

## Board Approves Request For \$1.3 Billion Budget

At its Oct. 28 meeting, the Board of Trustees approved the Chancellor's 1997-98 Operating Budget Request. The \$1.3 billion requested represents a 4.6% increase—the smallest hike, percentage-wise, the University has sought since the State assumed financing of CUNY senior colleges in 1983-84. The senior college request is for \$966.2 million. For the community colleges, the total is \$347.3 million.

The Board also approved the Capital Budget request of \$478 million. Those funds will support the University-wide Building Condition Assessment Program, now in its fifth year, and preservation and modernization of facilities at Baruch, City, Hostos, Lehman, and Queens Colleges. Capital funds are also targeted to a major new initiative, the Infrastructure Network Telecommunications project. This multi-year plan allows for installation of infrastructure to support educational technology in all CUNY facilities.

"The proposed budget request of \$1.3 billion is a prudent plan," said Trustee Robert Price, Vice Chairperson of the Board Committee on Fiscal Affairs, Facilities and Contract Review. "It maximizes the benefits of recent retirement incentives, redistributes program savings to the colleges' base budgets, restores full-time faculty, moves the University to a new level of technology and seeks modest enhancements to vital programs."

As in the previous year's operating budget request, the highest priority is funding (\$6 million) to hire 140 new, full-time faculty members. Last year, New York State acknowledged the importance of replenishing CUNY's faculty ranks in its adopted budget. Another \$2.3 million in funding is sought for the

Graduate School and University Center for 25 senior appointments to renew the doctoral faculty, which has diminished in recent times due to departures and retirements.

Other programmatic highlights of the '97-'98 request include new student-centered initiatives. Acknowledging that the electronic information age is here to stay, a far-reaching \$3.6 million initiative—the Computer Ownership Matching Program (COMP)—aims to supply incoming CUNY freshmen with computer workstations for at-home use. The initiative, which recognizes that a computer has become the equivalent of pens and paper, will level the playing field with the many higher education institutions nationwide that now require students to have personal computers.

COMP will be an innovative partnership combining resources from the State, private industry and individual students, who would make a \$500 contribution. The University will seek ways to facilitate ownership for students who are unable to afford the personal cost. This option, if approved by the State, will be available initially on a pilot basis to students who complete fall studies with a "B" average or higher and who enroll for the following spring semester.

To free CUNY's doctoral students from the need to work full-time, \$2 million is requested for financial assistance so that they may progress more rapidly toward earning their degrees. Current financial aid resources have not kept pace with enrollment growth, tuition increases and inflation. The request will allow the University to compete at national levels of assistance to doctoral candidates.

In support of the growing number of

(Continued on page 3)

### TWO CAMPUS ART GALLERY EXHIBITIONS

## De Chirico in America

The long-lived and controversial Italian painter Giorgio De Chirico (1888-1978) visited the United States in the 1930s, but throughout his career he was an important art world presence in this country. Reproduced to the right is "The Nobles and the Shopkeepers" of 1933 from a private collection in Verona. A satirical commentary on the social pretensions of the bourgeoisie, it was a key work in the artist's 1936 exhibition at the New York gallery of the surrealist dealer Julien Levy. De Chirico borrowed the medieval dress of the nobles from his designs for a production of Bellini's opera *I Puritani* at the 1933 Maggio Musicale in Florence.

The painting exemplifies the view of Emily Braun, Hunter College art professor and a specialist in Italian art between the Wars, especially the Fascist period: "De Chirico's images can be read as a continuous commentary on the demise of high culture and traditional erudition."

"Giorgio De Chirico and America," an exhibition of 30 paintings, drawings, and photographs at Hunter's Leubsdorf Art Gallery that explored the artist's American ties, completed a highly successful six-week run on Oct. 26. It received international attention, and the chief art critic of



*The New York Times* praised Dr. Braun, its curator, for providing "a better handle on this incredibly slippery artist." Susan Edwards, Hunter's Curator of Art Galleries, was delighted, too, by the streams of visitors to the Gallery at 68th Street and Lexington: "We broke our previous attendance record spectacularly. The show has given morale on the College's art scene an enormous boost."

Screenings of pertinent films by Antonioni and Bertolucci accompanied the exhibition, along with a series of lectures on such topics as "De Chirico, Art, and *Vogue*," "De Chirico's American Collectors," and "De Chirico and Dr. Barnes."

## Motherwell, Stella at BMCC

Miles and Shirley Fiterman, the donors of BMCC's Fiterman Hall, are pictured here in their Fifth Avenue apartment with Andy Warhol's 1974 portrait of the prolific English artist David Hockney. From Dec. 5 to Jan. 22 a selection of the Fitermans' collection of prints by major '60s artists like Ellsworth Kelly, Josef Albers, Robert Motherwell, and Frank Stella will be on view at the Shirley Fiterman Gallery in Fiterman Hall (30 West Broadway). For more on the Fitermans and the story behind their generous gift to CUNY, see page two.



## AMP Transforms Science Education

By Helena Leslie

Editor, New York City Alliance News

Orthiel Williams received his masters degree from City College School of Engineering last spring. Asked about the New York City Alliance for Minority Participation (AMP), the new product engineer for the Ford Motor Co. says, "It made all the difference. I had to work to pay for my education, but when I was awarded an AMP Research Scholarship I was able to leave airport baggage-handling behind. I could spend my time in my City

College lab, doing research in my field."

Williams feels that his hands-on lab experience was crucial to the academic success that led to his job at Ford. "I could actually see the applications of what I was learning in the classroom, and that made the subject matter so much easier to absorb."

By changing the way science, engineering, and mathematics (SEM) are taught at CUNY, the Alliance for Minority Participation is profoundly influencing the careers of students like Williams. This consortium of 16 CUNY senior and community colleges is a key element in the National Science

Foundation's current vigorous response to the critical need for a larger and more ethnically diverse scientific and technological work force.

The objective of the NSF's five-year grant to AMP, which began in 1992, is to double the number of underrepresented minorities—blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans—who earn baccalaureate degrees in the three SEM areas. The Alliance's contractual target calls for CUNY to award nearly 600 undergraduate SEM degrees

(Continued on page 12)



Brooklyn College Research Scholar René Cajuste, with Faculty Mentor David T. Smouse at a Nikon fluorescent microscope.

## Connoisseurs of Art & Education

**Gary Schmidgall** kicks off an occasional **CUNY•Matters** feature on prominent CUNY benefactors with a visit to two of Borough of Manhattan Community College's best friends.

To say Shirley and Miles Fiterman are avid, top-of-the-line collectors is to put it mildly. Walk into their 45th-floor aerie on Fifth Avenue and your eyes are immediately drawn to a grand, richly colored, and affectionate spoof of images from Picasso by David Hockney. Turn a corner and you find a major late Picasso commanding a wall by itself and gallantly accepting the homage. The effect is wry and playful, not unlike Miles Fiterman himself, who presides with his wife Shirley over



Shirley and Miles Fiterman with Roy Lichtenstein's "Painting Near Window." Photos, André Beckles

their apartment-cum-gallery with a disarming combination of good humor and down-to-earth pride. No big city braggadocio from these two life-long Minnesotans.

And what a gallery it is: Imagine a view of most of Central Park being upstaged. A vintage Lichtenstein, "Painting Near Window," is hung, well, near a window. Across the way a blazing white torso by George Segal juts from the wall. In a corner stands a Miró bronze as tall as Michael Jordan; it has shoes sprouting from it in odd places. Fail to watch your step and you can get one of the Fitermans' Calder mobiles all upset, and in the TV room David Hockney and Chairman Mao, courtesy of Andy Warhol, look on.

Mr. Fiterman knows his paintings well and clearly enjoys talking about them...and not with curatorial solemnity, either. The visitor is cordially invited to notice the thumb Warhol has suggestively painted in Hockney's mouth. The collector points a moment later to a stark, mesmerizing painting of a lone beach umbrella casting its shadow. "Now, here's what artists are always doing," he says with obvious approval, "looking at the world completely differently. The sea in the distance is completely still, and the sand is in motion." The painting seemed very familiar; later I realized it had been August in my 1996 Hockney calendar.

Of the works in their collection, Shirley Fiterman says, "They are like our children. We feel the same combination of passion and compassion for them." The Fitermans are generous lenders, too, eager to see their works travel and be enjoyed in public venues. My visit, in fact, came just

hours before the gala opening of the Ellsworth Kelly retrospective that will be running until Jan. 15 at the Guggenheim Museum. "Pony," a free-standing sculpture considered by Kelly to be one of his most important works, was lassoed from the Fitermans for the exhibition.

Speak of their well-traveled "children," though, and one is bound to think of a part of the Fiterman collection that is always traveling like crazy (mostly by subway), is subject to rapid deaccessioning (on to senior colleges or into the workforce), and is about to enjoy a splendid new installation. These are the Borough of Manhattan Community College students now using the facilities of Miles and Shirley Fiterman Hall, a 15-story building at 30 West Broadway in Lower Manhattan, which was so generously donated to the College in 1993.

The building, which was appraised at \$30 million at the time of the gift, constitutes the largest gift to CUNY in its history and is now undergoing major capital renovation. Mr. Fiterman is especially proud that the Hall is the only major capital project at CUNY now being funded by New York City. Five thousand students are now using the building weekly; when it comes fully on line in 1999, 9,000 students will enter its doors every week.

Minerva, the goddess of wisdom and invention, certainly helped usher 30 West Broadway into the CUNY fold. Early in 1993 Mr. Fiterman lost his primary tenant, Morgan Guaranty, and Ron Spalter, BMCC's Dean for Administration and Planning heard from two vendors who served the building, Con Edison and an energy management company, that its owner was considering mothballing the structure. Struck by the possibility of renting part of it for the space-starved BMCC campus—16,000 students were cramped in facilities intended for 10,000—Spalter made a date with the building's manager and was thrilled by what he saw on a tour.

Spalter, though, had to explain that even funds for rental of space could not be garnered for a year, and his space needs were painfully immediate. "That meeting ended with everyone scratching their heads," Spalter recalls with a laugh. Then a few days later, in mid-July, Spalter received a call from the south of France: "This is Miles Fiterman. Who are you...and what is it you want?" Spalter explained the allure of the building's lower floors.

A week later, the broker gently dropped a question that left everyone rubbing their ears: Would BMCC like to have the whole building, gratis? To erase all doubt that this was meant to be, it turned out that the Fitermans' real estate broker happened to be Raymond O'Keefe, who was also co-chair of the BMCC Fund, the college's principal office for external fund-raising. The brokerage company also offered to waive

all fees if a philanthropic transfer of title was effected.

But who was Miles Fiterman? He lived in Minneapolis, had no prior connections with CUNY, and 30 West Broadway was his only major holding in the city. Shortly after graduating from the University of Minnesota and attending its law school, he became a major force in the new do-it-yourself housing construction business. His company, Miles Homes Inc., took off in the '60s, and it was eventually responsible for construction in 41 states.

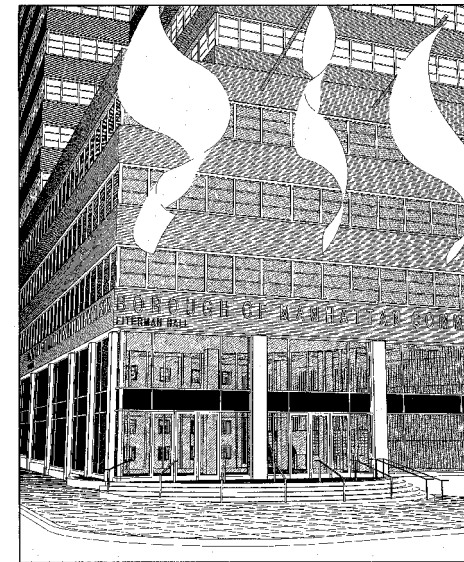
But by 1993, with the company sold and more time to devote to the world of art, the do-it-yourself pioneer found appealing the idea of helping BMCC students achieve the ultimate do-it-yourself goal: a college education. "All they needed was a chance," Fiterman says.

When the tantalizing dream appeared to be a serious possibility, Chancellor Reynolds swung the Central Office into action. "Her efforts were crucial in giving me the confidence to go ahead," Mr. Fiterman recalls, adding that "I also instantly established a sense of trust with her husband [Dr. Thomas Kirschbaum] when we discovered we had attended the same small high school back in Minnesota." Mr. Fiterman was also impressed by how well BMCC students respected their clean, graffiti-free facilities on the West Street campus.

Mrs. Fiterman also had good reason to like the idea of educational philanthropy, as she explains. "Our serious collecting really began on a trip to Mexico, when I found myself face-to-face with a pre-Columbian piece for the first time. My heart started to thump; I was overwhelmed." In no time, she and her husband were building a choice pre-Columbian collection, and she was back in school at the University of Minnesota, beginning years of steeping herself in art history courses that, she says, "opened my mind and my eyes."

The dog days of summer 1993 suddenly got very busy. The speed with which the building was turned to academic use spoke volumes for the need it filled. Occupancy commenced on Aug. 23, and by opening day of the fall term on Sept. 10 the building—where hitherto nothing but stocks were transferred—had 12 classrooms and a computer lab in operation. A year later, 40 classrooms were available.

The Fitermans' desire to share has not been limited to art and education. Two of their daughters suffered from a rare case of ulcerative colitis; one eventually died, but the other now thrives. Fiterman threw himself into encouraging research on this



Rendering of the entrance to Fiterman Hall by the firm of Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates.

disease. With Hubert Humphrey opening some doors, he helped to establish the American Digestive Disease Foundation. Nearly 40 years on, he is still hoping for a discovery of a cure for the elusive disease.

In the meantime, Mr. Fiterman says, "I have never experienced as much satisfaction as I have had with BMCC. Giving that building, we have found, was only a beginning." They have, for example, recently been providing funds to support the stellar BMCC chess team, which won the Pan American Intercollegiate Team Chess Trophy in 1995. "The fact that these community college students beat Harvard twice sparked me," he adds.

The Fitermans were especially delighted—and completely surprised—when a grateful College announced during the gala inauguration in September 1993 the estab-

lishment of the Shirley Fiterman Gallery in the hall. Early this year the first of a two-part exhibition of the Fitermans' prints was on view there, and Gallery visitors can sample the second part from Dec. 5 to Jan. 22. Later, both parts will be joined for an exchange of exhibitions with the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

Before tweaking the Calder one last time and leaving, I ask Mr. Fiterman what shared les-

sons he might have learned from his dual pursuits in the construction and real estate business on one hand and the art world on the other. His three-pronged reply required about two seconds of meditation: "You have to have a vision, you have to be willing to take a chance sometimes, and you have to keep within yourself." Houses, in other words, are not the only things that should be do-it-yourself.

Miles Fiterman's three desiderata perhaps tell us succinctly why Fiterman Hall came to BMCC. For they happen to summarize neatly how to gain an education—and how to use it after Commencement Day. ♦

### AND THE TIMES APPLAUDED

*In the fall of 1993 The New York Times hailed the Fiterman gift in an essay on "CUNY's Timely Good Fortune": "It's the largest gift of a physical facility ever received by any community college.... Nearly 40% of the nation's 15 million higher education students attend community colleges. These colleges rarely receive large private gifts and they do very little fund raising; instead, they rely on allocations from state and local governments. As these allocations are being increasingly cut back, the Fitermans and CUNY suggest a new survival technique for community colleges."*

## CUNY's Hibernian Links

By James P. Murphy  
Chairperson, Board of Trustees

Dublin Castle, near the River Liffey, goes back to Anglo-Norman times, though only the Norman-era Record Tower remains to hint that a fortress once stood on the site. Now the Castle, where Knights of St. Patrick were installed, is a charming mixture of architectural styles—Georgian, rococo, and Adam.

Last June, I had the pleasure and honor of joining Chancellor Reynolds and speaking in Dublin Castle at the opening of an international conference on criminal justice. Fittingly, the statue atop one of the castle's famous entrance arches is that of Justice.

The splendid site, the serious subject, and CUNY's participation, I observed at the time, constituted a remarkable sesquicentennial coincidence. For last year was the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the catastrophic "great famine" that struck Ireland. It was also the 150th anniversary of the founding of the New York Police Department which, as everyone knows, proved to be an important avenue of professional advancement for countless Irish immigrants fleeing the famine. Following in no time will be the 150th anniversary of The City University of New York, founded in 1847 under the auspices of Townsend Harris, a former President of the City's Board of Education.

Consider history for a moment, and the interrelation of these three anniversaries becomes quite clear. The famine caused the first of many waves of immigration through which the United States—and New York City in particular—has renewed and re-invented itself over and over again. Most Irish emigrants came to America, and of them most came to New York. Here the heavy lifting of assimilation took place. Since the NYPD came into being just as the first boatloads of Irish were disembarking, wags wondered jokingly whether the Department had been established to recruit or incarcerate them. But in fact the Irish filled its ranks in numbers far out of proportion to their presence in the population, in our city and across the nation.

The history of CUNY has always been intimately entwined with the fortunes of immigrants. Townsend Harris foresaw the challenge they presented in education. He organized a plebiscite and campaigned to

persuade voters to approve the foundation of a "City College" that would give the children of immigrants and the poor a first-rate higher education. Having ancestors from Ireland myself, it is gratifying to think that the Irish were substantially represented among the immigrants first served by The City University.

Very soon these new arrivals became Americans, and in no time at all they developed, like all major ethnic groups, their own rich vein of "hyphenated history." I am happy to report that American-Irish history, especially history related to our metropolitan area, has been attracting particular interest since June 1995, when The City University and the American Irish Historical Society (AIHS) commenced a formal program of collaboration. The goal of this initiative is to nurture a better understanding not only of American-Irish impact upon our culture, but of the historic role New York City continues to play as a welcoming gateway for new arrivals.

A continuing series of lectures began in the fall of 1995. To date, 11 CUNY professors have spoken in this series on a remarkable array of subjects and scholarly fields. Queens English Professor Edmund Epstein, for instance, spoke on "Joyce and Music." Professor Bernadette McCauley of Hunter College, who has written about Catholic nuns and the care of the sick in the city, spoke last month on Irish contributions to health care in the 19th cen-

tury. On Dec. 10 Dean Michael Paull of Lehman College will join Cathie Ryan, lead singer of Cherish the Ladies, for a presentation on "The Ireland of Myth and Song." These lectures take place at AIHS headquarters, facing the Metropolitan Museum of Art at 991 Fifth Ave.

CUNY is also assisting the AIHS in its archival efforts. A committee of University librarians has been advising and guiding this work, emphasizing enhancements to preservation and refining its cataloguing protocols. We have also assisted the Society in writing grant proposals, and during the Fall term eight interns who are enrolled as graduate students in Queens College's Library Science Program are working at the AIHS.

AIHS President-General Dr. Kevin Cahill and Paul Ruppert, its Director, have been our principal contacts. I have been pleased to serve on the AIHS Executive Council, and former Vice Chancellor Freeland and Acting Vice Chancellor Anne Martin of the Office of Academic Affairs have helped to coordinate this initiative. Prof. Catherine McKenna, a member of the Queens College Irish Studies faculty, has presided over the lecture series, and she and Vice Chancellor Martin will be leading a review this year of ways to enhance and disseminate Irish Studies activities throughout CUNY.



Seamus Heaney, right, recipient of the 1995 Nobel Prize in Literature, joins Prof. Joe Cuomo, Director of the Queens College Evening Readings, just prior to Mr. Heaney's reading at the Rosenthal Library on the Queens campus on Sept. 19. Photo, Michael Thompson

The University's close ties with Ireland and those of the Irish diaspora were eloquently highlighted on Sept. 19 by the appearance of 1995 Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney for a reading at Queens College. Heaney's association with the College has been a long one, dating back to his friendship with the late Professor of English and pillar of local Irish Studies Kevin Sullivan. His several appearances at the College's prestigious Evening Readings series have been very successful, especially this last one. Three hundred people assembled in Rosenthal Library to hear him, and a spill-over crowd of 300 more listened to him on loudspeakers.

Prof. Joe Cuomo, founder of the series in 1976 and its director since then, recalls one line from the reading that is especially apt. It is from a sonnet in Heaney's sequence about a return to one's roots, "Glanmore Revisited," in his *Seeing Things*: "Only pure words and deeds secure the house."

Adds Cuomo, "Heaney has lived up to that line in his career, and we are grateful that he made a special effort, amid the demands upon a Nobel Prize winner's time, to secure his ties with Queens College."

Heaney's noble line, it occurs to me, would look good on any college or university insignia. The throng at Rosenthal Library was certainly grateful for his visit. ♦

### STELLAR QUEENS READINGS CONTINUE

Celebrating its 21st season of bringing distinguished literary visitors to the Queens College's Rosenthal Library, this year's Evening Readings series commenced with early fall appearances by **Seamus Heaney** and **Arthur Miller**. The remaining readings will be no anticlimax. Poet **Derek Walcott**, winner of the 1992 Nobel Prize, appeared on Nov. 19. On Dec. 10 comes poet and novelist **Margaret Atwood**, winner of Canada's highest literary honor,

the Governor General's Award. **Marilyn Hacker**, who has been called America's "latter-day Byron," will read from her poetry on March 18. **A.S. Byatt** explored subjects familiar to us all—academic rivalry and obsession—in her best-selling novel *Possession*; the Booker Prize winner will appear on May 19. Readings take place on the second floor of the Library. Admission is \$4, free for students with ID. For further information, call 718-997-4646.

(Continued from page 1)

students with disabilities, \$300,000 is requested to support and expand assistive computing technologies that improve access to education through specialized services. A total of \$1.2 million is requested to increase child care at senior and community colleges. All students and faculty stand to benefit from a \$3 million library book approval plan that will speed the time and cut the costs of acquisition in order to rebuild core collections and coverage in certain subject areas.

Teacher education is another area of budget concern. Building on CUNY's strong relationship with the New York City public schools—as the supplier of 80% of its teachers and partner in the College Preparatory Initiative—a \$1.8 million Teacher Education Initiative seeks to improve

CUNY's capacity to prepare teachers, principals and superintendents in urban areas. The Common Ground Partnership would coordinate and focus University and school resources to improve both education of schoolchildren and the next generation of teachers; link the education of future teachers and school leaders with reform and improvement of the schools; and establish leadership programs, including a Ph.D. program in education with an urban focus on Policy Studies and Curriculum.

For the community colleges, increased state support of \$100 in base aid per FTE is an important highlight of the budget.

The Chancellor's 1997-98 Budget Request may be accessed on the CUNY Web site (<http://www.cuny.edu>). Click first on "About CUNY," then on "Facts & Finances." ♦

## "PIANO MAN" BILLY JOEL HONORS MOM, CITY COLLEGE

Last May, as part of his college tour, Billy Joel performed at Town Hall with a special free "Evening of Questions & Answers... & A Little Music." More than 50 City College music students were on hand, and afterward they had special reason to be humming a medley of appropriate Joel songs—"Everybody Loves You Now," "Keeping the Faith," and "Surprises."

Joel had a surprise announcement for the crowd: the establishment of the Rosalind Joel Scholarship for the Performing Arts. This scholarship, which will be given annually to a City College music student, honors Joel's mother, who met his father at the CCNY campus on 23rd Street in 1942. The scholarship was made possible through a \$75,000 gift to CCNY from Sony Music and WPLJ-FM (which broadcast the event) in celebration of the 25th anniversary of Joel's recording career.

If there is a theme song for the Rosalind Joel Scholarship, it is surely Joel's "The River of Dreams"—a perfect image for what gifts in the form of scholarships make possible.

## CUNY Engineers at Work in Ukraine

**By Dr. Reza M. Khanbilvardi**

*Professor of Civil Engineering and Director, Center for Water Resources and Environmental Research, City College*

In 1993, the first American-Ukrainian conference on environmental study and control took place at Kiev State Technical University. Scientists from five CUNY colleges joined more than 200 Ukrainian scientists attending this conference.

Recognizing that ecological problems are increasingly international and global in scope, participants worked to identify projects that would make logical candidates for international collaboration. Contamination of the Ukraine's water supply emerged as a very pressing problem. Responding to this need, the U.S. Agency for International Development in 1994 provided \$350,000 to the Center for Water Resources and Environmental Research (CWRER) to explore alternatives to the water supply problems of the Ukraine.

Our monitoring of Kiev's water distribution system in 1994-95 revealed that, in terms of color, coli-index, turbidity (the suspension of matter that causes cloudiness), and concentration of chlorinated by-products, we engineers of water purification had a major task before us.

Generally in the Ukraine, the water of surface sources is affected by natural contamination, as well as contamination from pesticides, heavy metals, and other substances in untreated wastewaters. The main source of natural matter is humic acids, which reside in different types of soil. In addition, pollutants such as aliphatic acids, phenolic compounds, and amines

have been washed from the soil into natural waters. Concentrations of organic acids in the Dnieper River, the main river running from north to south into the Black Sea, for example, have reached dangerously high levels—up to two grams per liter of organic acids during vegetation time, for example, and a range of .06 to .28 milligrams per liter for amino acids.

After the initial evaluation, the CUNY team joined Ukrainian scientists to develop water purification units at such high priority sites as schools, hospitals, and community water supply outlets. The pilot plant system (pictured) was designed, tested, then installed as a demonstration unit at the largest children's hospital in Kiev.

This three-stage system consisted of a front-end ozonator and mixing tank for eliminating bacteria, then a granular-activated carbon filter for removing turbidity and dissolving organic compounds, and finally a mechanism for ultraviolet disinfection. The system proved satisfactory under a variety of water conditions, some of them quite extreme.

The success of this initiative encouraged USAID to provide an additional \$550,000 this past summer to refine the efficiency, minimize the cost of constructing new models of the system, and plan for their manufacture and distribution.

A second important project of the Center, this one funded by the National Science Foundation, has focused on the movement through erosion of agrochemicals and radioactive pollutants within agricultural watersheds. CUNY scientists have established ties with the center for Radio-

ecological Field Studies at the Ukraine Academy of Sciences to deal with the still unknown consequences of the Chernobyl meltdown.

For several months following the disaster, the fallout of radioactive aerosols was observed around the site. Strontium and cesium were among the most dangerous components of these mists. In this sadly ideal experimental site at Chernobyl, within the 30-kilometer "closed" zone, we have laid out two run-off plots for analysis.

Our better understanding of how such radioactive compounds move through soil will contribute significantly to the protection of rivers, reservoirs, and agricultural lands. In addition to field experiments like artificial rainfalls, we will be developing computer models for simulating the migration of radionuclides during processes of sedimentation and episodic events like flooding.

Earthwatch, a nonprofit institution, has been funding a third area of ecological research in the Ukraine. Volunteers from around the world have been assembled for short-term summer field expeditions in which they assist scientists in confronting very specific challenges.

For example, over the last two summers Earthwatchers have assisted our Center scientists and those from the Odessa Hydrometeorological Institute in a study of "Complex Anthropogenic Impacts" on small rivers and other water bodies of the Ukraine. This team also included volunteers from Canada, En-



*The Center for Water Resources supervised the development and installation of this water purification system in Okhmatdet Children's Hospital, largest in the Ukraine. Its modular design allows for varying levels of purification depending on the nature of water use. The Center has entered into a contract to supply 40 systems in Ukrainian hospitals and schools.*

gland, Ireland, Belgium, and Japan. Its work, notably at the Kuyalnik Liman site near Odessa, garnered considerable media coverage.

The Center draws on the talents of faculty members on all the CUNY campuses. Among those working on these projects are Professors Samir Ahmed, Vasil Diyamandoglu, Leonid Roytman, Victor Goldsmith, Ali Sadegh, John Tietjen, and Dr. Vadim Khazin. In the last three years CWRER has attracted more \$1 million in external funding for its projects, but this is only a beginning. It is difficult to imagine a more useful application of the Center's expertise than the serious environmental problems facing the Ukraine. ♦

### HUNTER'S RIGHTS INITIATIVE

## Mobilizing Student Welfare Recipients

**By Melinda K. Lackey**

*Director, Welfare Rights Initiative, Center for the Study of Family Policy, Hunter College*

In a 17th-floor conference room in Hunter College West, 15 determined women gather every Tuesday afternoon for three hours. At first glance there is nothing extraordinary about the group of full-time students, but this seminar in fact represents a ground-breaking educational initiative.

All of these students are receiving public assistance. They have come to study the history of welfare policy, share personal experiences with the current system, and ponder welfare reform. Even more remarkably, they have come to hone their skills in public speaking, coalition-building, fundraising, and "active" listening. They develop organizational skills by introducing themselves every week and learning how to take minutes at meetings designed to simulate forms of advocacy.

Welcome to the Hunter College Welfare Rights Initiative (WRI), which requires its students to become active participants in off-campus venues for pursuing welfare

reform that is both sensitive and sensible. A second-semester internship develops their potential as grassroots community leaders and organizers.

WRI was spawned by three troubling aspects of national and local debate over welfare reform: an absence of the voice of welfare recipients themselves; the tendency of negative stereotypes of welfare recipients to dominate the debate; and a failure to envision reforms that are humane, realistic, and constructive. By offering college credit to CUNY students who are current or former recipients and providing critical resources like subway tokens, the Leadership Seminar gives them the chance to shed the shame of being on welfare and add their articulate voices to the debate, and become informed, practiced advocates.

WRI was originally conceived by Dr. Janet E. Poppendieck, Director of the Hunter College Center for the Study of Family Policy, Dr. Mimi Abramovitz, Professor of Social Policy at the Hunter School of Social Work, and myself. Jan Poppendieck's 20 years of teaching sociology and daily contact with dozens of public assis-

tance recipients who contradicted old stereotypes led her to envision such a project. Mimi Abramovitz, through many years of research, writing, advocacy, and teaching on welfare policy, is also a seasoned public speaker on these issues and was concerned that the welfare debate was leaving out the voices of recipients.

While working on my masters in social research at Hunter, I undertook research for Dr. Marilyn Gittel at the Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center to study the impact of higher education on college students supported by public assistance and college graduates achieving economic self-support. The needs, ideas, experiences and aspirations of women I interviewed for that study helped to inspire planning for WRI's Fall 1995 pilot semester. Since then, we have strived to involve students in our decision-making, and Poppendieck and Abramovitz have continued to act in an advisory capacity. With support from the Child Welfare Fund and College student activity funds, WRI has



*Participants in Hunter College's Leadership Seminar.*

been able to hire three student leadership trainees as part-time staff.

Twelve women students—no men have yet applied for this program—completed the pilot year, and 15 new students are now enrolled, ranging in age from 18 to mid-40s and representing a diversity of neighborhoods and home campuses. A long-range WRI goal is to assist in the development of student-driven welfare reform organizations on each CUNY campus and form a union of all of them.

The Initiative has recently developed an Advocacy Training Mobilization Project in concert with the CUNY Law School at Queens College. This, we hope, will result in an innovative lawyering seminar this com-

*(Continued on page 11)*

# The Striking Successes of Open Admissions

**D**avid Lavin has been a Professor of Sociology at the Graduate School and Lehman College since 1970. The most recent of his four books explores a subject of special interest to CUNY faculty and staff: the long-term effects of the University's open admissions policy on students' lives. Co-authored with Dr. David Hyllegard, Director of Institutional Research at Borough of Manhattan Community College, *Changing the Odds: Open Admissions and the Life Chances of the Disadvantaged* (Yale University Press) goes head-to-head with critics of the University's admissions policy and graduation rates; it was featured on the front page of *The New York Times* under the head-line, "Study Details CUNY Successes From Open Admissions Policy." The book demonstrates that the University's graduation record since open admissions began is not only respectable, but substantial; CUNY has changed the odds for thousands of people who would not otherwise have had an opportunity to attend college.

Though critical educational policy questions were on his mind, Lavin was at ease in a recent interview. He deliberately and directly dismantled the rhetoric of detractors of open admissions, shrewdly peppering his views with supporting data. He also discussed his research methodology and plans for future work. Finally, he elaborated more speculatively about weighty racial and economic issues surrounding accessibility to higher education. Lavin's personal reasons for desiring to study open admissions became evident. For he is not merely an academic sociologist but also an egalitarian philosopher with a personal investment in his subject matter that has served a 36-year career.

—Peter Taback

**PT:** You have long been concerned with equity and access in higher education, and with *Changing the Odds* you have become our resident expert on the policy of open admissions and the value of a CUNY diploma since 1970. Can you take us through the University's policy?

**DL:** Well, as a generic concept, the CUNY policy was not a new idea. It goes back to the land-grant colleges in the last century and their policy of accepting all high school graduates. The best model of a 100% access policy would be the State of California's universal access. The top 12% of high school graduates go to the University of California system; roughly the next third go to the California State system; everybody else goes to community colleges. This policy in practice turns out to be quite highly stratified, particularly in terms of ethnicity. There's quite an extreme disparity in the proportions of Chicanos and Latinos and blacks at the community college level versus the university level.

**PT:** And CUNY's policy doesn't end up looking like that?

**DL:** No. CUNY's model in 1970 was much more oriented toward creating better opportunities for students to attain bachelor's degrees. CUNY took the top half rather than the top 12%. If you were in the top half of your class or had a B-minus average, you were guaranteed a seat in one of the senior colleges, and if you didn't make either of those cuts, you went to a community college. [Editor's note: Lavin's description refers to the earliest policy, which has since been substantially revised.] This meant CUNY access was much more equitably distributed, particularly in terms of the representation of minority students in four-year colleges.

**PT:** Has our open admissions policy been misunderstood?

**DL:** And maligned. Some critics thought open admissions was a bad idea because they expected it would severely erode academic standards. We would somehow be swept away under this deluge of inept, incompetent, ineducable students. The prestige of the CUNY diploma would be degraded, severely undercutting its value both in the job market and as a passport to post-graduate study. There have been many examples in the media of this point of view.

**PT:** James Traub ventured in a *Times* op-ed piece earlier this year that CUNY has only belatedly "begun addressing its academic problems." Can the University defend itself against such an accusation?

**DL:** The issue of "standards" is much discussed but little defined by our critics. People talk about standards as if the word had some obvious meaning. Because of the political context in which open admissions arose, there was a fear on the part of many that open admissions would also lead to tremendous pressure to give people respectable grades just for showing up—that the University would turn into a diploma mill. There was another side that said these students were ineducable. In other words, it was a hoax to whet their ambitions for higher education only to have them flunk out. So CUNY was in what appeared to be a no-win situation.

**PT:** But the data in *Changing the Odds* don't reflect that at all, do they?

**DL:** CUNY has not turned into a diploma mill, nor did everybody flunk out. The point is that substantial numbers of students who would not have had an opportunity to go to college at all were able to seize the CUNY opportunity and make something of it. Once they got on the education ladder, many were able to climb to the highest rungs.

**PT:** What can CUNY faculty learn from

**"The stereotype of a dropout necessarily being an educational failure is not supported by our data."**

*Changing the Odds?*

**DL:** About our success. I think that our data give voice to the conclusion that the efforts of CUNY faculty have paid off in the lives of the students. So in a certain sense—although many don't believe it—this university, historically a symbol of mobility in American society both in occupational and intellectual terms, is still doing for newer groups what it used to do for previous student generations.

**PT:** You began teaching here the same year CUNY adopted the open admissions policy. Your scholarship also began that year. This can't be a coincidence.

**DL:** Well, I have thought about why God picked me. In the '60s, I was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania. I was on

sabbatical, and spent a year at Columbia, and then I had an offer from CUNY and extended my leave from Penn for a year. My area of interest had always been in the sociology of education, particularly education and social inequality. Vice Chancellor Timothy Healy was in charge of getting the open admissions policy together. CUNY desperately needed to start a research effort, and I was one of the people identified. It was an opportunity I think few academics have in the social sciences...to really do something in evaluating policies that can make a difference in people's lives.

**PT:** At the beginning of the Fall 1970 semester, open admissions swelled the freshman class from 20,000 to 35,000.

**DL:** Obviously, the most visible sense of the changed reality was the issue of crowding. Visiting City College that year, I saw classes being held in trailers. There was a lot of jerry-built stuff—Quonset huts at Lehman.

**PT:** And the faculty response?

**DL:** Some felt it was the end of their academic lives; they were devastated by the culture shock. But the '60s was the time of the War on Poverty and the Great Society. The idea that social policy could and should be used to advance equity was one tributary that led to open admissions. We were on the cutting edge of educational equity nationally. We sensed that all of these sentiments converged in the University, that this magnificent experiment was going forward.

**PT:** Did you use your own classroom experiences in your research?

**DL:** I've had the opportunity to sense the issues in students' lives that make their college-going an experience vastly different from most of us who went to college long ago and from more advantaged backgrounds. Consider how long it takes some students to graduate—seven, eight, up to 10 years. A lot of critics think if it takes you that long to get through college, you can't be a serious student. You must be lazy. The stories can be heartbreaking, the difficulties in just getting to the library and getting papers done, in checking their own three kids' homework, getting them to bed, getting household chores done, then starting to study at one o'clock.... The flavor of these stories does not come through in the statistical work. There's a sense of students' struggle I could not have felt if I had not had them in my classes.

**PT:** In your March 1996 study, "Leaving CUNY: Destinations of Students Who Depart from the University," you demonstrate that students defined as "leavers" eventually complete their bachelor's in a window of time that correlates with disparities in household income, dependents, and other factors. Nearly 60% of 1990 entrants are projected to receive their degree in less than 10 years. What inspired you to conduct this study?

**DL:** CUNY has taken a terrible beating over its so-called low graduation rates. Now, this is a function of a number of things. First of all, it's a function of the time lens that you use to focus. If you use a four-year, or so-called "on time," lens, or even a five- or six-year lens, particularly in the case of minority students, you will miss



Professor David Lavin

half of the eventual graduates. The public issue of graduation from CUNY is a function of how far down the educational time line you're willing to look.

**PT:** So you went back to work?

**DL:** In the summer of 1995 we looked afresh at the attrition rates of the class of 1990. We surveyed missing students who had not earned a CUNY degree. Lo and behold, we found a number of astounding things. One is that half of the students who leave CUNY without graduating transfer to a non-CUNY college. Another stunning finding: There's a stereotype of drop-outs as those who either have no motivation or are so badly prepared that they either do poorly, get discouraged, or flunk out.

The fact of the matter is that half the students who leave CUNY do so in good academic standing. The stereotype of a dropout necessarily being an educational failure is not supported by our data. Of course, five years is not a sufficient time frame. If we go out eight years and take transfers into account, we begin to see graduation rates from bachelor's programs that are at or above the national rates for public colleges and universities, which is to say well over 60%.

**PT:** How have the critics responded to this?

**DL:** They like to repeat the old myths... "the University is spending money on students who can't cut it. There's really no pay-off for the taxpayer." It's very clear from our follow-up research that this is not the case. The data show that CUNY degrees pay off in the labor market. Students with bachelor's degrees are earning about \$12,000 to \$13,000 a year more than high school graduates. Students who go on to get graduate degrees are making around \$20,000 more. Educational credentials and earnings move in tandem up the very same ladder.

**PT:** Is it possible to calculate the revenues earned by these students?

**DL:** We aggregated all these open admissions students and looked at them, say 14 years after open admissions started. We considered, in one year of the mid-'80s, how much more did these students earn than if they had not gone to college? The answer is that they earned in one year \$67 million more than they would have earned in the absence of open admissions. If a work career is roughly 30 years in length and \$67 million is accumulated year after year, at the end of their work careers the increase in their earnings should be more than \$2 billion. That means a lot of tax revenue for the City and the State and the

(Continued on page 6)



## New Window on Puerto Rican Migration

Reproduced here are two pictures from the Historical Archives of the Puerto Rican Migration, which have recently come to reside at Hunter College. They provide a glimpse into the continuing educational concerns of this community.

The picture above, taken by an unidentified photographer in the 1940s, shows a group of farm workers during an English class in a migrant camp. The Puerto Rican government sponsored a program of agricultural labor for seasonal farm work, and the Archive contains a wealth of information about the experiences of these workers. Luis R. Diaz took the picture at right, which records a demonstration in the early 1960s by various Puerto Rican and other Latino organizations in New York City pressing, as one of the placards demands, for "quality integrated education."

This last May the President of Hunter College, David A. Caputo, and Juan Flores, the Director of Hunter's Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, celebrated the formal transfer to Centro custody of the Migration archives, a valuable collection of Puerto Rican government records. Covering the years 1930 to 1989, these materials constitute the most extensive gathering of documents on the Puerto Rican migration in existence. Among its contents are more than 1,000 photographs, films, newspa-

pers, and a wide range of miscellaneous documents.

These archives testify to the Puerto Rican community's continuous efforts in pressing for social and institutional progress and to the contributions Puerto Ricans have made wherever they have settled. For further information about the Migration archives or other collections at the Centro, which is housed in the Hunter Library, please contact me or Pedro Juan Hernandez. —**Nelida Perez**, Director of the Centro Library



(Continued from page 5)

IRS. This data clearly show that open admissions is an investment that pays big dividends. Judging from initial evidence it appears to be better even than job training. Education, I think, is a better way to go.

**PT:** Lately, especially during the final weeks of the Presidential campaign, we have heard a repeated chorus celebrating access.

**DL:** The question is access to what. The President celebrates access, but when you read between the lines, he thinks that everybody should at least have access to a vocational program in a community college. But the labor market is requiring more and more elevated credentials. The associate's degree is not a big ticket to the American dream unless it is linked with a realistic shot at transfer to a bachelor's program. The bachelor's degree comes closer, but is now the absolute minimum defining who is eligible for postgraduate study, as always the gateway to the best-rewarded jobs.

**PT:** What remains to be studied in open admissions, and what are you working on right now?

**DL:** One of the critical issues about the policy is whether it will enhance the lives of the children of the first generations of open admissions students. We're now planning a study of the second generation because

those original open admissions students are now in mid-life. We want to find out where those children are.

**PT:** What will be the barometers for that study?

**DL:** Educational attainments and the labor market. Basically we will examine if there is a kind of momentum or a trajectory to the educational careers of the offspring that seems more like what middle class or more advantaged people experience. We also want to look again at these former students at mid-life. Is there evidence that the benefits of the open admissions policy have continued to unfold? Not only in terms of their work experience but also in terms of how they feel about themselves and how they see their lives and how they see the role of education in their lives. These projects are now at an early stage.

**PT:** If, at the conclusion of this conversation, you were made Governor of New York State—and, while we are at it, Mayor of New York City—what would you do for CUNY apropos of our discussion of open admissions?

**DL:** (at a loss for the first time in 90 minutes) Well...I think that CUNY needs to ....I never fantasized about this so much! One thing I would do is urge the attuning of financial aid to the realities of college-go-

COMPUTER INNOVATION FROM BARUCH

## Kiosk to Traveler: "Talk to Me"

The next time you find yourself in Penn Station, take a moment to stroll over to the track 21 entrance of the LIRR Terminal, and make the acquaintance of one of Baruch College's newest "graduates." You will find on display all of the qualities appropriate for a public servant: accessibility, talkativeness, and impressive knowledge. Not bad for a two-month-old...and it knows how to attract attention, too.

Just don't try to shake hands. Go instead for the tactile map—it's part of the "Talking Kiosk" or, to use its full name, Talking Directory Display System. The product of advanced multi-media technology, TDDS employs a raised-line map, large print, and speech to present carefully crafted way-finding information to help the visually impaired navigate complex spaces.

TDDS, the first station of its kind, was designed and developed by the Baruch College Computer Center for Visually Impaired People in concert with the American Foundation for the Blind and the Stein Partnership. Also helping to assure TDDS's timely graduation was the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Federal Transit Administration, and Project ACTION of the Easter Seal Society. It was unveiled for a five-month test period on Sept. 9 by LIRR President Thomas Prendergast and Baruch President Matthew Goldstein.

The kiosk consists of computers, speakers, a touch tablet with a tactile map, and a touch tone-type keypad. When not in use, the system remains in an "attract" mode, announcing its presence and inviting users to try it out. A proximity detector senses an approach and begins an interactive session.

Information on all local transit system fares and schedules, Amtrak, lost-and-found, police services, and station amenities is accessed through a voice-mail menu



or through a "touch and tell" mode that is activated by touching the map. All spoken messages are displayed in large print for those with some vision.

Karen Gourgey, director of the Computer Center, reports, "I am very happy with the kiosk's first few months in service. Our tracking indicates it is being used frequently, and many patrons have responded helpfully and enthusiastically to the verbal questionnaire we present them before they catch their train."

## UPGRADE FOR CUNY HOME PAGE

The City University home page on the World Wide Web—found at <http://www.cuny.edu>—has recently been redesigned to offer a vast array of CUNY-related information to students, faculty, staff, and interested visitors.

Information on tuition, admissions, financial aid/scholarships, counseling, and course-planning on the 20 campuses is accessible through the Web site and links to individual campus home pages. Links to job listings will be valuable to the two-thirds of CUNY students who work.

Important news is posted on the home page, such as data on budget and enrollment, information about members of the Board of Trustees and its schedule of meetings, which are open to the public. A section titled "News & Events" displays recent press releases, CUNY-TV listings, as well as the latest issue of *CUNY•Matters*. Pertinent new research is also occasionally featured, most recently the book *Changing the Odds*, a study of the open admissions policy at CUNY.

A "Resources & Projects" section links users to the CUNY+ library database and such sites as the American Social History Project, CETUS, and NetTech, which are collaborative academic networks. One such project is the award-winning New York Online Access to Health (NOAH), which offers information on a variety of health topics and on local care providers in both English and Spanish.

The CUNY Web site also contains links to other pertinent Web pages such as the New York Public Library, the Library of Congress, the College Board, and state and federal educational offices. It is administered and maintained by the University Office of Computing and Information Services.

ing. I wouldn't have a TAP program that basically provides support under the idea that it take just four years to get through school. We need to peg it to the realities.

**PT:** Anything else, Mr. Governor-Mayor?

**DL:** I have mixed feelings on the issue of the rising proportion of adjuncts. The CUNY faculty is becoming a big gerontology club. In my department at Lehman College, I was actually put on the block to be retrenched last year because I am the most recently hired person!

**PT:** In 1970.

**DL:** Twenty-five years later I'm the newest hire. There were some others who didn't get tenure along the way, but we're talking here about an age structure. Governors and mayors should ask: What is going to happen to knowledge? There are new techniques that young scholars, young Turks know that older people don't know. Younger scholars are more cutting edge in terms of what students are exposed to, but they also help to socialize older faculty. I think it is an extremely serious threat to the intellectual vitality and quality of a faculty that we have been unable to hire new blood. We need to support our educational institutions at their most fundamental, functional, level, and this certainly is one of them.

**PT:** Thank you. ♦

# Reconnaissance from the Battlefields of Memory

John Jay Professor of History **Mike Wallace** has just published a collection of essays, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Temple University Press), in which he examines "the way Americans have grappled with the preservation and presentation of history in public settings." Among the topics he addresses, mostly concerning events since World War II, are presentations on Ellis Island, several museum exhibition controversies, the history of the historic preservation movement, and, in the title essay, the Mickey Mouse-eye's view of history. The following excerpt has been adapted, with Prof. Wallace's kind permission, from his introduction, "Battlefields of Memory."

In the early 1990s, Serbian troops besieging cities in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina set their artillery to blowing up museums, monuments, libraries, archives, mosques, and churches. Not content to evict or eradicate their enemies, Serbian hyper-nationalists scoured away every evidence of long-standing Croat or Muslim occupation of coveted territories—an effort at historic cleansing.

Fifty years later, when the Nazis had also tried to erase a people and their past, a group of guerilla scholars managed to save memories, if not lives. In the doomed Warsaw Ghetto, historian Emmanuel Ringelbaum led an underground effort to document life in the Jewish quarter. Several dozen writers, teachers, rabbis, and historians maintained a chronicle, recorded deportations, commissioned papers (one on the effects of starvation), and collected posters, decrees, and copies of underground newspapers.

On the eve of destruction they placed this archive in milk cans and metal boxes and buried them deep beneath the city streets. In a posthumous triumph for these historians, one milk can was unearthed in 1946 and another surfaced in 1950; the exhumed work went on to inform the vast enterprise of Holocaust commemoration that blossomed in Israel, the United States, and Germany itself.

These are extreme examples of the interplay between power and memory, a major theme of *Mickey Mouse History*. Yet they are so extreme they might seem extraneous to a book that explores the place of history in contemporary American culture. Fervent arguments over collective memory puzzle most Americans, who find it hard to get passionate about the past and to take it seriously.

The past is not our favorite tense. It seems dead and done with. We often say History is a repository of names and dates



Professor Mike Wallace

school children memorize, regurgitate, and forget. Or it is a listing of prior achievements that, like those in the *Guinness Book of Records*, are certain to be soon surpassed. To cuttingly dismiss someone, we say, "He's history."

Ironically, the ahistorical strain that runs through our culture is deeply rooted in our history and economy. Our Revolutionary forebears believed they had broken free both of England and the past's dead hand. Shattering tradition's chains became the young nation's go-ahead mantra. In succeeding centuries, millions of immigrants shed their pasts and moved to America, land of the future. Capitalist entrepreneurs repeatedly dismantled customary constraints on profitable invest-

ment. Few Americans, even the elite, had a stake in the past.

This impatience with the past had its attractive qualities. It fostered innovation: U.S. economist Joseph Schumpeter hailed capitalism's capacity for "creative destruction." It gave Americans an exhilarating feeling of freedom, a sense they were exempt from the crushing weight of history under which places like the Balkans seemed buried. Yet ultimately this feeling was and is illusory. It is not, in fact, possible to step outside of time. A culture that generates such fantasies might fairly be called "historicidal."

Yet ahistoricism is only one way Americans relate to the past. It is a powerful tendency, but by no means all-embracing or determinative. Many people are deeply interested in specific histories—their own biographies (and the story of their generation), the lives of family forebears, the lore of their local communities, particular chapters from the national saga, notably the Civil War...

And what of our era? How stands the balance between memory and forgetting? Arguably, we have been on a heritage binge and remain thoroughly obsessed with the past. We have preserved and restored old urban centers and historic land-

This milk can, discovered on Dec. 1, 1950, contained documentation on life and death in the city's wartime Jewish ghetto; pictured left is the author of *Mickey Mouse History*.



scapes. We have constructed vast numbers of museums and halls of fame that explore an astonishing range of subjects. Retrofashion in clothing is big; so is golden oldyism in music (recycled rock bands, revived musicals); and postmodern architects assiduously deploy historic flourishes. Family reunions are popular. Genealogical investigation is booming. Monuments and memorials have made a comeback. And we crowd into historic sites, collect antiques, consume historical novels, take in costume

epics, and devour innumerable docudramas and documentaries on television.

Much of this interest, to be sure, is quite compatible with an ahistorical bent. These various pasts may be interesting places to visit and explore, but they are often imagined as unproblematic givens that remain segregated from the present. We rummage around in them for pleasure or profit, we appropriate them, consume them, but we do not focus on the ligaments connecting then and now, nor acknowledge the past's ongoing constitutive power in the present.

With the coming of the country's culture wars, however, hot heritage skirmishes have broken out all along the history front. Some of these conflicts over collective memory have been fought in the educational arena: debates on curricula, polemics over university canons, attacks on the *National Standards for U.S. History*, efforts to dismantle the NEH.

But much of the combat has taken place outside academia, on my beat: the terrain now known as Public History. I think of the stormy reaction to the exhibition, "The West as America," which opened at the National Museum of American Art in 1991, and the furor that led to the cancellation of the Enola Gay exhibition at the Air and Space Museum in 1994-95. Or of the fight to preserve the African Burial Ground in New York City and the acrimonious (but instructive) debates that engulfed the Columbus quincennial. Disney's plans for an amusement park near Washington based on historical themes excited intense crossfire as well; corporate officials finally decided it was a Lost Cause too.

If America's conflicts over history have been less blunt and brutal than in many other societies—in large measure because the state was seldom heavily involved here—they have not been less consequential. They have, in fact, been affected by considerations of power.

America's history wars are not likely to be settled with shot and shell—though some of Newt Gingrich's more bombastic denunciations of his opponents carry a whiff of grapeshot. It is, however, quite possible that future encounters over the nature of the American past will partake more of the deadly seriousness with which they are customarily fought elsewhere on the planet. If so, perhaps my essays may serve as premonition, and assist in preparation for combat to come. ♦

## In Memoriam

Merdis Williams Temple, for 15 years the Chancellor's Office and 7th floor receptionist, passed away on Oct. 30. She began as a work-study student from York College. Her dedication, talent, loyalty and persistence were a source of strength and inspiration to all who knew her. Her eight children also attended CUNY colleges. Merdis, pictured with participants in a Bring Our Daughters to Work Day at the Central Office, was a charismatic community leader on behalf of her church, the Friendship Baptist Church; the New York Coalition of 100 Black

Women; the Eastern Star; the Elks; and many other organizations. She will be greatly missed.

Photo, André Beckles



## VERTIGO, THE PREQUEL; HITCHCOCK, THE CD-ROM

Readers will recall the excerpt in the Summer 1996 issue of *CUNY•Matters* from Hunter English Professor Louise DeSalvo's memoir, which she titled *Vertigo*, in part because she saw Alfred Hitchcock's thriller 11 times in one week when it opened in 1958.

She was doubtless cheering, along with Queens College's Hitchcock authority, Professor Robert Kapsis, when a fully restored version of the long-forgotten film was screened on Oct. 4 at the New York Film Festival. "It was really lost until 1983," Kapsis says. "It was lucky that the camera negative and the soundtrack, including the history-making Bernard Herrman score, had been preserved.

*Vertigo* not only stands as Hitchcock's best film, it is considered one of the great cinematic achievements of all time."

Prof. Kapsis is currently completing work on a CD-ROM, intended for teaching film at the college level, that will include exhaustive documentation of Hitchcock films and their social impact. It will consist of text, stills, music, audio and film clips in an interactive format. Kapsis is also collaborating with Professor Royal Brown of the Queens Film Studies Program on a study of the film scores of Bernard Herrman.

As to another *Vertigo* binge when the movie goes into general release, DeSalvo is doubtful. "I'm a little saner now," she avers.

# New Faculty, Fascinating Careers

By Gary Schmidgall

It can be jarring to hear the Chief Librarian at John Jay College of Criminal Justice refer casually to “the year I spent in prison.”

However, **Larry Sullivan** delivers the remark with a suspicious flair, and he seems practiced at giving his listeners pause to imagine the cause of his incarceration. Shockingly overdue books? Breaking their spines? Perpetrating graffiti in the margins? Or, perhaps more fashionably, some larcenous breaking-and-entering in cyberspace?

Sullivan divulged his past in small talk at a luncheon hosted by Chancellor W. Ann Reynolds last spring for 30 new City University faculty members of the “Class of ‘96.” Over chocolate mousse in the Robert J. Kibbee Board Room at the Central Office, Sullivan put all suspicions to rest with a more benign but intriguing explanation.

In the late 1970s he applied for the position of director of the library at the Maryland State Penitentiary. The Ph.D. in medieval French history and brand-new M.L.S. from Johns Hopkins on his vita were all very nice, but what won him the job was the fact (*not* mentioned on the vita) that for four years he had tended bar at The Wigwam, a shoot-em-up Baltimore dive famed for its clientele of once and future felons.

The experience behind bars did succeed in giving much of his subsequent scholarship a felonious bent: He has published *The Prison Reform Movement: Forlorn Hope* (1990) and last summer traveled to Russia to give a paper on “Reading in American Prisons.” Though a “new” hire, Sullivan is an old CUNY hand, having been Chief Librarian at Lehman College before commencing a six-year tenure as the Chief of Rare Books and Special Collections at the Library of Congress.

Also present for the lively and wide-ranging discussion among CUNY’s newly arrived scholars was **Jonathan Hill** of the Kingsborough Community College Department of Travel and Tourism. Hill underlined the explosive growth in his field of expertise, tourism marketing, by noting that tourism now is the global economy’s largest employer and generates an astonishing \$665 billion in tax revenues worldwide.

The tourism curriculum and enrollments, Hill reported, are mirroring the industry’s growth, and he believes that the field is finally gaining the respect it deserves. “Our students must have superior critical thinking and organizational skills for highly responsible upper-level positions in hotel and resort management, airlines, and tourist boards,” he noted.

Hill, a lifelong New Yorker, retains a special fondness for Russia as a result of working for Aeroflot during the crucial first four years of Glasnost. But, he says, the part of the world that currently tantalizes him most as a tourist is the southern part of Chile.

Though **Daniel Broe** is a new member of Lehman College’s Department of Geology and Geography, his speciality is a far cry



Elizabeth Rosen of the Chancellor’s Office chats with John Jay’s new Chief Librarian, Larry Sullivan, about his experience behind the bar—and behind bars. Center rear, new Hunter College Professor of History Edward O’Donnell. Photo, André Beckles

from the wide-open spaces that Hill yearns for. Broe is one of a new breed of urban geographers, and much of his analytic and research energies are focused on two of the great questions facing American business in the late 20th century: to mall or not to mall?—and where? A specialist in transportation planning, Broe has also developed expertise in retail site location, as well as the creation of models for the optimum siting and spacing of chains of stores.

**Dina Dabhany-Miraglia** has more playful sites up her sleeves. As a new Queensborough Community College Speech Communications & Theater Arts professor, her particular excitement was over the development of a new Summer Theater Workshop that would run the gamut from stand-up comedy to children’s theater, where the three- to five-minute plays the thing. She also lives her motto—“language and theater can’t be separated”—in her ESL and speech classes, which, she says, will soon spawn a theater-based ESL textbook.

Dabhany-Miraglia’s remark, “Colorful is my middle name,” is no idle boast. First, she goes back to Jack Kerouac: “I knew him, and I’m not proud of it! He was awful...gross. He wanted women to sit at his feet!” To the countercultural performance space born, she had 200 modern dance/performance pieces nationwide to her credit by the age of 30. In her next decade, with exquisite schizophrenia, she led her own Yemenite Performance Art Company (numbering as many as 32 artists) while coolly earning a Columbia Ph.D. in linguistic anthropology. The speciality in which she publishes is Semitic linguistics, notably in Judeo-Yemeni.

Can an “old beatnik,” as Dabhany-Miraglia styles herself, find happiness on a campus? Adept at speaking or reading nearly a dozen languages, she replies: “I’m loving it, mainly because my students come from all over the world. My openness to, my fascination with, their languages makes them comfortable, and of course they are always pushing me into new linguistic insights.”

A new member of Baruch College’s fledgling School of Public Affairs, **Gregg Van Ryzin**, brings several years of experience in Washington, D.C. research firms (notably,

working for the Department of Housing and Urban Development) to his classes in research, statistics, and housing policy.

As a specialist in low-income housing policy whose doctoral dissertation in psychology (from the CUNY Graduate School) focused on housing for the elderly, Van Ryzin’s pleasures on arriving at the School have centered on the excitement of being part of its founding and the anticipation of Baruch’s great

leap forward into advanced information and data-gathering technology. On the other hand, he worries that heavier teaching loads in the future might hinder his research. One topic on which he is now publishing, resident management of low-income housing, has become the focus of especially keen interest in recent years.

Following studies in Georgia, **Ann Brown** came north to earn her Ph.D. in anatomy at New York Medical College. After post-doctoral work she joined the Medgar Evers College Biology Department, where she is pursuing research in hematology, with special emphasis on leukemia and forms of anemia. When she comes home from her anatomy and embryology courses, Brown relies on her classical training as a flutist for relaxation. She has been im-

pressed by the “excellent interaction” she has had with her students at Medgar Evers.

One of **Michael Hurbis-Cherrier**’s most cherished movies last year was the Oscar-nominated Italian film, *Il Postino*. In fact, Hunter College’s new teacher of film production, screenwriting, and screen direction, who is an experienced alternative film and video maker, is about to embark on his own project on Pablo Neruda (the poet who is a prominent character in *Il Postino*). To his surprised delight—“after the movie I thought it would be impossible!”—he was able to acquire rights to six poems from Neruda’s *Odes to Common Things* for a documentary he shot recently.

Hurbis-Cherrier’s works have run a striking gamut, from a simple meditation on a single leap of a modern dancer to a several-year project titled *History Lessons*, which explores the first-person narratives, combat stories, and war poetry of two cohorts of Vietnam War veterans, one reintegrated into society in Michigan and the other in the Veterans Administration Hospital in Boston. Concerning teaching at Hunter, Hurbis-Cherrier observed, “I’ve taught in several places, and what has amazed me most, even amid the tensions of retrenchment that greeted me when I arrived, is the incredible dedication of the faculty to their students.”

The presence of one new faculty member, **Louise Hoffman**, was particularly missed. As a professor in the Department of Hospitality Management at NYC Technical College, she could have provided an expert review on the caterer’s country mesclun salad and chicken roulade. When Hoffman called with her regrets, she explained that on the day of the luncheon she taught a class from 8:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. When I inquired what course required such a marathon, Hoffman replied, “Baking and pastry arts.”

If it’s Wednesday, it must be soufflés. ♦

## CUNY EXPANDS WEB ACCESS IN QUEENS

The CUNY by-word, “access to excellence,” nowadays encompasses full electronic access to information. In its historic role of outreach to the community, the University has recently collaborated with the Queens Borough Public Library to provide just that for the residents of Queens.

The collaboration is historic, for the Library this summer became CUNY’s first major client as an Internet Service Provider (ISP). The collaboration also makes sense, putting the nation’s largest urban university system in tandem with the top circulating library in the nation for 10 consecutive years.

In August, users of computers at the Borough’s Central Library began to enjoy expanded and much faster access to the Internet and World Wide Web. Ultimately computers at all 62 of the Library’s branches will be fully linked to cyberspace with no charge to the public. The Library’s

plan is to install from five to 25 computers (400 in all) in each branch by next summer.

Though previous Internet connections had been sufficient, says Library Director Gary E. Strong, “using CUNY as our ISP is a pre-emptive step” to accommodate a projected huge increase in usage. “The advantages to the Library are more capacity, better service, and lower costs,” he adds.

This arrangement, supervised by CUNY’s Office of Budget, Finance and Information Services, cements the Library’s already strong ties with the University. Director Strong serves on CUNY’s task force on Libraries and Educational Technology, and Queens College offers a Library Science degree program attended by many Queens Library employees. As Chancellor W. Ann Reynolds observes, “This collaboration will benefit both our institutions and make Internet access available to many more of our mutual constituents.”

## TLC for *The Tender Land*

**Richard Barrett**, Director of the Brooklyn College Opera Theater, reports on his experience of conducting a ground-breaking production of Aaron Copland's lone opera.

Mounting an opera, any opera, complete with singers, orchestra, sets, and costumes, is an enormous undertaking. Add to this the problems of filming a production for television and the difficulties are multiplied. Perhaps that is why, until recently, Aaron Copland's only major operatic work, *The Tender Land*, had never been produced as he originally intended: as music theater for television.

The Brooklyn College Conservatory of Music's production of *The Tender Land*, created in conjunction with the College's Television/Radio Department, was conceived from start to finish for the camera's eye, and thus constituted a kind of world premiere for this exuberant yet poignant work about the passage from adolescence to adulthood.

An artist of tremendous vision, Copland saw in the early 1950s the possibilities for opera on the infant medium of television and he eagerly accepted a commission from NBC. *The Tender Land* was inspired by James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, with its affecting photographs by Walker Evans. But during its composition

the shadow of McCarthyism fell across America, and Copland's friendship with such suspicious characters as Leonard Bernstein and Marc Blitzstein tainted his own career. Lecture invitations suddenly vanished, and NBC canceled the commission.

I have mounted several traditional productions of *The Tender Land* in the past but always found them unsatisfying. Somehow, the score's intimate portrait of a struggling American family did not rise to the oversized demands of the grand opera stage.



other private donors, and generous support and encouragement from Chancellor Reynolds, the project finally got off the ground.

The enthusiasm of Nancy Hager, Chair of the Conservatory, for the project was also important. When so many kibbitzers were saying "You can't do this" or "Why are you trying to do this?," she made it a point to be encouraging. "It was ideal repertory for us," Hager

*Richard Barrett, holding score, confers with his cast on the Tender Land set, which was based closely on a Walker Evans photograph in James Agee's Now Let Us Praise Famous Men; center, bass-baritone Holden Connor.*

observes. "*The Tender Land* focuses on the courage, vision, and determination of American pioneers, and these qualities live on in the students and faculty of the Conservatory, which is appropriately the home of the Institute for Studies in American Music."

The result of this teamwork was a remarkable opportunity for the College's music and TV/Radio students, who had the chance to work with highly trained professionals on a major production as singers, instrumentalists, technical and camera crews. In the outside world, a venture of this size and complexity might have demanded a \$1 million budget.

It was a learning experience, especially for the singers. Unlike a live opera, where everything comes together (one hopes) on opening night, a television performance must be accomplished in stages. First, the orchestra audio track was recorded separately—one of the most difficult parts of the project for me personally. As conductor, I had to anticipate how the singers would interpret their parts and then make sure the orchestra track accommodated them. The worst part was timing the *capella* passages.

Next, the singers went into the studio to record their parts on both audio and video. Skip Brunner, the Director of Conservatory Technologies, did a great job of providing us with the orchestra background during live on-stage taping of the action. Happily, the passion of our stage director, Stuart McClelland, for the piece equaled mine.

At first, it was a shock for the singers, who did not simply sing through their roles, take their curtain calls, and go home. Sometimes a scene would require 10 or 12 takes, which forced them to find ways to stay vocally fresh through a long day of shooting and ways to make the words they were singing *mean* something every single time.

Now that our *Tender Land* is "in the can," the performers and production team are feeling truly vindicated by the way it has been received. Already the performance has won major awards, including being a finalist for the Telly Awards and winning the Crystal Award of Distinction from the Communicator Awards.

My personal reward, of course, is that now I no longer have to search for a way to make *The Tender Land* "work" for me. That our production succeeded by following Copland's original intentions makes the experience all the more gratifying. ♦

### VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

## Upholding Affirmative Action

By Vita C. Tauss

University Affirmative Action Office; former UAAC Member

Imagine this scenario: You have been authorized to hire a new colleague for your department, but you must complete your search within three months. Your affirmative action officer calls you to set up an appointment and forwards to your office a set of forms that outline the process to be followed. The immensity of the task seems daunting, and you wonder: Why is the affirmative action officer involved? What about the current debate regarding affirmative action? What is the role of affirmative action at CUNY?

These and related policy considerations fall squarely in the lap of the University Affirmative Action Committee (UAAC). The Committee, composed of faculty and administrators from the campuses, studies extramural practices, recommends policy, and examines ways to increase institutional accountability.

Established in 1984, the Committee sets its agenda each year in consultation with Vice Chancellor for Faculty and Staff Relations Brenda Richardson Malone. Its work has centered on two strategies. First, Committee members pay close attention to the reporting procedures and other documentation required for campuses' compliance with national and local affirmative action regulations. Second, the Committee advises the Vice Chancellor on matters of concern to the protected class groups in the University:

women, blacks, Hispanics, Asian-American/Pacific Islanders, Italian-Americans and American Indian/Alaska natives.

Dr. Ruth Lugo, UAAC Chair and Dean of Student Affairs at LaGuardia Community College, speaks with enthusiasm of the Committee's role. "I am quite pleased with the skills and experience within the Committee and throughout CUNY," she says. "UAAC is currently working on three areas: increasing awareness of the benefits of affirmative action to CUNY; developing recruitment and retention strategies for faculty and staff; and monitoring the affirmative action plans at each campus."

Over the years, the Committee has implemented a number of recommendations that demonstrate its commitment to immediate concerns as well as to long-range planning. For example, UAAC has

- reviewed the University workforce, developing procedures for auditing applicant pools and hiring patterns;
- conducted an in-depth survey of the responsibilities of Campus Affirmative Action Officers and recommended changes in their role in the affirmative action process;
- examined the roles, work and goals of Campus Affirmative Action Committees.

The Committee generally presents its findings in the form of recommendations used to provide guidance to policymakers within the University.

Having served on the Committee since its inception, Dr. Don Watkins, Professor

Emeritus of Baruch College, is something of a UAAC "elder statesperson." He has the advantage of the long view of UAAC and has witnessed first-hand the positive contributions made by affirmative action. "Institutions have moved to eliminate irrelevant barriers to appointment, retention, and promotion . . . and have developed programs that expand opportunity and lead to more diverse and inclusive communities." Firm in his belief that the Committee's mission and procedures are strongly needed at CUNY, Watkins views the establishment of UAAC as a strong gesture in support of affirmative action and sees the Committee's role as a positive force in the University.

The Committee currently consists of the following 12 members: Dr. Humberto Canate, Hostos Community College; Dr. Nancy Lay, City College of New York; Dr. Ruth Lugo, UAAC Chair, LaGuardia Community College; Ms. Gloria Medonne, City College; Dr. Pamela Trotman Reid, Graduate School & University Center; Prof. Joseph Gil Riley, Bronx Community College; Dr. Marlene Springer, President, College of Staten Island; Dr. Gloria Waldman, York College; Dr. Don Watkins, Baruch College; Dr. Clara Watnick, Hostos Community College; Dr. Annette Schaefer, New York City Technical College; and Dean Gloriana Waters, University Affirmative Action Office.

If you are faced with the scenario outlined above, take heart. While the process may seem complicated, with planning it can go very smoothly—as voices of experience will be pleased to demonstrate to you. For further information, contact Jean Chen in the University Office of Affirmative Action, (212) 794-5374. ♦

### LAST WORDS

"Born 28 Nov<sup>r</sup> 1757 in London & has died several times since. —William Blake, 16 January 1826"

*Entry by Blake in the autograph album of his friend and patron William Upcott. The visionary poet and artist died, presumably for the last time, in 1827. Friedrich Nietzsche, it appears, was of Blake's mind. In 1888 he observed, "One pays dearly for immortality: one has to die several times while still alive."*

# Stranger Than Non-Fiction

For most of his 20 years at New York City Technical College **Greg Donaldson** has taught *Developmental Reading*. In 1994 Ticknor & Fields published *The Ville*, his acclaimed documentary study of street life in Brooklyn's Brownsville. Here, he describes his students' tough reviews.

In Luigi Pirandello's classic play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the characters refuse to reside within the boundaries of the written play. Instead, they bound from the stage during rehearsal and petition the scribe to rewrite the piece from their perspective.

For my Developmental Reading course at New York City Technical College I usually assign 10 books from a range of genres. Last year I ventured to add my own non-fiction book, *The Ville: Cops and Kids in Urban America*, to the reading list for my classes. Of course, college teachers regularly assign their own works. But my book about life in a Brooklyn neighborhood happened to be very much about my students themselves. In a way, they are the ultimate authorities on the "plot" and *dramatis personae* of the action that unfolds in *The Ville*. And, like Pirandello's unruly cast, they began to lobby to have the story told from their point of view. Sometimes the characters in the book even seemed to leap off my pages and into the classroom.

*The Ville* is a tale of two city lives, played out in Brownsville, a community on the eastern end of Brooklyn with a spectacularly schizophrenic history. As the main landing point for Jewish immigrants, Brownsville in the 1930s produced both numerous Nobel Prize winners and—because of organized crime—the nation's highest murder rate. And it has remained a tough place as its demography, but not its poverty and neglect, has changed. How tough? A young Riddick Bowa was afraid to go out on Amboy Street because a bully named "Bummy Mike" kept beating him up. As every Brownsvillian knows, "Bummy" was Mike Tyson. There's a stand-and-fight truculence even in the 'hood's motto: "The Ville—never ran, never will."

In *The Ville's* pages I follow the careers of two young men, an ambitious police officer and a high school student who is both a gang member and an aspiring actor. As my narrative progresses, the officer is involved in shootout after shootout, while the young thespian goes in and out of jail, then back to high school, and finally on to pursue his show business aspirations.

Since the publication of the book, the actor has starred in two major films; the second one, *The Substitute* with Tom Berringer, has recently been released. Since then as well, the cop's partner was killed in a shootout, and he was asked to give the eulogy. He did so, and in the course of his speech he demanded the death penalty for the killer. His words appeared on the front page of a tabloid: SLAIN COP'S PARTNER TO BRONX DA: "DO THE RIGHT THING." I've also been getting calls late at night from a pay phone—from one of the high school student leaders I featured in the book. He's wanted now for homicide.

But it is the interaction with my students



Author Greg Donaldson, right, conducting a "vertical search" of a stairwell at Tilden House in the Brownsville section of New York with detective Gary Lemite, whose experiences in the NYPD are featured in *The Ville*. Photo, Jerry Bauer

that is perhaps the most fascinating by-product of *The Ville*.

I knew I was in for some unusual classroom discussion when a young woman in one of my classes begged to differ about my written assessment of the trustworthiness of the aspiring actor in the book. "I spent days with him," I told her. "Everywhere he went, I went. I followed him on dates with him and his girlfriend. I went to jail with him. I read his diaries."

"I was his girlfriend for six months," she countered.

Certainly, it is usual for a writer to have his book reviewed. Sometimes the reviewers even seem to know what they are talking about. Sometimes they don't. But nowadays I collect 25 expert reviews from four different classes every semester. It is like a Ph.D. candidate having his dissertation scrutinized by renowned scholars in his field on a regular basis. Not only are some of the students from Brownsville; they are friends and neighbors of the book's protagonists. The result is a vigorous interaction, a reviewing of events in the text, some of which my students actually witnessed.

This semester one young scholar, perhaps irked by my intrusion into his neighborhood and the lives of his friends, combed the book for the tiniest mistakes. "You couldn't have taken a left off Pennsylvania onto Dumont," he challenged. "It is one way the other way." I thought for a moment. "I was in a police car," I told him. When you are with cops you get to go the wrong way.

The cross-cultural interaction has been rigorous. Every error, no matter how small, threatens to destroy my credibility. I am not a Brooklyn native. I am a white man writing about the lives of African Americans, and for the young people who read my book, I am also from an alien generation.

During a talk I gave last year at Spofford, a Bronx correctional facility for youth, I faced a particularly hard audience. "What could you know about us?" asked those who had not read *The Ville*. Their testing was fast, furious, and utterly fair. But after a half hour I had a test of my own. "I was in Hollywood a while back," I told

them. "There was talk of a movie deal, but I'm worried they'll take *The Ville* and make it all about violence. They might offer me serious money, but they could just hype the violence and even add to the killing. What should I do?"

"Take the money!" the kids howled.

"You're telling me to take the money for something that could help to destroy your own community?" There was a deep silence, and I added, referring to a familiar celebrity, "Listen, you know Snoop Dogg raps about 'I've got my mind on my money and my money on my mind.' Well, if things are going to get any better, all of us better have more than money on our mind."

One of the benefits of assigning *The Ville* was that my students could learn that I had an understanding of the kind of pressures they live under. Another is that I have learned to appreciate the diversity of my students. Many African Americans are amazed and appalled by the conditions I describe, even though they live very close to them. These students are moving through the gunsmoke world of their neighborhoods with a tunnel vision focused on the American Dream. "I cannot imagine that such things go on," one Caribbean student wrote, referring to the violence I describe. "But now that I have read about it, I understand the anger of American blacks much better."

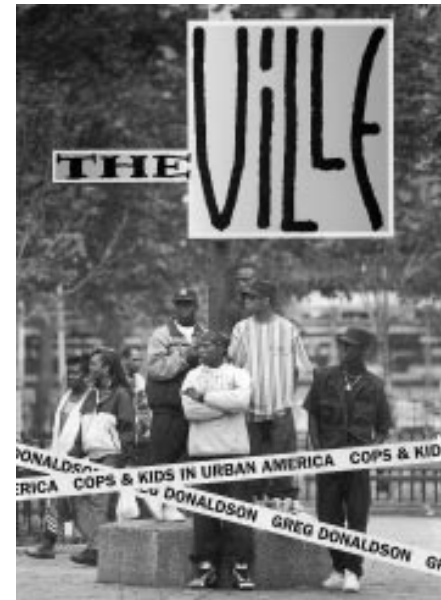
My journalistic research in inner-city neighborhoods has helped me teach in other ways. My linguistic skills, for example, have certainly been refined. One of the current phrases on the street is to "play yourself," which means to tip your hand, reveal your weakness. When a police car pulls up quickly on a group, the person who steps quickly away may be the one with something to hide. If he has an outstanding warrant or an illegal weapon, he will have "played himself."

When my class enters the room for a weekly test I give on the assigned book, I look into their eyes. A young man averts his gaze. "You only read half the assignment, isn't that right, Thomas?" "How'd you know?" he wonders. "You played yourself," I respond.

When the young men in my classes realize I am a student of street slang, it seems to ease their insistence on such language

as an identity badge. But the biggest positive effects have been trust—a narrowing of the gap between teacher and student—and a dissolution of the veil of mystique that can drape itself over writing in general and journalism in particular.

"I find it difficult to read your book," one college student said after 50 pages "because of the mistakes." I winced and asked to him meet me in my office. In the book there is an account of a fistfight in front of his building in which a local tough went toe to toe with a police officer who wanted to prove his bravery. It was an epic battle worthy of gladiators, watched from many windows of the high-rise. The encounter of "Ninja" (the tough's nickname) and "Robocop" was much storied in



the neighborhood afterward, and my student had heard a different version of the incident.

I explained to him about the Rashomon effect, referring to the folk tale in which several eyewitnesses give conflicting accounts of the same incident. Step by step, I told him how I interviewed numerous witnesses and read the reports of arriving officers. As I told him how I cross-checked accounts, I could see his eyes glow with interest in the process.

Finally, he straightened his back and looked me in the eye. "I can do that," he said. ♦

## MASSIVE VOTER DRIVE

Prior to the recent Presidential election, CUNY mounted a massive non-partisan drive to increase voter registration. Chancellor Reynolds particularly urged students at CUNY's 21 campuses to participate in the voting process. Voting forms were distributed to more than 200,000 students in their pre-registration packets at class registration and freshman orientations.

Posters urging turnout at the polls featured such publishing celebrities as Bill Moyers, Anne Rice, Amy Tan, and Alice Walker. "Voting is one way to say hello to your grandchildren" was Walker's message.

The extensive initiative also included making it possible, in mid-fall,

to request a voter registration form through the CUNY home page on the World Wide Web; the formation of a team of Voter Registration Coordinators for each of the campuses; and the distribution throughout the University of thousands of promotional, non-partisan buttons, pens, and brochures.

CUNY's continuing efforts to increase the active electorate were supported this year by Barnes & Noble Inc. and have had considerable impact.

According to Board of Election figures, the CUNY drive earlier this year accounted for 71% of newly registered New York City voters processed through city or educational agencies from November 1995 through June 1996.

## Silver Anniversary for Social Change

The Feminist Press at the City University of New York recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. **Florence Howe**, one of its founders, casts a brief glance back over her long tenure as the Press's only president.

When we began, there were no feminist books or bookstores, no *Ms. Magazine*, no women directors of film. You could not find Virginia Woolf's volumes in paperback in any bookstore, nor other women writers. Even if you were a woman, you probably could not name more than two or three women writers, and your literature professor was unlikely to be a woman. If you were a woman student wanting to become a doctor or a lawyer, your chances were slim unless you were an A+ student and could fit into the unofficial 6% percent quota for women.

When we began in the early 1970s, lawsuits were just in progress to change some of these inequities. But such legal changes, we knew, would not be effective without other, inner changes, those we called changes of consciousness. Women students and their elders needed to know that many thousands before them had written successfully, had worked for social change, and had been instrumental in gaining some rights for women, though much more remained to be done. When we began, Women's Studies—the academic arm of

(Continued from page 4)

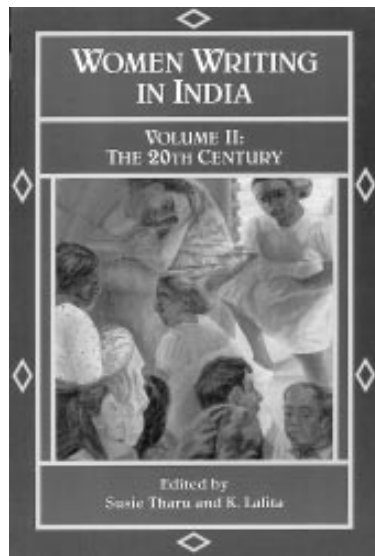
ing spring. Some 25 to 30 law students will train for advocacy on behalf of CUNY students who receive public assistance.

The Initiative is also working with attorneys from the Legal Aid Society, Legal Services, and the Center on Social Welfare Policy and Law to disseminate information about rights of access to education and training and also to coordinate a city-wide rapid response advocacy team to oppose unjust or ill-considered reforms. We also hope to develop a system for tracking, locating, and facilitating the re-enrollment of students who have been forced to leave college because of welfare conflicts or poverty.

On another front, WRI's new Alumni Project is aimed at forming an advocacy group of exemplary CUNY graduates who have become self-supporting. We hope, through them, to combat welfare stereotypes and heighten public awareness of our success in making education an accessible route out of poverty. (If you have names of such alumni, please let us know.)

Finally, WRI is planning to convene its student leaders with CUNY scholars, administrators, community advocates and activists for a series of open, relaxed "vision workshops" designed to encourage collaborative programs and policies to help our fellow New Yorkers to transcend poverty.

Already, WRI student leaders have been called upon to testify at local, state and national hearings and have been invited to speak at press conferences. They have also helped to lead door-to-door, letter-writing, and phone campaigns designed to reach those directly impacted by proposed legislative reforms. And they have been



the movement, I called it—was a new idea. And of course, so were we.

We were a small group of women and men in Baltimore the first year, and then, a year later, on the SUNY campus at Old Westbury. Always there were students who wanted to work with us; some of them became our authors. Always, too, there were other professors, chiefly but not always in literature and history, who advised us about what they wanted to see published, what they needed for their classrooms. And then there were thousands who supported this fledgling press with dollars, fan mail, manuscripts, suggestions for manuscripts, and often volunteer labor.

We began with a mission: to change consciousness and knowledge by providing,

asked to lead presentations and educational forums at numerous local colleges and civic groups such as New York Public Interest Research Group, Care for the Homeless, and the local chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. Their reputation has spread out of state, as well, as signaled by invitations from the Women's Center at Yale University and Dartmouth College. The media also regularly seeks out WRI students to hear their concerns.

A natural result of the Initiative has been the growth of a strong mutual support system among participants. By sharing information and representing one another at fair hearings and recertification interviews, our students have become "family."

It is not by accident that WRI was launched at CUNY, where low tuition draws many students from the New York area who could not otherwise attend college and where nearly 10% of the student body receives Home Relief or AFDC. The current attack on welfare has opened these students' eyes to the ways their lives are linked to public policy, mobilizing them not only to defend their ability to get a college degree but also to promote economic justice for others.

We invite you to share ideas, get involved, refer promising students to us, and help mobilize an effective CUNY voice in welfare reform discussions. I can be reached at the WRI office, Room E1031, at Hunter College (212-772-4091). Given the disappointing new federal legislation, WRI's creative approach to grassroots community organizing will be essential in coming months and years, particularly for impoverished families seeking access to higher education. ♦

These bookjackets for an anthology of Indian writers and a selection of supernatural fiction suggest the range of *The Feminist Press* list. For further information, write for a Press catalogue to 311 East 94th Street, New York, NY 10128 (phone: 360-5790; fax: 348-1241).



through our publications, access to the lost history and culture of women. We were intent on finding and publishing the "missing" books and making them available not only in classrooms but in libraries and homes. In doing this, we also took on the job of supporting the women's studies curriculum, especially by making invisible or "lost" women writers not only "found" but also ready to move into the "mainstream."

As the 1970s moved forward, we recovered major 19th- and 20th-century U.S. women writers now ubiquitous in such venues as the Norton anthologies. Among them were Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Rebecca Harding Davis, Zora Neale Hurston. As the 1980s began, we swerved into the present to restore fiction by living African-Americans who are now household names: Paule Marshall, Dorothy West, Sarah A. Wright, and Louise Meriwether. At the same time we looked across oceans toward Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Where were their women writers?

At first, I was reluctant, wanting to continue preserving our U.S. heritage. But on trips to India in 1977 and again in 1983, when I asked scholars, "Where are the women writers of India?" I was told (by both men and women), "There aren't any." Some men added, "Even if you could find a few, they wouldn't be any good."

Ten years and 200 Indian feminists later, we published two huge volumes called *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present*. It contains selections from 140 authors, almost all of whom had been acclaimed in their own day, then forgotten. Of course, it was gratifying to read Anita Desai, writing about this venture in the *New York Review of Books*, as "revolutionary" in presenting "a view of India in life and history never coherently put together before." For the first time, Indian women could see their history not only as writers but as intellectuals and active participants in the long struggle for women's rights.

Even before the successful debut of the Indian volumes, we were urged to "begin on Africa." What could that mean? India was one huge country, but Africa was one huge continent embracing 53 nations. How could a small non-profit, educational press take on Africa? Where would the

resources come from? How many years?

Few of these questions have yet been answered, but with our co-directors, Prof. Tuzyline Jita Allan of Baruch College and Prof. Abena P.A. Busia of Rutgers University, as well as an aptly prestigious Advisory Board and Executive Committee, we have begun our work. Since we know that women's oral histories and stories, as well as their published and unpublished work, will "write" Africa, we have called the project "Women Writing Africa."

Of course, there are other parts of the world yet to explore. Nor have we abandoned our original mission. In addition to the African-American and working-class writers we have always been committed to, the Press has begun two new series: the Helen Rose Scheuer Jewish Women's Studies series and another, not yet formally named, that will focus on Italian-American writers. We have also continued to publish outstanding children's literature, Asian and Asian-American titles, as well as an original series of cross-cultural memoirs.

How do we manage all this? More personally, how do I manage all this? Some things are very easy, given a talented staff and dedicated Board of Directors. Other tasks are harder, given the volatile book business and the pressure to raise funds for the development of new projects. On the other hand, I continue to feel fortunate to have spent a quarter of a century not only working for social change, but watching it happen.

There are now more than a thousand women's studies programs and centers for research on women, some 70 feminist presses, hundreds of journals, magazines, newsletters, and bookstores—not only in the U.S. but around the world. I am writing this essay from Frankfurt, Germany, the site of the largest book fair in the world, where feminists publishers could meet to discuss co-publishing ventures and, over dinner, to begin planning an international feminist book fair that will look forward to the new century.

I take special pleasure in such work, since I believe that the future of the women's movement, like the future of feminist publishing, teaching, and writing will be international. ♦

### Images of Women: East and West

That's the title of the 1996 Speakers' Series sponsored by the Women's Studies Certificate Program at the Graduate School and University Center. Among the programs this fall are a panel discussion, "Do Images of Women in the Media Harm Women" that took place on Nov. 19; a talk by Prof. Ruth Abrams of the University of Massachusetts on "Jews in the Dutch Women's Suffrage Movement, 1895-1920" (Nov. 25, 5 to 7 p.m., Room 202); a talk on "Jewish Women Writers in Late Tsarist Russia" by Carole Balin, a Columbia Ph.D. candidate (Dec. 4, 5 to 7 p.m., Room 4000, 43 W. 42nd St.); and a brown-bag film and discussion session, "Revisiting the Japanese Women's Movement," led by filmmaker Nanako Kurihara (Dec. 10, 1 to 3 p.m., Room 4000, 43 W. 42nd St.).

(Continued from page 1)

in 1997. With 442 granted in 1994-95, AMP is well on the way toward meeting this goal.

NSF is contributing up to \$5 million, to be matched by the Alliance, toward implementing permanent systemic change in the SEM curriculum. While the Alliance targets minority students, the systemic instructional changes it has initiated have enhanced SEM instruction for all CUNY undergraduates. In addition, NSF has awarded the Alliance \$130,000 for support of initiatives to foster better teacher preparation for science and mathematics courses at pre-college levels and to consider extending the AMP concept to the social and behavioral sciences.

Fostering a sense of shared purpose in CUNY's SEM community has been a chief concern of AMP's Governing Board, chaired by Chancellor Reynolds; its Steering Committee, Project Directors, and Activity Coordinators. According to Dean Erwin Fleissner, who is active with AMP on the Hunter campus, "The project is an example of wholehearted collaboration. Colleagues from CUNY campuses have been meeting in a very natural, unconstricted spirit of cooperation."

This spirit has led to significant restructuring. Under AMP auspices, the workshop approach to teaching calculus, chemistry, and physics is being integrated into the gateway courses which have so often proved stumbling blocks to advanced studies. These workshops, led by specially trained peer tutors on AMP-funded stipends, emphasize problem-solving and collaborative learning. They have helped to reduce SEM attrition among all CUNY undergraduates.

The Alliance is also committed to making individual research integral to the University's undergraduate SEM curriculum. One hundred minority students are currently doing on- and off-campus research with the assistance of AMP stipends. This experience has proved crucial in motivating and empowering students to pursue advanced study. Queens Professor of Chemistry William Hersh recalls of one of his students, "AMP provided funds for him to work full-time in the laboratory. In his last semester I watched him turn into a chemist before my very eyes."

AMP has also initiated pre-research courses for freshmen and sophomores at the community colleges, research enrichment and career development activities,

and funding to encourage faculty to generate AMP-related collaborations.

Science learning centers, staffed by a coordinator and trained peer mentors, have also been established on all campuses and serve as home base for Alliance students. These hubs offer tutoring sessions, diagnostic testing, computer-based instruction, career presentations, training in job interviewing and resumé writing, and social functions. Increasing the number of trained faculty mentors is one of AMP's important goals.

The Alliance has also helped to improve articulation between the community and senior colleges. Initiatives include the Research Articulation Program, or SEMRAP, which is developing a cadre of senior college research faculty who undertake projects with community college faculty, who in turn serve as mentors to AMP students on their campus. AMP has also stimulated major University-wide grant proposals such as the NSF-supported Workshop Chemistry Curriculum, which will radiate to 10 CUNY campuses and three other major universities. These initiatives have benefited from \$1 million in direct funding from CUNY and \$1.5 million in matching funds.

As well, the Alliance has forged important extramural ties. Chief among these is a thriving partnership with NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies. For the past three years, the Institute on Climate and Planets, an innovative venture co-sponsored by NASA/Goddard and CUNY/AMP, has joined high school and college students and faculty with scientists in the field who are doing world-class climatological and space research. Other current collaborations involve Polytechnic University, Brookhaven National Laboratory, AT&T Bell Labs, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's laboratory in New York.

In just four years, the Alliance has created a new model for SEM education and, in the process, it has changed the lives of students. As Reggie Parker, an AMP Research Scholar, said recently at the fourth NSF-sponsored AMP national research conference, "When I was accepted into the AMP program, I was extremely excited. I knew AMP would put me one step closer to my goal of becoming a computer scientist. I was like a lump of clay. I was without form or definite shape, but I had infinite potential. AMP was the potter's wheel, and the NSF and AMP directors and coordinators were the pottery makers. They helped shape and mold me into what you see today." ♦

## SAM GOLDWYN ON CAMPUS

The leading independent film producer in Hollywood for 35 years, Sam Goldwyn (1884-1974) was famous for his hilariously spacey malapropisms. Though his domain was the movie set, some of his more inspired asides and pontifications can still come in very handy on any college campus. Consider the following situations:

- You want to return a bad paper, but gently say: "I was very pleasantly disappointed."
- When a paper was so bad you gave up: "I read part of it all the way through."
- You came under fire in a faculty meeting: "It rolls off my back like a duck."
- A perfect excuse for missing the next one: "I'm laid up with intentional flu."
- You want to pay tribute to a longtime colleague you like—"He has warmth and charmth."—or don't: "Plenty of water has passed between us."
- You must inform your staff of an austerity budget: "Spare no expense to make everything as economical as possible."
- The same old professional jargon is getting you down: "Let's have some new clichés!"
- You want to greet a new colleague from the Midwest: "You're from Iowa? Here we pronounce it Ohio."
- You want to applaud a trend on campus: "It's spreading like wildflowers!"
- You find yourself at a cocktail party speaking to a legislator responsible for cuts in education funds: "The sweetness of low budget never equals the bitterness of low quality."

## The Board of Trustees The City University of New York

James P. Murphy  
Chairperson

Edith B. Everett  
Vice-Chairperson

Satish K. Babbar  
Herman Badillo  
Jerome S. Berg  
John J. Calandra  
Michael C. Crimmins  
Charles E. Inniss

Ronald J. Marino  
Susan Moore Mouner  
Anne A. Paolucci  
Robert Price  
George J. Rios  
Nilda Soto Ruiz  
Richard B. Stone

Sandi E. Cooper  
Chairperson, University Faculty Senate  
Ifeachor Potts  
Chairperson, University Student Senate

Jay Hershenson  
Vice Chancellor for  
University Relations

Editor:  
Pamela Bayless

Managing Editor:  
Gary Schmidgall

Letters or suggestions for future articles on topics of general interest to the CUNY community should be addressed to

**CUNY Matters**  
535 E. 80th St., 7th Floor  
New York, NY 10021

**CUNY Matters** is available on the CUNY home page at <http://www.cuny.edu>.

**The Office of University Relations**  
**The City University of New York**  
535 E. 80th St.  
New York, NY 10021