum of values (i.e. 35) is an odd number and we are not allowed to divide an item to put pieces of it into two packages. Similarly, we can argue that forming 3 or 4 packages with the same value is not possible, since 35 is not divisible by 3 or 4. Thus, we cannot reduce the number of packages without violating the conditions. Consequently the answer to both parts of the question is 7.

Puzzle 2

We need to use the temperature as well as the light to find the connections. Since we know switch #1 is connected to light bulb #1, we can use it as a reference for comparing the temperatures. Suppose we do the following in order:

- turn ON switch #3
- 20 minutes later turn ON switches #1 and #2
- 20 minutes later turn OFF switches #1, #2, and #3
- turn ON switch #4
- enter the room

So before we entered the room, switch #3 was ON for 40 minutes and switches #1 and #2 were ON for 20. As a result, we can conclude the following upon entering the room:

- if a light bulb is on, we know it is connected to switch #4
- if a light bulb is off and is colder than light bulb #1, we know it is connected to switch #5
- if a light bulb is off and is as warm as light bulb #1, we know it is connected to switch #2
- if a light bulb is off and is warmer than light bulb #1, we know it is connected to switch #3

Puzzle 1

U.S. Workers Can't Wait for a Living Wage

Why the Time has Come for Real Action

james hoff

THROUGHOUT THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, American workers toiled upwards of twelve and fourteen hours each work day, frequently earning less than the 2012 equivalent of \$33 (about \$1.44) for an entire twelve hour shift. In response to these conditions, workers made the demand for an eight hour workday their rallying cry, and rather than waiting for the federal government to lead the way, they came together to build a strong movement that would eventually force their employers and local legislatures to act. In 1884, the Federation of Trade and Labor Unions, which would go on to become the American Federation of Labor, declared that as of May 1st, 1886 the work day would be no more than eight hours. On that day, more than 300,000 workers across the country went out on strike, and in Chicago, the epicenter of the movement, 40,000 workers crowded the streets for what would become the first May Day marches. These strikes and the ones that followed led to an increasingly significant set of victories across different industries that eventually established the eight hour workday as common practice. Though the struggle was about money, it was also about dignity and quality of life. For those who fought for an eight hour day, the demand of “eight hours work, eight hours rest, and eight hours leisure” was an assertion of their fundamental right to pursue a meaningful and rich life—not one crushed by incessant labor for the benefit of others.

As yet another May Day fast approaches, low wage workers in the US are growing increasingly restive and it is clear that a new workers’ movement is already underway. Faced with skyrocketing metropolitan rents and rapidly rising health care and education costs—not to mention a minimum wage that has lost more than 30% of its buying power since 1968—many full time workers and their families, including the many millions who live on or below the poverty line, are finding it increasingly difficult to survive. Though most of these struggling Americans work full time, sometimes at two or more different jobs, many still

qualify for public assistance without which they and their families might go hungry or become homeless. While Wall Street profits and CEO salaries have continued to break new records, the number of full time workers who are living in poverty or homeless has also dramatically increased. As the New York Times succinctly put it in September, 2013: “In New York, having a job, or two, doesn’t mean having a home.”

In response to these extraordinary conditions, there has been an increasingly militant struggle taking place just below the radar of the American media: a struggle that is already becoming one of the most important moments in American labor history in decades. From Seattle, which is in the throes of a city-wide minimum wage battle that stands to be a proving ground for future struggles, to San Francisco, Chicago, and New York—where Mayor Bill de Blasio is petitioning the state to allow the city to set its own minimum wage—workers and activists are coming together to demand fair compensation for their valuable labor. This time, however, unlike previous living wage campaigns, there is a real demand being made. Rather than the abstraction of a “livable wage,” American workers are demanding “\$15 now.”

Though President Obama has recently proposed a \$10.10 federal minimum wage and signed an executive order increasing the minimum wage for all federal contractors, such meager palliatives, though a welcome start, are hardly sufficient. Here’s why: at forty hours a week, a worker earning Obama’s proposed minimum wage for fifty weeks a year would make only \$20,200, a wage that, although well above the insanely out of touch federal poverty level, would be near impossible to live on in any major American metropolitan center.

For instance, in New York City, the average rent for a one bedroom apartment is \$2,666, or \$31,992 a year. At the rate proposed by Obama, a full time worker making minimum wage would have to pay 79% of his or her gross wages for an apartment that was just half of the city average. In San Francisco, where rents are nearly three times the national

average, a one bedroom apartment at half the average cost would be \$17,382 a year, or 86% of said worker's gross yearly income. Add to this the cost of dependents, and it's not hard to see that minimum wage workers, even under Obama's plan, would have little chance of getting by in most American cities; and you can forget about ever owning a home or going to college.

Even at \$15 an hour most workers would hardly be living large. If the minimum wage were raised to just \$15 an hour, the average minimum wage worker, with two weeks unpaid vacation, would make exactly \$30,000 per year before taxes. Combined, two adults each working full time could potentially earn an annual income of \$60,000, slightly more than the pre-recession U.S. median household income of \$56,048. Such an increase, however, would lift tens of millions of

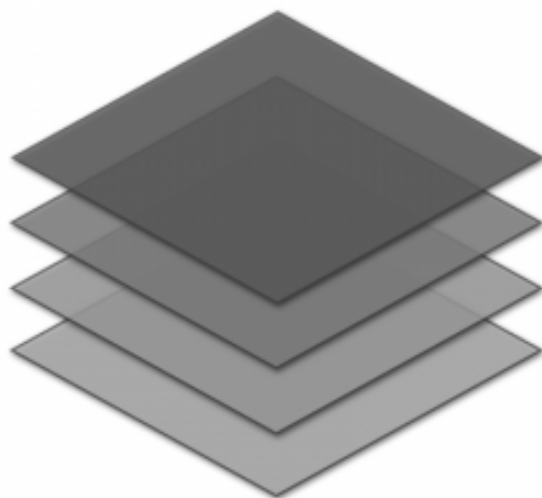
Americans out of poverty and allow many millions more to work fewer hours, stay home with their children, or return to school, all without any significant increases in costs or loss of jobs.

It should be clear to anyone living in any major American city that Obama's proposed federal minimum is not enough for most people to live on. It should also be evident that the federal government cannot and will not ever be the advanced guard for a real living wage. No, the path to a truly fair and dignified minimum wage for all workers, like the fight for an eight hour work day, is a battle that will have to be fought city by city and state by state. Such a movement is already underway, but to win it will require patience, intelligence, struggle, solidarity, and cooperation—virtues that the US working class still has in abundance. ☺

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‘It’s Just a Game’

The Real Ugliness of Internet Vitriol

katherine cross

IT’S JUST A GAME,” “It’s the Internet, what do you expect?” “Don’t read the comments” “Don’t feed the trolls.” All of these phrases are rapidly becoming the weary graffiti of our digital age, helpless surrenders tossed up at what we have wrought online. It has become commonplace across all demographic lines to treat the Internet as a wasteland, as a place that is constitutionally impervious to reason, due in no small measure to the ugly bouts of hatred and wracking spasms of flame wars, emailed death threats, and bigotry spelled out in 140 characters or less. But is this hopelessness actually causing more of that abuse?

Often as not, when it comes to explaining the vitriol that has become so commonplace online, whether one is a seasoned academic, a casual observer, a long-time Internet user, or a layperson of any sort, we turn to the idea that it is anonymity which leads to the abuses that have come to define online life. Anonymity, many believe, allows people to say things they never would in the physical world, giving them free rein to be as acerbic as they like and anonymously send violent threats (including threats of rape). Anonymity plays its role, but it has too often been assigned pride of place in our consideration of virtual abuse. In lieu of seeing it as one of a number of social factors at play in online toxicity and cyberbullying, we presume it is the cause, the Archimedean lever of online hatred.

In recent work, I have argued that it is how we culturally construct the Internet and our approach to it that creates the social swamp that allows toxicity to flourish. Think of the most popular ideas about the Internet that percolate in a thousand online comments, jokes, or fretful punditry: the Internet is not “real,” online games are just games, “real life” is more important and substantive, the Internet is always going to be an ugly place, anonymity makes people into—shall we say—uncouth characters. These cultural ideas, I argue, along with our collective expression of hopelessness about our online condition, are what truly allow hatred to flourish, not anonymity. If we wish for our online world to change for the better, then we will need not only new analytic tools equal to the task, but also a new set of ethics that address the distinctions of the online world. In a word, we need ethics for cyborgs.

• • •

TO UNDERSTAND THE DIMENSIONS of the problem, we must disabuse ourselves of another popular cultural conceit: the “sticks and stones” thesis, if you will. The idea that words are “just words” or intrinsically harmless are a commonplace idea, but one that profoundly misunderstands language. Online harassment and cyberbullying are illustrative of this; they are clear reminders that words have the power to become bricks and mortar, constructing and reconstructing our world.

Examples are legion—from the cyberbullying that leads to the death of young women like Reteah Parsons, the current wave of harassment through so-called “revenge porn” sites, the all too common practice of bullying girls through circulating naked pictures of them through their schools, the spasmodic bouts of rage culture amongst a minority of both leftist and rightist activists online, the infamous abrasiveness of YouTube comments, or the ongoing tsunami of harassment faced by outspoken feminists like Anita Sarkeesian and Rebecca Watson, we are confronted with something that is almost banal in its commonality. Online toxicity has become part of the very air we breathe. But they are not just words. People have committed suicide, have had to move house, lost their jobs, hired bodyguards, and have otherwise had to dramatically alter their lifestyles and livelihoods in order to live in a newly hostile world sired and sustained by cyclones of harassment.

Hitherto, I’ve described the dust storm, but what do the grains of sand look like?

- ▶ “Good, go get raped you cunt, get fucking lynched you deserve it.”
- ▶ “Please kill yourself. I hope you die of breast cancer and AIDS combined, you chink.”
- ▶ “I hope u get raped and then hit by a bus.”
- ▶ “You’re a Bolshevik feminist jewess that hates white people... and you expect to be taken seriously when you’re ‘critique-ing’ video games? Fucking ovendodger.”
- ▶ “What a tedious, self-important crybaby.” (Response to a woman’s online video asserting that rape threats are inappropriate.)
- ▶ “Call me horrible, but I hope this person genuinely gets

cancer.”

- ▶ “You stupid cunt.”
- ▶ “Bitch” (repeated multiple times by different commenters in the same thread)
- ▶ “Well, fuck you too, you abhorrent disparaging witch...I hope you crash and burn.”
- ▶ “ohgod [sic] you don’t even pass you look like a man in drag, god I’d rather put my dick in a blender than you.”

I think this makes the point. And these are just what I would call “first order harassment”—vituperation in extremis sent directly to the target. “Second order harassment” involves indirect attacks at a person’s online presence, such as DDOS attacks meant to crash a person’s website or, something like what feminist media critic Anita Sarkeesian experiences regularly, concerted attempts by a number of misogynists to report her videos as “terrorism” to YouTube. Other forms of second-order harassment include pornography made of the target, particularly when she is a woman, or video games that show the target being beaten to a pulp. These indirect forms of harassment are cultural graffiti that lend hortatory fire to the masses of first order harassers who continue to send direct threats to their targets. Thus, it is a perverse form of culture that emerges from the harassment of specific targets, which lends legitimacy to further harassment.

Anita Sarkeesian picked up the bulk of her harassers when, as part of her *Feminist Frequency* series of online videos which critiqued popular culture with a feminist lens, she tried to crowd fund a series about gendered tropes in video games. The attacks against her have reinforced a cultural meme that she is anti-male, anti-gaming, and a destructively oppositional force to the happy subculture of video game fans—despite the fact that she is a gamer herself, and her critiques are premised on the idea of improving the medium's storytelling capacity.

Amongst leftists there is a similar culture of punishment. Because I had dis-

agreed with an ideological statement made by another activist, I was told that someone I loved dearly should die faster from her terminal illness. Wall Street Journal columnist, Jeff Yang, was told after he critiqued the limitations of activism on Twitter, that he was “just a chink” to his employers and a “gatekeeping patriarch” whose “anti-black” sentiments made him *persona non grata* to other leftists.

Andrea James, a transsexual woman actress and activist, recently accused *The Advocate* [the LGBT magazine] journalist Parker Marie Malloy (also a trans woman) of making a transphobic comment when she called actress Calpernia Addams a “drag queen” in a recent article. When Malloy profusely apologised her apology was mocked by Ms. James, who then called Malloy a “skin transvestite,” and has continued harassing her on Twitter despite requests by Malloy to cease contact. James is still pressing *The Advocate* to fire Ms. Malloy.

SURELY THIS BEHAVIOUR HAS some isomorphism with pathological actions in the physical world—being irredeemably cruel is hardly an innovation of the Information Age—but it is both more frequent and more pitched online. Ease of access and a lower “buy in” for such actions is surely part of the equation, but many of the situations I described did not involve a great deal of anonymity. Many of the comments I quoted were made by people using their legal names or with profiles that linked back to their names. Andrea James is a public figure, and many of Jeff Yang’s interlocu-



Above: *Stop the Bullying* by heroforpain.

tors used real names and photos for their Twitter accounts, as did many of the people who harassed anti-racist activist Suey Park with rape and death threats. Several people who attacked and threatened me used their legal names, including a cisgender feminist—Cathy Brennan—who has made a name for herself harassing, outing, and publishing personal details of transgender women due to her own deep seated transphobia. She has even publicly posted her home and work addresses, as well as her personal phone number, to taunt those she attacks.

Clearly, anonymity is not the only cause or accelerant to this crowd-sourced vituperation. The image of the angry teenager hiding behind firewalls and anonymous usernames is not an accurate picture of what trans-feminist Autumn Nicole Bradley calls “the monster with a thousand faces.” Many of those faces are quite discernible, after all.

In spite of the sometimes serious real-life consequences that attend the many instances of online harassment I’ve described, a cultural conceit persists that insists we think of the online world as less real, and of what is said there as less impactful, meaningful, or worthwhile than something said face-to-face. A common thread in many waves of online harassment is the presence of someone (or, usually, several individuals) who argues that the cavalcades of hatred are not “real.”

Bonnie Nardi, an anthropologist who studied the massive multiplayer online game *World of Warcraft*, recounted how serious requests from male players that she send topless pictures of herself in game would be glossed over as “just a joke.” In his book *Guyland*, sociologist Michael Kimmel argues that for today’s young, heterosexual men, “the fantasy world of media is both an escape from reality and an escape to reality.” The sentiment is put rather precisely in the terms of one YouTube commenter who condescendingly told Anita Sarkeesian: “It’s just a game, those girls [depicted in games] aren’t real now, are they?”

This attitude bleeds over into the physical world as well, so long as the constitution of the physical space is structured by the conceits of the virtual. During a televised tournament for the video game *Street Fighter X Tekken*, one coach viciously sexually harassed a woman on his own team. Then on an online gaming forum, a man defended the coach’s actions by asserting “I’m not saying go around in real life acting like an asshole, but on [gamer forums] and at tourneys it is perfectly acceptable to talk some shit and have some fun.” Again and again, this idea rears its head: virulent harass-

ment is somehow “unreal,” or “play,” or “a joke,” even as its structuring effects are all too real. These abuses are licenced by the idea that “it’s just the Internet.” That phrase is the machine to which oppressive power dynamics are the ghost.

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THROUGHOUT THIS ARTICLE I have used the phrase “physical world” instead of “real world.” The dichotomy of “online” and “real” is no small part of our present problem. We are confronted here with a deeply popular belief that the world we have created—and are continuing to create daily—on the Internet is fundamentally fake. But if it isn’t real, then what moral fetters restrain our behaviour on the Internet? What gives us pause, and what provides the fruitful furrows in which empathy might take permanent root? If we go on believing that the Internet is only a space of play, then, the answer to those questions will continue to be: “very little.”

The solutions to our current predicament begin from tearing at the weeds of that “online/real” dichotomy. The world we have created online is unmistakably “real” in every sense in which that term matters. It is a space where we socialise, organise, fall in love, behave constructively, hatefully, and everything in between. We build and destroy on the Internet. Revolutions have begun there, and it is the site of spying by large governmental bodies like the National Security Agency. The Internet is where we shop, have cybersex, express our views, do work, keep in touch with those we know and love, and otherwise just

live our lives. The Internet is analogous to previously new spaces like the agora, the factory, the church, the bazaar, or the university in terms of how they structured and produced new forms of social organisation previously unknown by humankind. We need to take that seriously. And if we are to meaningfully address these storms of social pathology we must also aptly identify the problem.

At present, we are bedevilled by moral panics that recognise symptoms but not causes. Handwringing over “violent video games” remains a regular station of the cross at which our press often prays; we fret about “teen sexting” and sharing of naked pictures; it remains popular for parents to be concerned about the amount of time their children spend online. Yet none of these issues gets to the meat of virtual troubles. They fail to understand what makes the Internet what it is, and instead treat it with the universal acid of moral panic or with Luddite technophobia. This only exacerbates the problem, because it encourages disengagement as a solution rather than productive engagement. By casting off the online world as inherently toxic and decadent, we succeed only in reifying the idea that the virtual ought to be defined

“Please kill yourself. I
hope you die of breast
cancer and AIDS
combined, you chink.”

by the likes of YouTube commenters and sexual harassers.

So what can be done? First, we should change our approach to the concept of anonymity. We would do well to borrow the “capabilities approach” pioneered by philosopher Martha Nussbaum and economist Amartya Sen to get past measures like GDP in terms of measuring a nation’s wealth or success. Nussbaum and Sen argue that we are better off considering the ‘capability’ of people to access education, fresh water, and other resources—their ability to do and be what they wish—rather than simply aggregate monetary statistics for the whole nation. We should see anonymity similarly—as a tool that, at its best, represents a right of online citizens that should be inalienable.

Oftentimes, anonymity is conceived of purely in terms of the ugliness it is believed to facilitate. It is seen only as something that problematic young men use to engage in viciously anti-social behaviour, or that scam artists use to deceive others. This popular belief fails to grapple with how anonymity may be a salvation for those who need to hide their physical-world identity—say, a woman trying to escape an abusive ex-partner, or a sex worker who wants to write about their experiences without tipping off former clients or the police, or whistle-blowers who want to speak out about something untoward happening at their organisation, or transgender persons who want to reinvent their gender identity online.

Anonymity is, broadly understood, a capability that can allow people to more fully express their humanity. If the Internet is a grand *ballo in maschera* where we constantly change identities and selves, then it stands to reason that some of those changes can be productive and positive, and that it should be our right to seize that potential and make it our own. It is for this reason that the anti-anonymity proposals of people like Facebook’s marketing director, Randi Zuckerberg, should be resisted. In 2011 she observed that “anonymity on the Internet has to go away... I think people hide behind anonymity and they feel like they can say whatever they want behind closed doors.” While such an erasure of anonymity would be immensely profitable to a website like Facebook, which trades in “real” online identities, it is not a solution to the problem. Indeed, Facebook has garnered much controversy for its failure to grapple with myriad attempts at using the site to promote misogyny, often promulgated by Facebook users using their legal names.

Second, we need to shift our parenting focus from keeping children away from the Internet to socialising them in using it ethically. Today much parenting centres on a kind of temporal control of media exposure—the mark of success is whether you can keep your child limited to two hours of Internet use as opposed to four or six. Some parents, like a couple I met on a train from Boston one afternoon, pride themselves on keeping their children away from both the

Internet and violent video games entirely. But this form of abstention is merely a failure to grapple with the difficulties of online life and delays the inevitable. The time will come when that child grows up and participates in online society; she or he will be socialised, then, by the forces that prevail in cyberspace, by the very people engaging in the forms of toxicity I outlined earlier. In this way, such behaviour will socially reproduce itself.

Rare is the parent who actually trusts their child to use the Internet while simultaneously teaching them how to engage with people online in a responsible and humane way. My own younger brother is a decade my junior, and as a gamer and long-time net user myself, I was hardly in a position to morally condemn his love of the online game *Team Fortress 2*. Instead of forcing him off the Internet or lecturing him about the joys of playing ball in the sunshine, I empathised with his hobby and shared my own experiences with him, teaching him about my own mistakes, how he could learn from them, and what he might be better off doing instead. Time and again, I taught him how to talk online and reminded him—above all else—that the people he engaged with on the Internet were human beings. I can hardly hold myself up as a model parent, especially when I do not have children of my own, but there is something to the experience I had with my own brother. It was an experience that saw me recognise that his participation in the online world was not inherently problematic, and that there was a role for me as a big sister in helping him to be a better online citizen, even as he continued to enjoy the competitive and violent games that were his past time.

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THE ONLINE WORLD IS clearly fraught with dangers that older generations could neither anticipate nor begin to cope with effectively. Time and again, we fall back into the comfortable security blankets that reassure us the problem lies only with anonymity and nothing else. But in truth, the heart of our present predicament lies with the fact that we have created a new social space which has metastasized with stunning alacrity and we are yet to appreciate the dimensions and potential of what we have created. We may shop online with the greatest of ease, but we refuse to see the virtual as a meaningful extension of this thing called “society.” Because of this, we licence terrible abuses that make us yet more fearful of claiming this space as a social realm, worthy of veneration. It is time that we adapted to the beautiful potential of our latest social innovation, and adopted ethics worthy of the cyborgs we are inexorably becoming—we are a people whose lives and civilisation depend ever more on technology, and we mortally crib that potential by consistently allowing the tidal waves of petty hatred to define virtual space. “It’s just the Internet”? It’s just our world. 🌐

No Words for Freedom

Morality and Slavery in Antiquity

tristan husby

SPARTACUS IS A NAME now synonymous with slave resistance. His legacy can be seen in politics, such as Rosa Luxemburg's *Spartacist League*, and in the arts, ranging from Denis Foyatier's 19th century sculpture of the former gladiator to Kubrick's eponymous film. Marx even declared Spartacus to be "the finest figure that all of ancient history has to show," presumably because of his commitment to liberation. However, historians have questioned Spartacus' commitment, because while there were many slave revolts in antiquity, no ancient writer or thinker ever articulated a vision of a world without slavery.

The closest the ancients got to a critique of the institution of slavery was Gregory of Nyssa. As a Christian, he was concerned that slavery threatened the morality of slave owners. His Christian concerns notably did not extend to the conditions of the slaves. But Gregory's concerns must be thought in the context of early Christianity. Numerous sources, both Christian and pagan, attest that many Christians were slaves, but neither Jesus nor Paul ever attacked the institution of slavery. True, both Paul and John of Patmos were happy to rail against slave traders, but this was a group of people considered rather nasty by all decent people at the time. Paul frequently describes himself in his epistles as a "slave of Christ," a phrase indicating his close connection with God and, therefore, Paul's own spiritual authority.

Paul's metaphor shows how some slaves in antiquity could be quite powerful. While a slave did not have the same legal protections and powers as a citizen or even a resident foreigner, slaves could foster close relationships with wealthy and politically connected individuals. Cicero's slave Tiro not only had the chance to become quite wealthy through his relationship with his master but also had the ability to work on his own projects: Tiro invented a style of shorthand that remained in use for a thousand years in Western Europe. The style was named tironian in his honor. In the Imperial period, a group of government owned slaves were tasked with maintaining Rome's aqueducts. Called the *aquarii*, through a combination of their intimate knowledge of the plumbing system and low level corruption they were able to become quite wealthy and powerful enough to prevent any sort of reform that would threaten their own control.

When Classicists and historians are asked why the Greeks and the Romans did not object to slavery, likely they will point to Aristotle. In his *Politics*, Aristotle argues for seeing certain people as born fit only for slavery. However, the scholar Peter Garnsey, in his survey of Greek and Roman thought on slavery, points out that not only were most people in antiquity not philosophers, when they were philosophers they were frequently not Aristotelians. In short, there is no reason to assume that Aristotle's argument for natural slavery was ever widely believed.

Indeed, it is hard to reconcile Aristotle's own thoughts on slavery with his life. The later writer Diogenes Laertius records a copy of Aristotle's will, in which the philosopher plans to free a number of his slaves after his death. Scholars debate with each other about how frequent manumission was in Greece and Rome. The presence of thousands of inscriptions recording manumissions in Greece and the thousands of tombstones of freedmen in Italy indicate that while manumission may have been infrequent, it was not out of the ordinary. Given that the boundary between slavery and freedom was not permanent, it is no surprise that Aristotle's theories never caught on.

Aristotle's lack of influence does not indicate that the other philosophers and philosophies were secretly for emancipation. Rather, the closest any of the pagan thinkers in antiquity come towards condemning slavery is when they attack all social institutions. The Cynics based their philosophy on the idea that it was morally necessary to discard all social customs and live according to nature as much as possible. Diogenes of Sinope, the original Cynic, owned a slave Manes who ran away. When pressed on why he did not seek to have Manes found and returned to him, Diogenes replied "If Manes can live without Diogenes, why not Diogenes without Manes?"

While it is possible that Manes and his flight from Diogenes is a literary invention, slave flight was certainly a historical reality. The historian Thucydides complains that during the Peloponnesian War 20,000 slaves fled from Athens to neighboring Boeotia. Classical archaeologists have turned up a number of chains, fetters, and even brands that were used by the Greeks and Romans to prevent such flight.

Slave violence was closely connected to slave flight. On



the Greek island of Chios, there was a community of runaway slaves who raided the nearby towns. It's entirely possible that there were a number of communities like this one across the Mediterranean: we know of the one on Chios only because the antiquarian Athenaeus was intrigued how the slaves' leader, Drimakos, was later worshipped as a cult figure.

The slave uprising in Sicily began 141 BCE and lasted nine years before the Romans quashed it. For comparison, one of the most significant slave revolts in American history, the one led by John Brown, lasted only a single day. The origins of the Sicilian revolt are poorly described in the sources, although it is clear that Sicily as a whole had a larger slave population than other Roman territories. As at Chios, religion played a factor in unifying the slaves. A slave originally from Syria, Eunus, cemented his leadership in part through his skills as a prophet and fortune-teller.

Despite lasting nine years and requiring significant military force to put down, the longest account of the Sicilian revolts survived for reasons unrelated to its importance to the history of slavery. This event is primarily attested through 9th century Byzantine summaries of the history of Diodorus. This slave uprising was particularly timely for the Byzantine Christians, as it was during this time that Sicily was lost to the Arabs. It is not surprising then that in these summaries

of the Sicilian slave war, the slave owner's decadence and corruption are depicted as causing the uprising. In order to explain to themselves why the Arab empires consistently defeated the Byzantines' own forces, they frequently blamed themselves for failing to live up to Christian standards.

It is a good thing to keep in mind this Christian interpretation of the slave revolt when we approach slaves in antiquity, if only to remind ourselves it is frequently better to admit that the cause is inconclusive than it is to assume that we know why an event occurred. In Kubrick's film, *Spartacus* planned to hire pirates to carry the slave army to freedom. It is in fact unclear what Spartacus' plan was: his army had initially travelled north before turning around and heading south. Scholars debate whether or not he had a coherent plan. It seems decidedly unlikely that he had a moral commitment to freeing all the slaves in Rome.

We now live in a world in which it is reasonable to assume that all moral people are anti-slavery; indeed, if someone is not anti-slavery, it is reasonable to doubt their commitment to morality at all. But for thousands of years this was not the case. While this point is frequently used to defend forms of moral relativism, I prefer to think of it from the position of the future: what in our daily lives goes unquestioned but will be looked upon by future generations in horror? ☹

The Militant Legacy of Eslanda Robeson

► *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson* by Barbara Ransby (Yale University Press, 2013)

rhone fraser

BARBARA RANSBY HAS FULFILLED her stated goal of crafting “a fair and honest portrait of an amazing, talented, tough, and complex woman” in *Eslanda* (Essie) Cardozo Goode Robeson. However, it comes at the expense of not fully expressing her complete role in advancing the Black freedom struggle. Eslanda’s maternal grandfather Francis Lewis Cardozo, named after the New York signer of the Declaration of Independence, was a South Carolina politician during Reconstruction who later became a respected educator in Washington. He later moved to England, just like his granddaughter did as the wife of the concert singer Paul Robeson, and studied briefly at Oxford. Essie studied at the London School of Economics. Because Cardozo refused to cooperate with the infamous Hayes-Tilden Compromise of 1877 that removed federal Union troops to the South and exposed newly educated Blacks to white mob rule, Ransby writes that according to family lore, he was soon arrested on trumped up embezzlement charges, tried and convicted.

Another individual close to Essie in her lifetime would be convicted of what she thought was an unfair charge: her husband Paul Robeson, whose militant outspoken warning to Blacks earned him the State Department’s seizure of his U.S. passport in 1950. His controversial statement, that prompted the Truman State Department to seize his and Essie’s passports, was that “it is unthinkable that American Negroes would go to war on behalf of those who oppressed us for generations against a country in which one generation has raised our people to the full dignity of mankind.” Ransby makes clear, however, in her book’s introduction that she did not want the largesse of Paul’s celebrity and infamy (in McCarthyist eyes) to eclipse the importance of Eslanda, whom she focuses exclusively on. Her life not only reveals militant Black men who defy the social order, but militant Black women as well. Her mother, Ransby writes, “was a supporter of the Black socialist internationalist Hubert Harrison... She was a volunteer for Harrison’s *The Voice* newspaper.” Harrison was what his biographer Jeffrey Perry called “the father of Harlem radicalism,” who made a living as a soapbox orator on the corner of 135th Street and Lenox Avenue, encouraging Harlemites to organize their own presses and their own independent party that represents their own interests.

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From what Ransby writes, this radical influence by Harrison on Eslanda’s mother has some influence on shaping Eslanda into the militant journalist and anthropologist she would become. She met Paul Robeson in 1919, the year he graduated from Rutgers as a Phi Beta Kappa. By then, she had finished three years at the University of Illinois as a chemistry major, but transferred to Columbia University Teacher’s College, where she graduated by 1920. By the next year she and Paul married. Ransby writes that Eslanda “played a pivotal role in Paul’s early success.” She began to network and navigate her way into post-World War I high society. When Paul’s singing and acting career moved them to London, Essie applied her anticolonial grounding to a new network that included influential Africans like Prince Kojo Touvalou Houenou, a descendant of Dahomean royalty, who talked about Africa and the diaspora with Eslanda. She met Rene Maran, an influential French writer who, with Prince Kojo, worked on a new journal called *Les Continents*, which aimed to create a global community of Black writers opposing colonial domination.

Ransby shows Eslanda as not only a doting wife, but personal manager and publicist. She “stayed up late and woke up early rehearsing Paul’s lines with him... She worked tirelessly to promote the event [Paul’s first public concert at Greenwich Village Theatre with pianist Lawrence Brown]... It was sold out, with standing room only.” Ransby writes “For Paul she remained an invaluable coach and career strategist.” For others, like Paul’s brother Benjamin and Paul’s friend Claude McKay, she was “too abrasive,” “too ambitious,” and “formidable.” By 1927, she had arranged for the duo to appear in a series of concerts in France and England. By the end of that year, she bore her and Paul’s only son, Paul Jr., on November 2nd. She made arrangements for her mother to be Paul Jr.’s full-time caregiver, “a role she would fill for well over a decade... this arrangement freed Essie to travel with Paul... and fulfill her increasingly demanding managerial duties.” Ransby writes that as Paul’s artistic status soared, “his and Essie’s marriage began to unravel.” She struggled with Paul’s extramarital affair with a British woman, Yolande Jackson, and sought letters to use in a divorce proceeding. In fact, finding such letters was “the first order business” for Eslanda in 1932. While in Paris, she reconnected with Rene Maran, Prince Kojo, and a network of other African-descended French whom she interviewed and collected for a series of essays she titled “Black Paris,” that was published in Dorothy West’s journal *Challenge*. This

year she also penned a detailed treatise called “I Believe In Divorce,” where she wrote that “marriage is a hangover from the cave man era” and, about Paul, “I think we are happier now than we have ever been. But we no longer wish to be married.” After writing this, Paul left Yolande for Essie and reconciled their issues. By the close of 1932, Ransby writes, “they would remain together for the rest of their lives.” By the end of this year, Eslanda wrote three fictional works, two novels and one play. None of which would get published, but each of which would speak to Eslanda’s interests in challenging Black middle class norms.

The first novel, *Black Progress*, was about the plight of a Black middle class family; the second novel, *Color*, was about the theme of passing, and her play, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was a parody of Stowe’s 1852 novel. She was able to publish her first book *Paul Robeson, Negro* by Victor Gollancz. Although Ransby does not mention it, this book contains the famous anecdote of Paul rejecting the law profession after a legal secretary tells him as a Columbia law student that she “doesn’t take dictation from niggers.”

By the end of 1934, Essie would visit Russia with Paul and by 1936, with her then nine year old son Paul Jr., would visit South Africa and take copious notes: “Essie boldly indicted the racism she had witnessed, and even commented on the unwarranted divisions and tensions between Blacks and so-called Colored or mixed-race people who had a distinct social, yet still subjugated, status in South Africa relative to whites.” Leaving South Africa, Essie and Paul Jr. became a guest of Akiki Nyabongo and his family in Uganda. Essie’s lens of seeing race and class divisions throughout Africa seems to complement Ransby’s own lenses, especially when Ransby writes: “while some African elites openly collaborated with colonial powers, others used their Western education to turn the tables, they argued for African rights in British courts and made a moral cause against white domination.”

The Eslanda she describes seems to make mental notes of exactly which Africans collaborated with the British and which didn’t, without openly saying so: “she did the best she could to offer

insights without offending her hosts.” In 1936, she returns to London, and then goes to Madrid to join her husband who sings to rally the Spanish Republicans. Ransby writes that by this time the gulf between Eslanda and the feminist-anarchist Emma Goldman grew when Stalin’s purges took place.

Although Stalin’s pact with Hitler made Communism very unpopular in the United States, Ransby writes that “throughout it all Essie was both pro-Soviet and militantly anti-fascist.” The Robesons were quiet about Stalin’s abuses because of the Jim Crow abuses in the United States sanctioned by the conservative forces like Truman, which they



Above: Eslanda Robeson.

would be indirectly supporting by publicly decrying Stalin's atrocities. Instead, they moved into a comfortable Enfield, Connecticut, home by 1941. Although Essie was being watched by U.S. intelligence agencies because of her political views, the FBI may have been a bit disappointed with the results, because "she got along with her fellow Enfield residents," one of whom described her as "one hundred percent American."

While Paul was performing *Othello* in the United States, he was intimately involved with his co-star Uta Hagen and his longtime friend Frieda Diamond. However, Essie, Ransby writes, had agreed with Paul that "each partner was free to do as he or she pleased with regard to sex and romance." She would have her own intimate involvements outside the country and remain married to Paul. In May 1945, she attended the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco and insisted that the U.N. "be a catalyst for ending colonialism." She wrote a pamphlet arguing this, which was distributed at this conference. By August of 1945, her second book detailing her anthropological field work in Uganda and South Africa, *African Journey*, was published by John Day.

Ransby writes that her research in this book was at odds with the mainstream of the field because, as she quotes from Mahon, for Essie "anthropology was a tool for liberation, rather than simply an abstract research enterprise." She visited the Congo in 1946 and met a Marxist organizer Gabriel D'Arboussier, who organized the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (African Democratic Group). It was on this trip that the British intelligence apparatus viewed her presence in the Congo "as a threat to colonial authority." She also met Moïse Tshombe and wrote about him in complimentary terms; Ransby writes how he would later play a "much reviled" role in supporting European colonialism by the 1960 U.S.-led murder of African revolutionary Patrice Lumumba.

Ransby could have mentioned that, in the pages of *Freedom*, a paper dedicated to retrieving the passports of Paul & Essie Robeson, Ralph Bunche was heavily critiqued for his support of U.S. colonialism. Ben Davis, whom Essie would call "an old valued friend" in *Freedom*, wrote on page 6 of the March 1951 issue, that Bunche was "a Negro misleader" whom "Wall Street had bought out." It would be this kind of leadership that would come to make the U.N. as ineffective it is towards ending colonialism, particularly towards Haiti, especially in the histories of the island written by Randall Robinson and Edwidge Danticat. Two months later after returning from the Congo in November 1948, Essie, declares in a speech that "Africa is in revolution." She joins the platform committee of the United States' Progressive Party and publicly opposes the Korean War. She had been developing

a strong anticolonial message so that by the time Paul makes his controversial 1949 statement, she "immediately issued a strong statement defending her husband and lambasting his detractors."

The following year, she vociferously defends her son from racist hate mail towards his interracial marriage to Marilyn Greenberg: "I do hereby declare war on my enemies and publicly notify them that I will fight them every step of the way." That year she traveled to Moscow, Eastern Europe, and China, where she "praised China's new land reform policy...and the fact that...equality extends to the women, who are recognized as citizens on the same basis as the men." Also, by the end of this year, Essie's last book, *American Arguments*, with novelist Pearl Buck, is published. This was also the year that many of her colleagues, including James Jackson and Claudia Jones, were jailed because of the Smith Act, which exaggerated sympathy with Communism as plotting to overthrow the United States government. A fuller description of the Smith Act could have explained Essie's drastic difference of opinion with Emma Goldman, Pearl Buck, and other privileged white liberals who sympathized with them only up to their support of the Soviet Union. However, the impact of this law gets only passing mention by Ransby.

During the years that *Freedom* was issued, both Paul and Essie used it as a tool to call attention to the anticolonial struggles in Kenya and Africa. Essie also wrote an article for *Freedom* calling on the world to observe April 6th as D-Day, in South Africa, where Africans began to fight their revolutionary struggle against European colonials. By 1953, she is called before Senator Joseph McCarthy's Senate Committee, she is asked whether she is a member of the Communist Party and refuses to answer directly by claiming protection under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. When she is told she could not invoke the Fifteenth Amendment, she responded that as a Negro, she knew a lot about force and violence used against her people and how they don't have much right to elect Senators. Ransby writes that no charges were brought against her. Essie wrote frankly about her testimony in the October 1953 issue of *Freedom*: "They kept on trying to change the subject, but I kept on sticking to it, and it soon became crystal clear that before any Committee starts yelling for first class loyalty and cooperation from me, they'd better get busy and put me and my Negro people in the First Class Department by making us First Class Citizens."

Ransby writes that the more Cold War paranoia informed the United States' foreign and domestic policy, the more Essie had to say: "there were three women whose decades long friendships with Essie best reflect her transnational identity and both personal and political allegiances:

Shirley Graham Du Bois, Vijaya Lakshmit (Nan) Pandit, and Janet Jagan, all three of whom appeared in the pages of *Freedom* on more than one occasion. Jomo Kenyatta also wrote some articles for *Freedom*. Essie credits him, according to Ransby, with bringing anthropology to life for her. About a year after *Freedom's* last issue in 1955, Essie was diagnosed with breast cancer. However, she continued her effort to build a transnational identity. The Russian edition of her book *African Journey* was published in 1957 and reviewed favorably by the Russian press as a one that plays a positive role in the “active struggle against colonialism.” In April 1958, she traveled to Trinidad with Grenadian anticolonialist Theophilus Marryshow to participate in the celebration surrounding the formation of the West Indies Federation. By December of 1958, she would travel to Accra, Ghana to attend the All-African Peoples’ Conference (AAPC), one year after the country became the first African nation to receive independence from England. Like Malcolm X’s historic 1964 speech at the Organization of Afro-American Unity warning South African leaders against replacing European colonialism with “American dollarism,” Essie, six years earlier, issues a similar warning that should be considered an ideological precursor to Malcolm’s message. Ransby writes that she “condemned African Uncle Toms, these would-be Frenchmen, Britons, etc., the especially-trained Black ‘elite’ who had been allowed to speak for Africa and would be displaced by “the authentic voice of the African people.”

Essie made clear a distinction between leaders who demonstrated a commitment to ending colonial rule in all of its forms and empowering the African masses, like Patrice Lumumba (in a 1961 photo of this book that shows Eslanda speaking, a banner next to her podium reads: “Long Live Lumumba”), and those who saw themselves as extensions of, or in alliance with white colonial elites. In her journal she writes that “neo-colonialism is [the] greatest menace in Africa.” Not only does Eslanda critique African collusion with European and American interests, but she makes clear prophetic critiques of U.S. militarism in Africa: “I should like the continent to become...a zone where no foreign military bases are allowed. I should like this to be paralleled with an ideological truce and an agreement not to try to convert Africa into an economic appendage of any other continent.” The American development of AFRICOM absolutely betrays this hope.

Eslanda died of breast cancer on December 13th, 1965. Ransby, the biographer, is reluctant to describe Eslanda as a feminist, because that is not the way she described herself. However, Ransby writes in her epilogue that “Essie anticipated contemporary Black feminist theories of intersectionality that insisted that the relationships between capitalism, sexism, colonialism, racism and empire were symbiotic.”

Ransby admits that contemporary feminists might bristle at Essie’s formulation that the women of the United States “see themselves as people first and women second.” However, given Essie’s strong disdain for colonialism, what she meant by “people” in this case are people fighting colonialism and who currently resent the use of the social construction of gender to advance the agenda of Wall Street.

No debate highlights this rejection of colonialism better than Eslanda’s critique of Edith Sampson, a United States delegate to the U.N. General Assembly, in the July 1951 issue of *Freedom*, which Ransby misses. Here, Eslanda is rejecting the cynical use of token Blacks to advance a colonial or neocolonial agenda in the United States. Eslanda critiques Sampson’s silence at the 1951 U.N. Assembly on the Jim Crow abuses that Negroes endure and her remarks claiming that Communism was the United States’ main concern. Eslanda does not support Sampson simply because she is a woman; she understands the sophisticated yet cynical use by conservatives to push a sexist and racist agenda. She critiques Sampson because of her conscious choice to ignore the more serious plight of Jim Crow in the United States. Eslanda writes to Sampson:

“As a Negro woman...I was glad and proud to see you, a Negro woman, appointed as alternate U.S. delegate to the U.N. General Assembly...When a reporter heckled you about conditions of the Negro people in the United States, you ‘defended the U.S. in a press conference, against Communist accusation...and denied that the color bar is universal and typical in the U.S...Now Edith, this will never do...We all hope, Edith, that you will ‘follow your own best thought.’ We watch and wait and hope.”

Eslanda critiques Sampson’s downplaying of racism in the United States in ways similar to how Hubert Harrison, in a 1911 *New York Sun* editorial, critiqued Booker T. Washington’s downplaying of racism in a 1911 edition of the *London Morning Post*. Eslanda’s mother belonged to Harrison’s Liberty League, whose ideological concerns rubbed off on Eslanda in her resentment of token Blacks who downplay racism, as Harrison did. She was aware of the strategic and cynical use of the social construction of gender by token leaders manipulated by the elite class to advance colonialism. Eslanda’s critique applies to the approaching uncritical appraisal of Hillary Clinton to be the next U.S. president. Her critique highlights the importance of identifying tokenism and not supporting someone simply because of their race or gender, but by how well they fight neocolonialism. This is Eslanda’s legacy, which Barbara Ransby brilliantly shows us. 🌹

Sighing Explosively

► New York Neo-Futurists: *The Complete & Condensed Stage Directions of Eugene O'Neill: Vol. 2*, at the Theater for the New City.

bess rowen

IF I HAD A dime for every time someone told me that academics write things no one reads, I'd be able to afford a ticket to the New York Neo-Futurists' newest show. That show happens to be about stage directions, those italicized words that many a theatre director has encouraged actors to cross out and ignore. Yet the New York Neo-Futurists discovered last year in the first volume of this series (*The Complete & Condensed Stage Directions of Eugene O'Neill: Vol. 1 Early Plays/Lost Plays*) that these moments of writing for actor and reader are exactly what people should be reading.

For those of you who have not read or seen O'Neill's early plays, let's just say that it took quite a while before the subject matter and dialogue reached the Pulitzer Prize winning status that eventually came to be associated with his work. Today, O'Neill is known for plays like *Moon for the Misbegotten*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, and *The Hairy Ape*. You might know O'Neill for his Nobel Laureate, four-time Pulitzer Prize winner, or maybe even Jack Nicholson's portrayal of him in the movie *Reds*. But long before all of this, O'Neill wrote a series of plays with some very stilted dialogue that covered themes such as sailing, shipwrecks, murder, country homes, and war. These plays are rarely produced or read, as most people seem to want to ignore them in favor of their more polished and profound relatives.

Though this is an understandable impulse, the New York Neo-Futurists have noticed that the most interesting parts of these early plays seem to be the words O'Neill ever intended to be spoken aloud. In *The Complete & Condensed Stage Directions of Eugene O'Neill: Vol. 2*, Cecil Baldwin (who also narrates the well-known podcast *Welcome to Night Vale*) speaks the stage directions—and only the stage directions—from five of O'Neill's works while four actors play all of the roles and do all of the actions described therein. This piece is adapted and directed by Christopher Loar, who has promised that he intends to adapt O'Neill's entire oeuvre in this manner. I have asked that he then move on to Tennessee Williams at that time, but we'll see how the Neos feel at that point.

During the plays *Recklessness* (1913), *Warnings* (1913), *Fog* (1914), *Abortion* (1914), and *The Sniper* (1915), actors Christopher Borg, Roberta Colindrez, Cara Francis, and Dylan Marron interact with the broad stage of the Cino

Theatre at Theater for the New City, changing costumes and props to keep pace with the ever-changing action. When Baldwin reads a stage direction, the other performers hurry to do its bidding, though rarely in the way we can guess O'Neill meant it. For example, at the direction, "she flings herself into one of the chairs," Colindrez does literally fling her body into one of the wooden chairs on stage. In O'Neill's attempt to capture a kind of heightened realism, his stage directions seem totally ridiculous when devoid of the dialogue that they normally frame. The effect is instead a sort of mimed, fast-forwarded, vaudevillian version of what were originally very serious plays. This disconnect is surreal and often incredibly funny.


I say often because, though almost all of the plays do end up being hilarious, there are some moments where O'Neill's original intentions are hauntingly preserved. This is most obvious in the last play performed, *The Sniper*, which becomes all the more serious because it follows the most exaggerated and outlandish play, *Abortion*. In *The Sniper*, the stage directions lead us through a story that seems not to need dialogue. We have a father and his dead son in a war. The performers do not work against O'Neill's original meaning in this piece as much as they do in the others, perhaps because the first moment includes bringing in a dead body. The stakes here are more immediately recognizable, and therefore actions like the repeated clenching and unclenching of fists, which occur in other plays in the program, make sense in the context of the play.

The other side of this, of course, contains all of the moments where the actions of the characters on stage seem to come out of nowhere, their extremes creating an alternate narrative to the one O'Neill wrote into the dialogue. The culmination of out-of-context hilarity comes, ironically, from the play named *Abortion*. This



play has so many characters that the actors must double up, occasionally having to play scenes between the same actor's two characters. This fact, plus the exaggerated "American college" stereotypes layered into the stage directions, causes the best kind of surprising comedy. It's hard to imagine what the "real" story of this play is, and what O'Neill could have been thinking when he wrote these lines.

But he was thinking quite a lot. That much is obvious. And even as the performers mostly work to deconstruct the "normal" interpretation of these kinds of stage directions, the New York Neo-Futurists also give us a glimpse into the mind of a playwright who was very interested in giving his actors visual and emotional prompts. As my own research is in the area of stage directions, these pieces of dialogue for bodies, I treasure the opportunity to see just how much potential there are in these extensive directions. How far can a performer's body go before it no longer adheres to the

literal meaning of these words? How do you perform a line like "THE BUSINESS MAN edges away from THE POET, firmly convinced that his convictions regarding the similarity of poets and madmen are based upon fact," so that the audience would get that sentiment perfectly without having read it? These questions are not easily answerable, even with the performed help of this play, but by calling our attention to these often-ignored parts of O'Neill's plays, Loar and the New York Neos have made a critical intervention that deserves our attention. This attention to a hidden aspect of the canon strikes me as quite academic, and I appreciate the intelligence of this show as much as the raw talent in the adaptation, directing, and performances. If you don't want to fulfill the stage direction, "sighs explosively," then go ahead and get tickets to *The Complete & Condensed Stage Directions: Vol. 2* at Theater for the New City. Tickets are \$25 and the show runs through May 11th. 

"Jack puts his hands over his ears and forces a laugh. Evelyn smiles. She holds out both hands to him."



Results from the GC Program Survey, Parental Leave, Mental Health & More

Governance Task Force Survey

THE GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE conducted a survey of Executive Officers and students about student representation on program standing committees. The Task Force is in the process of tabulating the results. Here are some of the findings from the survey of EOs:

Governance Document

Despite Graduate Center policies, only 50% of programs have had their governance documents updated within the last 3 years.

Program Committees

Of the 20 Programs who responded to our survey:

- ▶ 3 do not have a faculty membership committee
- ▶ 5 did not have an Elections Committee

Minutes

- ▶ 10% of Programs only take minutes for their Program Executive Committee sometimes.
- ▶ 40% of Programs do not consistently deposit their Executive Committee meetings minutes with the Provost's office, if at all.
- ▶ 35% of Programs only take minutes for their Program Faculty Membership Committee sometimes.
- ▶ 25% of Programs do not consistently keep minutes for their Curriculum and exams Committee, if at all.
- ▶ Only 55% of Programs consistently keep minutes of their Admissions and Awards Committee, and 30% of Programs consistently keep min-

utes of their Elections Committee.

- ▶ Only 20% of Programs make the minutes of their standing committees publicly available.

Process

- ▶ 40% of programs announce meeting dates to faculty and students.
- ▶ 65% of programs submit agendas to committee members at least seven calendar days before the meetings.
- ▶ Only half of all programs report that students have full voice and vote on each committee.

Presidential Search

AMY MARTIN AND COLIN Ashley, DSC Co-Chairs for Student Affairs and Business, respectively, are serving on the Presidential Search Committee for the next GC President.

The committee will conduct preliminary interviews, and then finalists will be invited to campus later in the spring, and the GC community will have a chance to give feedback to the committee again at that point.

Parental Leave & Work Accommodation

INTERIM PRESIDENT CHASE ROBINSON, Interim Provost Louise Lenihan, and Interim Associate Provost David Olan were guests at the April DSC Plenary Meeting. Thanks to last year's DSC ad hoc committee on Parental Leave, which worked hard to advocate for paid parental leave.

According to the administration's comments at the meeting, the new policy will establish academic accommodations for all Graduate Center students who are becoming parents

(regardless of gender or type of family forming). New parents on Graduate Center fellowships will be released from their service requirements. All Graduate Center students becoming parents who would have been eligible for NYSHIP will receive a Graduate D fellowship (with nominal service requirements and pay) to remain covered by NYSHIP.

NYSHIP Mental Health & Substance Abuse Coverage

JEN PRINCE, OFFICER FOR Health & Wellness, continues to be in contact with the CUNY benefits office and NYSHIP contacts at SUNY to advocate for students experiencing problems in the face of NYSHIP's sudden transition to ValueOptions.

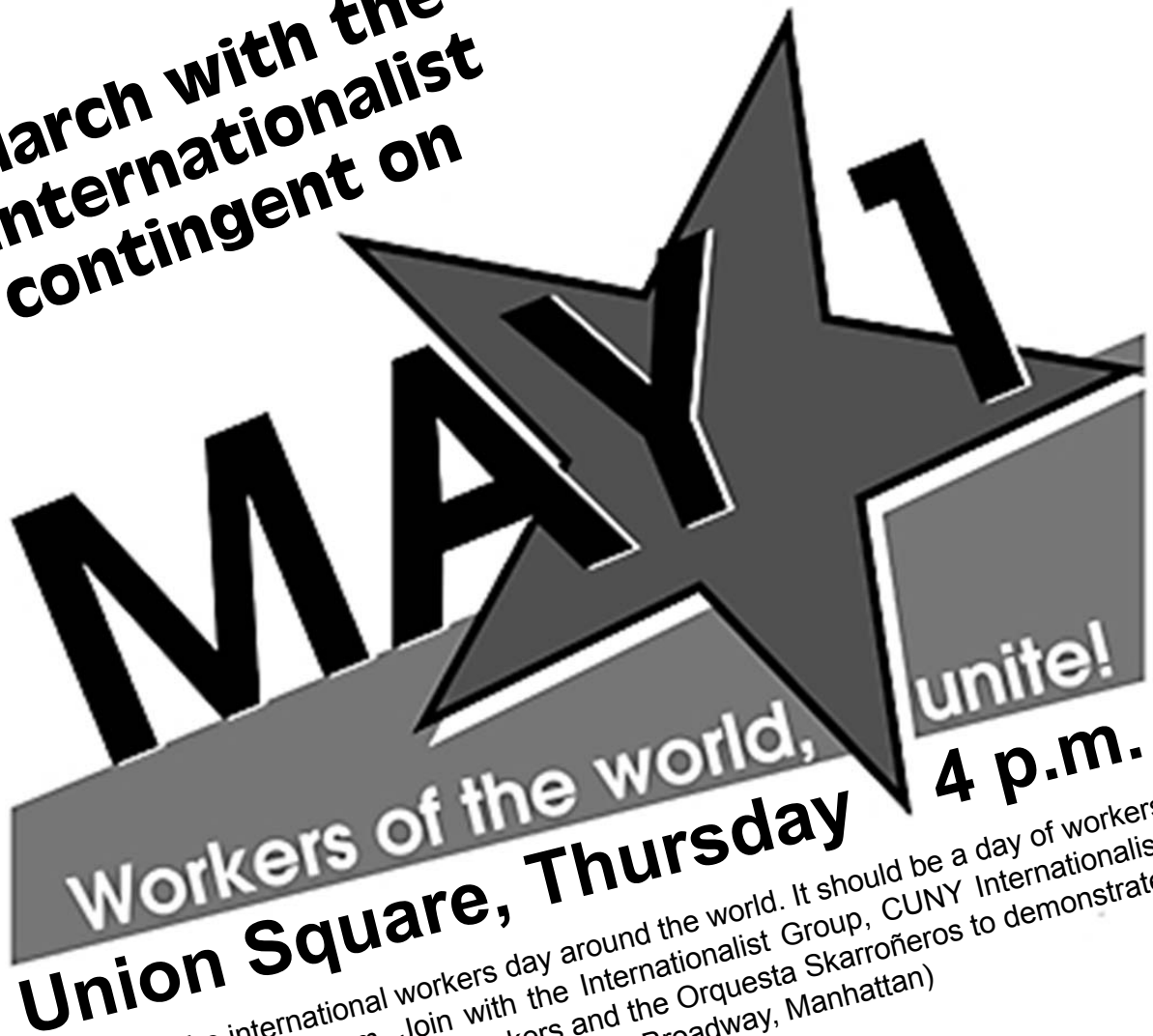
If you have been affected by this change, contact Jen at health@cunydsdsc.org, or opencuny.org/dschealth.

Sciences & The Graduate Center

THE DSC'S AD HOC committee has been working to learn more about the current state of the science restructuring that would relocate the "bench sciences" from the GC to other CUNY campuses. While CUNY Central formed various committees on this topic, elected students were not involved, and none of the proceedings have been made public.

From what we heard from the Interim President and Provost, there have not been any decisions made. The lack of transparency and lack of student representation in this process so far is extremely lamentable. ☹

**March with the
Internationalist
contingent on**



May Day is the international workers day around the world. It should be a day of workers struggle against capitalism. Join with the Internationalist Group, CUNY International Clubs, Class Struggle Education Workers and the Orquesta Skarroñeros to demonstrate and march from Union Square (14th Street and Broadway, Manhattan)

We Fight For:

- ★ **Unionize Low-Wage Workers!**
- ★ **Workers Action to Stop Deportations!**
- ★ **Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!**
- ★ **U.S. Imperialism Hands Off Ukraine, Venezuela!**
- ★ **No to Militarization of CUNY – ROTC, Petraeus Out!**
- ★ **Break with the Democrats, Build A
Revolutionary Workers Party!**

For more information call (212) 460-0983 or write to internationalistgroup@msn.com

 1162-M

Puzzle 1

THERE ARE 3 LIGHT bulbs in a room that is located out of your sight, and 5 switches are in front of you (all initially set to OFF). The switches and light bulbs are numbered. You know that switch #1 is connected to light bulb #1, and that each of the two remaining light bulbs is connected to a distinct switch. You are allowed to set each switch to ON or OFF for any duration of time, but you can enter the room only once. How can you determine which switch is connected to which light bulb?

Puzzle 2

SUPPOSE WE WANT TO categorise 11 items into packages such that the total value of each package is the same as that of every other package. We also

require the following conditions to be met:

- ▶ We need to form at least two packages (i.e. putting everything in one package is not allowed)
- ▶ Each package has at least one item (i.e. empty packages do not count)
- ▶ Each item is in exactly one of the packages (i.e. dividing an item to put in several packages is not allowed)

The number of items of each value is given in the below table:

Value	1	2	4	5	6	7
Count	3	3	2	1	1	1

Problems:

1. If we wanted to form as many packages as possible, what would be the total value of each package?

2. If we wanted to maximise the value of each package, we would need to form as few packages as possible. What would be the total value of each package in this case?

Puzzle 3

INSERT THE GIVEN MATHEMATICAL symbols in the below sequence of numbers to create a valid equation.

Sequence:

3 1 4 9 8 8 1

Given symbols:

- + =

Note that you are not allowed to change the order of numbers in the sequence, and you can only use one of each given symbol (in any order). Ⓐ

solutions on page 31

ph.d. comics BY JORGE CHAM



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ACHTUNG! — Our new email address is gcadvocate@gc.cuny.edu!