Citi Bike kicks into high gear in Long Island City

By Victoria Zunitch // Chronicle Contributor | Posted: Wednesday, August 5, 2015 4:34 pm

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The station, the first of 12 to be installed in the neighborhood and among 91 to be placed in an overall Brooklyn and Queens expansion this summer as the popular bike-sharing program expands over the East River into Queens, is just south of the NY Waterways ferry station at Hunters Point South Park.

“Ladies and gentlemen, the blue bikes are in Queens County, New York City,” said City Council Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer (D-Sunnyside) at a kickoff event for the station, which also included a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

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The expansion this summer will double the size of the program in the city.

Among the new bike stations will be a hub at the Queensbridge Houses, where NYCHA residents will receive a discount on memberships.

The other planned stations include one in front of MoMA PS1 and another by LaGuardia Community College.

In the fall, organizers, which include the bike-share program Motivate and the city Department of Transportation, also plans to add 27 stations on the Upper East Side and 21 on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

“New Yorkers have ridden Citi bikes over 20 million times since it started,” said DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg.

The new stations will put 1,400 new bikes into service in the next three weeks, with more to follow.
Trottenberg said.

Jay Walder, president and CEO of Motivate, which operates Citi Bike, said anyone who joins Citi Bike during the month of August will receive $25 off the price of an annual membership.

Under the next phase of the expansion plan, once a customer gets on a Citi Bike in Long Island City, he or she will eventually be able to dock it in Astoria, or in the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Brooklyn Heights, Clinton Hill, Fort Greene and Dumbo.

A bike lane is under construction on the Pulaski Bridge, which Trottenberg said she hopes will be open to cyclists by spring 2016.

"I certainly hope if my team is playing in October, we find a way to ride a Citi Bike over there," said Walder, a Mets fan.
Joffrey Ballet School expands into Long Island City

By Bill Parry

Long Island City prides itself on more than 30 arts and cultural institutions and venues such as Socrates Sculpture Park, SculptureCenter, the Noguchi Museum, and the Chocolate Factory theater.

Now the Joffrey Ballet School is expanding into LIC, signing a 10-year lease for 15,500 square feet of space in the Zipper Building, located at 47-16 Austell Place, in an industrial area between Skillman Avenue and 27th Place just south of LaGuardia Community College.

"We are building six studios, two of which will convert into a small performance space," Joffrey Ballet School Operations Director Lee Merwin said. "We'll be on the fourth floor of the Zipper Building and it will have some administrative offices as well."

Vanbarron Group closed on the old Waldes Zipper Factory in February for $7.7 million and it is now overhauling the building with renovations that include a new facade and elevators as well as ground-floor retail.

"We have outgrown our space in the Village at 10th Street and 6th Avenue that we have been in since 1954," Merwin said. "This will be additional space. The space will have open classes for adults and professionals, our pre-professional dance program, primarily the contemporary jazz program but also ballet trainees, as well as our children's program and after-school Young Dancer program. We expect the build-out to finish in January 2016."

Sheila Lewandowski, the co-founder and executive director of the Obie Award-winning Chocolate Factory theater, believes the addition further solidifies LIC's status as a cultural center.

"It's so exciting," she said. "I'm thrilled to welcome more professional dance to Queens. We are the place to create!"

LIC Arts Open Executive Director Richard Mazza, the owner of the Secret Theatre and founder and artistic director of the Queens Players, also welcomed the 62-year-old institution to the community.

"The arrival of Joffrey Ballet in LIC is yet another indication of the deep and enduring roots and connections to the arts in..."
Queens,” he said. “It’s a huge vote of confidence to be chosen over the other boroughs.”

Merwin explained several factors behind the choice.

“We couldn’t find space in Manhattan that a performance arts organization like ours could afford,” he said. “We needed a big space with wide column spacing, a building like the Zipper Building. When we realized we needed to look to the outer boroughs, it was important to be located off one of the first several stops on the subway so that we would have the most convenient commute possible to our current studios and dorms in Manhattan. Long Island City also has a burgeoning dance scene with new performance spaces and a lot of young dancers who are just starting out are moving into LIC.”

And finally Merwin mentioned the ongoing population boom in western Queens.

“There is a lot of residential building going on in LIC and a significant percentage of those moving into the area are young parents with children that fit the demographic for our children’s and after-school youth programs,” he said.
DAVID GOMEZ

July 28, 2015 |


DAVID GOMEZ has been named president of Hostos Community College of the City University of New York. He was interim president of Hostos Community College. Gomez earned a bachelor’s from the University of Albany, State University of New York, and a master’s and a doctorate from Columbia University.
Study will look at whether Staten Island gets fair share of city services

Staten Island Little League
Mayor Bill de Blasio speaks to borough cops during Staten Island Little League opening day in April 2015. 
(Staten Island Advance/Bill Lyons)
Anna Sanders | asanders@siadvance.com By Anna Sanders | asanders@siadvance.com
Email the author | Follow on Twitter
on August 05, 2015 at 4:30 PM, updated August 05, 2015 at 5:29 PM
"Staten Islanders often feel that our home is the 'forgotten borough' because it seems we are consistently overlooked when it comes to getting resources and services," Matteo said.

CITY HALL -- Is Staten Island getting its fair share? The "forgotten borough" may soon find out.

The College of Staten Island will study and evaluate city services provided to the borough with $20,000 in the budget for fiscal year 2016, which began July 1. The discretionary funding was allocated by Staten Island's three Council members.

The study is meant to determine if Staten Island receives an equal portion of services compared to the other boroughs, though the specific parameters have yet to be drawn out.

The formal evaluation is the brainchild of Council Minority Leader Steven Matteo (R-Mid-Island) and his predecessor, former South Shore Councilman Vincent Ignizio.

"Staten Islanders often feel that our home is the 'forgotten borough' because it seems we are consistently overlooked when it comes to getting resources and services," Matteo said.

He and Ignizio believed that there was a need to determine if that moniker is still deserved.

"The data gathered in this valuable study will help inform my colleagues and I as we continue to advocate for Staten Island's needs," Matteo said. "I look forward to meeting with CSI to discuss the parameters of the new study."

Michael Kress, vice president for information technology and economic development at the college, said in a statement that a team of faculty experts and student interns will be assembled to work on high performance computing systems for the project.

"The College of Staten Island remains dedicated to analyzing the needs of our community to ensure that the
Island is equally benefiting from the many services provided to the boroughs of New York City," said Kress, who also heads up the High Performance Computing Center at CSI.

Councilwoman Debi Rose (D-North Shore) agreed to include the study in the borough-wide allocations.

"I look forward to seeing the results of this in-depth study, which will serve as a useful tool for us as we engage in future budget negotiations and aim to better meet the needs of Staten Islanders," Rose said in a statement.

Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito (D-Manhattan/Bronx) had to sign off on all discretionary funding to be included in the budget, including the study, before passage.

"The City Council is proud to work with the Staten Island delegation to support Staten Island and make sure all New Yorkers receive their fair share of city services," Mark-Viverito said in a statement.

Still, the study is a disagreeable development in Mayor Bill de Blasio's relationship with Staten Island.

Spokeswoman Amy Spitalnick pointed to the de Blasio administration's expansion of Staten Island Ferry service and increased funding for road repairs, as well as Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts, when asked about the project.

"Mayor de Blasio has made major investments to improve the lives of Staten Islanders and ensure the borough receives the attention and services it deserves," Spitalnick said, adding, "We welcome all additional data, and will continue to partner with elected officials and communities to further improve services on Staten Island."

**SECESSION SENTIMENT**

The study brings to mind a central argument behind the unsuccessful Staten Island secession movement.

The campaign began decades ago when a federal lawsuit and court decisions led to a new City Charter that significantly decreased the borough’s representation. Without a Board of Estimate and a meager three-member delegation in the City Council, Islanders wondered whether they would lose a meaningful voice in the new government and if they'd be better off going solo.

A state law allowed a commission to study the feasibility of an independent city of Staten Island. That body concluded that providing current services to such a municipality was possible with existing revenue levels.

Though a majority of Islanders voted to secede from New York City, the measure ultimately failed in the state legislature.

**SHORTCHANGED?**
The sentiment behind secession remains. This is particularly felt under de Blasio, who lost the borough in the 2013 mayoral election and remains ideologically separated from many locals. (A poll released on Wednesday found only 19 percent of Island voters approved of de Blasio’s job handling, though the margin of error for the borough was high.)

"It’s always something that bothers Staten Islanders -- whether they get their fair share," said Richard Flanagan, a political science professor at the College of Staten Island, when he was told of the study.

Flanagan said that there’s a case to be made that the borough ends up on the “wrong side of the coin” in the city’s budgetary considerations. A study would definitely help local elected officials at the negotiating table when arguing for more borough support.

The detailed evaluation could also fuel another discussion about secession, though a state measure is needed to formally begin that process again.

"The suggestion that somehow Staten Island is being shortchanged is part of the mythology of the borough," Flanagan said of the study. "But I think it might be a little more complicated than that."

The timeline of the evaluation is unclear.
Man Walks Every Block In Every Borough Of New York City
August 5, 2015 5:48 PM

NEW YORK (CBSNewYork) — Step by step, block by block, borough by borough — 89-year-old William Helmreich has walked them all.

"If I had any idea how hard this would be, I never would’ve done it," he told CBS2’s Scott Rapoport.

An astounding feat by any measure, the sociology professor at CUNY says he’s hooved all 120,000 blocks and 6,000 miles of New York City, virtually every square foot.

It took him four years.

Crazy?

"It is a little meshuga," Helmreich said. "But in order to do something interesting, you sometimes have to be crazy."

That raises the unavoidable question: Why?

"I do it because I love the city," the lifelong New Yorker said. "The city’s fascinating to me. It’s the world’s greatest outdoor museum."

Helmreich said he performed his pilgrimage through a variety of meteorological miseries — sleet and heat, rain and snow, taking it all in stride.

"Just awesome. It’s unbelievable," he said. "You’re walking in the street. There’s nobody around. You say, ‘What the hell am I doing this for?’"

The results are a book he’s written called "The New York Nobody Knows" and a seemingly endless array of enviable experiences: the tree with 1,140 stuffed animals in Bergen Beach; the school bus limousine in Sunset Park, Brooklyn; an ultra-exquisite sunset in Battery Park City; and a view of the gorgeous mosaic that is New York City.
Saw Mill River water being tested for sewage

Akiko Matsuda, amatsuda@lohud.com 7:32 a.m. EDT August 6, 2015

The Saw Mill River is getting a watchman.

For the first time, the water quality of the Saw Mill River will be under constant observation, with samples collected every other week by volunteers for Riverkeeper, and tested for harmful bacteria at a Yonkers laboratory. The program started mid-July.

The Saw Mill becomes the eighth Hudson River tributary added to a water-quality program launched in 2008 by Riverkeeper, a nonprofit dedicated to the health of the Hudson River, along with CUNY Queens College and Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. Other tributaries include Sparkill Creek in Rockland and the Pocantico River in central Westchester.

The Saw Mill River runs from Chappaqua to Yonkers, where it meets the Hudson after going through Van der Donck Park in downtown. A stretch of the river in Yonkers was recently "revealed" after running under streets for years.

When samples were collected in downtown Yonkers in 2013, the Saw Mill River failed to meet safe-swimming standards, according to Riverkeeper. The newly launched sampling program is being coordinated by Sarah Lawrence College's Center for the Urban River at Beeczak and the Yonkers Padding & Rowing Club.

Ryan Palmer, director of the Center for Sarah Lawrence College's Urban River at Beeczak, processes water samples with Chelsea Mora, a sampler in the Saw Mill River program. (Photo: Riverkeeper)

The new samples will help the organization "have a better data, more current data to understand what's going on, to bring more awareness to the issues and to get more everyday citizens involved," said Ryan Palmer, director of the Center for the Urban River at Beeczak.

Riverkeeper has been sampling water at least once a month at 74 locations in the Hudson estuary, which stretches 153 miles from Troy to New York Harbor. In addition, local volunteers have been scooping water at 149 locations along seven tributaries. The program has expanded over the years, involving more than 130 volunteers and 6,000 samples in 2014 alone.

About a dozen volunteers — including Saunders Trades and Technical High School students from Yonkers, members of the padding and rowing club, the Pleasantville Conservation Advisory Council and the Saw Mill River Coalition — have signed up to help with the sampling, Palmer said. The 16 sampling sites are located throughout the Saw Mill watershed, including Chappaqua, Pleasantville, Hawthorne, Elmsford, Ardsley, Hastings-on-Hudson and Yonkers.

Volunteers are at the heart of the water-quality program, which encourages more people to care about the Hudson River and its tributaries, said John
Lipscomb, Riverkeeper's patrol boat captain who has been leading the effort.

Timothy Frankstine, a Sleepy Hollow High School graduate who will be a sophomore at Stony Brook University this fall, has been volunteering for Riverkeeper's water sampling program. (Photo: Aiko Matsuda/The Journal News)

The program measures the amount of enterococcus — bacteria that indicates the presence of sewage in the water. The data give a water-quality snapshot of a specific location using the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's swimming standards.

"We were looking for ways to get people to care about water quality," Lipscomb said. "What we learned early on was that part of the water quality that people care about is whether they're going to get sick if they swim."

Learning about the Sparkill Creek's water quality has been an eye-opening experience, said Margie Turrin, a member of the Sparkill Creek Watershed Alliance. About 25 volunteers with the alliance have been working with Riverkeeper for the past five years, taking samples at 17 sites along the creek.

"Looking at Sparkill in comparison to the other creeks that Riverkeeper is now sampling, we have one of the higher contaminations of enterococcus," Turrin said. "That's been kind of sobering for us."

The findings prompted the alliance to have meetings with the town of Orangetown, Rockland County and the state Department of Environmental Conservation to discuss possible causes of the contamination, Turrin said.

Both Orangetown and Rockland County have wastewater facilities along the creek. But even samples taken at the top of the Sparkill Creek watershed in Blauvelt very often exceeded the EPA's guidelines for safe swimming, the data show.

"The more sampling we do, the more we see that there's pretty widespread enterococcus," Turrin said. "We aren't really sure what the source is."
Turin said the volunteers are hoping to find additional ways to analyze the creek's conditions and uncover the cause.

Back at the Saw Mill River, Palmer said that, when more information is in, he wants to work with decision makers, including local and state officials, to have better policies to address the environmental issues.

"Ultimately, we'd like to find some solutions, whether it's identifying a few problem areas, or perhaps identifying certain buildings or parcels," he said.

Alina Campbell, who will be a senior at Ossining High School this fall, joined a recent water sampling voyage aboard Riverkeeper's patrol boat on the Hudson, and said she believed involving community members is vital to get issues resolved.

"That's how we make a difference," Campbell said. "You have to come together as a community to really think... People have different perspectives. That really helps us tackle issues."

Twitter: @LohudAkiko (https://twitter.com/LohudAkiko)
How friendship affects well-being in each decade of life

The psychological well-being of people in their fifties is tied to how many social interactions they had at 20 and the quality of their friendships at 30, according to new research.

Kelsey Dallas, Deseret News - Modified: July 30, 2015 at 4:10 pm • Published: August 3, 2015

Eighteen months ago, Chad Every moved from Ohio to St. Petersburg, Florida. He had a new job, apartment and bicycle, but one important ingredient of a good life was missing: friends.

Every was content at first to spend time reading and relaxing alone, but the self-proclaimed extrovert knew he'd eventually need pals for impromptu trips to coffee shops, movie theaters and concerts.

"I finally reached a point when I knew I needed to put myself out there. A (vinyl) record fair was happening by my house, so I literally went with the hope of finding a friend," said Every, 26.

Every's search for new connections was a bit awkward, but admitting defeat would have damaged more than his social calendar. Recent research on the mental health benefits of friendship showed spending time with friends and building meaningful relationships in your twenties and thirties has a positive influence on well-being for decades to come.

The study, published earlier this year in Psychology and Aging (http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/pag/30/1/96/) (paywall), linked people's social and psychological outcomes at age 50 to how much of a social butterfly they were at age 20 and the quality of their friendships at age 30. It highlighted the importance of friend-making (and keeping) at all stages of life, a process that's celebrated on International Friendship Day, marked on the first Sunday in August.

Psychologists and others who study friendships said the findings illustrate how people's social needs change as they age, noting that friend-seekers should be proactive about making social connections that bring meaning to their lives.

"Friendships don't just happen," said Shasta Nelson, CEO of GirlfriendCircles.com (http://www.girlfriendcircles.com), a women's friendship matching site. "We have to be as intentional about this as we are about healthy eating and exercise."

Friendship and aging

In the study, the social lives of more than 100 students from the University of Rochester were tracked over 30 years. Researchers concluded that individuals with a high quantity of social activities at age 20 and high quality friendships at age 30 were found to have better psychological outcomes at age 50 than their less friendly peers.

These outcomes were measured with questions about loneliness, depression and positive emotions like self-acceptance and a sense of purpose.

Cheryl Carmichael, assistant professor of psychology at CUNY's Brooklyn College and Graduate Center and the study's lead author, said the findings illustrate how an emotionally healthy person's social connections evolve over time.

In our twenties, we need to interact with many different people in order to sharpen our ability to navigate social situations, she said. But by 30, "our social goals focus on emotional closeness."

The study tracked quantity using all of the participant's daily social encounters, including work meetings, college classes and get-togethers with friends.

Social well-being at 20 "is not about going out and partying all the time. That's not the quantity that builds (social) skills," Carmichael said. Instead, people's busy social schedules during their twenties should help them learn how to be a high-quality friend to the people they'll be close to in the coming decades.

Capitalizing on connections

Carmichael doesn't like to think of her research as a guidebook to using friendships to boost well-being, but she acknowledged that it offers a snapshot of a healthy evolution from being a socially active young adult to someone who appreciates and nurtures close
"We're observing patterns. It's not meant to be a directive," she said. "However, it does suggest that people who are doing this seem to benefit from it."

It might feel unnatural to question how your friendships are affecting your well-being, but the process can ensure your social needs are being met, said Andrea Bonior, adjunct professor of psychology at Georgetown University and author of "The Friendship Fix: The Complete Guide to Choosing, Losing and Keeping Up with Your Friends (http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0312607318/ref=sr_simh_gw_p14_1?ie=UTF8&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=desktop-1&pf_rd_r=14C5WRZEDYB2QEY8BFX&pf_rd_t=365701&pf_rd_p=2079475242&pf_rd_i=desktop)."

"We allow ourselves to analyze romantic relationships, but with friendships we often accept the status quo," she said, noting people should be strategic with their social connections as they age, building supportive relationships and transitioning away from the more casual acquaintances that characterize most people's twenties.

However, focusing on friendship quality in your thirties and beyond doesn't mean you should stop making new connections, Nelson noted.

"We need to be making new friends throughout our entire life," Nelson said. "When you're in your thirties or forties and craving a meaningful interaction, you sometimes forget you can't just meet someone and go straight to that. ... You have to be open and socialize in order to build a few of those (deep) friendships."

Finding meaningful friendships

At the record fair, Every was a man on a mission. He saw a guy wearing a pin for "Me Without You," a little-known band Every enjoys, and headed straight for him.

"I made a bee line to him, like a guy makes a bee line to a pretty girl at a bar," he said. "We talked, exchanged numbers and he gradually became my best friend."

The process sounds simple when it's summarized in a few sentences, but putting yourself out there to meet new people can be nerve-wracking, Bonior said.

She suggested people in the market for new friends attend events and activities they will enjoy regardless of who they meet, like Every did with the record fair.

Then, friend-seekers should make an effort to chat with others, building a casual connection with people that can be maintained over meetings at weekly exercise classes or church events.

And finally, someone has to be bold and suggest a friend date like a lunch, Bonior noted.

"You have to stick your neck out" to move from acquaintance to friend, she said.

Throughout the process, it's important to keep an open mind, Nelson said.

"Research shows we're not good predictors of who we will bond with," she said. "I would argue we should move forward and allow a friendship to develop as long as there are no red flags. ... Don't judge people based on what you think you want in a best friend."

The bottom line is that it's important to take friendship seriously, Bonior said.

"You should be serious about pursuing friendships" and ensuring the ones you already have are going well, she added. "Friendship isn't a luxury. It really is a health issue."

After many months of enjoying his friendship with his record-fair friend, Every was heartbroken to learn he and his wife were moving away. However, Every's experience helped him realize all hope was not lost.

"Brian is irreplaceable. Best friends always are," he said. "But another cool dude is out there. I just need to find him."
Ma'ayanot Senior Year “Encounter Program” Launches Careers and Dreams

THURSDAY, 06 AUGUST 2015 05:53 BY LISA MATKOWSKY

Over the course of this past school year, Ma'ayanot High School’s senior class participated in the inaugural offering of an innovative new program called "Encounter," a year-long research program that culminated in an internship or project related to their research. The initiative was designed to provide students with the opportunity to explore an individual area of interest outside the formal academic setting, to learn through real-world experiences, to develop specialized skills and to establish professional relationships.

Launched this past year by Jewish History Chair Dr. Julie Goldstein, the program has been hugely successful and popular. "Some of the students conducted major experiments and came to groundbreaking conclusions," said Goldstein. "It's evolved into one of those experiences that will make Ma'ayanot even more exceptional, and will give the students the chance to put the knowledge, skills and values acquired at Ma'ayanot into dialogue with the world outside of school."

Whether the students’ particular interest was sparked inside a classroom or developed from longstanding personal passions, the program provided them with the resources and time to investigate and discover its various dimensions. The students were excited by the opportunity to study their personal interests so comprehensively and with academic oversight. Starting with the identification of a core question or problem, each student conducted research in her chosen field. Along the way, she recorded data, observations and ideas that were helpful towards the preparation of a final presentation that took place before a panel of Ma'ayanot faculty at the close of the second semester. Students were encouraged to put their findings in context with Jewish thought, halacha or culture. In May, they each undertook a 60-hour internship or project that elucidated the facets of the problem and facilitated reflection about it.

The students explored a wide variety of fields, ranging from investigative journalism to art, law, education, pest control, medicine, government and fashion blogging. Students Lily Sause and Timmy Taplow started a fashion blog that caught the attention of department store Lord & Taylor, who hired them to create an in-store fashion show. Several students plunged into the world of politics, interning for the likes of Governor Chris Christie, the Republican State Committee, the Borough of Bergenfield, Sen. Chuck Schumer, Sen. Cory Booker and State Sen. Bob Gordon.

One student surveyed female teachers in day schools to conclude that they know little about financial planning and created an information packet for them; one produced a mock magazine; one created an art exhibit applying the various theories and techniques she learned in an advanced art class she took at the 92nd street Y. Student Naima Hirsch wrote a novella as her project. "These were truly amazing feats for them to have accomplished during their senior year," said Goldstein.

Student Ahluva Shaffer, who pursued an interest in fashion design, developed her sewing skills by apprenticing with a seamstress and designing and creating her own gown for her brother’s wedding. She said: "It was so exciting to tell interested people about my projects! I love looking for inspiration in historical fashion and costume design. When I was researching I noticed that a recent design of Valentino actually had details from 19th-century corsets!"

Shira Goldsmith, who interned in culinary arts, said: "ENCOUNTER is a program that enables high school seniors to truly immerse themselves in a field they are interested in. Through self-study and application of personal strengths that was complemented by guided research and reflection, I was primed to find new insights and perspectives in a field I had previous experience in. ENCOUNTER was an exciting opportunity to learn outside the classroom and I believe I benefited deeply from it."

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Miriam Blum who interned in education said: "The ENCOUNTER program gave me a valuable opportunity to work in a professional environment of my choosing. It gave me the chance to experience what having a job is really like. The program's beginning steps enabled me to research and learn about what job I would be doing. Many of us with the program's connections had the opportunity to work for senators, lawyers, doctors and schools throughout New Jersey. The four weeks I spent working as an early childhood teacher were a lot of fun and worthwhile. The program's goal and message is extremely clear: to give high school seniors valuable experience in any workforce in the hopes of preparing them for the near future."

Other internships were conducted at the Fair Lawn Volunteer Ambulance Corps, the Halachic Organ Donor Project, Lenox Hill and Columbia University Medical Centers, E-Commerce Jewelry and Black Box Studios. All of the students discovered new interests and new things about themselves and produced incredible results. Added Goldstein: "Some students were offered jobs and continue to work at the places where they interned. All the students chose and approached their internships with an eye towards answering a question they had raised at the beginning of the school year and researched throughout. They really rose to the occasion, learned a ton and I was so proud of them!"

Ma'ayanot has helped to launch successful careers in areas including medicine, law, finance, marketing, the arts, public service, education, psychology, communications and politics. Ma'ayanot graduates from the class of 2015 were accepted to the following Ivy and Honors-level programs: Barnard, Columbia, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Macalester Honors College at CUNY, Maryland Honors, MIT, Penn, Princeton, Rutgers Honors and Stern
New Exhibit ‘Reframes’ the Italian Immigrant Experience

5th August 2015  Michael V. Cusenza  Art and Culture
0 Comments

PHOTO: Roman Bronze Works: “Messa in forma e ritoccatura delle cere.” (Molding and retouching the wax) 275–289 Greene St., Brooklyn. Date of photograph unknown. Photo Courtesy of Wurts Brothers/Queens College

A new photography exhibit organized by Queens College depicts how Italian immigrants refashioned themselves in early 20th Century New York.

"Reframing Italian America" unveils 23 historical photographs selected from the Bernard Titoysky Collection. Consisting of more than 200 items, the collection belonging to the Queens rare-book dealer and librarian was donated to the college's John D. Calandra Italian American Institute by his son, Michael Titoysky.
The exhibition is on view Monday–Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Jan. 8, 2016, at the institute located in Manhattan at 25 West 43rd St., 17th Floor. A catalog with 41 photographs, as well as essays by Dominique Padurano, Joseph Sciorra, and actor John Turturro, will also be available for purchase.

"These featured individuals and the collective they create in group shots are of an industrious, orderly, church-going, and socially engaged people," said Sciorra, the institute’s director of Academic and Cultural Programs. "These are markedly different depictions of Italian immigrants than we find taken by others of the era such as social reformer Jacob Riis, whose muckraking work on New York City’s impoverished Italian slums oscillates between the 'exoticizing distance' of the picturesque and the 'stark racially othering' of the destitute."

The photos were chosen for the diversity of their settings and for their importance as "social documents of Italian immigrant life," Sciorra noted. The fields represented cover commerce, education, religion, artistry, and labor—from manual workers such as sandhogs working on the tunnels of Penn Station in the city, to male hat-makers and female garment workers, to artisans such as finishers at the Roman Bronze Works. Professionals are represented as well, including newspaper editors, presidents of banks, and factory owners.

According to Sciorra, most of the immigrants in the photos posed for the camera and maintain a formal public persona, aware that the very occasion of a photograph is a special one. Some of the laborers, who may have posed in a studio, suggest a sense of satisfaction and pride. At the same time, the subjects are shown engaging in work that has shaped the country: building rail stations and tunnels, founding schools and churches, providing needed services and goods. Thus they are displaying and representing themselves as Italian Americans as they refashion themselves in the process of transforming America, Sciorra posited.

For more information and directions, visit http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/calandra/.
New Device Converts DC Electric Field to Terahertz Radiation

Terahertz radiation, the no-man's land of the electromagnetic spectrum, has long stymied researchers. Optical technologies can finagle light in the shorter-wavelength visible and infrared range, while electromagnetic techniques can manipulate longer-wavelength radiation like microwaves and radio waves. Terahertz radiation, on the other hand, lies in the gap between microwaves and infrared, whether neither traditional way to manipulate waves works effectively. As a result, creating coherent artificial sources of terahertz radiation in order to harness it for human use requires some ingenuity.

Difficulties of generating it aside, terahertz radiation has a wide variety of potential applications, particularly in medical and security fields. Because it's a non-ionizing form of radiation, it is generally considered safe to use on the human body. For instance, it can distinguish between tissues of different water content or density, making it a potentially valuable tool for identifying tumors. It could also be used to detect explosives or hidden weapons, or to wirelessly transmit data.

In a step towards more widespread use of terahertz radiation, researchers have designed a new device that can convert a DC electric field into a tunable source of terahertz radiation. Their results are published this week in the *Journal of Applied Physics*, from AIP Publishing.

This device exploits the instabilities in the oscillation of conducting electrons at the device's surface, a phenomenon known as surface plasmon resonance. To address the terahertz gap, the team created a hybrid semiconductor: a layer of thick conducting material paired with two thin, two-dimensional crystalline layers made from graphene, silicene (a graphene-like material made from silicon instead of carbon), or a two-dimensional electron gas. When a direct current is passed through the hybrid semiconductor, it creates a plasmon instability at a particular wavenumber. This instability induces the emission of terahertz radiation, which can be harnessed with the help of a surface grating that splits the radiation.

By adjusting various parameters -- such as the density of conduction electrons in the material or the strength of the DC electric field -- it is possible to tune the cutoff wavenumber and, consequently, the frequency of the resulting terahertz radiation.

"[Our work] demonstrates a new approach for efficient energy conversation from a dc electric field to coherent, high-power and electrically tunable terahertz emission by using hybrid semiconductors," said Andrii Iurov, a researcher with a dual appointment at the University of New Mexico's Center for High Technology Materials and the City University of New York. "Additionally, our proposed approach based on hybrid semiconductors can be generalized to include other novel two-dimensional materials, such as..."
hexagonal boron nitride, molybdenum disulfide and tungsten diselenide."

Other labs have created artificial sources of terahertz radiation, but this design could enable better imaging capabilities than other sources can provide. "Our proposed devices can retain the terahertz frequency like other terahertz sources but with a much shorter wavelength for an improved spatial resolution in imaging application as well as a very wide frequency tuning range from a microwave to a terahertz wave," said Iurov.

The article, "Tunable surface plasmon instability leading to emission of radiation," is authored by Godfrey Gumbs, Andrii Iurov, Danhong Huang, and Wei Pan. It will appear in the Journal of Applied Physics on August 4, 2015. After that date, it can be accessed here.

The authors of this paper are affiliated with City University of New York, Donostia International Physics Center, Center for High Technology Materials at University of New Mexico, Air Force Research Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratory.
The Fix

How in the world do you debate Donald Trump? Here’s what the experts prescribe.

By Janell Ross  August 6 at 8:24 AM

Donald Trump is an unusual presence on the presidential debate stage. And it’s not just because he’s a businessman and amateur politician who happens to be in the lead. It’s also because he’s, well, Donald Trump. His rhetorical devices, use of hyperbole, looseness with the facts and bravado simply cannot be compared to any recent presidential hopefuls.

The Fix checked in this week with several debate coaches, political communication experts and rhetoric experts to see what they would advise for Trump -- oh, and the other nine men on stage tonight who have to face him.

Their responses have been edited for length and clarity.

The experts

David Birdsell is a the Dean of Baruch College’s School of Public Affairs and one of the foremost authorities on the history of presidential debates. He co-authored, "Presidential Debates: The Challenge of Creating An Informed Electorate." He worked with Democrats and as academic debate coach. Then, Birdsell gave up that work for objective research.

David Kimel is the head coach of the Yale University Debate Society, the university’s debate team. Kimel is a Harvard graduate and two-time winner of that school’s Coolidge Debating Prize. He also co-owns a company that produces English-language learning tools for debaters in Asia. We caught up with Kimel via e-mail because he was out of the country.

Angela D. Minor is an attorney in the Washington, D.C., area, a Howard University law professor, and for the last five years, she’s served as the director of Forensics (a Greek term for speech and or debate) at Howard University. She’s also one of the Howard officials behind those annual debates between Howard and Harvard University.

Ben Voth is the director of Forensics and a professor of communication at Southern Methodist University’s Meadows School of the Arts. He’s also an adviser for the school’s George W. Bush Institute, a division of the Bush Center which also includes the presidential library and museum. Voth has helped to train students, political refugees and conservative political candidates for debates.

The 2 big questions

1. How would you describe Trump's style?

BIRDSELL: Trump betrays very little sense of a thought process behind what he does and says. I don’t mean that in the
sense that he’s not a smart man. But, you see a lot of what we call “flat assertions,” and when he does refer to evidence, it’s often information that almost no one else is able to replicate.

**KIMEL:** I personally think that leaving politics aside and approaching Trump from a purely oratorical standpoint, he’s a magnetic television personality and a hugely entertaining speaker who is much more fun to watch than the other candidates. Because he speaks his mind unabashedly, is willing to take controversial and offensive stances on the strength of his convictions, and doesn’t care about being rude, he gives the impression of being an honest speaker. [All of that] is a welcome relief in a world full of talking points.

**MINOR:** I would characterize Trump’s style as dominating -- dominating with soundbites. Now, he doesn’t do that with facts or intricate arguments, but with soundbites and aggression. I think a lot of traditionalists would say what we do know points to a very risky, maybe very colorful style on the debate stage. Right now with Trump a lot of his comments appear to be not vetted, not linked to traditional data and information sources that most candidates tend to rely upon. That is something that seems to appeal to some voters.

So, I would be surprised to see him abandon that completely. Then again, he could soften things just to throw his competitors off.

**VOTH:** Trump is a by-product of an uncivil society. Although, I should be clear and also say: This is not new. We used to shoot each other with pistols at dawn; that was a normal thing to do to resolve a dispute. Now that would be considered insane. But his style -- it’s very extemporaneous and candid and, at many moments, it’s coarse.

It’s fairly deliberately abrasive and trying to cause some sparks to fly, and I think connecting to a deep cycle of populism the American public has cyclically been drawn into.

**2. How should other candidates handle The Donald?**

**BIRDSELL:** The rules of this debate are such that if you mention someone by name, that person is given 30 seconds to respond. So, tactically, it makes no sense -- no sense at all -- to attack Trump directly. In terms of Trump’s weaknesses, he can probably be pressed on policy specifics in ways that show him off to less-than-optimal effect.

For example, he’s very likely to say something to the effect of, “What we need is legal immigration, legal immigration, legal immigration.” You can’t go too deep, but in 60 seconds you are probably going to need more than two words. So the candidates need to master the indirect hit. That’s things like, “We can’t have a politics where we condemn million of people by association.” Or, “No one on this stage should feel comfortable unless he can give you a detailed approach to crafting 4 percent GDP growth. I’ll tell you what I am going to do: 1, 2, 3. And anyone who tells you we simply have to make America great is not being honest with you.”

**KIMEL:** [Trump’s] main drawback as a political orator -- beyond the obvious fact that he often puts his foot in his mouth -- is that while he’s great at agitating others and criticizing policies, he’s not the most inspiring speaker. His vanity is his
Achilles heel. If another candidate can make fun of him or stir up topics that might potentially fluster him, he could easily slip into seeming sloppy or petty on camera rather than presidential.

But making fun of someone takes wit, and challenging them takes courage, and contemporary political oratory traditionally rewards neither quick-thinking nor spontaneity, so who knows how the debate will turn out. But the danger is that when the other candidates try to do this, they will falter at it and simply turn the entire debate into a circus.

MINOR: To contend with Trump, they have to be dominant as well and truly prepared to think in terms of soundbites. I would have them review every single world he has said publicly in the six months leading up to the debate and then fact-check it. The only way that you are going to take control is to bring some facts, some type of truth to the discussion and with that some kind of moral authority and display of fitness for the job.

I suspect we are going to hear him talk over others, bleed into their time. I am going to look for a little bit of bark -- maybe even a little bit of bite -- from the other candidates, probably with a professional edge. But I would caution, if you are ready to put up your dukes with Donald Trump, be prepared to sustain that charge.

VOTH: Trump has some advantages in being the no-holds-barred speaker and will possibly score what I call some "public resentment" points. We're talking about the viewer who will hear his unconventional way of talking about policy and think, 'Yeah, yeah. That's what I would have said.' Next to Trump, someone like Rubio, a more traditional candidate and senator, is going to be more boxed in.

Of course, all of these people must know that they need to step up and try to stand out and outshine Trump, because he has become this runaway sensation in the polls. So, other candidates would be wise to identify their biggest difference or disagreement with Trump and play that up. The challenge is that they are actually going to have emulate his straight-shooter style a bit while also looking presidential.
Women Earn More Than Men In These Fields After College

by Laura Colby
August 5, 2015 — 10:11 AM EDT
Updated on August 5, 2015 — 1:59 PM EDT

A robotics engineer assembles a robot model.
Photographer: James McDonald/Bloomberg

Women who recently graduated from college earn as much as or more than their male counterparts in 29 fields, ranging from engineering to art history, according to researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

The reverse wage gap means women earned 16 percent more than men in social services and 10 percent more in industrial engineering jobs held by graduates between the ages of 22 and 27, the research showed.

The difference in pay between genders -- women overall earn only 78 cents for every dollar earned by men -- is also far smaller for newly minted college graduates. This group of women earns 97 cents for each dollar earned by men, the study showed.

The fields where women outpaced men the most in earnings were social services; treatment therapy, 11 percent; industrial engineering; and art history, with a 9 percent gap. Women also outearned men in all other engineering disciplines, construction and business analytics, among other fields.
By the time they reach age 35 to 45, though, any advantage women had evaporates. Mid-career men earn 15 percent more than their female peers.

Gains Disappear

In all 29 areas where women started out with equal or higher pay, “the wage premium that young women enjoy in these majors completely disappears, and males earn a more substantial premium in nearly every major,” the researchers said.

The reasons for the shifting gaps aren’t clear, the report said. They could be a result of discrimination, in either direction, or because of career interruptions among women who stop working when they have children, according to the study.

One reason for the disparity between the pay gap for young and mid-career women is that corporations have begun making more efforts to recruit women at the entry level, said Erik Gordon, a professor at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business who studies corporate governance. “When they recruit, there’s a thirst for women and underrepresented minorities,” he said, adding that the process is usually managed by human resources officials in line with a formal company policy.

When it comes to midcareer promotions, HR is less involved. “All the things that have worked against women, such as unconscious bias, can creep back in,” Gordon said.

Discrimination against women with children is especially notable, said Pamela Stone, a sociology professor at Hunter College. “The motherhood penalty looms large,” she said.
A BRONX TALE

Boogie Down Production: Is Ruben Díaz Jr. On Track to Become the Next Mayor?

Ruben Diaz Jr. is an ambitious politician on the rise. But he'll have to overcome the lingering perception of the Bronx as a borough in decline.

By Will Bredderman | 08/05/15 10:30pm

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. in the Mall At Bay Plaza in the Baychester section of the Bronx (Photo: Aaron Adler for Observer).

Some 400 finance and real estate honchos recently filled the Villa Barone Manor in the Throgs Neck neighborhood of the Bronx for the 17th annual "Bankers Breakfast." While the keynote speaker for the event was William Dudley, president and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the headliner was really the effusive 42-year-old emcee: Bronx Borough President
Ruben Díaz Jr.

Tall and handsome, an obsessive weightlifter and basketball player (though a recent knee injury may sideline him for the foreseeable future), the borough president is not the most polished speaker: he sometimes stumbles over his words, makes odd pauses and grammatical errors. What seemed to captivate the crowd, got them to echo his exuberant “Buenos días,” was the unbridled enthusiasm behind his delivery.

“This is our moment!” he boomed. “This is the time now where we show the world, not only do the negative stereotypes of the past for the Bronx don’t apply any more, but we are progressing and we’re going to show everyone else how it’s done!”

Though just a few exits on the Cross-Bronx Expressway away, the scene seemed far from Soundview, the hardscrabble neighborhood where Mr. Díaz grew up, where he bounced on mattresses piled in empty lots and played with wheatpaste he used to help plaster the neighborhood over in posters for his father’s many political campaigns.

Since the younger Mr. Díaz entered Borough Hall in 2009, the Bronx—long a byword for urban decay—has added about 15,000 jobs and almost 17,000 new apartments. Crime is at the lowest levels since the 1960s. Mr. Díaz is not shy about asserting where the credit belongs: “In the past, if we were being shortchanged and we were being overlooked here in the Bronx, it was just because our politics just wasn’t as strong as it should have been.”
"Politics is all about relationships," Mr. Díaz later told the Observer from the front seat of his official black Chevy Tahoe SUV, and the borough president has plenty: with the Bronx political machine he oversees, with legislative leaders, with Gov. Andrew Cuomo and with developers who share his vision for a reborn Bronx. Those relationships have proved fruitful. Mr. Díaz is now the linchpin of a political alliance behind a $1 billion project with potential to transform the borough—four new Metro North stations running down its eastern corridor, estimated to bring in as many as 5,400 jobs and raise property values by almost $150,000—and perhaps catapult Mr. Díaz Jr. into Gracie Mansion.

Mr. Díaz's most important relationship may be with the man who spoke at the Bankers Breakfast immediately after him: new Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, another Bronx native. There has been no vote yet on the MTA capital plan, which includes the funds for the new stations, and Mr. Heastie's perch will likely prove crucial in preserving the money through future negotiations.

The speaker promised more pork to come.

"When the borough president and other elected officials from the Bronx start to give us this laundry list of things that they want, instead of us always having to wonder how we were going to figure out to get it, I just call up the [borough] president and say, 'Mr. President, if that's what you want, you got it,'" Mr. Heastie said.

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"In the past, if we were being shortchanged and we were

Mr. Díaz and Mr. Heastie served in the Assembly together for nine years. They sat next to each other in session in Albany, had adjacent offices, attended movies together
being overlooked here in the Bronx, it was just because our politics just wasn’t as strong as it should have been.”

“Some would call them the generation that grew up on hip-hop They have a sense of what the city was like then and what it’s becoming,” said former Bronx Assemblyman Michael Benjamin, who served with both men.

In 2008, Mr. Benjamin joined Mr. Díaz and Mr. Heastie in a political insurgency dubbed the “Rainbow Rebels,” which overthrew then-Bronx Democratic machine boss Jose Rivera and installed Mr. Heastie in his place. When Mr. Heastie stepped down as party chairman upon replacing indicted ex-Speaker Sheldon Silver earlier this year, his successor was Assemblyman Marcos Crespo, a former intern in Mr. Díaz’s office who took over his seat in the State Legislature.

A jaunt across the borough in the Tahoe from Villa Barone Manor brought Mr. Diaz to a press conference with another of his former Assembly colleagues, Bronx State Senator Jeffrey Klein. The event marked the construction of a $12 million pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway.

Such infrastructure investments are possible despite Republican control of the State Senate thanks to Mr. Klein, who has served as the body’s co-leader since his five-member Independent Democratic Conference entered into a power-sharing arrangement with the GOP in 2012.

Mr. Díaz, a veteran of the Assembly’s transportation committee, collaborated with the senator to produce a report on the potential benefits of the Metro North expansion in 2013, and the borough president said he pitched the idea to the governor. Mr. Cuomo allocated money for it in his executive budget this year.

Construction of the stations is scheduled to wrap up
around 2021, when Mr. Díaz would be ending his presumptive third term in Borough Hall, and likely looking toward his next office.

"We're the new Bronx. We've seen a renaissance," Mr. Klein declared at the press conference. "And one of the people I think most responsible for this renaissance ... is our outstanding borough president." Once unimaginable facilities have blossomed in the "new Bronx," including a $269 million golf course, the 2.2-million-square-foot Bay Plaza retail development with a just-opened indoor mall and the sprawling 42-acre Hutchinson Metro Center office complex and its new 125-room Marriot Residence Inn. Mr. Díaz insisted on visiting them all.

He makes for a tireless tour guide—constantly pointing out the Tahoe's window, his glossy shaved head nodding excitedly as he notes top-rated restaurants, areas he has successfully pushed to rezone for new development, parks that he and his colleagues have refurbished from the overgrown wastelands of his youth.

Mr. Díaz described the Soundview of his childhood in one word: "tough." Remembering his role as "ambassador for the block"—that is, the corner of St. Lawrence and Gleason Avenues—Mr. Díaz told the Observer it was clear he was always meant to be a politician.

"If you sort of looked kind of out of place, let's just say I was the sort of representative to inquire why you were there," he recalled, laughing. "So I don't have any problem going up to a stranger and saying, 'Hi. I'm Ruben. What's your name, what brings you here?'"
The Bronx of the borough president's youth was a byword for urban decay (Photo: John Fekner/Getty Images).

Nowadays, though, Mr. Díaz rarely needs to introduce himself.

"Mr. President!" "Hey, Ruben!" "Yo, Ru!" The shout-outs come on the street, at the mall, from people who spot him while his car is stopped at a light.

Borough presidents are typically viewed as figureheads. But a well-connected "beep" can still be a tremendous ally to developers trying to usher a project through the city's arcane Uniform Land Use Review Procedure. The borough president handpicks half the members of the local community board that first reviews a proposed project, submits his own letter of recommendation on the development and has a representative on the City Planning Commission, which subsequently considers the new construction.

The City Council has the final say on any zoning change or public land disposition, but it usually defers to the wishes of the local councilman—which is where Mr. Díaz's power in the County machine becomes crucial to a developer.

"If you conduct yourself in a certain way, if [real estate interests] know they can count on you, that you're a friend—or that, you know, it's not a good thing to have you against them—then everybody is willing to work, is prepared to work with you," Mr. Díaz said.

The borough president has cultivated an image as a pro-business Democrat and forged close relationships with Hutch Metro Center developer Joseph Simone and Prestige Properties' Sam Shalem. Yet shortly after taking
office in 2009, he led the bid to stop Related Companies’ effort to convert the hull of the Kingsbridge Armory into a mall, a plan that had the backing of then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Mr. Díaz insisted that, as a subsidized project, the mall’s future vendors should be obligated to pay at least $10 an hour to workers. Related balked at the proposal, and a public battle ensued, with mall supporters painting the borough president in the press as anti-progress.

“They had all their friends in the media come after me. And now we don’t have a relationship,” Mr. Díaz acknowledged—though he quickly struck a conciliatory note. “I’m open to having one in the future.”

Related did not respond to calls for comment.

Mr. Díaz did not make the same demand of Prestige Properties during the planning of the mall at Bay Plaza—which he justified by pointing out that the Northern Bronx development received no public money—but asked that stores there hire locals.

To that end, Mr. Cuomo deployed his “Unemployment Strikeforce” to run jobs fairs for the project. The governor even put out a press release when the mall opened, urging shoppers to visit. Even as many Democratic leaders have butted heads with Mr. Cuomo of late, he and Mr. Díaz, who sat on the governor’s 2010 transition team and co-chaired his 2014 re-election campaign, remain close.

The borough president said he bonded with Mr. Cuomo when the future governor met with him while campaigning for attorney general in 2006.

“We hit it off. What was supposed to be a half-an-hour, 45-minute lunch, we hung out, just the two of us, for almost two hours,” Mr. Díaz recalled.

The topic of conversation? Emerging from the shadow of a larger-than-life father.
Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr, with his father, State Senator Ruben Diaz Sr. (Photo: Will Bredderman for Observer).

Mr. Díaz’s father, an ordained minister born in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, was elected to State Senate in 2002 after a short stint in the Council—but, for two decades before that, Rev. Ruben Diaz Sr. was an incessant nuisance to the Bronx political machine, a “gadfly,” as the borough president called him.

It was his father (“Papi”) who gave Mr. Díaz his start in politics in 1994, by letting him run on his slate for the unpaid party position of district leader, back when “Rubencito” was just a 21-year-old with a newborn son, no college degree and a $300-a-week job as a messenger for the City Council. (He later completed his degree at Lehman College, his father’s alma mater.)

The socially conservative senator, who is reviled by many on the left, is today known for his hardline stances against homosexuality and abortion—positions his son has had to denounce, especially since publicly backing gay marriage in 2013. The list of his father’s outrageous statements is long—stem cell research, for instance, was akin to “Hitler using the ashes of the Jews to make bars of soap.”
Sharing the same name, the father-son bond might be the one relationship that will haunt Mr. Diaz as he steps up onto the citywide stage.

"That's what people say, that my positions will hurt my son," the senator told the Observer. "My shadow will be over him."

Some in the LGBT community disagree.

"I can only control what I say or do, the borough president can only control what he says or does. And to hold someone accountable for someone else's behavior is unfair, is inherently unfair," Bronx Councilman Ritchie Torres, an openly gay man who has at times defied the County machine, told the Observer. "I doubt there's going to be a liability."

The borough president is coy when talking about running for future office—"we'll see what happens"—but it is an open secret that he hopes to run for mayor in 2021, the same year that his presumptive third term in Borough Hall will end.

He will not be the first Bronx politician to aim to become the city's first Hispanic mayor.

(The last mayor produced by the Bronx machine was Joseph V. McKee, an ex-schoolteacher and assemblyman who served just 121 days in office after former Mayor James Walker resigned amid a corruption scandal in 1932. Late former Mayor Ed Koch was born in the Bronx, but his political career grew out of the Greenwich Village).

In 2001, Fernando Ferrer lost a racially contentious Democratic primary to then-Public Advocate Mark Green. In 2005, Mr. Ferrer tried again and won the Democratic nomination only to, in Mr. Benjamin's words, "run into the buzzsaw of Bloomberg's millions."

Mr. Ferrer's successor, Adolfo Carrion, also seemed a promising prospect. But in 2009 he took a job in the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, before returning to New York in 2013 to
make a lackluster bid for mayor on the Independence Party line.

But Mr. Ferrer’s Bronx still bore the stigma of urban decay, while Mr. Carrion simply blundered. Mr. Díaz’s Bronx is burgeoning, which former Bronx Democratic boss Roberto Ramirez suggested would prove crucial when making an appeal to the “economic engine” —Manhattan. Bridging the river has always been the chief challenge for outer-borough elected officials looking to win the mayoralty, especially for those from the Bronx, he said.

“This is about the person who has the ability to articulate a vision to the City of New York. That person will be the mayor,” said Mr. Ramirez, now partner in the MirRan Group consulting firm, which also has ties to Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, who represents East Harlem and parts of the South Bronx. “The Bronx is ripe. The Bronx with the speaker to the New York State Assembly. The Bronx with the speaker to the City Council, the Bronx with a very charismatic borough president, the Bronx is ripe to have someone reach that highest level office.”

Mr. Ramirez added that Mr. Díaz would have a strong shot even if Ms. Mark-Viverito, the only other Latino politician in the city with a comparably high profile, ran in 2021.

Angelo Falcon, co-founder of the National Institute for Latino Policy, argued that Ms. Mark-Viverito’s close relationship with Mr. de Blasio would inhibit her ability to articulate an independent vision for the city, and that fatigue with the present regime would likely drag on her candidacy—despite her efforts to play up her differences with the mayor, most recently over the attempt to regulate Uber.

““The Bronx is ripe. The Bronx with the

“She’s so tied to his administration, unless there’s some major break down the road … it’s going to be very hard to envision her as a candidate for [mayor],” he
speaker to the New York State Assembly. The Bronx with the speaker to the City Council, the Bronx with a very charismatic borough president, the Bronx is ripe to have someone reach that highest level office.”

Ms. Mark-Viverito, unlike Mr. Díaz, will be term-limited in 2017—which would leave her scrambling to stay in the spotlight if she wanted to aim at becoming mayor in 2021.

Mr. Díaz, on the other hand, Mr. Falcon deemed “a rising star” with a distinct identity.

“He’s seen as a young man,” he said. “A new voice in the community,”

Ms. Mark-Viverito told the Observer “hope” when asked last year if she hoped to replace Mr. de Blasio, though she would not be the first politician to change her mind.
If the plan for new Metro North stations works out, Bronx Borough President Ruben Díaz Jr. next stop could be Gracie Mansion (Photo: Aaron Adler for Observer)

For now, Mr. Díaz's sights are on the Bronx: on the slated renewal of the waterfront in Port Morris, on the nine-rink ice skating center now coming to the Kingsbridge Armory, on the still-gritty streets of his native Soundview, where he makes his home even today.

"We're creating housing for Bronxites, we're creating jobs. That's the American Way, it's the way of New York City, it's the way of the Bronx," he told the Observer before his driver dropped him off at his co-op for the evening. "Why shouldn't we have all the things the other boroughs have? Why shouldn't we have them here?"

Please also read our profile of Patrolmen's Benevolent Association President Patrick Lynch.
Healthy eating is catching on

By Shant Shahrigian
Posted 8/6/15

With farmers’ markets abounding, school curriculums emphasizing good diets and a first lady who made childhood obesity a topic of national discussion, it seems that being healthy has never been more of a priority.

Last month, a major report found Americans’ calorie consumption has declined for the first time in decades.

The authors of a study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found calorie consumption has dropped most among children, with full-calorie soda sipping significantly declining among all groups.

“That’s a tremendously welcome development,” said Steven Froot, chairman of Community Board (CB) 8’s Health, Hospitals and Social Services Committee. “That’s really major, if that’s happening.”

Healthy eating has been on CB 8’s agenda for some time. The board has sponsored youth-run farmers’ markets in Marble Hill and at the Riverdale Neighborhood House.

Friends of Van Cortlandt Park has a similar project.

And green-thinking Riverdalians seem to place a premium on fresh produce, with the Riverdale Community Support Agriculture Group bringing members crunchy carrots, succulent strawberries and all manner of produce from a farm in Hawthorne Valley for the past 20 years.

Health indicators in Bronx County as a whole remain the worst in the state. A prominent annual study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found 28 percent of adult Bronxites were obese in 2011. By comparison, in nearby Westchester County, the figure was 18 percent.

Basic economics

*Guil Tiryaki-Soumez, the chairwoman of Lehman College’s Health Sciences Department, pointed to basic economics as the reason for such discrepancies.

“If you go and look at economically much better areas and the education level is much higher, those people are eating much healthier,” she said.
State Grant Should Fund Rockaway Rail Line Study: Goldfeder

29th July 2015  Michael V. Cusenza  Government
0 Comments

PHOTO: Assemblyman Phil Goldfeder this week called on the MTA to fund a new Rockaway Beach Rail Line study with a $17 million state grant. File Photo

An area elected official who for years has been advocating for the rehabilitation of the long-abandoned Rockaway Beach Rail Line called on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority this week to apply for capital from a recently-announced state Department of Transportation infrastructure grant to fund a comprehensive feasibility study into reactivation of the rail spur.

In a letter written to MTA Chairman Thomas Prendergast, Assemblyman Phil Goldfeder (D-Howard Beach) urged the agency to apply for the 2015 Passenger and Freight Rail Assistance Program grant to fund the feasibility study into reactivating the RBRL. According to the program's application guidelines, the state is making up to $10 million dollars in funding available for passenger rail projects. These grants, Goldfeder noted in his letter, may go towards the costs of preparing design and plan specifications for the rehabilitation of tracks, as well as fund cost estimates and environmental impact studies.

"Families in southern Queens and Rockaway suffer from some of the longest commutes in the entire city. The state’s new passenger rail grant program has the potential to bring an end to our transportation desert," Goldfeder said. "By funding a feasibility study into reactivating the Rockaway Beach Rail Line, we can work to create a true north-south rail corridor in Queens, improve transit access to our airports, and take thousands of cars off the road."

The program announced earlier this month commits $17 million to critical improvements at rail and port facilities across the Empire State. According to NYSDOT, projects will be selected based on the ability to address areas of economic development and sustainability, how well they support the broad initiatives of the State Rail Plan, and the overall public benefit relative to project costs. The application process is open to railroad operators, industrial development agencies, and state and local government agencies and authorities. The deadline to submit applications is Aug. 27.

The line was put into service in the late 19th Century under the control of the Long Island Rail Road. According to Goldfeder's office, it provided area residents with expedient access to other parts of the city and 40-minute
commutes to midtown Manhattan from Rockaway. In the early 1960s, parts of the railroad service were condensed, sectioned off and eventually closed. In the following years, communities surrounding the line have seen dramatic increases in population, with the Rockaway Peninsula populace nearly doubling.

Last November, Goldfeder touted a Queens College study that indicated that the defunct rail line could generate half a million subway rides per day, and many residents in the communities through which the line runs favor reactivation over transforming it into a park similar to the High Line in Manhattan.

The student-led Department of Urban Studies analysis, "A Community Impact Study of Proposed Uses of the Rockaway Beach Branch Right of Way," surveyed thousands of residents and researched available census data to gauge the transportation and park needs of Rego Park, Forest Hills, Glendale, Richmond Hill, Woodhaven, and Ozone Park—the neighborhoods surrounding the abandoned line.

In October, Friends of the QueensWay and the Trust for Public Land released the QueensWay Plan, a project that involves converting the RBRL into a 3.5-mile, $120 million public park boasting trails and amenities.

"Multiple studies by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Port Authority have shown that rail is not a viable option because of the extraordinary cost of building it, the significant increase in cost to commuters to use it, and the environmental and quality of life damage and disruption it would cause to the existing regional rail system," said Friends of the QueensWay's Travis Terry.

Reactivation of the rail line would cost anywhere from $700 to $900 million.
Myron Magnet

The Politics of Delusion

Mayor Bill de Blasio's radical dreams are leading straight to chaos.
Summer 2015

However we may yearn for a politician whose worldview springs straight from his reason, his grasp of history and human nature, and his sense that politics is the art of the possible, not the ideal, what we usually get is a mix of half-baked ideology, hungry ambition, weaselly opportunism, and some inner wound that only the roar of a crowd or the cooing of sycophants can soothe. Even for a politician, though, New York mayor Bill de Blasio is a rare specimen: a self-contrived person spouting an ideology unmoored in reality but inseparable from the man's brittle sense of himself.

This strange amalgam would be only of local interest were de Blasio not hell-bent on making himself the spokesman for the Democratic Party's left fringe with a new manifesto: the Progressive Agenda to Combat Income Inequality. Unveiled to raves from the Left on the U.S. Capitol steps in mid-May, the agenda amplifies such familiar far-left tropes as President Barack Obama's assertion that inequality is "a defining issue of our time"—especially racial inequality, which ex-attorney general Eric Holder devoted his tenure to rooting out, in a quest to uncover racism concealed in every cranny of American life and the American soul, as exposed by the "disparate impact" on blacks of policies not intended to discriminate. How much influence de Blasio and his War on Inequality will have, only time will tell, but multimillionaire presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, that reliably sensitive indicator of which way the Democratic hot air is blowing, now talks the inequality talk. Here in New York, of course, where de Blasio's approval numbers have hit a new low and crime has spiked not just in ghetto neighborhoods but also on Central Park's verdant lawns and in Fifth Avenue's glittering shops, nothing in the mayor's inequality crusade bodes well.

To call de Blasio a self-made man would be a charitable way of putting it. More accurately, he is a made-up man. Born Warren Wilhelm, Jr., he painfully watched his Loomis- and Yale-educated war-hero father decline into anger, depression, and drunkenness after he lost his federal budget-analyst job in the wake of a congressional probe into his and his wife's left-wing politics. Sparked by ex-Communist Whittaker Chambers, who'd known the couple as fellow Time magazine staffers before the war, the investigation cleared both Wilhelms of being Communists but noted their "sympathetic interest in Communism," which cost de Blasio's father his security clearance, even though he had shown ample proof of patriotism by giving part of his leg for his country at the Battle of Okinawa, for which he won the Bronze Star. So, despite going on to prestigious posts as a Texaco economist and an Arthur D. Little management consultant, he couldn't let go of the grievance of being a target of McCarthyism. He destroyed his marriage when his son was only seven, ultimately got fired, and put a bullet through his heart in 1979.

"I have a real respect, and a real anger and sadness at the same time," said de Blasio, trying to describe his feelings about his father to the New York Times. "I don't think I've ever been able to do the math on exactly what it all means." So wounded was he by the triple abandonment of alcoholic stupor, divorce,
and then suicide that he junked his father's name and took his Smith-graduate mother's maiden name. Returning as a Sandinista-booster from a Nicaraguan trip after NYU and then Columbia graduate school, de Blasio brought his angry radicalism with him when he joined the administration of Mayor David Dinkins, whose placidly feckless Leftism might have seemed tamer than his 33-year-old aide had hoped. But de Blasio found all the fire he wanted in diminutive fellow staffer Chirlane McCray, a black lesbian just as angrily radical.

In America, F. Scott Fitzgerald tells us, we are all free to become our own Platonic conceptions of ourselves (or at least to try), but one senses a messier, less self-assured process at work in the self-invention of de Blasio and McCray. Reader, she married him, despite her years of relationships with women, and she joined her racial grievance—nursed as the only black in a New England high school, and then at Wellesley, where she also felt she “didn’t belong”—to his political grievance as innocent collateral damage of a right-wing witch hunt. They became each other’s completing counterparts—“she’s my most important adviser and the person I’m closest to in the world,” de Blasio has said of McCray—and together they stoked a shared anger against injustices that belonged to an earlier, and largely vanished, America. Nor can de Blasio always keep that anger from boiling over, as witness his extraordinary, impolitic June 30 outburst against Andrew Cuomo.

To frame his Progressive Agenda to Combat Income Inequality, de Blasio held high-level Gracie Mansion powwows with such leftist luminaries as Nation editor Katrina vanden Heuvel; his Acorn-alumna intergovernmental-affairs aide, Emma Wolfe (who infused much of that defunct and corrupt outfit’s radical program into the new manifesto); Senator Sherrod Brown, whom President Obama flew back on a special plane from his mother’s funeral to cast the deciding vote for the 2009 stimulus package (which created 1.5 jobs per every $1 million of its $840 billion price tag); tax-loving Connecticut governor Dannel Malloy; and ex-Obama green-jobs czar Van Jones, a supporter of cop-killer Mumia Abu-Jamal, forced out of his job for signing a petition charging that the Bush administration “may indeed have deliberately allowed 9/11 to happen” and for publicly declaring (to use, he says, a “technical, political kind of term”) that Republicans are “assholes.” Also influencing the Progressive Agenda, The Atlantic reports, was a recent paper by Nobel economics laureate Joseph Stiglitz, who chaired both President Bill Clinton’s Council of Economic Advisers and the Socialist International’s Commission on Global Financial Issues and who has argued that “unfettered markets often not only do not lead to social justice, but do not even produce efficient outcomes,” so that the “real debate today is about finding the right balance between the market and government.” I assumed that the manifesto that emerged would be a real advance on the Tale of Two Cities stump speech that de Blasio first delivered as his State of the City address last February and, indulging presidential dreams, delivered again in presidential primary states this spring. But no: same old, same old.

That speech is truly awful, and no amount of editorial smoothing can make it coherent—trust me, I have tried. Let me lay its meager parts out on the autopsy table for inspection. Point One is that after the Great Recession that began in 2007, Wall Street recovered smartly, while the rest of New York floundered. If de Blasio means that the stock market, thanks to unorthodox Federal Reserve monetary policy that made most other investment options unrewarding, performed better than the Obama administration’s antigrowth fiscal policy allowed the real economy to perform, that’s true. But if he means that employment and pay in New York’s financial industry for all but a few top CEOs bounced back unscathed, it’s hogwash. Though Gotham added more jobs in the last five years than in any similar period over the last half-century, the New York Times reports, Wall Street accounted for a wa
percent of them, by contrast with 10 percent in the 1990s boom. Suddenly, postindustrial New York is developing a diversified economy, with strong employment growth in everything from hotels to Google and Facebook, and with 5,000 new tech jobs added just this March.

De Blasio’s implication that Wall Street is living as high on the hog as it did pre-2007, while everyone else is stuck, is simply false, as is his fantasy that the Great Recession is our era’s Great Depression. “That’s just a fact,” he insisted recently to an adulterous Rolling Stone reporter. “The difference is, there’s no light at the end of the tunnel now.” Therefore, he must do “what Mayor LaGuardia did—making the New Deal come alive in New York City.” Look around at our city-run housing projects, hospitals, subways, and buses, and ask yourself how much you want a repeat of the accomplishments of the “midget Mussolini,” as LaGuardia’s enemies dubbed him. New York has had 75 years to pay many times over in worker wages and benefits for its New Deal nationalizations, while watching the services themselves decay.

Nevertheless, the city—and the country, too, as de Blasio’s Progressive Agenda declares—must mandate a $15 minimum hourly wage (which the New York State legislature has rejected and which would push more jobs into the underground economy), paid sick leave and family leave for all workers, and universal pre-K education (a tax-financed babysitting service whose educational benefits, where they exist, have been shown to vanish by third grade), along with multiple hefty tax hikes on “the rich” (which, in New York, includes much of the middle class), more union-friendly labor laws, and “comprehensive” immigration reform. In New York, de Blasio also seeks more “affordable” housing, and more STEM courses at the City University, with an array of science and tech high school courses in between, plus training and apprenticeship programs for high school graduates and the unemployed. It doesn’t take a roomful of left-wing activists to come up with such platitudes.

Because of the Great Recession, de Blasio claims, America’s opportunity engine has broken down. Today’s workers have lost “the assurance that hard work could pull them from modest means into a growing middle class.” The “sense of economic justice is gone,” the mayor says, though, of course, what he means is not justice (of which history has but little to show) but rather the miracle of opportunity that American liberty—and his own city’s concentration of wealth, which provides the employment that has made New York the Opportunity City—has wrought. It’s worth remembering that this opportunity rests on the fact that America leaves every man free to pursue his own vision of happiness in his own way, so that, as James Madison put it at the nation’s founding, because people’s dreams and talents differ widely, of course our bedrock liberty will yield unequal outcomes. But de Blasio aide Richard Buery, who rose to deputy mayor from a crime-ridden East New York housing project, knows better than such an unenlightened figure from the past. The “mythical” belief “that where you end up bears no relation to where you began,” he asserts, “never reflected reality in any meaningful or sustainable way.” Whether the upward-mobility machine be mythical or merely out of gas, the mayor’s agenda means to get it humming.

You can get a sense of how much magical thinking has gone into de Blasio’s program when you consider two key measures he has instituted as mayor: he has handed out municipal identification cards to “the almost half-million undocument New Yorkers,” so that they will not have “to live their lives in the shadows,” he says; and he is ending “the wrongs spurred by a broken policing policy,” especially “the overuse of stop-and-frisk,” thus assuring “New Yorkers of every background that we will respect equal protection under the law.” Taken together, these two measures unintentionally reveal who the poor in de Blasio’s inequality fairy tale really are, and why they are poor—which has nothing to do with why the
rich are rich. They are the hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens who do the low-wage jobs that New Yorkers won’t do, along with the New Yorkers who won’t do them—a largely nonwhite, welfare-dependent, disproportionately lawless underclass. Hence de Blasio lumps racial and economic inequality together in his mind, as if the one caused the other. If de Blasio’s proposals were to succeed and get these underclass New Yorkers into jobs, what would happen to the illegals, with their little municipal IDs?

But don’t worry: they won’t work. The indigenous underclass, for all de Blasio’s efforts, will not troop into the industrious working or middle class. Much more likely, as Victor Davis Hanson, Heather Mac Donald, and Steven Malanga have shown in these pages, is the reverse: many of the illegals and their U.S.-born (and therefore legal) children will get sucked into the underclass, through school dropout, early unwed childbearing, and gang membership leading to crime.

That an intergenerational, nonworking underclass should exist in the Opportunity City—where, by de Blasio’s own showing, so many illegal immigrants have found gainful, mostly unskilled employment—requires explanation. Since the one that I suggested two decades ago in The Dream and the Nightmare seems borne out by time, let me recap it briefly, especially since de Blasio-style ideologues deny many lessons that 20 years of successful urban experimentation have taught.

Tectonic shifts in elite culture in the 1960s, I argued—a normalization of sexual experimentation, a devaluation of marriage (especially as the key to successful child rearing) and a destigmatization of illegitimacy, a fad for drugs and for dropping out of the workaday world, a disdain for authority, a belief that black criminality was a natural rebellion against racism and exclusion, and that, in reparation for 300 years of racial injustice, welfare payments ought to be raised and handed out freely, without any hint of disapproval—all these changes in morals, manners, and beliefs quickly filtered down to the inner-city poor and produced an explosion in drug use, crime, nonwork, welfare dependency, and illegitimacy. The housing projects teemed with families headed by teenage mothers, whose own meager education, multiple (and often abusive) boyfriends, drug use (crack, in those days), and chaotic households ensured that their children would miss out on cognitive and moral nurture, along with the sense of security and love, that promotes success in school and in later life. So the basic reality that perpetuated the underclass was culture: it wasn’t the welfare system, unemployment, deindustrialization, racism, job mismatch, or genetic inferiority.

The middle class soon came to its senses, and—while it more sedately continued its adventures with sex and drugs, and its 1960s attitudes about race turned into what George W. Bush called the “soft bigotry of low expectations” and others called “political correctness”—it once again got married and stayed married, nurtured its children for success at soccer and Stanford with born-again ferocity, and developed a work ethic that can wear you out to watch. Not so the black underclass (and a growing white underclass). The crack epidemic abated, and the single mothers tended to start families in their twenties instead of in their teens, even as the illegitimacy rate in underclass neighborhoods soared north of 80 percent; but what had been a self-defeating culture derived from elite attitudes hardened into a self-subsisting, dysfunctional ghetto culture of grievance, entitlement, obscene misogyny, and contempt for education and authority, personified by teachers and cops (and, I’m guessing, by harried, quick-tempered single mothers, the genesis of the “bitches” of gangsta rap). These deeply ingrained habits of seeing and feeling made underclass young men (generally speaking) not only unemployable but also incapable of being husbands or fathers, in any but the biological sense. Ten minutes listening to
gangsta rap will demonstrate what I mean, as will two minutes watching clips of April's Baltimore riots.

But not only did the middle class change its behavior, appalled at the consequences of its 1960s excesses. So did government, spurred by voters fed up with those consequences as they appeared in the underclass. In New York, Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani, elected because even Gotham Democrats grew to hate the crime and disorder killing their city, charged Police Commissioner William Bratton with implementing a strategy of quality-of-life policing, computerized crime-mapping, and stop-and-frisk, that would not just respond to crimes after they occurred but would reduce criminality—and not only in ritzy neighborhoods but in the ghetto, too. Crime plummeted almost overnight; and after 20 years of activist policing, which Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly steadfastly retained and refined, murders fell from one every four hours in 1991 to fewer than one a day last year, with crime in minority neighborhoods (where it had been highest) falling most dramatically—and with the most improvement in residents' lives.

In addition, Republican congressman Newt Gingrich's 1994 Contract with America proposed a sweeping reform of welfare that President Bill Clinton vetoed twice before signing at last, in 1996. Its key point was that the dole would be a short-term boost, not a way of life, and that recipients would work for their benefits, to accustom them to employment and its disciplines. In New York, Giuliani embraced that reform, setting up an ingenious work-experience program, as he called it, and ensuring that welfare offices, renamed “job centers,” steered dole-seekers toward the job market before they could get hooked on dependency. He also required tough eligibility checks to end widespread fraud. Mayor Bloomberg continued and fine-tuned the program, so that the welfare caseload didn't budge during the Great Recession. From 1.1 million New Yorkers on welfare—more than one in seven—two decades ago, public-assistance rolls have shrunk to 350,000, while the population grew and the poverty rate fell dramatically. Postrecession child poverty remains 10 percentage points lower than in the pre-Giuliani era.

In the 1980s, I believed that many who espoused the conventional racism or lack-of-opportunity explanations for the growing underclass were sincere, if misguided. But after New York conducted the most successful urban-policy experiment in my lifetime over the last two decades, we know for sure that there are jobs for people of all colors; that even menial work is respectable and can be a step on the ladder of upward mobility, as opposed to the demoralization of perpetual dependency; and that there is no excuse for crime, which harms not just its individual victims but also the whole city, while good policing can make the city bloom again.

So what to say about those who still spout the old racial excuses? Some—not just race hustlers like Al Sharpton but a wide swath of professional pols and activists who need a victim class, even if imported or imaginary, to promise voters and donors they will rescue—are cynical to varying degrees. Hillary Clinton is a case in point. Others—and here, I would class the Obamas and, to a greater extent, the de Blasios—have their identities bound up with their ideology. Sincere but deluded, they would come apart psychologically without their grievance and victimology. What kind of thinking, after all, could allow de Blasio to bluster that the 2013 mayoral contest was “an election that I won with 73 percent of the vote. I think the jury is in”? Yes, he won 73 percent of the 24 percent of eligible voters who bothered to show up—mostly government workers or dependents—the lowest turnout in history. So the truth is that he won with 17 percent of the vote, hardly a ringing endorsement.

As born-again New York draws in fresh cohorts of ambitious newcomers, fewer of us are around who
remember the bad old pre-Giuliani days, when 1 million mostly prosperous and well-educated residents fled an increasingly dangerous and squalid city over 15 years, as did most of Manhattan’s big corporate headquarters. So the understandable impulse of recently arrived New Yorkers to help whatever distress they see around them, along with the “racist-America” orthodoxy that so many newcomers bring with them straight from PC University, makes them susceptible to the Marxoid inequality rant that de Blasio and other Democrats spout, with the mainstream media swelling the chorus. They might not recognize the risible falsehood of Democratic presidential hopeful Martin O’Malley’s assertion that “we haven’t had an agenda for America’s cities probably since Jimmy Carter,” despite the fact that not only did Giuliani devise one but also that 20 years’ experience proved its spectacular efficacy. The newcomers don’t know that we have tried de Blasio’s ideas—already old-fashioned when Rudyard Kipling jeered at “Social Progress” as the policy of “robbing selected Peter to pay for collective Paul,” thus ensuring that “all men are paid for existing and no man must pay for his sins”—and the results have been failure.

Recently arrived New Yorkers aren’t horrified by the determination of de Blasio and his welfare commissioner, Steven Banks, a former radical homeless advocate and an ex-Legal Aid Society chief lawyer, to undo New York’s workfare program—exactly the wrong way to carry out Banks’s declared intention to have his agency “fight inequality and poverty every day.” Come-and-get-it welfare will trap families in dependency for generations, as it has done for 50 years. Nor are newcomers dismayed by the mayor’s relaxation of school discipline, certain to make inner-city public schools once again so disorderly and frightening that only prodigies of determination can get an education there, much less dare to go to the bathroom. And they’re not bothered by de Blasio’s opposition to charter schools—stymied for now—which have so successfully provided poor kids whose parents want them to succeed with a good enough education to help them do so, in the time-honored New York way. De Blasio’s rage to reduce inequality, it seems, would be perfectly satisfied with equal lack of opportunity for all.

Unlike longtime residents, some newcomers to Gotham, and not just the Occupy Wall Street fringe, vaguely approve of the city council’s push, partly endorsed by New York State’s chief judge, to stop arresting people for such low-level quality-of-life crimes against public order as subway farebeating, public urination, or drinking on the street that in recent memory made the trendy neighborhoods where they now live with a sense of perfect safety—the Lower East Side or Williamsburg, for instance—anarchic, crumbling, and scary. They don’t know that such Broken Windows policing was central to Gotham’s crime drop, allowing the police to take back control of the streets, parks, and subways by arresting the drinkers and brawlers, who regularly proved, upon investigation, to be carrying guns and to be wanted for serious crimes. When evildoers know the cops are watching them, crime goes down, setting off a virtuous circle, so that arrests and imprisonment have also fallen far below their pre-Giuliani levels. Policy and culture, it turns out, have a dialectical relationship: each affects the other.

With the shocking deaths of Eric Garner in New York and Freddie Gray in Baltimore, and a panicked rookie cop’s accidental killing of an unarmed man in a Brooklyn housing-project stairwell last November fresh in their minds, some new New Yorkers also don’t know that, despite the odd sadist or bully who will always turn up in any group of people armed by society with the authority (and firearms) to keep it safe, the world-class NYPD, the best police force in the nation and nearly as racially diverse as the city it serves, is the opposite of the instrument of racist oppression that the left-wing war on the police has branded it. Trained to defuse potentially explosive situations without violence, it had to use force in fewer than 2 percent of 2014’s Broken Windows arrests. Many newcomers also don’t know that
it isn’t racism but wildly disproportionate rates of lawbreaking that explain the high numbers of minorities arrested or stopped and frisked: in 2013, to take one example, 92 percent of the city’s murder suspects (and 83 percent of its murder victims) but only 53 percent of its population were black or Hispanic.

A poll this May found that 57 percent of all New Yorkers favor Broken Windows policing, compared with 38 percent opposed to it, with 50 percent of blacks supporting it, versus 46 percent opposed. Kudos to Mayor de Blasio for backing—however ambivalently—NYPD commissioner Bratton’s determination to continue so successful a policing tactic, critical to the health of the city. All New Yorkers must hope that the Bratton-supporting de Blasio will win out over the de Blasio who, not long ago, had the insulting idea of sitting down with a glum-faced Bratton on one side and a gloating Sharpton on the other, as if the two were morally equivalent. Bratton has asserted that vigorous quality-of-life policing—even with fewer but more precisely targeted stop-and-frisks—can keep New York’s crime rate on its downward path. “But if you lose those powers to arrest,” Bratton warns, “that’s where Pandora’s box is opened and the 1970s, the 1980s have the potential to come roaring back again.” (See “Why We Need Broken Windows Policing,” Winter 2015.)

Alas, de Blasio’s reining in of stop-and-frisk, along with his refusal to fight a lawsuit charging the NYPD with racism and the national demonization of cops in the wake of a justified police shooting of a Ferguson, Missouri, black man, has opened that Pandora’s box. Shootings in New York have risen two years in a row. In addition, murders jumped 19.5 percent in the first five months of 2015, compared with the same period last year, even as stop-and-frisks fell by over 40 percent, bringing the total drop since 2011 to nearly 95 percent.

“What you’re seeing now are the perps carrying their guns because they’re not afraid to carry them,” Sergeants Benevolent Association head Ed Mullins told the New York Daily News. “We’ve created an atmosphere where we’ve handcuffed the police.” As a Bronx cop told the paper: “The guys I talk to all feel the same way: De Blasio doesn’t want stops. The perps know what we’re doing.” Stories of depraved crimes such as New Yorkers haven’t read about for two decades are once again blazoned across the local papers: three teens living in a Brooklyn Boys Town residence, for instance, allegedly abducted a 33-year-old woman from a Chinatown Internet café, brutally beat, raped, and robbed her, leaving her dazed and blood-soaked as they used her ID and house keys to find her apartment and rob it, as well, the New York Times reports.

In response, even Calvin Butts, pastor of Harlem’s Abyssinian Baptist Church, who had recently criticized de Blasio for not acting against the cop responsible for Eric Garner’s death, has noted that rising crime in minority neighborhoods could threaten de Blasio’s reelection chances. “The mayor needs to pay attention,” Butts warned. “It could mean that people will organize against him.” Though 96 percent of black voters backed him in his 2013 “landslide” victory, only 59 percent currently think he is doing a good job. Among white voters, 54 percent of whom cast a ballot for him, his approval rating is a paltry 32 percent. Belatedly, de Blasio is flooding neighborhoods where shootings have spiked with 300 extra cops. But, in what seems a silent vote of No Confidence, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, at the request of the NYPD and U.S. prosecutor Preet Bharara, is sending in federal agents to get guns off the streets, to trace the interstate networks of gun suppliers, and to turn carrying a gun into a potential federal case, threatening ten to 15 years in federal prison. Nevertheless, miracle-worker Bratton’s beefed-up patrols cut overall crime in June to its lowest level in over two decades, so that murder is up â€œonlyâ€ 9.3 percent for the first half of 2015, compared with 2014â€™s first half.
It's critical to emphasize that good policing and welfare reform, for all their importance, only work around the edges of the real problem. They keep the depredations of the underclass in check, and they limit its ability to spread. Even an ideologue like President Obama, when he stops talking long enough to listen to someone else and to reflect honestly on his own experience instead of mythologizing it, knows what the problem is, however unwelcome the knowledge may be. "I grew up without a dad," he recently said at Lehman College in the Bronx. "I grew up lost sometimes and adrift, not having a sense of a clear path. The only difference between me and a lot of other young men in this neighborhood... is that I grew up in an environment that was a little more forgiving." To say the least: for Obama had a loving, if hippy-dippy, white mother, an exclusive prep school and Ivy League education, and nurturing, middle-class white grandparents who took care of him from age ten until his prep school graduation, protecting him from (among other things) the consequences of his teenage drug use. His grandmother, he once said, "loves me as much as she loves anything in this world."

So when he reports that one of the Lehman College students he talked to, whose father had also absconded, told him that "we should talk about love," the president could only partly understand what it means to grow up not only without a father but also without a loving mother, and an orderly, loving, nurturing family that makes it business to help one succeed in school and beyond. "But really," said Obama, "what this comes down to is: Do we love these kids?"

And here the ideological Obama obliterates the Obama capable of insight. We love these kids? We, the taxpayer, the school staff, the child-services caseworker? No, we can't give them the love they need, as a much-derided Obama campaign ad showed how government by itself brought up and protected a fictional "Julia" from womb to tomb. For all the welfare money, food stamps, WIC money, and Section 8 vouchers, we can't even ensure that the apartments they rent with our money won't be the roach-infested, urine-reeking, cat-feces-covered hellhole of disorder, without books or a quiet place to read them in, where two baby mamas dude it out over possession of their ex-con impregnator in the living room, that Heather Mac Donald recently described in these pages. (See "Running with the Predators," Spring 2015.)

White Americans are acutely aware that slavery and Jim Crow are grotesque blots on our visionary republic, and they have now done about everything they can do to make amends and open the doors of opportunity—even to excess. Now it is up to black Americans to liberate the underclass. Whether this will take another courageous visionary like Martin Luther King to give the message, as he did, that all men are to be judged by the content of their character—for which they are responsible—I don't know. Certainly the times are calling for such a charismatic hero loudly enough. And certainly what the underclass now needs is a transformation of soul, such as the Wesley brothers worked among the British working poor over two centuries ago, or as Bishop John Hughes worked among New York's Irish Catholic poor half a century after that. (See "How Dagger John Saved New York's Irish," Spring 1997.) To take one example of what I mean: to make the ex-con mentioned above marry one of his baby mamas would not turn him into a father and would not create a family. He would abuse the children or abandon them or both. Something has to happen in his innermost self to turn him into that everyday miracle of civilization, a nurturing parent.

As the first black president, Obama could have been that world-historical liberator, freeing the underclass from its mind-forg'd manacles and healing race relations in America forever, as many who voted for him hoped. But character is fate, as Heraclitus said; and Obama chose the opposite, ignoble course. What is luminously clear is that everyone—and not just court-certified liars like Sharpton—now
needs to stop feeding the grievance at the center of underclass culture by telling lies about a supposedly racist America supposedly victimizing blacks. No cultural transformation of the underclass can take place as long as the constant drumbeat of resentment and victimology sounds in their ears. It’s incitement, not help, to have the president turn his eulogy of a murdered black pastor in Charleston, South Carolina, into an object lesson in pervasive American racism, or to muse that, if he’d had a son, he’d look like Trayvon Martin, a black teen whom a Florida neighborhood-watch vigilante shot to death. Ignorant of the circumstances, Obama reflexively treated the incident as proof that it was open season on blacks in America, though a jury found the vigilante not guilty, and such occurrences are aberrations, like the murders of cops by deranged blacks—but unlike the daily grind of black-on-black killings in the nation’s ghettos.

Now that the press is starting to dub de Blasio “the Left’s new star in Washington,” the mayor has a greater responsibility than ever for the consequences of what he says. So it is especially troubling that he is willfully, almost perversely, blind to the reality in front of him, determined not to admit what has really happened in the world and in his city. New York’s overwhelmingly Democratic voters rejected his liberal boss, David Dinkins, and his “progressive” agenda, and instead for two decades elected Republican or Independent mayors whose key vision was a well-policed city with self-reliant citizens and a flourishing economy. An aberration, in de Blasio’s mind, almost a rounding error. “I was on the ’93 David Dinkins reelection campaign, so I watched the beginning of the Giuliani era the hard way. Dinkins should’ve beaten Giuliani, but we lost touch with our own base. Dinkins lost by 50,000 votes, and there were more than 50,000 votes to be had if we had handled things differently,” de Blasio told Rolling Stone. “So I never felt that Giuliani’s election was a renunciation of the core vision. I also feel the same about Bloomberg’s election in 2001. Yes, he had a huge amount of resources, but that was a winnable election. So one could argue [that] we had 20 years of Republican or Republican-independent rule that were entirely avoidable.” Except that we didn’t avoid it: the 20 Republican years were eminently real and conclusively successful, and the renunciation of the Dinkins vision was as thunderous as the New York Post headline, as murders were soaring past 2,000 a year: DAVE, DO SOMETHING.

And the historic crime reduction that the Giuliani administration quickly achieved, which resulted in New York’s miraculous rebirth almost overnight? “I don’t 100 percent buy into that theory,” de Blasio sniffes, waving away an inconvenient reality as if it never happened. “I agree that he was good at selling himself, and a lot of media over-accepted his version of the story. So, yeah, do you give him credit for figuring out a way to get more credit than he deserves? Sure, if that’s credit. We’ve proven not only was my model more electorally popular than his—by a lot [the 73 percent landslide myth, again]—but that you can manage this place much more effectively if you’re not in fact creating division through the process.”

But the greatest de Blasio self-delusion of all is his Tale of Two Cities, the rich and white New York somehow withholding opportunity from the poor and minority one, further oppressed by racist police, whom de Blasio says he tells his biracial teenage son every day to treat with extreme wariness, lest they brutalize him on the slightest pretext. Talk like that will not uplift the poor but only imprison them all the more harshly in their self-destructive resentment and prompt them to act it out by burning down their own neighborhoods, as happened this spring in Baltimore. The mayor had better open his eyes, take a hard look, and cool his rhetoric, before he lights a raging bonfire at home.