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by Emma Whitford in News on Aug 18, 2015 4:38 pm

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"We're here today because we're disgusted by the treatment of homeless people in our city," said Alyssa Aguilera, the Political Director for Vocal New York. "We're tired of the criminalization and stigmatization of homeless people who are struggling, and need housing, and who need social services. Instead they are being targeted by the police."

According to the SBA, civilian documentation of the homeless is a valid response to those who exercise their right to surveil the NYPD. From their press release: "We, the 'Good Guys,' are sworn to protect our citizens. Shouldn't our public officials be held to the same standard?" Granted, this argument assumes that all homeless people are criminals "lying in our streets... engaging in open-air drug activity, and quality-of-life offenses of every type."

"This is some bullshit," said Jose Lopez of Make The Road New York. "If we're talking about solutions for our city, the solution cannot be to take a photo of a homeless New Yorker, who might just be on the street because he got pushed out by his slum landlord who refused to make repairs and decided to raise the rent."
"We need to name the problem, and the problem is our system," echoed Jesus Gonzalez of Churches United for Fair Housing. "We live in a for-profit system where some people are going to be able to afford housing, and most won't. Shame on the system! Shame!"

Earlier this month, the NYTimes reported that there are 56,284 New Yorkers in the city's shelter system. The number of street-homeless is more difficult to track, but the Department of Homeless Services cited
about 3,000 this February.

"What I've been really upset about with the recent press, is there's been this false definition of the problem," said Christy Parque, the Executive Director of Homeless Services United. "First of all, the street-homeless are only about 5% of the population. We forget that the vast majority are children. The problem is not defined correctly, and it's perpetuating stereotypes."

For many in attendance today, the shelter system has proven to perpetuate homelessness. Danielle Stelluto, 27, a single mother of two, has lived in the Jackson Avenue Family Residence, a homeless shelter in the Bronx, for almost four years. "My experience with the shelter has been a revolving door," she said. "I get almost no help from the workers. I'm studying Digital Music Engineering at Hostos Community College, I work, I'm an advocate, and I'm still not getting out of the shelter."

Meanwhile, the conditions at Jackson are uncomfortable. "I've dealt with infestation, and there's mold," she said. "I am on the third floor in a room the size of half a studio, and we're not allowed to have air conditioners, so in the summertime it feels like over 100 degrees in my unit. I can't even sit in there with my kids."

An image from the SBA's Flickr Account
The city's notorious network of three-quarter housing—state-funded apartments instated under Bloomberg—is also problematic, characterized by high turnover and dismal living conditions. "Three-quarter housing is not a stable solution for most people," said Parque. "Because the vast majority of three-quarter houses are not safe. The homeless are very vulnerable to being taken advantage of by the house managers, or the landlords. They are susceptible to financial criminal abuse."

According to an April report from homeless advocacy group Homes for Every New Yorker, the homeless shelter population rose to a record 60,000 in 2014. The report urges Mayor de Blasio and Governor Cuomo to renew a city-state agreement that would create and fully fund 30,000 permanent supportive housing units—permanent housing for the homeless and recently incarcerated supplemented with health and psychiatric services—over the next decade.

"Permanent supportive housing is a solution for the chronically homeless," said Laura Mascuch, Executive Director of Supportive Housing Network of New York. "There are individuals who don't need the shelter system or the streets because they have substance abuse issues, mental health issues, HIV/AIDS, and physical disabilities. If we don't build any more supportive housing, our census is just going to go up and up."

According to Mascuch, the average homeless New Yorker costs the state $58,000 per year, between prison, psychiatric care, and shelter fees. Meanwhile, a homeless New Yorker in supportive housing costs between $15-20,000. Mascuch added that the mayor has been generally supportive of adding more permanent housing, to the tune of about 12,000 units in New York City. However, "The governor needs to come to the table with a better figure. He suggested 5,000 units, which is only 3,900 for the city."

Ryan Gibbs, 45, of Picture The Homeless, spent five months in a shelter in 2006. "Usually when you get there you're supposed to get a case worker. I didn't get a case worker for the entire five months. It was like I was stuck in a loop," he said. "I figured it was better for me to stay in the streets then to be in there, where nothing was happening."

The Sergeants Benevolent Association did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Contact the author of this article or email tips@gothamist.com with further questions, comments or tips.
Pratt Wins 2015 Building Brooklyn Award for Engineering Quadrangle Redesign

The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce named Pratt's redesigned Engineering Quadrangle the winner of the 2015 Building Brooklyn Award for the Landscape and Open Space category. Held annually, the awards event recognizes recently completed construction and renovation projects that improve the borough's diverse neighborhoods and economy. Thirteen projects in various categories were selected to receive awards at this year's ceremony, which was held on July 21 in the newly restored Kings Theatre on Flatbush Avenue. Pratt Institute President Thomas F. Schutte and Executive Director of Planning, Design, Construction, and Facilities Management Glenn Gordon were present to accept the award.

The redesign of the Engineering Quadrangle was a collaborative effort by Pratt alumnus and Trustee Emeritus Bruce M. Newman (B.F.A. Interior Design '53), recent architectural graduates from Pratt and CUNY, and the Office of Facilities Management. The Quadrangle, bounded by the Chemistry, Machinery, and Engineering Buildings, was reconstructed to allow for better circulation and enhanced aesthetics, and to reinforce the design cohesiveness of the campus.

The Building Brooklyn Awards judging committee — comprised of architects, planners, government officials, economic development experts and business leaders — convened
last spring to select the winning projects.

"The borough of Brooklyn is truly an innovation hub, where builders and designers can put their craft to use and enhance the city that surrounds them, said Chamber President & CEO Carlo A. Scissura. "These projects represent the creative influence and inventive culture that inhabit our borough. I would like to congratulate all the winners for their state-of-the-art projects that make this urban setting a place the world needs to see."

More information on the Building Brooklyn Awards can be found here.
NEW YORK — The first-ever flyby of Pluto left scientists and the public wide-eyed and the surprises will likely keep on coming.

NASA's New Horizons spacecraft zoomed through the Pluto system on July 14, coming within 7,800 miles (12,500 kilometers) of the dwarf planet's surface. Images captured by the probe have revealed a world with its own cryogenic geology, situated in a diverse array of moons.

At the American Museum of Natural History here, Emily Rice, an astrophysicist at the College of Staten Island, and Jackie Faherty, an astronomer with the Carnegie Institute, took an audience on a journey with New Horizons last week to highlight the science. [New Horizons' Pluto Flyby: Complete Coverage]

The Aug. 11 presentation was in the museum's Hayden Planetarium and used its skylight dome to immerse people in the vastness of space. The show, called "Visiting Pluto and Friends in the 21st Century," was part of the museum's "Astronomy Live" series.

Using new visualization technologies, Rice and Faherty offered views of Pluto and its five moons as New Horizons might have seen them and placed the dwarf planet system in relation to the sun and Earth.

Carter Emmart, who directs Astropix visualization at the museum's Rose Center for Earth and Space, Skyped in from Singapore to show off some of the technology, and to talk about how New Horizons made its way through the Pluto system.

"I'm calling from the future," he quipped, noting the time difference. (Singapore lies on the other side of the International Date Line.)

The 3D view showed the shadows of Pluto and gave a feel for how the spacecraft was oriented, and how the craft had to move in space to get the pictures that NASA sent around the world.

Rice said the accuracy of the flyby was quite good; the probe arrived within 90 seconds of its targeted time.

"It's like hitting a hole in one on a golf course in Los Angeles from New York," she said.

New Horizons also had to navigate among Pluto's five moons — Charon, Nix, Hydra, Styx and Kerberos. Styx and Kerberos weren't discovered until 2011 and 2012, when New Horizons was well on its way to Pluto. (The $720 million mission launched in January 2006.)

Later in the show, Rice called up an old artist's rendering of Pluto, which had been created long before New Horizons' historic flyby. [Firing Over Pluto: Ice Mountains and Young Plains (Video)]

"We were wrong," she said. The old picture doesn't show ice mountains, or even a surface that bears much resemblance to the one New Horizons showed.

Faherty and Rice also demonstrated how New Horizons studied Pluto's thin atmosphere, using a picture of Pluto "eclipsing" the sun. A dusty ring marked the edge of the dwarf planet, showing that there was some gas diffusing the light. The atmosphere contains methane-based chemicals called tholins.
"The tholins probably rain out," Fuherty said, adding that they are what give Pluto its reddish-brown color.

The big highlight of the mission, though, was finding that Pluto's surface has been reworked in the recent past — it's smooth in places, and cratered lightly or not at all. This suggests that some sort of internal heat source remained active for millions of years, and may still be active today, mission scientists have said.

"But we don't know what it is," Fuherty said.

Many more pictures are coming from New Horizons; they'll just take a long time to transmit. Mission team members have said the complete flyby data set probably won't come down to Earth until late 2016. Emmert said the data-transmission rate is akin to that of a dial-up connection, and New Horizons is a good 3 billion miles (4.8 billion km) from Earth.

Pluto wasn't the only object that got attention during the planetary show; Charon did as well. Fuherty noted that Charon is "Pluto's opposite" in that it's made mostly of rock rather than mostly ice, methane and nitrogen. She pointed out the unusual features that New Horizons saw, such as a large, miles-deep canyon and the dark spot near the moon's north pole, which has been dubbed Mordor.

The two scientists also mentioned the dwarf planet Ceres, which is currently being studied by NASA's orbiting Dawn spacecraft. Dawn has spotted intriguing bright spots on Ceres' surface that could be ice or salts of some sort; Dawn is moving down to a lower orbit to map the surface and get a better look.

Then there is the European Space Agency's Rosetta mission, which began orbiting Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko in August 2014 and dropped a lander named Philae onto the icy object's surface three months later.

Comet 67P harbored its own surprises. "When they [Rosetta scientists] saw it, they said, 'Oh man, it looks like a rubber duck,'" Rice said.

Philae didn't manage to land in quite the way the mission planners hoped; it actually bounced off the comet twice and came to rest in a place where it couldn't get as much sunlight as it needed to run its instruments continually.

But Philae did gather data for more than two days on the comet's surface, and the Rosetta mission continues to study the object from orbit. Rice showed one photo taken by Philae during its November 2014 descent, at a distance of just 30 feet (9 meters) from 67P's surface. It showed the place where scientists think the lander initially hit the surface. [Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko Images: ESA/Rosetta/MPS for OSIRIS Team MPS/UPD/LAM/IAA/SSO/INTA/UPM/DASP/IDA]

Rosetta's mission will end when the lander is sent into the comet in September 2016. "It will crash into the comet, Jackie would call it landing," Rice said.

Even Mercury got a place in the sun (no pun intended), NASA's MESSENGER (Mercury Surface, Space Environment, Geochemistry, and Ranging) mission, which ended in April of this year, gathered a wealth of new data about the small planet, which is smaller than the Jupiter moon Ganymede, the solar system's largest satellite.

Rice brought up an emotional moment with one of the mission specialists on MESSENGER. "I asked if he was sad that the mission was over," she said. "He said he woke up one morning and wanted to look for new images from MESSENGER, and there weren't any."

Its fuel tank empty, MESSENGER was deliberately crashed into the planet's surface on April 30.

The show ended with a journey to the Ort Cloud, a huge comet repository that lies perhaps 2 light years from the sun. None of the objects that inhabit this distant realm have been imaged yet.

"It's all dependent on the funding," Rice said.

Another question was whether New Horizons has solar panels in case it might pass another star. "It would take about 100,000 years for it to get to another star," Rice said. "And it's going in the wrong direction." So the probe wasn't designed with solar panels.

New Horizons will fly by another object in the Kuiper Belt — the ring of icy bodies beyond Pluto — in 2019 if NASA approves and funds it as a proposed extended mission.

"Maybe other Kuiper Belt objects won't be as sexy as Pluto, but who knows?" Rice said.

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Broken-Windows Theory Put in Question

by Bernard E. Harcourt

In an effort to rehabilitate the broken-windows theory, George Kelling recently distanced himself from the tragic deaths of Eric Garner, Michael Brown and others, chalking them to "poor policing." In a post titled "Don't Blame My 'Broken Windows' Theory For Poor Policing," Kelling maintains that his theory was never meant to be a high-arrest program.

That's hard to believe because George Kelling himself measures broken-windows policing by the number of misdemeanor arrests performed by the police. Kelling made that clear in his 2001 study, "Do Police Matter?" In that study, Kelling tried to prove the efficacy of broken-windows by comparing policing by precinct in New York City. How did Kelling measure broken-windows policing? By the number of misdemeanor arrests.

Yes, the "independent variable" used by Kelling to measure broken-windows policing was the rate of misdemeanor arrests in each NYPD precinct. Kelling explained, on page eight of his 2001 Report, that his "measure of 'broken windows' policing [is] represented by a precinct's arrests for misdemeanor offenses." This was his finding, again his emphasis: "The average NYPD precinct during the ten-year period studied could expect to suffer one less violent crime for approximately every 28 additional misdemeanor arrests made."

"We thus find," Kelling wrote, "that 'broken-windows' policing, as reflected by arrests for misdemeanor offenses, has exerted the most significant influence on trends in violent crime."

Now, Jens Ludwig and I replicated Kelling's study back in 2006 and found that Kelling had failed to include in his analysis, as a control variable, the build-up in crime in each precinct, and thus failed to take account of the most likely explanation for the trends in New York City, namely reversion to the mean. Ludwig and I established that there was no link between the number of misdemeanor arrests and serious crime in N.Y.C. (We found the same results for marijuana arrests a year later).

But putting that aside, the point here is that Kelling himself measures the implementation of the broken-windows theory by counting the number of misdemeanor arrests in each police precinct.

And Kelling is not alone.

NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton, a champion of broken-windows policing, also uses the number of misdemeanor

Here is the visual that opens Bratton's report:

![NYC Crime Rate and Misdemeanor Arrests](image)

Figure A

In order to put New York City's crime decline in context, this chart displays New York City's crime rate—the crimes per 100,000 population—below the average of the six most populous U.S. cities (New York, Chicago, Atlanta, and Los Angeles). Also shown are New York City's misdemeanor arrest rates per 100,000 residents. In red.

Let's put aside, again, the reliability of the correlation. (There are, incidentally, a number of upward trends since the 1990s that we could substitute for misdemeanor arrests in this graph, such as the price of housing in N.Y.C. (http://susanmanger.com/file/Trends_in_NYC_Housing_Price_Appreciation.pdf), and we would need to hold constant a number of competing variables if we were conducting a proper study).

The important point here is that Commissioner Bratton himself, like Kelling, uses the rate of misdemeanor arrests as the metric to prove the success of his broken-windows approach. Not surprisingly, misdemeanor arrests have always gone up with broken-windows policing.

All this raises a deeper problem at the heart of broken-windows policing: using misdemeanor arrests as a way to light serious crime aggravates one of the worst problems in our criminal justice system today, namely racial disparities in policing.

In New York City and around the country, misdemeanor arrests have historically skewed toward African-American and Hispanic persons. This is well documented, for New York City, in a recent report from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice: "Trends In Misdemeanor Arrests In New York City" (http://johnjay.cuny.edu/justice_images/TRENDS%20IN%20MISDEMEANOR%20ARRESTS%20IN%20NEW%20YORK%20CITY.pdf), which included the telling figure:

![Rates of Misdemeanor Arrests by Race/Ethnicity for New York City from 1990 to 2013](image)

Rates of Misdemeanor Arrests by Race/Ethnicity for New York City from 1990 to 2013, Per 100,000 Population; Source: John Jay Report

The disparities are even greater in the sub-population of young men:
These disparities are the tragic legacy of decades, if not centuries, of troubled race relations in this country. The figures are a haunting reflection of what Michelle Alexander calls the New Jim Crow (http://newjimcrow.com).

The question we need to pose ourselves today, faced with these racial disparities in misdemeanor arrests, is what to do about them. Do we exploit them and make them worse by increasing the number of misdemeanor arrests using a broken-windows policing approach — a policing strategy that measures its implementation by the rate of misdemeanor arrests performed? Or, do we try to find ways to reduce the racial disparities that plague our criminal justice system?

These figures alone should make us walk away from the broken-windows theory.

Bernard E. Harcourt is a Professor at Columbia University, director of the Columbia Center for Contemporary Critical Thought, author, and human rights lawyer. Originally published by Huffington Post (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bernard-e-harcourt/broken-windows-policing_b_8900250.html)
With start of the school year coming up, Untapped Cities is uncovering the hidden and little known past uses of some of New York City's colleges. Today we look at the main campus of Hunter College, which is housed in four large buildings centered around Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street, following up on our first piece on Vanderbilt Hall at NYU.

Hunter College on the Upper East Side is the epitome of an urban college campus. Ironically, for a college that lacks a quad or even a nearby public park, it is located on part of the site of Hamilton Square, a planned park that never came to fruition.

Hamilton Square was designated as one of the City's public squares as part of the 1811 Commissioners' Plan for Manhattan's street grid. According to the New York Times, the land for the square was given to the City by the estate of Alexander Hamilton on the condition that it be used for a park or military parade ground.
"Public Squares, Parks, and Places, 1852" Via New York Public Library Digital Collections.

Until the 1860s the City did little to improve Hamilton Square in what was then the outskirts of the City though it did allow a church to be constructed at the north end of the square. In 1847, a ceremony was held in Hamilton Square to place the cornerstone for a planned 425-foot tall monument to George Washington. However, that project never advanced further. In the 1850s Hamilton Square was used as the site for special events such as Cattle Shows.

St. James' Church (demolished 1869). Image via NY Public Library Digital Collections

With the decision in 1853 to create Central Park, a large public square nearby was seen as redundant and the City provided the land to public institutions instead. This included a home for the Normal College, a new institution for the training of women teachers, which was established in 1870 under its first president, Thomas Hunter. (In 1914 Normal College was renamed for Hunter.)

As Hamilton Square was being developed in the 1870s, Thomas Hunter and other local leaders attempted to preserve the last remaining undeveloped block. They signed a petition in 1879 stating that the empty block "is now a public nuisance covered with shanties and occupied by the lowest class of people, their dogs, goats and swine" and they urged the state legislature to "pass an act converting the aforesaid square into a public park to be named Hamilton square."
"Diagram Showing the Hamilton Square District" New York Herald, 17 April 1879

However, what could have been a park for today's Hunter College students and the neighborhood was instead developed with other public buildings and the last vestige of Hamilton Square disappeared.

*Hunter North building. Image via Wikimedia Commons by Gryffindor*

Apart from Hunter, today the former Hamilton Square area is a mix of public and private buildings; apparently the original condition that the land be used for public purposes was forgotten or ignored. And that's why a college built on land donated for a large public square has no quad or park.

Hunter has one of the city's many remaining skybridges. Check it out and more here. Next, read about the top ten secrets of Central Park.
College-renames-itself-after-banking-billionaire's-wife-gave-$20-million

The Weill family name brands quite a few buildings, and a college in upstate New York is in line to join the list.

But a lot of people associated with the small rural college are not happy about it.

Joan Weill, the wife of Citigroup (C) creator Sandy Weill, is giving $20 million to Paul Smith’s College. In exchange, the school wants to be renamed Joan Weill-Paul Smith’s College.

The school’s board of trustees said in a letter that it welcomes the change in light of “two decades of volunteer leadership and unprecedented financial support from philanthropists Joan and Sanford Weill.” In a statement, the school’s president said the Weill family’s latest donation will “provide a stabilizing financial foundation for the college.”

But when the school was founded in 1937, it was with created with money and land left to it by Phelps Smith with the requirement that it forever be named after his father Paul Smith. So the school needs a court’s approval to change the name.

The school has about 1,000 undergraduates and is the only four-year college in the Adirondacks. It is best known for its offerings in forestry, hospitality and environmental sciences.

About 3,300 people including current students, faculty and alumni have signed an online petition asking that the name not be changed. The petition says the name change represents “the brutal mutilation of the institution we know and love.”

“It is not because we disrespect the generosity of Joan Weill,” said the petition. “In fact we embrace it. It’s so flattering that an outsider, someone with a comparatively small connection to our tight knit community would take such an interest in our tiny sanctuary.”

Joan Weill, right, donated $20 million to a college in upstate New York to rename it Joan Weill-Paul Smith’s College.
The school's motion argues that the "forever" requirement "nearly fatally impedes" the college's ability to seek the large donations it needs. It said the school "must now adapt in order to remain a viable institution of higher education in the future."

The college said the Weills have already donated $10 million and helped raise $30 million from other donors over the past 20 years. Joan Weill has also served on its board of trustees for 19 years, and the school's library is already named for her. Weill, however, is an alumnus of Brooklyn College.

The list of Weill-named institutions is a long one. In 1998, the family donated $350 million to Cornell, and part of it went to establishing the Weill Cornell Medical College.

The Weill name is also on a recital hall at Carnegie Hall, a public policy building at the University of Michigan, a music center at Sonoma State University and the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation's building in New York City.

The Chronicle of Philanthropy estimates that the family has given a total of $433 million to charity since 2006.

The family's foundation controlled nearly $74 million as of 2013, according to tax filings from the organization, and Forbes estimates the family's net worth is more than $1 billion.

Sandy and Joan Weill also signed Warren Buffett and Bill Gates's Giving Pledge -- a commitment to by billionaires to give away the majority of their wealth to charity -- which now has more than 570 signors.

In a letter on the pledge's website, the Weill's said they plan to give away all but a "small percentage allocated to our children and grandchildren." They added that education is their philanthropic focus.

Related: Bloomberg Philanthropies names first 8 cities in What Works Cities program
U.S. 'Concerned' over Israel's Treatment of Palestinian-Amer. Airport, Border Checkpoints

by Jacob Kornbluh

The United States expressed concern Tuesday regarding Israel's treatment of U.S. citizens traveling to recent reports of Palestinian-Americans being denied entry into Israel, while having their U.S. passports reached their destination outside of Israel.

"The U.S. Government seeks equal treatment and freedom to travel for all U.S. citizens regardless of race. Specifically, the U.S. Government remains concerned at the unequal treatment that Palestinian Arab-Americans face at Israel's borders and checkpoints," State Department Spokesperson John Kirby press briefing. "We regularly raise with Israeli authorities concerns about the issue of equal treatment for ports of entry."

The comments came in response to a question about reports of U.S. citizens, particularly those eligible for Authority ID card, being denied entry into Israel after landing at Ben Gurion International Airport or at borders in Israel.

George Khoury, a Palestinian American professor from San Francisco, was recently denied entry by Israel through Ben Gurion airport.

Nerdeen Kiswani, a 21-year-old student at CUNY Hunter College in New York City, was also recently denied entry into Israel, according to electronicintifada.net. Durar was waiting on 22-23 July at the Allenby crossing, Kisswani Israeli border officer she was being denied entry behavior towards Israel."

It's important to note, that earlier this year, Kiswani some 40 pro-Palestinian protesters who disrupt Council's stated meeting while members were vo commemoration the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. She also claimed to being assault Executive Director of the Kings Bay Y, following the Nets – Maccabi Tel Aviv basketball game at Barclay. 2014.
Kirby cited warnings posted on the State Department's website, which advises tourists that the Israeli gc travelers who hold PA IDs, as well as persons believed to have claim to a PA ID by virtue of ancestry, to residents of the West Bank and Gaza, regardless of whether they also hold U.S. citizenship.

"Israeli authorities consider anyone who has parents or grandparents who were born or lived in the West a claim to a PA ID. Palestinian nationals, including dual nationals, are required to enter the West Bank via crossing from Jordan (also known as the King Hussein Bridge) using a PA travel document, rather than International Airport, unless they have obtained advance permission from an Israeli embassy or consular emergency grounds."
Brooklyn Historical Society awarded national grant for oral history project

With funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS) has launched "Voices of Generations: Investigating Brooklyn's Cultural Identity," a project to digitize, process, catalogue and make more accessible nearly 500 interviews that are part of ten oral history collections documenting the histories of Brooklyn's diverse ethnic and cultural communities. Some of these interviews date back to 1973, with narrators born as early as 1880, and have been previously unavailable to researchers, educators, students and the general public.

The ten collections provide a wealth of historical evidence about the lives of 20th-century and 21st-century Brooklyn residents, and reveal how diverse communities sought to preserve vital social, political, religious and even culinary traditions while embracing new identities as Brooklynites, New Yorkers and Americans.

The NHPRC has awarded BHS a generous grant of up to $306,186 to support this project. "We're very proud of our oral history collection at BHS," said Deborah Schwartz, president of the Brooklyn Historical Society. "It includes some of the earliest oral histories in any collection, and we are thrilled to have it recognized by the NHPRC with this prestigious award."

Highlights of the collections include:

- Two collections that focus on Brooklyn's Latino/a history, including BHS' inaugural oral history project, "Puerto Rican Oral History," initiated by John D. Vazquez, a founder of Puerto Rican Studies at City University of New York (CUNY). Brooklyn residents who arrived from Puerto Rico via steam ships between 1917 and 1940 explain their reasons for migrating and the support systems they developed to help adjust to their new lives in Brooklyn.

- Three collections that tell the rich cultural, political and social history of Crown Heights, one of Brooklyn's fastest changing neighborhoods. Organizers and participants talk about the history of the West Indian Carnival — now one of the largest in the Western Hemisphere; members of the Lubavitch Jewish community discuss their faith-based commitment to the neighborhood; and community organizers and residents talk about the aftermath of the 1991 riots.

- A collection narrating the history of the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, the nation's first community development corporation that will be marking its 50th year in 2017.

- An early 1990s collection of interviews with Brooklynites affected by HIV/AIDS, highlighting how health and disease shape identity and form the basis for community as much as ethnicity and culture.

- A collection of Brooklyn history makers, including philanthropists, artists, activists, preservationists, long-time residents and others who have made Brooklyn into the vibrant, diverse borough that it is.
The chief goals of the project are to digitize and process the collections, catalogue them through item-level descriptions as well as collection-level finding aids, and post as many as possible online using the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS) — an innovative online application developed by the Loutie R. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky that provides time-correlated, word-level or index search capability for interviews online.

In addition, EHS plans to use each collection as the basis for increased community and public engagement through outreach, social media, online publishing and programming.

"It is very exciting that we'll be able to digitize collections that right now only exist in analog form, some of which have not been heard for decades," said Zabeer Ali, EHS's oral historian. "With oral histories, transcripts do not reflect the nuances of someone's voice and how they express themselves. OHMS allows us to make these recordings available and searchable in an online format; and once fully catalogued, these rich resources will be accessible to researchers and the general public like never before."

August 18, 2015 - 1:42pm
8 p.m. (FX) PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL (2003) Johnny Depp portrays Capt. Jack Sparrow, the grooviest swashbuckler on the bounding main, in this swaggering action adventure. And why shouldn’t he swagger, since he reportedly turned to Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones for inspiration? Orlando Bloom (above right, with Mr. Depp) is the blacksmith Will Turner, Sparrow’s unlikely ally. Keira Knightly is the damsel in distress and the love of Will’s life. The film, directed by Gore Verbinski, "raises one of the most overlooked and important cinematic questions of our time: Can a movie maintain the dramatic integrity of a theme park ride?,” Elvis Mitchell wrote in The New York Times. “In this case the answer is — sure.”

9 a.m. (CUNY) ELDRIDGE & CO. The journalist Wayne Barrett discusses his time at The Village Voice and now at The Nation Institute, and his coverage of figures including Donald Trump.

10:20 a.m. (Starz) CAPTAIN PHILLIPS (2013) Tom Hanks, below, far left, stars as Richard Phillips, commander of the Maersk Alabama, an American container ship, with a crew of 20 sailors and cargo including supplies from the United Nations World Food Program, that was seized in the Indian Ocean in April 2009 by four armed Somalis. Barkhad Abdi, a first-time actor who received an Oscar nomination, plays Muse, their leader, whose actions lead to the arrival of the American military and its warships. "The existential realities that inform contemporary Somali piracy turn out to be one of the unexpected themes of 'Captain Phillips,' which begins as something of a procedural about men at work and morphs into a jittery thriller even
Twyla Tharp’s Rehearsal: On the First Day, No Surprises Please

AUG. 18, 2015

Twyla Tharp
ARTIST’S JOURNAL

Twyla Tharp is writing about rehearsing, touring and creating new work, 50 years after her first dance concert.

On Monday in Midtown Manhattan, the pavement is scorching as I make my way to rehearsal. Fifty years ago, going into Room 1604 at Hunter College to give my first dance concert, the weather was about the same. A total of 10 people showed up for that event, a five-minute evening — long enough, I figured, for what I knew about a beginning, middle and end.

Today we begin the final four weeks of rehearsals before leaving on the 50th Anniversary Tour. The program will be a full evening of two new works for 12 dancers: “Preludes and Fugues,” to the music of Bach, and “Yowzie,” to American jazz classics. This will tour 10 weeks and close at the Koch Theater at Lincoln Center in late November. One reason I do not sleep well is that before then, we will need to sell more than 10 tickets.

It’s 9:30 when I arrive; class is at 10. I have done my morning exercises, eaten my three egg whites and grapefruit, showered, put on the lip gloss and earrings. As I will not be dancing myself in the studio today, I wonder why I am so early — perhaps only to be sure the building is still there. But this is a very important day and has
some of the excitement of a first day of school, as all the dancers working on the tour will be together for the first time.

This day has been in the planning for two years and we want it to run with no surprises, please. Like an athlete in training, you want to be ready, but not overtighten, leaving your race at the gate. The cosmetics are about showing control – at least to myself.

The studio on West 38th Street, where we have been rehearsing for the last year and a half, is approximately 20 feet deep and 60 feet wide. Tons of wing space, but with 18 feet of depth, only half a stage.

The studio on West 37th Street, where we'll rehearse for the next four weeks, is a 40-foot square, about the dimensions of the tour stages but with no wing space. Here we will be exiting directly into the walls. Every studio has its own personality, as does every stage. No two are the same, and this is one of the challenges of being on the road.

I am surprised by the distorted images that show up in panoramas, like the ones above, as a result of my moving the camera, moving myself, and moving the subject. Residue of movement, time and space are left behind as the camera travels constantly forward with the action.

By late morning, all the dancers have settled into the studio. Class is over, air-conditioning is off. No matter how hot, sweat is better for the muscles than frigid air blowing against moisture. Cellphones are tucked far away, disruptive to the working process and its sense of community. A tight ensemble requires time to develop. I have been working with many of these dancers more than a decade, a couple more than two.

Today's rehearsal begins with the end of "Preludes and Fugues." Not always, but for a certain kind of dance, it is best to know the ending first. This last section is a repeat of the ballet’s opening, also set to the Prelude in C major, shown in the ballet first as a duet but now orchestrated for all six couples. Its form is a circle. This is one of the most ancient configurations in dance and so common as to be on the cusp of cliché. I think of African pots, Matisse, children at play. But for me there is no other
Some back story: In 2001, my company had been the last to perform at the World Trade Center’s outdoor plaza. We danced on Saturday night, Sunday was dark and Monday night’s show was rained out. The attack was Tuesday morning. At the time we were rehearsing “Movin’ Out,” a Broadway show with a score to songs by Billy Joel, in Midtown. Tuesday I called all the dancers, telling them we would work again on Wednesday. That day, too, I was in the studio early. Sirens in the city would be wailing wall to wall for days and nights. How, I asked myself, was I to justify working on a Broadway show when all around there was only evidence of human destruction? How to justify dancing? Huge headlines were everywhere: WTC I/II down. Suddenly I flashed on another WTC I/II. “The Well-Tempered Clavier Volumes I/II” is the title of Bach’s two-volume set of 48 paired preludes and fugues. I had Prelude in C major of Volume 1 on my laptop and I began to dance.

The word I use for Bach is ecumenical. “The Well-Tempered Clavier” is encyclopedic, it has so many different possibilities of color and form and emotion, a compendium of keys and rhythm, improvisation and intense structural complexity, the simplest of beautiful tunes; all live so happily with one another in Bach’s twice-covered circle of fifths. His music is a huge umbrella, large enough to accommodate all movement — styles and intentions — and it was this possibility of inclusion and tolerance that allowed me to dance again.

Back to our circle being rehearsed 14 years later. It is difficult to sort out, as all of the dancers also rotate on their own axes and all must work together or there is terrible traffic and clash. Robotic exactness is of no interest. The dancers move each as themselves but in accord, in democratic agreement of speed and direction. Thus, we accomplish a circle where there is room for all the celebrants in all their diversity. Ultimately, my intention is that this dance shows the world as it ought to be.

Twyla Tharp is a choreographer, dancer and writer.
“Trigger warnings” may be the greatest red herring of this generation's culture wars. This is precisely the argument of Rowan Kaiser's streetwise essay at the *Daily Beast*, as well as what is intimated by Derek Beres at big think in his piece about the intellectual consequences of trigger warnings. Both of these pieces, of course, are responses to the *Atlantic*’s September cover story dedicated to the topic, “The Codding of the American Mind,” by Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist, and Greg Lukianoff, a constitutional lawyer and CEO of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

Not only, Haidt and Lukianoff contend, do trigger warnings have no conclusive positive effects on either the learning process or on assisting a victimized person to overcome their trauma...
and verbal and physical aggression—in younger generations.

I have written about the feminist case against trigger warnings before, outlining nine reasons—from the curtailment of academic freedom to the universalizing of emotions and of reading comprehension in general—why professors should abstain from including them on their syllabi. I have cited feminists like Jessica Valenti, Jill Filipovic, and Roxane Gay, who also quibble with the usefulness and effectiveness of trigger warnings.
the syllabus and in the classroom.

As an adjunct English literature professor at Hunter College and, now, Fordham University, I have found no pragmatic reason for the employment of trigger warnings in my classroom. My pedagogical apparatus relies on close reading and analysis. In my classroom, I ask my students to link texts to socio-cultural and political phenomena in our everyday lives with the ultimate objective of teaching them the skills to think deeply and then to translate that thinking into critical writing. I believe this apparatus should, if used correctly, render moot the trigger warnings’ necessity.

Here’s why: In their article, Haidt and Lukainoff explain how “emotional reasoning”—or the substitution of thought-out reason with subjective, reactionary emotion—has come to prevail in myriad social conversations, whether on social media or in college classrooms. In today’s age, the authors maintain, “[a] claim that someone’s words are ‘offensive’ is not just an expression of one’s own subjective feeling of offendedness. It is, rather, a public charge that the speaker has done something objectively wrong.”

Emotions are reactions, taken as truth and wielded as authority. But what most critics of—and advocates for—trigger warnings overlook is the fact that the act of learning in the college classroom is in large part intended to transform emotions into cogent, logically sound observations of texts. This is the endgame of close reading and critical analysis. Or, Spin
to the fact that our college classrooms are rapidly changing. Many courses are (wrongly, in my opinion) moving online, replacing the space and physicality of learning—sensing, as a teacher, how your students are feeling or engaging with the text under analysis—with technocratic automation.

These critics also seem to universally neglect the role of the professor as teacher in the classroom—a neglect that is reflected in academia with the obliteration of the professoriate in favor of part-time, non-unionized labor (aka adjuncts).

“niggings” may be red herring of on’s culture

Perhaps the oversight can even be traced to a broader attack on academia in America, from the corporatization of the universities to our devastating amount of student debt. One note I mention the first day in every class of every semester is that my classroom is not a transaction, because I know that being crippled by debt can make students lose their focus. The loss of academic freedom is felt by faculty members and students in equal measure.

Confusion. Frustration. Repulsion. Surprise. Pleasure. Exhilaration. Satisfaction. These are just some of the initial reactions students will experience when encountering a text for the first time in a classroom. Lecture and discussion-based analysis gives structure and meaning to that text, transforming emotion into reason.

All students should hope for this type of magical experi
her essay, "Nothing Fails Like Success," to come face-to-face with what we don't know: "If I perceive my ignorance as a gap in knowledge instead of an imperative that changes the very nature of what I think I know, then I do not truly experience my ignorance. The surprise of otherness is that moment when a new form of ignorance is suddenly activated as an imperative."

Trigger warnings not only block this experience of "the surprise of otherness," the discussion around them overlooks what actually transpires in the classroom. And both students and faculty members are likely to suffer the consequences.

Follow Marcie on Twitter at @MarcieBianco. We welcome your comments at ideas@qz.com.
'The Last Bus to Wisdom' is Ivan Doig's final tribute to the American West

Ivan Doig's last novel is his most autobiographical and a gentle close to a worthy career.

By Elizabeth Toohey   |   AUGUST 19, 2015

Ivan Doig has had a long and celebrated career as a journalist, historian, and writer of American westerns. Doig's first book, a memoir of his childhood in Montana, was a finalist for the National Book Award, and his novels "The Bartender's Tale" and "The Whistling Season" became New York Times bestsellers. Doig died in April, but his latest novel, Last Bus to Wisdom will be released this August, as the final note in his paean to the American West.

Though "Last Bus" is fiction, it's the most autobiographical of his novels. Donny, the plucky redhead narrator and protagonist, is an orphaned 11-year-old raised by his grandmother, a ranch cook. Over the course of the story, Donny bounces from Montana to Wisconsin and back again in search of a stable home and family. Doig lost his own mother when he was six and spent time traveling with his father to various jobs along the Rocky Mountains until they landed with his grandmother on a Montana sheep ranch.

The action in "Last Bus" is set in motion by Gram's surgery, which prompts her to send Donny to live in Wisconsin with his Aunt Kate, who Gram has never liked but who—she hopes—can give Donny the care she no longer can. Donny spends the first hundred pages of the book catching a series of Greyhounds (he and Gram call it "the dog bus"), living on a steady diet of Mounds bars, and encountering an eccentric cast of characters, which makes for a thoroughly pleasurable read, full of improbable but satisfying coincidences. Donny just escapes being robbed, missing his bus in the Twin
Cities and being pummeled by a gang of boys on their way to summer camp, all while engaging in conversations with his fellow passengers—a group of soldiers about to ship to Korea (the year is 1951), an officious sheriff and his long-suffering prisoner, a teamster driver, and a diner waitress who gives young Danny his first kiss.

Recommended: Famous opening lines: Take our literature quiz (Books 2014/06/12/Famous-opening-lines-Take-our-literature-quiz/Question-110)

Danny is an innocent, but he’s also a bit of a rogue who specializes in inventing wish-fulfillment stories about his life and family. The book is as much a picaresque as it is a western since Danny is a wanderer by necessity, skirting among more and less savory members of the working class, exposing adult hypocrisies, and bending the truth to survive—and because, like Dole, he’s a natural storyteller who likes a good yarn.

Arriving at his Aunt Kate and Uncle Herman’s is a letdown: his bedroom is the attic, his breakfast is gruel, and his only entertainment playing canasta with his aunt’s friends, so Danny soon escapes with his bespectacled Uncle Herman in tow. There are shades of Mark Twain here, along with every other American writer who created male heroes that escape a “civilization” represented by prissy women. I thought this would bother me, but Kate’s narcissism felt real enough to recognize—an unlikable character to be sure, but more a “type” than a stereotype, and one I’ve met.

Though Herman and Danny’s escape is welcome, the book loses some momentum in its last section as the coincidences become more strained. The two climb back aboard the “dog bus” to live out Herman’s Western fantasies and encounter swindlers (again), evade the law, and have a brush with fame in what I can only refer to as this reader’s “please-don’t-let-it-be-Jack-Kerouac” moment. (It was.)

Dole’s representation of native Americans as spectacle, though true to the times, is also a bit cringe-worthy. (If I were reading this book in a class, I’d assign a good dose of Sherman Alexie to go along with it.) More puzzling is his decision to change the date of the Crow Fair, which takes place in August, to the Fourth of July. From what I understand, July Fourth is not a holiday native Americans generally celebrate even with their own ceremonies, since European-Americans’ “Independence” meant their colonization. However, that’s a relatively small detail.

The story picks up steam in its final pages, which involve “good guys” in the form of an outlaw-hero and a rodeo rider outsmarting a sheriff, and a community of hobos who harvest hay in the Blackfeet Wisdom, Montana. Loose ends are tied up too neatly for realism, but in a way that’s satisfying for readers who crave a happy ending.

It’s a fun summer read, and a way to pay tribute to Dole’s wonderful combination of memory and imagination that gives us one more vision of the unique history of the American West.

Elizabeth Teckley is an assistant professor of English at Queensborough Community College, CUNY, and a regular Monitor contributor.
Government (/index.php/government)

Suing the Hand That Feeds You

Public Advocate Letitia James

Capitalizing on a boost to a historically anemic budget, Public Advocate Letitia James has emphasized the use of litigation in her capacity as the city's elected gadfly, often suing the city that funds her.

James is utilizing her office's limited funds in accordance with her own background as an assistant attorney general and public defender, hiring additional attorneys to her team and filing several suits against the de Blasio administration—a mayoralty with which she is politically aligned. Since taking office in January 2014, James has filed over a dozen suits, amicus briefs, complaints and petitions against the city and its agencies, with mixed results. She is set to announce another lawsuit on Wednesday, according to [https://twitter.com/elizashapiro/status/633764627160125440] Politico NY.

The public advocate, alongside the comptroller and City Council, is tasked with oversight of city agencies and programs, ensuring good government and good living and working conditions for New Yorkers. The public advocate may introduce legislation in the City Council and will serve as mayor in his or her extended absence.

The Office of the Public Advocate has traditionally been limited by budgetary restraints, the result of years of mayors implementing retributive and devastating cuts. But, Mayor Bill de Blasio, the first public advocate to move into the mayoralty, added $700,000 to the office’s budget his first year - a small amount relative to the overall city budget, which totals over $78 billion, but fairly large in terms of the public advocate’s office. The budget bump was an attempt to compensate for budget cuts made during Mayor Bloomberg’s tenure, according to the public advocate’s office.

"The Public Advocate serves a critical role as the City’s watchdog - something the Mayor knows firsthand from his own time serving in that office," a spokesperson from the Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget said in an emailed statement to Gotham Gazette. "It's important to our City's democratic process that the office have sufficient resources."

Now, in de Blasio’s second budget, which took effect July 1, Letitia James’ office has $3.27 million for the 2016 fiscal year, according to a spokesperson for the public advocate. To put that in perspective, a newly created Department of Education task force (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/05/nyregion/new-york-city-task-force-targets-cheating-by-teachers-and-principals.html?_r=0) also dedicated to performing an oversight role—rooting out cheating by teachers and administrators in city schools—is likely to utilize $5 million a year.
Both Mark Green and Betsy Gotbaum, who served as the city’s first and second public advocates before de Blasio became the third, agree that the office suffers from having its budget controlled by the very person it is supposed to be watchdoggging.

“The structure of the office of the public advocate— it’s something that should be looked at and changed. The mayor...should not be controlling the budget of the person who’s looking over their shoulder. It’s silly, it doesn’t make any sense,” Gotbaum said. “Because [Mayor Michael Bloomberg] would get furious at me and then come June, July, he’d cut the budget.”

In 2009, Bloomberg infamously declared (http://gothamist.com/2009/10/13/bloomberg_public_advocate_fat_waste.php) the office a “total waste of everybody’s money,” even after he and the City Council nearly halved Gotbaum’s budget from $2.9 million to $1.8 million.

That’s a situation that James has not found herself in, Green notes, saying she will likely not suffer at the hands of de Blasio.

“Of course, the new mayor has a special appreciation for the budget difficulties of the public advocate since he was the prior occupant of that office,” Green said, “and that increase should help [James] do the kind of long-term investigations that can yield real benefits to city performance and law.”

With these new funds, James has molded the role of public advocate into one with an aggressively litigious attitude.

The role of public advocate as an ombuds and watchdog has always, somewhat necessarily, been tied to litigation. As public advocate under Bloomberg, Gotbaum sued the city (along with city Comptroller William Thompson and sundry council members) in the lawsuit *Molinar v. Bloomberg*, opposing an extension of term limits.

As public advocate under Mayor Giuliani, Green famously pursued litigation against the city in *Green v. Safir* (http://www.leagle.com/decision/1997574174Misc2d400_1505.xml/MATTER%20OF%20GREEN%20v.%20SAFIR), (in which Green won the right to access documents on the conduct of the New York City Civilian Complaint Board after the police commissioner refused to provide them to his office) and *Green v. Giuliani* (http://www.leagle.com/decision/2000325187Misc2d138_1322/MATTER%20OF%20GREEN%20v.%20GIULIANI) (in which Green successfully sought a judicial inquiry into whether the mayor obtained and released information that had been sealed pursuant to state criminal procedure law concerning the criminal record of a man who had been shot and killed by an NYPD officer).

As public advocate, de Blasio sued (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/26/nyregion/public-advocate-de-blasio-to-sue-city-for-data-on-soaring-fines.html) Bloomberg to compel the mayor’s office to turn over data on the city’s revenue from business fines.

But James has been particularly robust in taking legal action against the city.
Everyday New Yorkers don’t have access to expensive lawyers and fancy lobbyists, which is why they need a Public Advocate who will fight for them," James said in an emailed statement to Gotham Gazette. "We’ve resolved to use every tool at our disposal, whether it’s litigation, legislation, or agitation to stand up for working people."

The list of lawsuits, petitions, or complaints James has filed is long and getting longer; her office sued the city’s Department of Finance over a rule change to the city’s rent freeze program; filed and won a lawsuit against the Department of Education, opening school leadership team meetings to the public; filed and won a lawsuit to block co-located charter schools; and petitioned unsuccessfully to unseal the Eric Garner grand jury proceedings, though she continues to appeal decisions in this pursuit. James also petitioned the Board of Corrections to enact rules to protect inmates at Rikers’ Island from sexual assault.

Recently, the office filed a class action lawsuit (http://pubadvocate.nyc.gov/news/articles/pa-james-foster-children-file-class-action-lawsuit-against-new-york-city-and-state) against New York City and state foster care agencies. The lawsuit alleges the city Administration for Children’s Services and the state Office of Children and Family Services fail to protect children from maltreatment, to ensure that services provided are effective, and to ensure appropriate placements. Some have questioned the suit, asking why the city’s usual legal opponents on child welfare issues did not sign on and citing nuances in New York law that explain some of the data cited in the suit.

The public advocate’s office employs 44 staff members, including six attorneys (other than James herself) and one legal assistant. Two of the six attorneys were hired this year. According to the office, feedback received by the constituent services unit can spur the litigation unit to file a suit or complaint. After tenants reached out to the unit, the public advocate was compelled to file (http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/bronx/disabled-bronx-tenants-landlord-article-1.1943288) a lawsuit on behalf of four Bronx residents, asserting that the city’s Department of Buildings is violating the civil rights of people with disabilities by permitting landlords to deprive mobility-impaired tenants of access to means of egress during extensive elevator outages.

James’ office also scrutinized the quality of life for children and families and workers in the city, releasing reports on the child care available to CUNY students, the city’s foster care system, and car wash and nail salon workers.


James finds herself in an unprecedented situation—she is the first public advocate to share the same party affiliation with the mayor (the position has only ever been held by Democrats and existed during the terms of Giuliani and Bloomberg). Some questioned whether her ability to act as a watchdog over the mayor would be compromised by
"If you're the public advocate and you have a lovebird relationship with mayor, what's the point of the office?" one Democrat who backed James asked (http://observer.com/2014/10/letitia-james-charting-a-new-path-for-public-advocate-holds-her-fire-at-city-hall/) the Observer (James once described (http://observer.com/2014/01/the-rise-of-the-super-friends-bffs-bring-liberal-love-fest-to-city-hall/) the mayor as her "political husband.")

Critics claimed that James left de Blasio largely unscathed in the first year of her term as watchdog, taking "safe" stances on equipping police with body cameras, authoring a bill against campus sex crimes, and completing her work on nail salons.

Gotbaum noted that she often thought the public advocate could be more effective if they had a positive relationship with the mayor.

"I thought it was better for the city that if I found out there was a problem and I called an agency or the mayor himself and it was solved quickly, then I wouldn't have to have a press conference and I wouldn't have to jump all over the mayor," Gotbaum said, adding that the contentious relationship Giuliani had with Green rendered Green the "municipal nag."

"Giuliani ordered his agencies not to talk to Mark Green, which to me makes the whole thing ridiculous," Gotbaum told Gotham Gazette. "I thought it was better for the city if [the public advocate and the mayor] had a positive relationship. That's what you're there for, you're there to help people who are desperate, have no place else to turn, and it's generally allied with some sort of city agency."

But in recent months, it appears that James has become increasingly comfortable with publicly criticizing the mayor and city agencies.

During budget season, James held a late May press conference advocating for universal free school lunch and condemning the mayor's opposition to the program.

"I was shocked and disappointed that Mayor de Blasio said during his executive budget presentation that no expansion of free lunch would happen this year," James said (http://t.co/3c7Go0f0Qd) at a press conference outside the Department of Education headquarters. "Mr. Mayor, you're wrong. Universal free lunch works and the results are in."

In her report (http://pubadvocate.nyc.gov/news/articles/pa-james-calls-reforms-mayoral-control) on mayoral control of city schools, James also recommended that the mayor lose his deciding majority on the Panel for Educational Policy in favor of
increased parent engagement. The report came after James conducted public town hall meetings on the subject in each borough, a general strategy for constituent feedback that de Blasio has not adopted.

According to James’ office, she has held 27 town hall-style events, with a 28th scheduled for Wednesday evening in Brooklyn - the subject will be public safety.

Green, the city’s first public advocate (who endorsed State Senator Daniel Squadron over James in the 2013 public advocate primary), said that regardless of party affiliation, the public advocate must act as a gadfly and compel reform rather than simply espouse ideals.

“I laud her earlier initiative looking into the problems of nail salons, which is a real home run because it helped inspire others to follow up and now the governor and mayor are in a competition who can clean up this early 20th century sweatshop,” Green said earlier this summer. “I just wish there could be more of that and fewer press releases saying I believe in ‘x.’ The issue isn’t so much what she believes in— which is very similar to what Bill de Blasio believes in— but to blow the whistle on problematic agencies that the mayor won’t own up to.”


According to Green, James has yet to take full advantage of the uniquely situated role.

“Because the charter gives the public advocate a lot of discretion, this public advocate is somewhat free to contour the office to his or her temperament, values, skills. If the question is has she evolved more toward oversight ombudsman role over city services, I think the only fair answer is ‘not yet,’’” Green said. “In my personal opinion, it doesn’t add that much value when a longtime ally of the mayor spends so much of her valuable time either saying ‘yay’ or ‘I wish he could’ve done [something] a little better or sooner.’”

Gotbaum, who at times during her tenure as public advocate struggled (http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/02/myregion/betsy-gotbaum-the-advocate-struggles-to-reach-her-public.html?pagewanted=1) to assert the relevance of the office, noted the difficulty of drawing attention to causes and the importance of highlighting substantive ones.
"I think it’s very hard to get traction, there’s so much going on in New York, unfortunately it’s very hard to get publicity," Gotbaum said. "It’s hard to get attention to some of these issues and the more [Public Advocate James] gets it the better, when it’s on issues of real substance, and she isn’t just attacking the mayor."

Most recently, the office has lobbied the New York City Employee Retirement System, the board of the city’s largest pension fund, to divest from gun retailers, including Walmart. In response, NYCERS passed a resolution James authored that would commission a study of the board’s investments in gun retailers and would analyze the transitional costs of divestment.

"Any council member or council body can sound off about what they think is a better way," Green said, "but the public advocate is uniquely situated to do policy and performance audits of city agencies, respond to patterns of complaints in the thousands they receive, do investigative reports way beyond what any individual councilman can do."

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by Catie Edmondson, Gotham Gazette
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MARTIN KAPLAN
KAPLAN—Martin E.

It is with the utmost sadness that the Baruch College community mourns the passing of alumnus Martin Kaplan '59. Kaplan devoted his time, talents and business acumen to serve Baruch College in many ways. A trustee of The Baruch College Fund since 2001, including service as vice president for several years, he chaired the Investment Committee and was vice chair of the Baruch Means Business Campaign. His wise counsel was sought and universally respected by college leaders and his fellow trustees. He and his wife, Laurie, were extraordinarily generous to Baruch, naming two classrooms as well as the Martin and Laurie Kaplan Computing and Technology Center. In appreciation for his loyal dedication, Baruch honored him with its Alumni Allegiance Award in 2009. We extend our deepest sympathy to Laurie, their sons Douglas and Lawrence and Marty's many friends, colleagues and admirers. Mitchel B. Wallerstein, President, Baruch College, Max Berger '68, President, The Baruch College Fund
Local NLRB Says Seattle Adjuncts May Count Ballots

Submitted by Colleen Flaherty on August 19, 2015 - 3:00am

Adjuncts at Seattle University may count their impounded union election ballots, a local National Labor Relations Board office said in a decision released Tuesday. The university is planning an appeal. The NLRB office's decision was issued several months after the national board sent a string of cases involving adjunct union bids at religiously affiliated colleges back to their respective regional offices for re-evaluation. The re-evaluation was based on a new framework for determining the NLRB's jurisdiction over religious colleges and universities established by the board in its December decision regarding Pacific Lutheran University. In that case, the board decided that based on a number of factors, the adjuncts who wished to form a union could do so because their jobs were not religious in nature. Over all, the decision asserted that just because a college or university has a religious affiliation doesn't mean non-tenure-track faculty can't form unions.

Local boards have ruled similarly in recent months in cases involving adjuncts at Duquesne University and St. Xavier University, which, like Seattle, are Roman Catholic. SEIU and pro-union adjuncts took the ruling as good news. In a statement, Anne Hepfer, an instructor of English, said she expected the national board to reject the request for review that the university signaled it was planning to file. "Why is our administration continuing to waste precious tuition dollars in an attempt to impede my colleagues and me from forming a union?" she asked.

Via email, Dean Forbes, a university spokesman, said Seattle wasn't surprised by the decision and intends to file a request for review with the national board -- which could be the first step in a court fight over NLRB jurisdiction over the university. "The petition is a necessary procedural step that preserves the university's options to seek court review of the newly established criteria by a divided NLRB for determining whether it has jurisdiction over religiously affiliated colleges and universities," Forbes said. "The issue is not whether employees may unionize. Rather, the issue is whether the government should have influence or control over the religious mission of Seattle University."

The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities had no immediate comment. William Herbert, executive director of the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions at Hunter College of the City University of New York, said it's "probable that at least one of the at-issue religiously affiliated colleges will challenge the NLRB's assertion of jurisdiction in court" if the national board eventually rules in favor the adjunct unions.