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BY JARED MCCALLISTER / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Thursday, August 13, 2015, 11:17 AM

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“This action increases employment, research and learning opportunities for students and faculty members at CUNY School of Medicine in Harlem, and will help our next generation of healthcare workers serve communities across New York State,” Cuomo said. “This new school is another step toward making medical care more accessible for all New Yorkers.”

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Dr. Scott Cooper, president and CEO of SBH Health System, which includes St.
City College campus in Harlem will be the home of the new CUNY medical school.

Barnabas Hospital, praised the partnership with the City University of New York.

"Like CUNY, we have a congruent mission to provide quality care to underserved communities. With our combined resources and commitment, those facing health disparities will have more than good reason to hope."

CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken and City College President Lisa Coico were also excited about the new institution.
Gov. Cuomo proudly made the official announcement about the new CUNY medical school, which will be operated by the City University of New York, in partnership with SBH Health System, which includes St. Barnabas Hospital.

"We thank Gov. Cuomo and state and city leaders for their support of CUNY’s historic commitment of access to high-quality health care education for underrepresented constituencies in New York," said Milliken. "The new medical school is a logical and necessary expansion of the college’s prestigious 40-year-old biomedical program that has gained recognition as a leader in educating underrepresented minorities for medical practice. CUNY and City College will award the M.D. degree for the first time in its nearly 170-year history."

Milliken also thanked City College President Lisa S. Coico, Dr. Maurizio Trevisan, provost and dean of the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education, and their team for "outstanding work toward making possible establishment of the CUNY School of Medicine at City College."

"Since its founding in 1847, City College has provided a high-quality, affordable education for New Yorkers who might otherwise not attend college," said Coico. "The new CUNY School of Medicine at City College is a natural extension of our bold founding mission that will open doors to underrepresented students and train caring physicians for underserved communities across our city and state. Our unique academic program infuses an ethos of service and social justice. Whether our graduates serve as primary care physicians, pediatricians or plastic surgeons, all are expected to have a deep commitment to serving underserved communities."

Congressman Charles Rangel was among the elected officials who welcomed the new learning institution.

"With the establishment of the CUNY School of Medicine, residents in the immediate vicinity of the school as well as all across the city will now have
increased access to primary care. For too long, communities across the city and across the state have suffered due to a critical shortage of medical professionals,” said Rangel.

“Now, with the CUNY School of Medicine, we are now able to provide desperately needed medical care in underserved communities, and also work towards closing the shortage of medical professionals, not only in New York, but also throughout the country.”

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Get smart about felons: Why it makes sense for inmates to qualify for Pell Grants, too

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Monday, August 17, 2015, 4:05 AM

Free to learn
Recognizing that a prison sentence should not condemn a person to being locked out of the job market, the Obama administration is pushing to end a 21-year-old ban on federal college aid for prisoners.

The Education Department plans to make Pell Grant scholarships available to a limited group of inmates nearing the end of their terms in select state and federal facilities. It’s a level-headed idea whose time has come.

Research shows that enabling inmates to earn college credits behind bars pays off, as college-educated ex-cons are much less likely to commit additional crimes, and more likely to find honest work.

Prisoners have been denied Pell Grants since 1994, when Congress voted to cut them off in a get-tough reaction to a crime wave — meaning most now have no access to higher education.

College programs are available in just 20 of New York’s 54 prisons — and only because institutions such as Bard College and CUNY raised private funds to cover costs.

Only 1,800 of the state’s 64,000 inmates participated in 2014 — a shame, because the reincarceration rate for former student-inmates is 12%, versus 42% for the population at large.

Pell Grants are aimed primarily at low-income students, providing just under $6,000 a year for as many as 12 semesters. That amount could position a New York inmate to earn a two- or four-year degree through CUNY or SUNY, if those systems opened prison-based schooling.

As U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan recently pointed out, spending less than $6,000 for a Pell Grant is a lot cheaper than keeping someone in prison: “The cost-benefit of this does not take a math genius to figure out.”

Wrong and wrong.

While Pell Grants are banned for most prisoners, Obama is acting under a statute that allows limited scholarships on a trial basis.

And contrary to Collins' argument, there is no cap on the Pell Grant budget. Washington finds the money for all who qualify — and a project for prisoners should be no exception.

To those who see a coddling of criminals, consider this: No matter what happens, 700,000 inmates finish their sentences every year. America would be better off if they emerge smarter, more skilled and with greater opportunity to earn legitimate livings.
SALT Names Annual Great Teacher, Human Rights Honorees

Posted August 16, 2015 & filed under Legal Education, Uncategorized.

At its upcoming Annual Dinner to be held on January 8, 2016 in New York City, SALT is pleased to announce the 2015 Human Rights Honorees:

Professor Susan Bryant, CUNY School of Law

Professor Jean Koh Peters, Yale Law School

Sherrill Maryla
York City, SALT will honor three champions of its mission of justice, diversity and teaching excellence. Professor Susan Bryant from CUNY School of Law and Professor Jean Koh Peters from Yale Law School will share the SALT Great Teacher Award honors. The M. Shanara Gilbert Human Rights Award will be presented to Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund (NAACP-LDF), and a faculty member at the University of Maryland Francis Carey School of Law. The Great Teacher Award recognizes Bryant and Koh Peters for their collaborative teaching and scholarship on clinical pedagogy. Sherrilyn Ifill will receive the Human Rights Award in recognition for her relentless advocacy with NAACP-LDF on issues such as voting rights, affirmative action and police violence as well as her work on race and justice as a faculty member. Look for more information about the honorees and sponsorship opportunities soon in your email and on saltlaw.org (http://saltlaw.org). The dinner will be held at New York University’s Kimmel Center on Friday, January 8, 2016, starting at 6:30 p.m.; information about ticketing options to follow in September. We look forward to seeing you there!
Dentsu Aegis Expands at the Mobil Building

London-based Dentsu Aegis Network is expanding its New York offices at Midtown’s Mobil Building, the latest sign that media companies are stoking the city’s economic growth.

Dentsu, which specializes in marketing and communications through digital media, is leasing an additional 57,000 square feet at 150 E. 42nd St. for a total of 206,000 square feet over four floors, according to Christopher Bendowski, vice president of real estate. The New York office has grown over the past three years to 900 employees.

The new deal will “accommodate continued expansion of our businesses and to ensure the availability of growth space,” said Mr. Bendowski. The expanded
office will also have an “open” design popular with media companies.

“Since we first started working with Dentsu, there’s been a 180-degree change in how to utilize office space for media and tech companies,” said Adam Ardise, senior managing director at DTZ, which brokered the deal. Mr. Ardise said that when the office first expanded in 2012, it took the opportunity to “reinvent its workspace with an open plan.”

“For this latest expansion, the floor will be built from scratch,” Mr. Ardise said. Dentsu operates in more than 110 countries.

—Emily Nonko

**O’Connor Closes Sale to City University**

O’Connor Capital Partners closed the sale of a Long Island City property to the City University of New York’s graduate center, completing an almost decadelong effort to develop the former industrial site.

The Graduate Center Foundation Housing Corp., a supporting organization of The Graduate Center of The City University of New York, closed on a $22.5 million deal to purchase roughly half of a 2-acre site at 5-11 47th Ave. The Graduate Center, CUNY’s doctoral-granting college, intends to erect a building that could be as large as six stories with 200 apartment units that will house graduate students and faculty. The site’s proximity to several subway lines allows for an easy commute to the college at 365 Fifth Avenue, near East 34th Street, said Sebastian Persico, senior vice president of finance and administration.

O’Connor Capital began assembling the 2 acres of industrial land in 2006 and later secured approval for a cleanup plan and zoning changes, said Chief Executive Bill O’Connor. The firm envisioned a luxury rental building and student housing, Mr. O’Connor said. About two years ago, O’Connor Capital completed construction on the site of The Maximillian, a 188-unit luxury rental building, which it now owns with Rose associates. The building was leased in four months.

The appeal of the Long Island City location was obvious, Mr. O’Connor said.

“It’s so close to transportation, close to Midtown [Manhattan] and had great access to the waterfront,” Mr. O’Connor said.
Situation Interactive Expands Near Home

Situation Interactive, a digital marketing agency with clients such as Disney, Bravo and the Guggenheim, has decided to keep its New York office in the Garment District for an expansion.

“They had a lot of choices for a new location,” said Bob Tunis, vice chairman of Colliers International, which helped arrange the deal. “But the Garment District has really transformed over the last three to four years to try and become a go-to for tech companies.”

The Garment District gets its name from the industry that moved to the area after World War I. More recently, some landlords began advocating changing the neighborhood’s name to give it a hipper image.

But the name stayed and media and technology companies migrated there anyway to find lower rents and more choice than in pricey Midtown South.

Situation Interactive will move from two floors at 1372 Broadway to 469 Seventh Ave., where it is leasing a single floor of 13,000 square feet. The company signed a 10-year lease at an asking rent of $54 a square foot.

The decision to move from two floors to a single floor was to help foster a more collaborative atmosphere, according to Mr. Tunis.

“The new space will be tremendously utilitarian,” he said.

—Emily Nonko
How friendship affects well-being in each decade of life

Deseret News | Posted: Friday, August 14, 2015 4:00 am

Eighteen months ago, Chad Every moved from Ohio to St. Peters burg, 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 (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, 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 friendships.

"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

"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."

According to the study, led by Cheryl L. Carnewish of Brooklyn College and published recently in the journal Psychology and Aging, your middle-age happiness can be predicted by two things: the quantity of friends in your 20s, and the quality of friendships in your 30s. In a way, your 50-year-old self stands to benefit both from the endless rounds of flip-flops with college pals and the long talks with close friends a decade later.

The researchers used a data set (http://psycnet.apa.org/index.cfm?fa=boy.optionToBuy&id=1593-34193-000) involving more than 200 University of Rochester students, who in the 1970s and 1980s had been asked to keep daily diaries tracking their social interactions for two weeks, once when they were about 20 years old and again when they were about 30. Each time, they were to note both how many people they interacted with each day and to rate the intimacy and pleasantness of the interaction. Then in 2007 and 2008, when they were about 50, a little more than 100 of those former students took a series of tests to measure their psychological health, including their levels of loneliness, depression, and overall well-being. As it turned out, having a higher number of interactions in the 20s predicted greater well-being in the 50s; in the 30s, however, the quality of the social connections mattered more.

The study isn't a perfect one. For one, Carnewish acknowledges that this is a limited sample - mostly white, relatively well-educated, and well-off - from which to draw these conclusions. And there's also the fact that adulthood is pretty different in 2015 than it was in the 1980s, when these study participants were in their early 30s; it's more common now for young adults to delay marriage and family, for instance. "Our reference to age 20 as early adulthood may, nowadays, be more aptly described as very early adulthood, whereas by age 30, people often feel they have fully entered adulthood," Carnewish writes. "The developmental changes that we ascribe to 50-year-olds may have taken place by age 30 for many in this late baby-boom cohort, but may unfold at a later age (e.g. closer to age 40) for other generations." Also, imagine if this study were to be replicated today, with the inclusion of social media. How many "social interactions" have you had in the last two hours, let alone the last two weeks?

Still, if this is the pattern your social life has taken, the researchers do explore some interesting potential reasons why. There's the obvious, for one — the fact that for many people, the 30s are the years of marriage, kids or career (or all three at once!), leaving less time for keeping up with tons of friends.

But there's also this: In early adulthood, you're still figuring yourself out, trying on different selves and ways of being; it makes sense that you'd want a larger circle of friends, with personalities you can borrow from time to time. "However, as individuals approach their 30s, social information-seeking motives wax," Carnewish and her co-authors write. "Identity exploration goals diminish with the transition into better-defined and more enduring social roles." You start to have a better idea of who you are in your 30s, meaning that you aren't so reliant on people in your social circle to give you ideas of who you could be. In other words: If you're concerned because you have fewer friends than you did in college or in the years shortly after, relax. You'll be fine.
New evidence suggests marmosets learn vocalizations from parents

August 14, 2015 by Bob Yirka in Biology / Plants & Animals

Common marmoset. (Callithrix jacchus) Credit: Carmem A. Busko/Wikipedia/CC BY 2.5

(Phys.org)—A team of researchers with Princeton University has found that marmosets appear to learn at least some of their vocalizations from their parents. In their paper published in the journal Science, the group describes a study they carried out with the little South American monkeys and what they learned from it. David Margoliash with the University of Chicago and Ofer Tchernichovski with City University of New York offer some insight into the work done by the team in a Perspectives piece in the same journal edition.

There has been a belief in modern science that only humans and songbirds can learn to make new sounds that have some sort of meaning, by listening to others. That may not be the case after all as the team at Princeton has carried out a study that appears to show infant marmosets learning to
vocalize in an adult fashion, by mimicking the calls of adults.

The study consisted of separating captive infants from their parents for short periods of time during the first two months of the infant's life (the time it takes for a marmoset to learn to talk like an adult) and recording the vocalizations that occurred as the infants and parents continued to chatter back and forth. In studying the recordings, the researchers were able to watch as clusters of noises from the young monkeys congregated, suggesting they were learning that certain noises held certain meaning. The researchers also recorded noises made by young and old individuals under normal circumstances and when they were kept completely isolated for short periods of time.

The researchers also recorded the size and weight of the marmosets as they grew and measured their respiratory abilities—doing so allowed them to see that the changes in the vocalizations that occurred over time were not likely the result of simple physical maturation.

In studying their recordings, the researchers discovered that young marmosets that had a high frequency of back and forth chatter with adults came to vocalize like an adult at a younger age than did other young monkeys that had less communication with adults. Taken together, the data suggests, the researchers claim, that marmosets learn to talk like an adult, by listening and mimicking adults.

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Playing Saxophone and All That Jazz

John Ludlow's 13 years under McKusick's tutelage had a clear and profound impact
By Christopher Welsh | August 13, 2015 - 12:29pm

As his teacher had before him, the late saxophonist Hal McKusick, who lived in Sag Harbor, wanted to inspire students to pursue their dream and be passionate about what they believe in. “That takes mentors,” he told The Star in 1998. “And that’s what I’d like to do with my students.

So inspired, John Ludlow is living the dream of a successful career in music. Now 26, the Bridgehampton native has been performing regularly on the South Fork since he was a teenager. In between gigs, he is pursuing a bachelor's degree in the jazz instrumental performance program at the City College of New York.

Mr. Ludlow’s 13 years under McKusick’s tutelage had a clear and profound impact. Apart from Bob Marley and a passing interest in rock 'n' roll and hip-hop, he has been a jazz aficionado from the start. “When I was pretty young, Hal asked, ‘Where do you want to go with this? I can teach you everything I know about jazz and you can follow that path. Or, you can not take it so seriously, and have fun with it playing pop or rock.’ I said, ‘I want to do what you do.’

In fact, Mr. Ludlow’s first instrument was the piano, which his brother, Peter, plays. “I enjoyed it, but I didn’t really like practicing, like every kid,” he said. “I wanted to stop, and my parents told me that I had to play an instrument. I guess I chose the sax because of the aesthetics — the gold, the curves. And, I was obsessed with basketball, and David Robinson, the San Antonio Spurs player, played the sax.”

Peter Ludlow was taking piano lessons with Mr. McKusick, so when John chose the saxophone, their parents brought the musician another student. “I was 10 or 11, and it just took off from there.” Mr. Ludlow said. “I took a lesson every week up until he passed away in 2012. He got me on the right path. I listened to him, and everything he said was gold.”

His teacher, who had worked with legendary musicians and vocalists including Woody Herman, Buddy Rich, Sarah Vaughan, and Gil Evans, advised him to listen to saxophonists like Charlie Parker, Lester Young, and Dave Schildkraut, “but he was my primary influence.”

He first performed during services at the Bridgehampton Methodist Church. “But my first real public performance was at Kipling’s.” The now-defunct Bridgehampton restaurant was owned by a musician, Jim Demitrack, who performed there regularly. “They had jazz playing on the radio,” Mr. Ludlow remembered, “and on Friday and Saturday nights they would have Jim with Ray Williams on bass. I just loved the sound of it.” About 10 years ago he was invited to perform there. “It turned out to be a lot of fun, and I played there a few more times.”

In his first paying gig, he and other students accompanied McKusick, who was performing with a trio at a fund-raiser in Southampton hosted by Dorothy Lichtenstein. “Hal invited us up to play a tune — that was a quite a thrill. I didn’t even have the chord changes in front of me. Maybe Hal told me not to use them, to just play by ear and be confident in what I was hearing. It was kind of a blur — one tune, one solo — but it was great.”
Mr. Ludlow, who is also a member of the Mid-Atlantic Collegiate Jazz Orchestra, will return soon to City College for the next of three remaining semesters, but meanwhile, with summer in full swing, there are plenty of gigs on the South Fork. On Saturday night he will perform with the vocalist Ludmilla Benevides and the Pimenta at Circo restaurant in Southampton, and on Sunday evening he will play at the Bridge 7 Restaurant. He is also a regular performer at Pierre's in Bridgehampton and the Ram's Head Inn on Shelter Island, among others. "I really like the scene out here," he said. "It's a small music scene, but there are some good players."

The feeling is mutual. "In addition to being a skilled, versatile player, John is very empathetic and brings a positive vibe to the bandstand," said Jane Hastay, a pianist. "He cheers his fellow band mates on with encouraging words, which is always an asset with new guest performers and repertoire. He helps keep things relaxed and easy. This is what veterans do."

"With his beautiful tone, excellent training, and a willingness to try any style, John Ludlow is at the top of my list," said Peter Martin Weiss, a bassist. "I hire him as much as I can because he's been playing more and more in New York City, and it's only a matter of time before he gets discovered by an internationally touring jazz group."

"I want to play as much as possible," Mr. Ludlow said, "and make enough money doing it — unfortunately, money has to be involved. It's not one of the most lucrative trades, but I love doing it, and if I could do that every day I'd be very happy."

For John Ludlow's performance schedule, recordings, and more, go to johnludlowjazz.com.
What’s on TV Saturday

By KATHRYN SHATTUCK  AUG. 15, 2015

8 P.M. (HBO) THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING (2014) Eddie Redmayne won an Oscar for his portrayal of the British theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, who, as a graduate student at Cambridge intent on fathoming the origins of the universe and locating the beginning of time, learned he had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Felicity Jones, who earned a nomination, plays his first wife, Jane Hawking, whose memoir, “Traveling to Infinity: My Life With Stephen,” is the main source for James Marsh’s portrait of a marriage. “Mr. Redmayne, hunched into a wheelchair, the muscles of his face spread into what looks like a permanent smile, must communicate his character’s feelings almost entirely with his eyes, which are remarkably expressive, conveying Stephen’s mischievous wit as well as his intelligence,” A. O. Scott wrote in The New York Times about this best picture nominee. “But it is in showing the application of that intelligence that ‘The Theory of Everything’ tumbles into a black hole of biopic banality.” The film’s historical and scientific lapses have been enumerated, but “taking liberties with facts is a prerogative of storytelling,” he said. The greater failing is that Mr. Marsh seems “unable to capture the spirit and energy of scientific inquiry.”

NOON (C-Span) CANDIDATE SOAPBOX Presidential contenders speak for 20 minutes each in this Iowa State Fair tradition. The lineup begins with former Senator Rick Santorum, Republican of Pennsylvania, and continues with two Democratic candidates, former Gov. Lincoln Chafee, independent of Rhode Island, at 12:30 p.m., and Senator Bernie Sanders, independent of Vermont, at 3.

7 P.M. (Showtime) KING KONG (2005) Peter Jackson revives the classic
beauty and the beast tale with a “Lord of the Rings” flourish. Naomi Watts plays Ann Darrow; Adrien Brody is her favorite writer; Jack Black is the director who got them into this mess; and Andy Serkis does double duty as Kong and a cook named Lumpy. “The movie is, almost by definition, too much — too long, too big, too stuffed with characters and over-the-top set pieces — but it is animated by an impish, generous grace,” A. O. Scott wrote in The Times. “Three hours in the dark with a giant, angry ape should leave you feeling battered and exhausted, but ‘King Kong’ is as memorable for its sweetness as for its sensationalism.”

9 P.M. (Starz) POWER As the death toll rises, Ghost (Omari Hardwick) and Tommy (Joseph Sikora) wonder if they’ll make it out alive in this Season 2 finale. A marathon of the season’s previous nine episodes starts at noon.

9 P.M. (CNN) BLACKFISH (2013) On Feb. 24, 2010, Dawn Brancheau, a senior trainer at SeaWorld Orlando in Florida, was killed when Tilikum, a 12,000-pound bull orca, grabbed her as they interacted in shallow water and dragged her into a deep pool, mutilating and drowning her. It was the third human death the whale had been implicated in since 1991. “If you were in a bathtub for 25 years, don’t you think you’d get a little irritated, aggravated, maybe a little psychotic?” Jane Velez-Mitchell suggested afterward in a CNN panel discussion. But had Tilikum turned violent from the stress of living outside his natural environment? Or was he just playing? Gabriela Cowperthwaite’s documentary uses the backdrop of Ms. Brancheau’s death to chronicle SeaWorld’s nearly four-decade history of holding orcas captive — starting with the taking of calves from their anguished mothers — and asks if keeping whales in marine parks amounts to torture for animals whose brains are so complex. “When you look into their eyes, you know somebody is home,” says John Jett, a former SeaWorld trainer turned critic. “Somebody’s looking back.” Writing in The Times, Jeannette Catsoulis called the film “delicately lacerating.”

9 P.M. (CUNY) WALLANDER: MASTERMIND Inspector Kurt Wallander (Krister Henriksson) must find the link between a grisly murder and the disappearance of a policeman’s daughter.
Racial Wealth Gap Persists Despite Degree, Study Says

By PATRICIA COHEN  AUG. 16, 2015

Even with tuition shooting up, the payoff from a college degree remains strong, lifting lifelong earnings and protecting many graduates like a Teflon coating against the worst effects of economic downturns.

But a new study has found that for black and Hispanic college graduates, that shield is severely cracked, failing to protect them from both short-term crises and longstanding challenges.

“The long-term trend is shockingly clear,” said William R. Emmons, an economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and one of the authors of the report. “White and Asian college grads do much better than their counterparts without college, while college-grad Hispanics and blacks do much worse proportionately.”

A college degree has long been recognized as a great equalizer, a path for minorities to help bridge the economic chasm that separates them from whites. But the report, scheduled to be released on Monday, raises troubling questions about the ability of a college education to narrow the racial and ethnic wealth gap.

“Higher education alone cannot level the playing field,” the report concludes.

Economists emphasize that college-educated blacks and Hispanics over all earn significantly more and are in a better position to accumulate wealth than
blacks and Hispanics who do not get degrees. Graduates’ median family income in 2013 was at least twice as high, and their median family wealth (which includes resources like a home, car and retirement account) was 3.5 to 4 times greater than that of nongraduates.

But while these college grads had more assets, they suffered disproportionately during periods of financial trouble.

From 1992 to 2013, the median net worth of blacks who finished college dropped nearly 56 percent (adjusted for inflation). By comparison, the median net worth of whites with college degrees rose about 86 percent over the same period, which included three recessions — including the severe downturn of 2007 through 2009, with its devastating effect on home prices in many parts of the country. Asian graduates did even better, gaining nearly 90 percent.

To understand just how disappointing these results are, look at the impact during this period on comparable groups without college degrees. Blacks without degrees, in large part because they had much less to lose, experienced a 3.8 percent drop in wealth. Whites who didn’t graduate from college lost nearly 11 percent. The wealth of Asian nongrads fell more than 44 percent.

There is not a simple answer to explain why a college degree has failed to help safeguard the assets of many minority families. Persistent discrimination and the types of training and jobs minorities get have played a role. Another central factor is the heavy debt many blacks and Hispanics accumulate to achieve middle-class status.

The collapse of the housing bubble played havoc with college-educated black and Hispanic families, who on average accumulated a huge amount of debt relative to the size of their paychecks. They borrowed a lot to buy homes, only to see them plunge in value during the mortgage crisis. While the average value of a home owned by a white college graduate declined 25 percent, homes owned by black and Hispanic grads fell by about twice that.

This loss was made more devastating by the fact that blacks and Hispanics
tended to have more of their wealth concentrated in their homes than whites and Asians, who, on average, accumulated more assets in the stock and bond markets, primarily through retirement accounts.

The housing boom and bust particularly whipsawed college-educated Hispanics: From 2007 to 2013, their net worth fell a whopping 72 percent.

One lesson, according to economists at the St. Louis Fed, is that borrowing too much to get a piece of the American dream often undermines any hope of sustaining it.

That notion applies equally to excessive college and housing loans, they say. “How you finance an asset is just as important as the asset itself,” said Ray Boshara, director of the Center for Household Financial Stability at the St. Louis Fed bank.

Substantially narrowing the racial and ethnic wealth gap, Mr. Boshara and the study’s authors suggest, would require policy changes to expand the availability of a quality college education without forcing students into outsize debt.

The issue of onerous student debt is surfacing in 2016 presidential campaigns. Hillary Rodham Clinton, who is seeking the Democratic Party nomination, has proposed government grants to replace loans for students at four-year public colleges and universities. The plan has spurred some of her Republican rivals, including Senator Marco Rubio of Florida and Gov. John R. Kasich of Ohio, to talk about reducing the student loan burden.

While the recession has caused especially steep declines in black and Hispanic wealth, the study contends that the problem is deeply rooted and more persistent. “The recent crisis exacerbated these longer-term trends but did not by itself cause the long-term trends that we see,” Mr. Emmons said.

In even the best of economic times, blacks and Hispanics have lagged whites. The black unemployment rate, for example, has consistently been twice as high as the rate for whites, even among college graduates.
Researchers have repeatedly found discrimination in the job market. When two nearly identical résumés are sent out, for example, it has been documented that the candidate with a white-sounding name receives more callbacks than the applicant with a black-sounding name.

Discrimination like this and other factors contribute to the persistent and substantial pay gap between whites and minorities. Blacks, for instance, hold a disproportionate share of government jobs — a sector that has shrunk in recent years and provides fewer opportunities for big wage gains. Blacks have fewer advanced degrees, and the ones who do are more often in lower-paying fields or graduates of colleges with lesser reputations.

"Blacks and Latinos at all education levels, including college and advanced degrees, earn less than their white counterparts, which means lower lifetime earnings" and less ability to save, said John Schmitt, research director at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, who reviewed an advance copy of the report.

Blacks and Hispanics are also less likely than whites to inherit money or receive help from their parents to cover a tuition bill or a down payment on a house.

William A. Darity Jr., director of the Duke Consortium on Social Equity at Duke University, points out that a family headed by a black college graduate has less wealth on average than a family headed by a white high school dropout.

The lack of family wealth is pivotal to understanding the racial economic gap, he argues.

While the researchers from the St. Louis Fed, when asked, played down the importance of financial support from family when explaining their results, Mr. Darity said he believed that family aid helped individuals avoid the type of risky big-ticket borrowing that ensnared so many Hispanic and black graduates.

"Prior family wealth is the key," Mr. Darity explained in an email, noting that it
“shapes both income-generating opportunities and the capacity to allow wealth to grow more wealth.”

A version of this article appears in print on August 17, 2015, on page B1 of the New York edition with the headline: Racial Wealth Gap Persists Despite Degree, Study Says.
At hands-on program, black and Latino boys aim for selective colleges

The Urban Ambassadors program handpicks promising students from schools that don't typically send students to four-year colleges — and so far, it's had impressive results

By Sabrina Rodriguez    @sabrod123    srodriguez@chalkbeat.org

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In the program, students do research and learn more about the education system and how it affects them as black and Latino young men. (Photo by Sabrina Rodriguez)

When Leo Herrera is at School for Excellence, a small high school in the Bronx, it can be hard to concentrate.
Sometimes, Herrera says, it’s girls. Sometimes, it’s feeling surrounded by classmates "that don’t really care and can hold you back."

But when he’s at SAT prep or debating with peers in a classroom at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, he’s more focused than ever. Herrera is part of a city program designed to send black and Latino male students to college. And not just any college: selective, four-year schools, perhaps out of New York City altogether.

"This program is completely different than my school," Herrera said during an SAT prep session one Wednesday this summer. "In my school, I personally have distractions that take me off sometimes. But luckily I’ve got these guys that always keep me on track and remind me where I want to go."

The program is called Urban Ambassadors, and is focused on a small group of promising students handpicked from high schools that don’t typically send many (or any) students to selective colleges. The students then get academic tutoring, help with college applications, and one-on-one mentoring, and are surrounded each week by a very motivated group of peers.

The result is something like the Posse Foundation scholarships, which send low-income students to colleges in groups, but for college preparation. So far it’s had impressive results: Of the program’s two groups of graduating seniors so far, 22 of 27 in the first cohort enrolled in college, according to Ainsley Rudolfo, the program’s director. This past year, 26 of 28 students enrolled at colleges, including Syracuse University, Middlebury College, Brandeis College, and Drexel University.

"We know that black and Latino boys tend to look at their peers in particular for college," Rudolfo said. "So our thought with the program was, could we develop these young men that are all about college? And would their peers then follow them and say, ‘I want to be like them?’"

To get into the program, which is overseen by the Department of Education’s equity and access division, students must qualify for free or reduced lunch and have at least a 2.5 grade point average, then go through an application process and interview. Rudolfo says they aren’t necessarily looking for a school’s top academic performers, but they are looking for dedication and charisma.

"It’s been infectious, with kids coming back and recommending it to their peers."

- Perry Rainey, Brooklyn School for Math and Research principal
Its students commit to an intensive schedule over their junior and senior years of high school. Herrera has spent his summer weekdays at Medgar Evers, and will continue to spend his Saturdays with the group for two years. The students visit colleges, get special leadership training, and prepare to take the SAT together in December of their senior year.

On a recent Wednesday, students were preparing for a debate about whether the Common Core standards helps black and Latino students. More than 20 rising juniors from across the city were discussing who they would impersonate — President Barack Obama, Rev. Al Sharpton, or Chancellor Carmen Fariña. (Kellon Garrick, a rising junior at Urban Assembly for Law and Justice in Brooklyn, asked if picking a less well-known character, like Diane Ravitch or the police commissioner William Bratton, could qualify him for extra credit.)

The goal, Rudolfo explained, is to give students a better sense of what has shaped their own education.

“We’re learning about how the system affects us so we can make informed decisions,” Garrick said.

The program was founded in 2012, in partnership with Hip Hop 4 Life, a youth empowerment organization, just months after the city launched the Young Men’s Initiative, designed to increase college- and career-readiness of black and Latino young men in the city.

Urban Ambassadors is
too small to tackle more than a corner of that problem, and its first students are just now entering their sophomore year of college, making it too early to tell whether the program will succeed in helping its students surpass the roadblocks that keep many similar students from graduating. In 2010, the college graduation rate for Latino male students was 10 percent lower than the national average for male students; for black males, it was 22 percent lower.

But as the city has started high schools and funded anti-violence programs through the Young Men’s Initiative, Urban Ambassadors fills a different gap, helping students with academic potential who are already in high schools that can’t offer the same kind of sustained, one-on-one guidance.

Before their debate that Wednesday, the students wrapped up a project focused on how they could create a “personal brand” to help during their college searches, creating DVD cases with concise descriptions of themselves.

Those activities and others are aimed at making students feel confident in their ability to pitch themselves to college interviewers, and comfortable with their peers, who they call brothers. During school breaks, students visit colleges to get a better idea of what colleges look like, visiting schools like Morehouse College, Georgetown University, and SUNY Albany.

“Without the program, I just don’t know — I didn’t know what a college campus looked like,” said Justin Summers, a rising senior at Brooklyn School for Math and Research. “And now my vision is really going out of state and being successful.”

Edward Fergus, an education professor at New York University, said it’s important that programs aimed at getting low-income students into college offer chances for students to have conversations with college students with similar backgrounds.

It’s critical that students are “gaining a better sense of not only what it means to go to college,” he said, “but also how much they envision themselves being ready for college.”

Students acknowledge that Urban Ambassadors, which has an annual budget of $175,000 for each cohort, offers resources their high schools can’t, since many of their
schools do not send many students to four-year schools and have guidance offices that are already stretched thin. At School for Excellence, 12 percent of graduates went on to a four-year university in 2014. At Pan American High School in Queens, which is designed for students who are new to the country, one-quarter of seniors that year went on to a two-year CUNY program, but almost none went into four-year programs.

"Where I come from, you just don't get opportunities like this every day," Herrera said. "My school is not that good of a school, so we don't have SAT prep classes and that's something I've always wanted."

Perry Rainey, principal of the Brooklyn School for Math and Research, says the program offers some resources that a small school like his cannot pay for. He is such a strong proponent of Urban Ambassadors, which currently includes 12 of his students, that the school hosts an open house for parents of 10th graders to explain why they should encourage their kids to apply.

"The program really helps those kids that need an extra push," said Rainey. "It's been infectious, with kids coming back and recommending it to their peers."
Efrin Martinez, a rising senior at Pan American International High School, came to New York from Dominican Republic just two years ago. For him, the group is more than just a chance to visit colleges. The group has helped him improve his English, adjust to his new surroundings, and convince him that attending college is a realistic prospect.

"It's not that there aren't students in my school that want to go to college and do good," Martinez said. "But for us, it's about making sure we all succeed, because I want my brothers to go far too."

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Why are New York cops shaming homeless people?

The police union is turning quality of life into a political battle

August 16, 2015 2:00AM ET

by Alex S. Vitale (/profiles/v/alex-s-vitale.html) - @avitale (http://www.twitter.com/avit

Last week the New York Police Department sergeants’ union inserted itself into local politics yet again when it urged its members (http://thinkprogress.org/justice/2015/08/12/3690454/new-york-police-use-social-media-against-homeless-population/) and supporters to document the declining quality of life in the city by taking pictures and videos of homeless people, panhandlers and low-level drug dealers and posting them on its Flickr page (https://www.flickr.com/photos/sbanyc/).

This public posting of photos and videos has sparked popular outcry and criticism. In response, the Sergeants Benevolent Association (SBA) has insisted on the value of the project:

The SBA’s recent posting of photographs of homeless people on the Flickr social networking site was in no way intended to demean or humiliate one of the city’s most vulnerable populations. The motivation for posting those photos, as well as photos of people engaged in criminal activity and quality of life offenses, was to illuminate the increasing sense of frustration among residents, workers and visitors to the city and to hold elected officials and purported civic leaders accountable for the diminishing quality of life in all five boroughs.

Despite this defense, the photos and videos were removed from Flickr on Friday. The SBA denied responsibility and objected to the move, saying, “The images were removed without our knowledge by Flickr for reasons we can only speculate on but add up to censorship at its worst.” The union promised that a website for the pictures was under construction and would launch soon.
While the images show symptoms of real problems that make life in cities more difficult for both those who are homeless and those who are not, the union’s actions were driven by the more cynical goals of resurrecting the widely discredited and deeply conservative broken-windows policing theory, pushing back against new accountability mechanisms and undermining the progressive politics of Mayor Bill de Blasio.

For the last two decades, police in New York have enjoyed a favored position as back-to-back Republican mayors have positioned law enforcement as the driving force in restructuring social relations in the city. They have done this by embracing the broken-windows theory, which erroneously argues that aggressive crackdowns on minor legal violations leads to a general climate of civility and lawfulness despite quantitative and qualitative analyses that have shown the idea to be more myth than theory. Broken-windows policing is supposed to revitalize poor and crime-ridden neighborhoods by stopping, frisking and arresting hundreds of thousands of poor, young and homeless people — most of whom are nonwhite — for a variety of minor nuisance crimes, giving them life time arrest records and involving them in an increasingly unforgiving criminal justice system.

"If the SBA was serious about addressing the quality of life in the city, its members would have spoken out over the last 20 years as the number of homeless people consistently increased."
getting people with serious mental health and substance use issues off the streets.

If the SBA was serious about addressing the quality of life in the city, its members would have spoken out over the last 20 years as the number of homeless people consistently increased. Their failure to do so may be tied to the fact that so many of the union’s members live in suburban counties rather than the city. They are essentially publicly degrading homeless people as a hammer to wield against a mayor they resent. And they’re doing it in the most callous way possible.

The irony is that de Blasio has done very little to directly undermine their position. This year, he authorized the hiring of 1,300 additional police officers. He has gone to great lengths to emphasize that he fully supports quality of life policing initiatives, including the deployment of more officers this summer to address low-level violations, all in keeping with the broken-windows theory that he explicitly supports.

This call to shock the public and embarrass the mayor is an ideological battle and an embarrassment. Police officers, like any other workers, have the right to organize themselves, and their union is not the only one to participate in politics. Still, the public, the media and politicians should judge the officers’ political actions critically, given their structurally powerful role.

And the police need to stop using vulnerable and disenfranchised people to make a political point. Groups like Picture the Homeless (http://www.picturethehomeless.org/civil_rights.html) are documenting extensive abusive policing aimed at homeless people. Calls for more crackdowns — on homelessness, vagrancy and other minor crimes — will hurt the quality of life for all of us, not improve it.

"Alex S. Vitale is an associate professor of sociology at Brooklyn College and author of "City of Disorder: How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York Politics." He is also a senior policy adviser to the Police Reform Organizing Project and serves on the New York State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera America's editorial policy."
Longtime Met Museum Public Affairs Head Harold Holzer Steps Into New Role at Hunter

By Alanna Martinez | 08/13/15 2:40pm

Harold Holzer, in his office surrounded by his collection of Lincoln memorabilia, will retire from the Met this summer. (Photo by Jackie Neale Chadwick, courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Scant months after his retirement from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Harold Holzer already has a new job title. The longtime museum officer, who served in a variety of positions for over 20 years and most recently as its senior vice president for public affairs, has been tapped as the next director of the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College, reports The New York Times.

Roosevelt House, at 47-49 East 65th Street, became the residence of Franklin Delano and Eleanor Roosevelt a few years into their marriage and remained so until its sale in 1941 to nearby Hunter College. It is currently the home of two Hunter academic programs: Public Policy
and Human Rights, and also serves as the host of conferences, lectures, etc., such as the recent "Long Hot Summer? A Double Symposium on Race and Law Enforcement."

On the occasion of his retirement in March, Mr. Holzer was described to the Observer as a "true Renaissance man" by close friend Tony Bennett (yes, the singing Mr. Bennett).

Mr. Holzer has worked as a reporter, editor, speech writer for politicians, in public affairs for television, and even alongside Governor Mario Cuomo in the New York State Urban Development Corporation; he is a noted Abraham Lincoln historian.

"Harold Holzer is an incredible scholar and quintessentially New York...He understands what a public college can do for the next generation," Hunter President Jennifer J. Raab told The New York Times.

An so now, in his next step, Mr. Holzer commits himself to scholarship, which he had said was something he was looking forward to after retiring.

"Instead of doing it on weekends, I would like to do it on weekdays—and see what other people do on weekends," he told the Observer in January.
Did Cop Murder Mother of His Child for Refusing Abortion?

Austin police are investigating a former officer for the murder of his on-again, off-again girlfriend, who was seven months pregnant with his child.

She lived to help victims of crime. But after two years as a crisis counselor for Texas police, Samantha Dean tragically became a victim herself.

The 29-year-old Austin woman was seven months pregnant when deputies discovered her body in the parking lot of a vacant shopping center. She had worked for the Kyle Police Department, where co-workers were planning a baby shower for her future daughter, whom she'd named Madeline.

Dean's life was cut short sometime before 2 a.m. on Feb. 4, when a deputy found her shot in the head three times—once at close range, an autopsy
Charger had been removed.

The alleged motive for her murder is chilling. VonTrey Clark—the father of her unborn baby—allegedly hired hit men because Dean refused to have an abortion and wanted child support, authorities charge.

On Wednesday, more disturbing details of the alleged hit job were revealed in a search warrant for Clark’s locker at an Austin police substation.

Texas authorities and the FBI early on named Clark as the chief suspect in Dean’s slaying but haven’t charged him with a crime.

Clark allegedly offered $5,000 to have Dean killed, the latest search warrant affidavit charges. Investigators say Clark’s associate, Aaron Lamont Williams, 32, told them that Clark drove Dean to the parking lot where she was found slain.

Williams allegedly claimed that Clark’s buddy and former roommate Kevin Watson—in jail on an unrelated drug charge—admitted to killing the mother-to-be with the help of a man named Freddie Smith. The hit men wanted to make it look like a drug deal gone wrong, according to the affidavit.

Cops also arrested Watson’s girlfriend, Kyla Fisk, on charges of tampering with evidence for her role in allegedly hiding the clothes Watson wore the night of the slaying, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

Evidence suggests Dean feared her longtime lover before she was murdered. In a January 21 diary entry, Dean described an encounter in which Clark handcuffed her while wearing his uniform and gun. “Dean felt at one point Clark was going to kill her,” authorities said in a July search warrant affidavit.

Dean reportedly also told Kyle Police Department colleagues that if something happened to her, Clark was behind it.

The couple was on-again, off-again for the last six years, Clark said, according to court documents. He allegedly told investigators their relationship was a secret because he was with another woman.

Police say his whereabouts were mostly unaccounted for the night of the murder. His girlfriend told cops he left his house at 8:30 p.m. on February 3 after they had a fight, and she found it bizarre that he left his cellphone and pager at the residence.

Clark told investigators he drove to a nearby school and sat in his car before walking around, according to a search warrant. Police say there is no surveillance footage of him doing so. He checked into a police substation around midnight, court documents reveal.

Police said a Los Angeles-area number called Dean the night of her death, and text messages seemed to lead her to the abandoned shopping center. Authorities placed four cellphones, including Dean’s own, near the crime scene.
Meanwhile, five days after Dean’s murder, Williams sent threatening text messages to an Austin Police Department crisis counselor, authorities charge in court records.

“I [expletive] got her. I am going to get him, then I’m coming for you,” the text said. “I will show you what a crisis is.”

According to the warrant, parties including Clark, Watson, Fisk, and Williams had conversations in which they discussed not snitching to police and distancing themselves from each other, KXAN reported.

In July, Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo announced that Clark was suspended indefinitely for refusing to attend an in-person interview, then skipping an Internal Affairs hearing days later. Pending the investigation, Clark was not permitted to leave his home without permission, Acevedo said.

Cops soon discovered Clark flew to Indonesia—a country that does not have an extradition treaty with the U.S.—on July 17.

“If you have any dignity, any semblance of humanity, Mr. Clark, get back on that plane and come back to Austin,” Acevedo said during a July 23 news conference.

Clark’s attorney, Bristol Myers, told KXAN that the former officer flew to Indonesia for a medical procedure.

“Officer Clark booked an international round-trip flight in his own name, used his own passport, and was easily located. These are not the hallmarks of a fugitive,” Myers told the TV station.

This month, authorities announced the FBI captured Clark in Indonesia but that he’s being held on a visa-related issue. It’s unclear when he will return to the U.S.

Some relatives of Dean said they didn’t know Clark and had never met him.

“Throughout the pregnancy, she had nothing to do with him,” Michaela Garth, Dean’s cousin, told The Daily Beast. “We didn’t know much of him until this situation happened. Nobody really knew who the father was.”

Dean’s mother, Kimberly, declined to comment on Clark. She would only tell People that her daughter and husband discussed the father of Dean’s child.
Kimberly told the magazine last week. "But she was a very good person and a great daughter, so we told her it was going to be okay. We'd do what we needed to do."

Kimberly Dean told The Daily Beast that her daughter—who had two bachelor's degrees and one master's—wanted to be a detective. But after overcoming a rare form of cancer in her elbow at age 18, she could not pass physical tests required to become a police officer.

Instead, she took a job as the Kyle Police Department's first and only victims' services coordinator.

"My daughter was a wonderful person," Kimberly Dean said. "She let people feel they could be whoever they wanted to be and do whatever they wanted to do... she was a moving motivational speaker for everyone that she met."

The grieving mom said one of her daughter's biggest accomplishments was staying in school throughout 15 separate surgeries, along with chemotherapy and radiation treatments, after being diagnosed with cancer.

She later attended New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice for her master's in forensic psychology, commuting four hours each way from Virginia to attend classes, Kimberly Dean said.

Kimberly didn't want to discuss the murder investigation or the headlines surrounding Clark.

"It's tragic, and it's sad," Kimberly Dean said. "It's something that could happen to anyone. That's what people need to be aware of—it could happen to anyone."
Teen caught smuggling knife into Rikers in her bra for rapper Bobby Shmurda takes plea deal

BY BEN KOCHMAN / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Thursday, August 13, 2015, 6:15 PM

She got a bra-shank redemption.

Kimberly Rousseau, 18, caught smuggling a knife into Rikers in her brassiere, will have her criminal record expunged if she stays out of trouble for a year, according to a plea deal hashed out Thursday.

Rousseau was trying to sneak the metal shank in to "Shmoney Dance" sensation Bobby Shmurda, aka Ackquille Pollard.

Pollard, 20, is being held at Rikers on $2 million bail for allegedly leading a violent Brooklyn street gang.

In exchange for a guilty plea on promoting prison contraband, a Bronx judge said Rousseau will
Kimberly Rousseau, 18, caught smuggling a knife into Rikers in her brassieres, will have her criminal record expunged if she stays out of trouble for a year, according to a plea deal.

Rousseau, her hair curled and wearing a white button-down shirt and black pants, looked markedly different from her first court appearance, when she pleaded not guilty and wore heavy red lipstick and jeans.
Listen: Israel blocks US citizen from visiting Palestine

Nora Barrows-Friedman (/people/nora-barrows-friedman)  The Electronic Intifada Podcast (/blog/electronic-intifada-podcast) 14 August 2015

Nerdeen Kiswani (https://electronicintifada.net/tags/nerdeen-kiswani), a 21-year-old student at CUNY Staten Island and Hunter College in New York City, was recently denied entry (https://electronicintifada.net/tags/denial-entry) into Palestine by Israeli authorities.

During nearly 15 hours of waiting on 22-23 July at the Allenby crossing (https://electronicintifada.net/tags/allenby-crossing) — the terminal between the occupied West Bank and Jordan which is administered by Israeli border control — Kiswani was subjected to a series of interrogations which included “bizarre” questioning related to her involvement with Students for Justice in Palestine (https://electronicintifada.net/tags/students-justice-palestine) (SJP).

She was then told by an Israeli officer she was being denied entry based on her “hostile behavior towards Israel.”
Allenby is the only point of exit and entry for Palestinians who hold West Bank identity documents. Many Palestinians who are born abroad also choose to enter and exit through Allenby, since Israel frequently detains and deports people of Palestinian origin upon arrival at Ben Gurion airport (https://electronicintifada.net/tags/ben-gurion-airport) near Tel Aviv, whether or not they are politically involved.

Palestinians with Gaza ID cards are never allowed by Israel to enter the West Bank or present-day Israel through any crossing point, unless they have direct permission from Israeli authorities.

Kiswani, who was born in Jordan to Palestinian refugee parents and is a US citizen, used her US passport at the Allenby crossing and was planning to visit family and friends in the West Bank and present-day Israel. She had traveled to Palestine through Allenby with her parents in 2013 and with her grandmother in 2014. She was kept waiting for hours and questioned each time, but was eventually let in.

This time, she said, it was clear that Israeli authorities wanted not just to deny her entry but to make sure that she wouldn’t consider coming back.

“They really don’t want us to want to go to Palestine,” she told The Electronic Intifada. “They make the experience as difficult and as hard as possible so it’s not very appealing in the first place to go through Allenby. It’s considered hell for so many people.”

Listen to the hour-long interview with Kiswani via the media player above.

Interrogations

Many Palestinian Americans have been harassed, threatened, abused and denied entry at Israeli-controlled crossings, a policy that has been recognized (http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/04/224989.htm) by the US State Department as an “unequal treatment that Palestinian Americans and other Arab Americans receive at Israel’s borders and checkpoints.”

As Mike Coogan wrote (https://electronicintifada.net/content/us-states-
should-act-against-israels-denial-entry-americans/13356) for The Electronic Intifada last year:


"I don't regret my activism," says Kiswani. (Nerdeen Kiswani)

On 29 July, Palestinian American novelist and human rights activist Susan
Abulhawa (https://electronicintifada.net/tags/susan-abulhawa) was also denied entry at Allenby (http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.669734). Israeli daily Haaretz reported that “After seven hours of waiting, and an exhausting and humiliating interrogation by six security officials, Abulhawa was expelled in disgrace — allegedly because she hadn’t cooperated with her interrogators.”

Seventy-year-old George Khoury, a Palestinian American professor from San Francisco, was also recently denied entry by Israel (http://mondoweiss.net/2015/07/palestinian-americans-detained) after he arrived at Ben Gurion airport. Khoury endured hours of detention, humiliating questioning and interrogation.

Kiswani said that the tactic Israeli officers used toward her was typical of treatment Palestinians regularly endure at crossings, and is meant to wear people down. She was asked over and over again, by different officers, where she planned to go in the West Bank and to list the names and ages of her relatives. “I honestly lost track of time,” she said.

“It felt like every two hours they’d come in to question me for two minutes and it would always be the same kind of questions, but altered,” she explained. “Sometimes they’d become more aggressive with their questioning. It was a very clear tactic. They [already] know all the answers.”

“Are you political?”

Eventually, after the hours dragged on, yet another officer subjected her to rounds of questioning specifically about her political beliefs and her background as an organizer with Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP).

The officer had a stack of papers that included articles in which Kiswani had made public statements, as well as information on SJP and the group’s protesting of an Israeli basketball team’s game with the Brooklyn Nets last year.

In October 2014, as The Electronic Intifada reported, Kiswani was physically assaulted during the demonstration outside the Barclay’s Center (https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/charlotte-silver/claims-anti-semitism-
vanish-facts-emerge-incident-ny-tel-aviv-game), a sports arena in Brooklyn.

Kiswani had been punched in the stomach after someone snatched her Palestinian flag from her hands after the Maccabi-Nets game. Kiswani alleged that Leonard Petlakh, an Israel-aligned professor at Hunter College, was one of the men in the group who harassed and assailed her.

"The officer asked me, 'are you political? do you go to any protests or rallies?"' Kiswani said. "'What is this club that you're president of?'" Kiswani explained that SJP works to support human rights and organizes cultural events. The officer then brought up the basketball game protest and asked if someone was beat up, but inferred that Kiswani herself was the perpetrator, not the victim, of physical assault.

"I knew they knew about everything I was involved in, and I was really terrified," she said.

"They knew where to hit"

Around midnight — 13 hours after she had first arrived at Allenby — Kiswani was taken into yet another room where a female officer interrogated her. The officer asked her what she thought of the "Israeli-Palestinian conflict" and "the Israeli army," she said.

"She asked 'if Jews were allowed to join SJP, or if it's only for Muslims and Arabs.' I said no, of course Jews are allowed to join — there are Jews in the club," Kiswani said. "She accused me [of dishonesty] and then asked me 'what would you do to fix the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?' I didn't know what to say at this point ... she forced me to answer. I said, 'I don't know, begin by giving people equal rights.'"

"I mentioned the word 'occupation,'" she added. "[The officer asked], 'Why do you say occupation? Where did you get this from? Who taught you this word?' I said, 'this is something I learned in college in America, in my international law class. It's a legal term.'"

Kiswani said the officer became even more aggressive. "She said, 'you may
think it’s an occupation, I don’t think it’s an occupation.’ ... I kept trying to be good, I kept trying to give them the answers they wanted ... I feared for my safety at this point.”

“She asked me, ‘What do you think about what happened in Gaza last summer?’ At this point, I just wanted to burst into tears. I was in Palestine when that happened and it was extremely heartbreaking, seeing everyone around me and feeling so helpless.”

Kiswani told The Electronic Intifada that “this was an extremely emotional soft spot to hit. They knew where to hit.”

Finally, the officer demanded to go through her text messages on her mobile phone. Kiswani refused. Then she was asked to log into her Facebook account and let the officer see her timeline and private inbox.

Kiswani again refused. “She kept pressing for it, in the most threatening way,” she said.

The officer then said that because she had refused to let the Israeli authorities access her private Facebook account, she was being denied entry because of her “hostile behavior towards Israel.”

A paper they wanted her to sign stated that the formal reason for denial of entry was “prevention of illegal immigration considerations,” Kiswani said.
She refused to sign the paper, and was eventually put on a bus to the Jordanian border around 2am.

**Intensified**

Back at her relatives’ home in Amman, Kiswani said that this experience has only intensified her determination to keep working for justice in Palestine.

“This [denial of entry to my homeland] is what millions of Palestinians in refugee camps and in different places around the world are facing,” Kiswani explained.

“Now my American citizenship doesn’t give me any privilege when it comes to Israel anymore, and I’m in the same position as they are. I’ve already faced my biggest fear when it came to activism — being denied at the border.”

She said that now that the fear is gone, “I can be even more upfront and forefront and vocal and really strong about my activism and about my beliefs ... I’m going to go back as motivated and as strong as possible.”

“I don’t regret my activism,” she added. “We want a free Palestine for all, not just for some. With that message, we can really galvanize the community and solidarity organizations in New York and across the nation to continue working as hard as ever for Palestine liberation and human rights and justice and freedom.”
City Expands Pre-K Vetting Process

Thousands of 4-year-olds to start classes in three weeks

By SOPHIA HOLANDER
Aug. 13, 2015 8:31 p.m. ET

New York City has strengthened its vetting process heading into the second year of its ambitious program to provide universal prekindergarten instruction, officials said Thursday.

In three weeks, thousands of 4-year-olds will start classes in 1,150 New York City Early Education Centers and 700 public schools.

Last year, 11 programs were suspended after the school year began. This year, 47 applicants that were initially approved to operate programs were rejected after being subjected to more rigorous inspections.

"There is no higher priority for this administration than the health and safety of every child entrusted to our care," said Richard Buery, deputy mayor for strategic policy initiatives.

The city increased its inspection budget this year, including an additional $1.5 million to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene that enabled it to add 26 new inspectors, officials said.

Josh Wallack, deputy chancellor at the Department of Education, said all 1,850 sites will have been visited by officials by opening day to ensure their readiness and safety.

Approved programs now receive caseworkers from the education department to ensure the program has adequate staffing, facilities, curriculum and outreach, Mr. Wallack said, culminating in a walk-through.

City officials added a second walk-through this year, Mr. Wallack said, to ensure
any issues from the first visit have been resolved.

“We’re confident with the lessons we learned from last year we have a better process,” he said.

The city also created a website where parents can receive alerts if their schools receive violations and compare its records with other programs.

The rapid implementation of the program the past two years impressed early-childhood education experts.

“It was rather remarkable,” said Sherry Cleary, executive director of the City University of New York's New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, which has partnered with the city to develop its pre-K programs. “This year's implementation, while it could never be seamless because we’re talking about a lot of little children, it’s bound to be pretty impressive.”

Each site is subject to safety inspections by multiple agencies, including the health department, the department of Buildings and the fire department, officials said.

To date, the fire department had done 742 inspections and the department of investigations has conducted 418 corporate checks and 1,503 background checks of people working in the programs. The health department said it conducts 7,000 annual inspections, and currently has eight open violations, none of them serious enough to warrant closing the program.

Write to Sophia Hollander at sophia.hollander@wsj.com
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Test Score Progress Shows Common Core Assessments Matter

Taking the politics out of education isn't easy, but it is necessary to keep improving our education system.

This week's release of English Language Arts and Math exam scores is yet another indicator that we are on the right path with the implementation of higher standards in New York State.

Test scores are on the rise. When compared to two years ago, the number of students proficient in math is up 7 percent. English scores are improving too.

In New York City the gains provide more reason for optimism. This year, 35.2 percent of NYC students achieved proficiency, which is approaching parity with the statewide number.

The numbers for minority students in New York City were encouraging as well. African American and Hispanic students made progress in both math and English. There is, of course, still much more work to be done, but this year's improvements are a strong step.

Closing the persistent achievement gap will take a consistent set of higher standards and accurate measurements – that's exactly what we have here in New York.

We know that tests given to our 3rd through 8th graders an important gauge of student progress. A recent report from Achieve and the Collaborative for Student Success found
that New York’s exams are the most honest in the nation - the report refers to this state as the “top truth-teller” in the country.

Our tests are painting an important picture of the progress we are making.

Having honest assessments allows us to compare children across geographies - and that ensures that no child is allowed to fall through the cracks simply because of where they are growing up. Accurate assessments of student progress are a matter of social equity and justice and a key tool in our arsenal to close the persistent achievement gap that is plaguing our society.

Unfortunately, a cynical movement encouraging students to opt out of the assessments is threatening our ability to do just that. We cannot allow politics to take us backwards.

High need areas, where students overwhelmingly opted in showed strong progress this year. That includes New York City, where 96 percent of students took this year’s state tests, Buffalo and Yonkers. That progress must be protected.

Higher standards aligned with the Common Core were first introduced in New York in 2011. The first state assessments aligned with those standards were administered in 2013. Our children are showing real improvement as teachers across New York become even more comfortable teaching to these rigorous standards.

New State Education Commissioner Mary Ellen Elia has already demonstrated her commitment to higher standards - and we should support her as she continues to make the system even stronger. She is currently leading a review of the standards and assessments to ensure their effectiveness.

Beyond just improved test scores, the signs of improvement in our education system are hard to miss:

- **Rising Graduation Rates:** The first class of students to spend their entire high school career learning under the higher standards was up 1.5 percent to 76.4 percent.

- **New Improvements to the System:** Questar Assessments will take over as New York’s new testing provider. They will bring adaptive, computer-based testing that will make our assessments even better indicators of student progress. Additionally, teachers will play an even larger role in test development.

- **More Transparency for Principals, Parents and Teachers:** The State Education Department recently released more test questions than ever before. This step will help all stakeholders continue getting more comfortable with the assessments and the standards.

The tests are just a checkup on student progress towards important benchmarks. They are designed in a way that de-emphasize “test prep”. State regulations limit that kind of preparation to no more than 2 percent of total classroom time annually. While the assessments themselves take less than 1 percent of class time.

But it’s also important to separate the assessments from the higher standards and understand why the critical thinking and reasoning skills actually matter for our children. By 2020 more than 70 percent of jobs in New York State will require a college degree. The vast majority of our children will need a college degree to succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy.