Everything You Wanted to Know About the New York City Subway

Written by JASON KOEBLER (@AUTHOR/JASONKOEBLER)
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December 18, 2015 // 08:00 AM EST
The New York City subway is a sprawling system, with more than 5 million people per day (and sometimes many more, on special occasions) passing through more than 460 stations. There is probably someone who knows more about the intricacies of the system than Max Diamond, but whoever it is, I don't know him or her.

Diamond is a transportation engineering student at the City College of New York and a "rail fan"—he studies budgets and plans, delves into contracts and historical minutia, and, of course, pays close attention whenever he's riding the subway. Every time he rides it, he brings a camera on the off chance he spots something that's not quite right.

Diamond runs the DJ Hammers YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/user/DjHammersBVEStation), which features roughly 1,500 videos shot on the subway. These videos feature trains entering and leaving stations, new and rare subway announcements, subway rails catching fire, and lots of other sorts of weirdness you won't notice if you don't know what you're looking for.

"I don't usually just film any train departing and arriving, I like seeking out these reroutes—say you're waiting for the F train at 14th St. and all of a sudden an N train came in, that's something I would love to film because it's unusual, it's odd, it's out of the ordinary," Diamond told me. "Whenever I'm traveling around the city I bring my camera with me just in case something comes up."

I learned about Diamond from this very informative Ask Me Anything (https://www.reddit.com/r/nycrail/comments/3utla0/im_an_nyc_subway_expert_ask_me_anything) he did on the NYCRail subreddit. But I had lots of additional questions (namely: Is the G train
the actual worst or what?), so I called him in to talk about the past, present, and future of the New York City subway and about mass transit in general.

Nancy Spector is new deputy director, chief curator of Brooklyn Museum

Brooklyn Daily Eagle

The Brooklyn Museum has announced the appointment of Nancy Spector as its deputy director and chief curator. Spector joins the museum after having served for more than 29 years at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. She comes to the Brooklyn Museum as the first senior staff member hired by Anne Pasternak following her recent appointment as the Museum’s Shelby White and Leon Levy director. She will succeed Kevin Stayton, who, after 35 years, will serve as deputy director and director of Collections and History. Spector will assume her new role in April 2016.

"The Brooklyn Museum’s past is rooted in vision, courage and a good measure of chutzpah. With Nancy Spector as our chief curator, we can count on a trailblazing future that charts new territory for our museum," said Pasternak. "We can expect Nancy to explore the important questions of the role of art and museums for the 21st century, shaking up old canons and proposing new ones, while sharing our love of art and artists with ever-expanding audiences."

"Nancy’s expertise and vision will revive our world-class collections and inspire rich and lively temporary exhibitions to excite the communities we serve," added Elizabeth A. Sackler, Brooklyn Museum board chair and founder of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art. "Her exceptional intelligence will support our extensive educational and public programming."

A preeminent authority on contemporary visual culture, Nancy Spector has served as deputy director and Jennifer and David Stockman chief curator of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, where she has demonstrated a commitment to the art of our time and promoted an ethos of radical innovation in the context of exhibitions and public programs. Her exhibition on the work of Peter Fischli and David Weis (co-organized with Nat Trotman) will open at the Guggenheim on Feb. 5, 2016.

During her tenure at the Guggenheim, Spector has been heralded for her outstanding accomplishments, including developing an ambitious collections strategy for the museum and spearheading the creation of four acquisition committees. Spector has shaped the Guggenheim’s exhibition calendars in New York as well as its affiliate museums including Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice and the former Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin.

Spector is the author of numerous scholarly books, catalogue essays and editorials. She received a bachelor’s degree from Sarah Lawrence College, a master’s degree in art history from the Clark Art Institute at Williams College, and an MPhil in art history from City University of New York. She is a longtime Brooklyn resident.
“I am excited about joining the Brooklyn Museum at this significant juncture in its history, and working with Anne Pasternak and the curatorial team to redefine the role of an encyclopedic collection in the 21st century,” Spector commented. “I am impressed by the institution's deep roots in the local community, and I hope to add to the museum's vitality and relevance by expanding its scope to include more international audiences both on-site and online. I look forward to engaging with the Brooklyn Museum as a place of both scholarship and experimentation.”

The museum’s leadership will further expand with the appointment of Kevin Stayton as deputy director and the museum's first Director of Collections and History. Since Stayton joined the Brooklyn Museum in 1980, he has held a number of positions, including chair of the Department of Decorative Arts, and has steadily risen in various positions of curatorial leadership, becoming chief curator in 2001. Considered one of the leading scholars in the field of Decorative Arts, Stayton is a graduate of Ohio State University and was awarded a master’s degree in art history and an MPhil. from Yale University, where he was a research and exhibitions assistant at the Yale University Art Gallery.

— Information from the Brooklyn Museum
Students rent out dorm rooms on Airbnb without university approval

By Tara Garcia Mathewson | December 18, 2015

Dive Brief:

College students seem to be taking advantage of the Airbnb platform, which allows them to rent out their dorm rooms or extra beds, to make money on the side.

Fast Company reports while Airbnb encourages hosts to be in compliance with their rental agreements, it does not ask for proof before letting users post ads for their space, and housing offices on campuses in Berkeley and New York City have both had to deal with student renters.

Managers of a residence hall in Brooklyn that was created with the City University of New York post rooms to Airbnb, advertising the space for local college students through the platform.

Dive Insight:

Airbnb has been in the news because of assaults or thefts undertaken by those who rent space out or those who pay to stay. It has also been criticized for letting private individuals basically operate hotels without paying proper taxes.

The safety and potential liability concerns are numerous for colleges and universities who maintain campus housing. College students cannot easily be prevented from having guests, but how campuses might restrict these guests is an open question.

Because the student renters featured in the Fast Company story did not seem to think what they were breaking rules, housing administrators might consider being more explicit with applicable prohibitions.
How to Build a Safer Urban Garden

In a recent survey, 71 percent of home gardens in New York City had too much lead in their soil. Here's how green-thumbs anywhere can avoid it.

LAURA BLISS and JESSICA LEIGH HESTER | Dec 18, 2015 | Comments

City gardens are blooming. In backyards, rooftops, and community lots, the number of U.S. urban dwellers growing food jumped from 7 million to 9 million from 2008 to 2013. Nearly one third of the country's public elementary schools had a gardening program as of 2013, up 11 percent since 2008. Urban schools are especially likely to have them, and for great reasons: Studies show health
and learning benefits for young children exposed to growing plants.

But among the chard and cherry tomatoes are trace metals, enduring in the soil. Particularly worrisome is lead, a vestige of the industries, house paints, and gasoline mixtures of 19th- and 20th-century urban life.

Researchers at the City University of New York (CUNY) recently surveyed 1,652 garden soil samples from 904 New York City gardens, and found that 71 percent of home garden samples exceeded the state’s soil safety maximum for lead and arsenic. 21 percent of community gardens also surpassed those limits. (Because the study’s samples came from New York City gardeners who sent them in voluntarily, it is impossible to know how many came from store-bought versus city soil.) Brooklyn, with its factory-heavy past, fared the worst of all five boroughs.

FIG. 1. Distribution of gardens where the soil samples were collected for this study. This map includes 904 identifiable street addresses for the gardens, and each dot on the map represents a garden. Each polygon on the map represents a zip code. Each zip code is color coded based on median Pb concentration, except for the zip codes with fewer than five samples.
Children are especially vulnerable to the health effects of ingested lead, according to the World Health Organization. Lead exposure can severely and irreversibly affect children's cognitive development, and can cause anemia, hypertension, immune system deficiencies, and other conditions. Lead CUNY researcher Zhongqi "Joshua" Cheng says he hopes for a day when governments better regulate soil testing. For now, it's critical that gardeners in any city set up strict standards about what kinds of soil they're using, especially if they've got kids digging and playing in the dirt.

"We encourage people to get their soil tested, so that you know what you're looking at," says Cheng, who also helps lead the NYC Urban Soils Institute, which offers testing for a small fee. "If it's extremely contaminated, then you help yourself avoid exposure."

Try these tactics, too:

Learn about the land. Some businesses—such as dry cleaners, gas stations, and manufacturing facilities—leave more significant ecological footprints than others. Before you plant, consult historical materials, such as atlases of local businesses, to learn about what was on or adjacent to the property.

Build a better raised bed. If you do perform the soil testing and discover trace amounts of lead or other contaminants in the soil, you might choose to make a raised bed. That's great, but it's probably not enough, according to The Johns Hopkins Center for Livable Futures. That's because crops with deep roots can extend to the dirt underneath. Consider adding a barrier in the form of a fabric cover, with holes big enough to let water through.

Choose plants wisely. Lead in urban soil doesn't necessarily translate into contaminated fruits and veggies. Certain types of plants are more likely to take up lead than others. "Tomatoes aren't a problem, while leafy greens and root vegetables you have to consider a bit more," Cheng says. There's also evidence to suggest that certain plants, such as sunflowers, are able to help extract harmful metals from soil through a process called phytoremediation.

Grow food in pots. If you don't have space to build a raised bed, you can grow
many varieties of vegetables in containers. Herbs and leafy greens are easy starter plants. Cheng suggests buying freshly bagged soil from the store; potted plants will do best in soil specifically designed for containers.
The food industry has processed lots of foods to hit that "bliss point" — that perfect amount of sweetness that would send eaters over the moon. In doing so, it's added sweetness in plenty of unexpected places — like bread and pasta sauce, says investigative reporter Michael Moss.

Yagi Studio/Getty Images
It is no secret that the rise in obesity in America has something to do with food. But how much? And what role does the food industry as a whole play?

As part of Here & Now's series this week on obesity, America on the Scale, host Jeremy Hobson spoke with investigative reporter Michael Moss of The New York Times.

For Moss's book, Salt Sugar Fat, he went inside the industry and spoke with food inventors and CEOs about how the industry has shaped what people eat and capitalized on how American eating habits have changed — for the worse and, maybe now, for the better. Highlights from their conversation follow, edited for brevity and clarity.

**Interview Highlights**

**On the food industry's level of responsibility for the obesity epidemic**

I was really struck by how many people inside the industry itself hold their industry totally accountable, totally culpable for this surge in obesity that we've had for the last 30 years now. Clearly, there are other contributing factors. Clearly, there are things like exercise and personal responsibility. But they — being insiders — came to believe that all of their effort they put into making their product so irresistible, so tasty, so perfectly engineered to get us to not just like them but to want more and more of them, laid that responsibility directly at their feet.

**On what it means to "perfectly engineer" food**

They would hire people like Howard Moskowitz, trained in high math at Queens College and experimental psychology at Harvard. Howard was one of the people responsible for some of the biggest icons in the grocery store.

For example, he walked me through his recent creation of a new soda flavor for Dr. Pepper. ... He started with no less than 59 variations of sweetness, each one slightly different than the next, subjected those to 3,000 taste tests around the country, did his
high math regression analysis thing, put the data in the computer. And out comes this bell-shaped curve where the perfect amount of sweetness — not too little, not too much — is at the very top of the curve.

And it’s Howard who coined the expression "bliss point" to capture that perfect amount of sweetness that would send us over the moon, their products flying off the shelf.

On adding a sweetness "bliss point" to foods that didn't used to be sweet

It's not that they engineer bliss points for sweetness in things like soda, ice cream, cookies — things we know and expect to be sweet. The food companies have marched around the grocery store adding sweetness, engineering bliss points to products that didn’t used to be sweet. So now bread has added sugar and a bliss point for sweetness. Yogurt can be as sweet as ice cream for some brands. And pasta sauce — my gosh, there are some brands with the equivalent of sugar from a couple of Oreo cookies in one half-cup serving.

And what this does, nutritionists say, is create this expectation in us that everything should be sweet. And this is especially difficult for kids who are hard-wired to the sweet taste. So when you drag their little butts over to the produce aisle and try to get them to eat some of that stuff we all should be eating more of — Brussels sprouts and broccoli, which have some of the other basic tastes like sour and bitter — you get a rebellion on your hands.

On the backlash the food industry now faces

One of the fascinating things I came across in my research is that it was none other than Philip Morris — for years and years, it was the largest food manufacturer in North America through its acquisition of General Foods and then Kraft — it was none other than the tobacco managers at Philip Morris who turned to their food managers [in] 1999 and warned them that they were going to face as much trouble over salt, sugar, fat, obesity as they were then [facing] over tobacco smoking and health problems. Now we’re starting to see that come home for the food companies.

Earlier this year, almost all of them stood before investors and reported dismal earnings. And the most forthright among the heads of the food companies attributed that decline to consumers caring more and more about what they put in their bodies, wanting to eat healthier, and acting on those decisions by changing their purchasing habits, which is really hitting the food giants hard.
1984: The Scientist Who Caused Americans to 'Torture' Their Peers Dies

Horrified by his own results, Stanley Milgram concluded a Nazi-style death-camp could easily be manned by jes' folks.

David B. Green
Dec 20, 2015 7:39 AM

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A student undergoing the Milgram test. Credit: AFP
On December 20, 1984, Stanley Milgram, the social psychologist who, less than two decades after the Nuremberg Trials, had appalled the world and himself with the results of a study that looked at people's readiness to follow orders, even when those orders instructed them to inflict severe pain on others, died, at the age of 51.

To this day, there is disagreement about the ethical propriety of Milgram's experiment, as well as about its scientific value. But there is little doubt that he got many millions of people, most of them outside the academic universe, to ponder their own reluctance to challenge authority and follow their own moral code — even when they are completely free to do all of those things.

Stanley Milgram
was born on August 15, 1933, in the Bronx, New York. His father, Samuel Milgram, was a Hungarian-born master baker; his mother was the former Adele Israel, a Jewish immigrant from Romania. Samuel died in 1953, at age 51, and, according to Stanley's biographer, Thomas Blase, the son often prophesied his own early demise.

Early interest in science, and obedience

Stanley was precocious and mischievous, and began doing scientific experiments at home from a young age. After graduating James Monroe High School, however, he studied political science at Queens College, earning his B.A. in 1954. Not surprisingly, when he applied to a Ph.D. program at Harvard in social
psychology, he was turned down for not having taken a single psychology course in college.

With a combination of brilliance and perseverance, Milgram prevailed upon Harvard to reverse its decision, and he began a six-year doctoral program there, earning his Ph.D. in 1960.

— Advertisement —

It was during his first academic appointment, at Yale University, where he stayed for three years, that Milgram undertook his notorious experiments. Later, he would note explicitly how "the influence of the Holocaust on my psyche energized my interest in obedience."

He recruited subjects through
a newspaper ad, telling them they would be participating in an experiment looking at how rewards and punishments affected an individual's ability to learn. In their case, they would be divided into pairs of "teachers" (the real subjects) and "learners"—actually, actors.

The teachers, i.e., the subjects, would read pairs of words to the learners, and ask them to recall them.

The learners were (supposedly) connected to electrodes. If they got questions wrong the teachers administered a shock (or thought they did).

As a student's errors accumulated, the intensity of the shock would be raised, by 15-volt increments, proceeding up to 450 volts. The actor-students would respond to the increasing
pain by complaining, first mildly then sharply, before lapsing into silence.

If a teacher refused to continue, the lab-coat-wearing administrator would respond, "The experiment requires that you continue."

In fact, though, nothing prevented a subject from simply walking out the door. Nonetheless, Milgram's tests showed overall that an average of 65 percent of subjects would continue to the end, up to 450 volts.

'Moral imbeciles'

The researcher himself was astounded and disturbed by the results. As Milgram wrote the following year, "I once wondered whether in all of the United States a vicious government could find enough moral imbeciles to meet the personnel..."
requirements of a national system of death camps, of the kind that were maintained in Germany. I am now beginning to think that the full complement could be recruited here in New Haven."

In and of itself, Milgram's research was undoubtedly meaningful, but he did not accompany his conclusions with any real theory to explain his results. Additionally, although the test included a significant debriefing and follow-up support for each participant, the scientist was criticized for the stress he subjected subjects to. Today, such a study could not be conducted in academia.

In 1967, Milgram, now something of an international celebrity, was hired by the Graduate Center of New York's City University to head its social
Martin Shkreli’s Arrest Fuels Debate Over $1 Million Donation

By DAVID W. CHEN  DEC. 18, 2015

When Hunter College High School announced in March that it had received a $1 million donation — the largest ever in its century-long history — from a member of the Class of 2001, many graduates were stunned to learn who the young donor was: Martin Shkreli, a multimillionaire pharmaceuticals executive.

Martin Shkreli? The awkward and impatient kid who had cut class and seemed almost allergic to working hard? The aspiring emo and punk musician who had ultimately been kicked out for poor grades and poor attendance?

“I never really thought about him as a ‘Most Likely To’ type of person,” said Geoff Gresh, a classmate of Mr. Shkreli’s, who is now a freelance video editor.

In retrospect, Mr. Gresh’s initial impression may have been correct, according to federal officials, who on Thursday charged Mr. Shkreli, 32, with securities fraud in connection with his hedge fund, MSMB Capital.
The debate has intensified since his arrest, in Facebook chat groups and within the school itself, even though Mr. Shkreli pleaded not guilty and has said, through a spokesman, that he is confident he will be exonerated.

At the time Mr. Shkreli announced his $1 million gift, he cited his Hunter experience as laying the foundation for his success in the business world. In particular, he thanked a math teacher, Linda Aboody, telling The Daily News that she was "just a wonderful teacher — her logic class was unbelievably helpful."

Ms. Aboody, who still teaches at Hunter, said that she remembered teaching Mr. Shkreli in an eighth-grade math class. One part of the course, she recalled, was devoted to logic, and the importance of organizational skills.

She said that Mr. Shkreli, while bright, often did not put in the effort needed to maximize his potential.

"I do feel that he had a heart, and I had a soft spot for him," she said. "I think he really loved math and science and loved learning about it, but did not want to do the grit work. I'd have to prod him, 'I know you can do it. You have the ability.'"

By 10th grade, however, classmates say that Mr. Shkreli would skip class frequently. Sometimes, Mr. Shkreli, recognizable by his rail-thin frame and predilection for white T-shirts and jeans, would hang out in the hallway, playing chess or cards. Other times, he would play basketball outside with his best friend at the time, Franky Guttman.

In an interview on Friday, Mr. Guttman, who now lives in Los Angeles, said that he and Mr. Shkreli had bonded over their fondness for music, and because both were uninterested in the fast track to law and medicine and academia that obsessed so many of their classmates.

"In order to really succeed there, you had to put in an amazing amount of
effort and I think we both decided it wasn’t worth the effort because we wanted to do other things,” he said.

The two were part of a band. Mr. Shkreli wrote the music and Mr. Guttman wrote the lyrics for sardonic songs with titles like “L. Ron Hubbard” and “I Like Eggs.” Their sound reminded classmates of the Pixies.

After Mr. Shkreli’s grades tumbled, he went to City-As-School High School, an alternative public school where students did internships for credit. He worked for TheStreet.com, the financial news website founded by James. J. Cramer, among other jobs, several classmates recalled, before later working for Cramer Berkowitz, & Co., the hedge fund in which Mr. Cramer was a partner.

“He would come back to Hunter frequently in a suit and in a briefcase, hanging out in the hallways and sort of showing off,” said one classmate who, like most people interviewed, spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid getting entangled in any investigation.

Another classmate said that, after high school, most of Mr. Shkreli’s Hunter friends drifted away as he became more involved in finance.

“We would come home from college and go out, and Martin seemed to be very interested in paying for everything, in order to show that he could,” one classmate said. “He changed during this time into someone they didn’t recognize as the same guy they had been friends with before.”

Mr. Shkreli apparently became interested in donating to Hunter College High School when he heard, about 10 years ago, that the school was trying to raise money, said Matthew Blumenfeld, a Hunter alumnus and nonprofit consultant who acted as a liaison to secure Mr. Shkreli’s gift.

“He wasn’t on Hunter’s radar screen at all,” Mr. Blumenfeld said. “But I think he really wanted to help the school and I think he wanted to make a
splash with a major contribution."

The funds came in about a year or so ago, Mr. Blumenfeld said, and are now in the hands of the high school’s foundation. The money has been split into two funds, one that can be spent at the direction of the principal, alumni and foundation, and the other that is part of the endowment.

At the time, Hunter officials hailed the gift, with the alumni association’s website declaring "Martin Shkreli, from the Class of 2001, donates $1,000,000 to HCHS!"

When asked this week whether Hunter was considering returning the money, a press officer declined to comment. Two members of the alumni association did not respond to emails.

Several classmates say that when they heard about Mr. Shkreli’s gift, they could not help but wonder whether it was meant as a sly act of one-upmanship.

“I thought it was weird since he hadn’t graduated,” one classmate said. “It seemed almost like a ‘take that’ move.”

Eli Rosenberg contributed reporting.

A version of this article appears in print on December 19, 2015, on page A17 of the New York edition with the headline: C.E.O.'s Arrest Fuels Debate Over a Gift of $1 Million.
Pro-Palestine Student Activists Face Cyberbullying, Backlash on US Campuses

Saturday, 19 December 2015 00:00

By Annie Hylton (author/itemlist/user/502388), Truthout | Report


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Sitting in a large classroom in northern New Jersey, Khalil, a shy and soft-spoken 18-year-old first-generation Palestinian immigrant, forms a circle with fellow pro-Palestine student activists. They nervously recount the issues they've faced for their outspoken political views, turning their heads each time a person peeks into the room.

"Everyone has to take more caution," Khalil said. The group of activists, aged 18 to 22, asked that their names and college be withheld. Khalil's name has been changed. "There are spies everywhere," he said. "It is scary."

Khalil has good reason to be nervous. Student groups, professors and academic associations "are increasingly engaging in conversations, debate, research and other speech activity that's challenging the status quo on Israel/Palestine," said Radhika Sainath, staff attorney at Palestine
Legal, an organization that defends the civil rights of those who speak out for Palestinian rights. "Along with this growth in support for Palestinian rights we are also seeing an increase in suppression."

"This is a deliberate strategy by Israel advocacy groups to shut down any and all criticism of Israel by maligning activists."

Boat to Gaza was shut down (http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2010/11/jewish_groups_raise_concern_ov.html) when Hillel and the Anti-Defamation League accused the students of providing material support for terrorism. Hillel, a Jewish campus organization, and the Anti-Defamation League, a nongovernmental organization aimed at countering anti-Semitism, have both been known to stifle criticism of Israel. In November, fake Facebook accounts (http://palestinelegal.org/news/2015/11/19/palestine-legal-demands-action-from-university-of-chicago-to-protect-palestine-advocates) targeted pro-Palestine, University of Chicago students by posting threatening Islamophobic and homophobic comments while a University of Illinois, Chicago student received an email with death threats.

It is important to note that according to FBI hate crimes statistics (https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2014/topic-pages/victims_final), in 2014 US Jews suffered by far the highest percentage of anti-religious hate crimes in the US. The report indicates that of 1,140 victims of anti-religious hate crimes, "56.8 percent were victims of crimes motivated by their offenders' anti-Jewish bias." To put this in context, though anti-Muslim hate crimes have sharply risen since the terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, in 2014, Muslims suffered 16.1 percent of anti-Islamic (Muslim) bias.

A report released in September by Palestine Legal (http://palestinelegal.org/the-palestine-exception#actors3) documents hundreds of these alleged incidents involving censorship, punishment and suppression of advocacy over an 18-month period. In October, the organization documented 31 alleged incidents. The group found that nearly half of the incidents involved false accusations of support for terrorism or anti-Semitism, and the vast majority targeted students and scholars.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg," said Sainath, one of the authors of the Palestine Legal report. "These false accusations of supporting terrorism and anti-Semitism often have Islamophobic and xenophobic tones when levied against Muslim and Arab Americans." Such
accusations may lead to criminal investigations, cancellation of events, harassment and even death threats. "This is a deliberate strategy by Israel advocacy groups to shut down any and all criticism of Israel by maligning activists," Sainath added.

Hillel International, the world's largest Jewish organization with significant financial backing, has about 550 chapters (http://www.hillel.org/about) across most college campuses and has been around for nearly a century. The group has been exposed by media outlets like AlterNet (http://www.alternet.org/education/leaked-conversations-director-rutgers-hillel-engages-shocking-islamophobia) and The New York Times (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/29/us/members-of-jewish-student-group-test-permissible-discussion-on-israel.html), as well as civil rights groups like the Center for Constitutional Rights (http://www.ccrjustice.org/home/press-center/ccc-news/letter-editor-re-hillel-s-policy-campus-speakers) and Palestine Legal (http://palestinelegal.org/the-palestine-exception/), for attempting to suppress speech critical of Israel across campuses.

A younger group, Students for Justice in Palestine (http://palestinelegal.org/the-palestine-exception/#citation-[55]), a pro-Palestine student organization, is present across more than 100 US campuses and in recent years has gained visibility. The group was founded in the early 2000s and calls for boycotts, divestment and sanctions to pressure Israel into ending its military occupation and respecting international law - a campaign modeled off of the South African anti-apartheid movement. The relationship between the groups has become more and more antagonistic.

As violence is on the rise between Israel and Palestine, the United States has increasingly come under fire from pro-Palestine advocates for its unwavering support of Israel. But the risks of speaking out are potentially grave. Students have feared that they or their families will face travel restrictions because of false accusations of terrorism. This "can have a real long-term effect on students," said Sainath, and some don't get involved because they are afraid of the consequences.

**Travel Restrictions**

Students in the US who have come as refugees or have families back in Palestine often fear backlash if they return home, said Omar Shakir, a Bertha Justice Institute fellow at the Center for Constitutional Rights and one of the authors of the report. In some cases, Israeli border officials have denied students entry into Palestine, apparently as a result of their activities on campus.

Israeli authorities control entry and exit into the Palestinian territories. The Allenby Bridge crossing (https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/listen-israel-blocks-us-citizen-visiting-palestine) between the West Bank and Jordan is the only entry point for Palestinians with a Palestinian Authority ID card. Palestinian-Americans have, in the past, entered through Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion International Airport with a US passport, but have been denied (http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Report-Palestinian-Americans-denied-entry-into-Israel-412532) entry in recent months.
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**Travel Restrictions**

Students in the US who have come as refugees or have families back in Palestine often fear backlash if they return home, said Omar Shakir, a Bertha Justice Institute fellow at the Center for Constitutional Rights and one of the authors of the report. In some cases, Israeli border officials have denied students entry into Palestine, apparently as a result of their activities on campus.

Israeli authorities control entry and exit into the Palestinian territories. The Allenby Bridge crossing (https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/listen-israel-blocks-us-citizen-visiting-palestine) between the West Bank and Jordan is the only entry point for Palestinians with a Palestinian Authority ID card. Palestinian-Americans have, in the past, entered through Tel Aviv’s Ben-Gurion International Airport with a US passport, but have been denied (http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Report-Palestinian-Americans-denied-entry-into-Israel-412532) entry in recent months.
The US State Department says (http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/08/246170.htm) Palestinian nationals, including dual nationals, must enter through the Allenby crossing from Jordan using a Palestinian Authority travel document, rather than via Ben-Gurion Airport, unless they have obtained advance permission from an Israeli embassy or consulate on humanitarian or emergency grounds.

State Department spokesperson John Kirby said (http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/08/246170.htm), "Specifically, the U.S. government remains concerned at the unequal treatment that Palestinian-Americans and other Arab-Americans receive at Israel's borders and checkpoints."

Nerdeen Kiswani, a 21-year-old Palestinian-American refugee, is an undergraduate student at the City University of New York (CUNY) and chair of NYC Students for Justice in Palestine, among other activist groups. Kiswani says she was denied entry into Palestine through the Allenby crossing last summer when she went to visit her grandmother. The Israeli border patrol compiled a file on her student activism and said after 15 hours (https://www.rt.com/usa/313814-israel-mistreating-us-palestinians/) of interrogation that she could not enter for her "hostile behavior towards Israel," she said. She has no hope of being let into Palestine anytime soon, and says for this reason, she is not as scared as most of the other students. She says she has grown increasingly despondent but that, "This is the thing that's keeping me strong."

Khalil, the New Jersey student, had similar issues upon his return to Palestine when he went in 2014 to visit family through the Allenby crossing. Though he was not denied entry, Khalil was questioned for his activities on campus, and says Israeli border guards beat him up when he didn't respond thoroughly. The Israeli Ministry of Public Security did not respond to requests for comment about these cases.

Shakir believes these cases send a message to Palestinian activists in the US that their activities on campus will impact their re-entry and may even put family members in Palestine at risk.

**Methods and Actors**

These stories come at a period when the pro-Palestine movement is gaining traction, as are the efforts to silence it. Because the movement is "stronger and visible," it brings about the most "sophisticated and vicious attacks," said Suzanne Adely, a human rights and labor lawyer.

In a four-part investigation, AlterNet (http://www.alternet.org/tea-party-and-right/moderdan-day-mccarthyists-are-going-extremes-slime-activists-fighting-israel) reported that the failure to stop the Iran nuclear deal has redirected efforts by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu
and American pro-Israel donors and contributors to campaign against the boycott and sanctions movement across US campuses, with millions of dollars to back it up.

"There is a clear strategy here to try to suppress speech critical of Israel - it's organized and very well-funded and there's nothing remotely comparable to that being done to the other side," Sainath said.

The precise actors and methods vary across campuses, but according to a report by the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network, a network of Jews committed to ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine, Hillel International plays a role in suppression. Hillel International receives funding in the millions from Zionist organizations to disperse across its chapters on US campuses.

The International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network says (http://www.ijan.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/IJAN-Bizness-of-Backlash-full-report-web.pdf) Hillel is "the most consistent and one of the best positioned backlash organizations on campuses across the United States and [its chapters] operate under the guise of being student-run organizations for Jewish life on campus. In reality, in the past decade, the key activities of Hillel have been driven by the national office, sometimes even staffed by non-university-paid staff, and focused on censorship of and attacks on any criticism of Israel as well as pro-Palestinian organizing by students and objective teaching on Palestine by faculty."

Sarah Schulman, faculty adviser of Students for Justice in Palestine at CUNY's College of Staten Island, says that every person on campus - student, faculty or staff member - has gone through a vetting process, except for the head of Hillel, who is hired and paid by national Hillel. "There is no other independent political partisan organization that is given an office on our campus. Only Hillel," Schulman said.

CUNY Staten Island did not respond to specific questions about these assertions and instead responded with this statement: "The College of Staten Island is committed to pluralism and diversity and values the thoughtful opinions and positions of all people." The spokesperson said a survey will be conducted next spring to learn "more deeply about our college."

When questioned about the above assertions, Matthew Berger, a spokesperson for Hillel International, responded by saying, "Your questions and line of questioning are based on false information, defamatory accusations and potentially malicious intent," but did not elaborate further. Though he did warn of the "risks" of publishing such an account.

Kiswani, the CUNY student, says that college administrators often cooperate with Hillel because donors pressure them. Kiswani participates in student-led, pro-Palestine initiatives across the New York area, and says excessive security presence at campus events is an issue. Security guards and sometimes police - with weapons - "isolate us, having tons of security criminalizes us and makes us feel like we're doing something wrong," she added. "Like my opinion warrants bullets."
When asked of the importance of accommodating two important points of view and ensuring mutual respect of student groups, Berger said, "Hillel is proud of the work it does on campus to support Jewish campus life."

In 2013, Students for Justice in Palestine invited academic Judith Butler to speak about the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement at Brooklyn College, co-sponsored by the political science department. Despite a concerted effort to cancel the event by politicians, including New York City Council (http://www.thenation.com/article/open-letter-academic-freedom-nation-new-york-elected-officials/) members threatening to withhold money from CUNY, the event continued. Those attending had to go through a special door for a security check, including metal detectors and bag checks. "They have checkpoints in Palestine, but they also have checkpoints on college campuses," Kiswani said.

Brooklyn College responded by saying, "Metal detectors have always been in use for events open to the public. We also determine usage based on the type of event, e.g., the number of attendees." The college spokesperson then referred to student event guidelines (http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/off_dosa/EPI_Handbook_-_September_2015.pdf), implemented after the incident, that provide more detail.

**Social Media**

The use of social media is a powerful tool used to target activists on campus. Palestine Legal's report says social media is used by Israel advocacy organizations to facilitate false accusations of terrorism and anti-Semitism, scrutinize activists in public and infiltrate private settings.

In March, journalist Rania Khalek was part of a panel discussion at Columbia University entitled "Media Solidarity and Palestine." Following tweets promoting the event, Khalek and other panelists received a bomb threat from an anonymous Twitter account that was later deleted. When it was reported to the administration, the event was provided one security guard. Khalek says this was highly inadequate, given the severity of the threat. On a separate occasion, a pro-Israel Twitter account (http://www.alternet.org/tea-party-and-right/modern-day-mccarthyists-are-going-extremes-slime-activists-fighting-israelis), since deleted, posted photos of Khalek with rape and death threats (https://mobile.twitter.com/ranikhalek/status/605621264242356224).

Khalil and his friends in New Jersey say a lot of the repercussions of being an activist come through social media, like Facebook and Twitter. They say they are often called "terrorists" and other racial slurs. During the 2014 war in Gaza, Khalil's friend said he posted a status on Facebook critical of Israel's assault on Gaza. An anonymous person found out where he worked, called his boss and encouraged him to fire the student for being "anti-Israeli."

Social media monitoring and harassment come not only from individuals but also from organized groups. The Middle East Monitor reported (https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/blogs/politics/16395-israeli-think-tank-holds-anti-bds-hackathon) that the Reut Institute, an Israeli think tank, held a "Legitimacy Hackathon" in January 2015 for cyber experts, pro-Israel activists and Israeli officials. The gathering was meant
to "develop methodologies to be able to penetrate, with messaging and for other purposes, often protected and niche internet-mediated worlds" and identify "those individuals that organise drive boycotts, protests, and other forms of delegitimisation."

Canary Mission, an anonymously run website, publishes profiles and photos of Palestinian activists in an attempt to expose them to future employers and schools. The website is registered under a private name - GoDaddy.com (http://godaddy.com/) - a service that offers privacy for domain registration. The website's registered phone number directs to Wild West Domains, which a salesperson explained: "People register their domains through us and then it's a way for them to keep the registration private." The salesperson explained they provide service, but don't control the content of the website. Canary Mission did not respond to requests for comment.

Kiswa says she was listed on Canary Mission. "I probably won't have a career with any employer that would look at Canary Mission," she said. "My future is really uncertain because of my level of involvement." Kiswa, the eldest of five siblings, says her family came to the US as refugees and thought they were getting away from this "type of thing."

"I don't feel like there's such thing as academic freedom - my opinions, thoughts, beliefs - are not only treated as not equal to everyone else's, but they are treated as silent," Kiswa added.

Schulman says a lot of the students she advises are themselves refugees. "They are under a lot of pressure... their families are under a lot of pressure...[and] for them to be harassed by their own [university] administration is really tragic," she said. "We are a public institution and we are supposed to be serving the people of New York and to teach them how to professionalize and grow."

"These are not enemy combatants; these are our students," Schulman said. "[And] they've shown incredible leadership."

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Diala Shamas, Washington Post: Four ways the US already ‘bans’ Muslims

DIALA SHAMAS Washington Post | Posted: Sunday, December 20, 2015 12:01 am

Donald Trump’s proclamations about banning all Muslims from entering the United States — even if temporarily — have triggered welcome condemnation, as politicians have scrambled to remind us that such a ban would be contrary to American values. Yet those of us engaged with policies affecting U.S. Muslims between election cycles are dismayed but not surprised, by Trump’s idea. For the past 14 years, authorities have steadily and silently implemented variants of the proposed Muslim exclusion.

In my four years working at the CLEAR Project [Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility Project, housed at the City University of New York (CUNY) School of Law], I saw how our primarily U.S. Muslim clients encountered an array of policies and practices denying Muslims — actual citizens or residents — full access to the privileges of citizenship and permanent residency. A few examples:

Delaying and denying Muslim immigrant petitions: There is a little-known, formerly secret, but sweeping federal program that results in delays or outright denial of citizenship or immigration benefits for otherwise eligible Muslims, apparently based on their religion or national origin, among other things. That program — known as the “Controlled Application Review and Resolution Program” or “CARRP” — has been in place since at least 2008.

One of our clients likely subjected to this program is a religious leader, prominent in his community, who had been in the United States for over 20 years. He was never alleged to present any security threat, and his children are all U.S. citizens. While he is eligible to become a resident, he has been waiting for 12 years for his petition to be processed. Another client, in the United States since he was a young boy, had his naturalization petition first “held” for years by the FBI and eventually denied on a pretext. While we ultimately prevailed in challenging that denial, it took considerable resources, many years and a significant toll on him and his family. With these unpredictable delays and denials, life becomes impossible to plan. And the promise of American citizenship or residency becomes elusive.

“Proxy denaturalization” through passport confiscation: This is an even less well-known program with strikingly Trumpian characteristics. Around 2013, our organization, along with a number of civil liberties organizations, began receiving complaints from more than a dozen U.S. citizens of Yemeni origin, all describing the same peculiar pattern: They went to the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, Yemen, for a routine consular matter such as registering a newborn. Once there, they were subjected to lengthy
and coercive interrogation by State Department officials, at the end of which they were forced to sign statements and had their U.S. passports seized without any explanation.

Some were only told after months — or sometimes a year — that they would be allowed to fly back to the United States and go through an opaque process to argue that they should get their passports back. The arbitrary character of this entire process has led many advocates and scholars to argue that this program amounts to proxy-denaturalization: allowing the government to strip a subset of citizens — all Muslim — of all the benefits of citizenship without having to go through appropriate procedures.

To date, an unknown number of Americans are likely stuck in Yemen. Or if they have now fled current violence there, they are stuck in neighboring countries, unable to return to their families or businesses in the United States. The State Department, which claims it is acting pursuant to “reasons set forth in federal law and in federal regulations,” has not issued any apologies and has doubled down on its position in individual administrative hearings.

The no-fly list: Another tool disproportionately affecting Muslims is the “no-fly list,” a database of individuals who are denied boarding any commercial flights to or from the United States. In 2013, there were reportedly 468,749 names on the watch list. Based on all the publicly known examples that I am aware of, and all of my clients, the no-fly list is almost entirely populated by Muslims or individuals assumed to be Muslim.

Federal courts have ruled that the process to challenge one’s placement on this list is constitutionally inadequate, and there have been some recent, limited revisions to this process. But it remains arduous and unpredictable, the criteria for placement on the list remains too broad and the list — which likely continues to grow — is riddled with errors. At CLEAR, I represented a dozen clients who were on the no-fly list, a mix of U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Those stranded overseas were ultimately allowed to return to the United States while they went through the lengthy process of trying to get off the list. But they had to make difficult choices of leaving parents, grandparents, spouses and young children, not knowing when they would be able to reunite.

Some decided to remain overseas to avoid being separated from their loved ones, who had no way of joining them in the United States. And the process remains a looming threat to many others who have not been denied boarding but fear the possibility of being put on the list — a surprisingly common concern among many young Muslims I regularly meet with. When the possibility of an arbitrary ban on travel colors decisions about where to live, where to raise families and what jobs to take, access to citizenship or legal status becomes moot.

“Special registration” for Muslims: And let us not forget another very recent historical precedent for Trump’s proposal: The National Security Entry-Exit Registration System program, implemented after the 9/11 attacks, mandated that all non-immigrant males from 24 Muslim-majority countries (and
North Korea) register with the government. Though the program did not yield a single terrorism-related prosecution, it resulted in widespread deportations and exclusions, and its effects on thousands of families remain to this day.

None of these programs quite amount to the outright ban that Trump has called for. But they are all variants on a theme — a theme that has been alive and well for some time.

As pundits race to condemn Trump’s particularly egregious breed of Muslim scapegoating, anyone watching our country’s trajectory is left wondering where the outrage has been all along. We should be far more concerned by well-oiled federal programs vigorously defended by a Democratic administration than by bombastic election-season proclamations of a candidate who is particularly adept at tapping into the national mood. Americans have been primed for this moment. Donald Trump is merely capitalizing on that reality.

Diaa Shamas is a supervising attorney at Stanford Law School’s International Human Rights Clinic. This article is based on her work as an attorney with the CLEAR project at CUNY School of Law.
Program that flags Chicago cops at risk of misconduct misses most officers

By Jonah Newman | December 18, 2015

Like many law enforcement agencies, the Chicago Police Department has an early intervention system that is supposed to flag officers at risk of serious misconduct and provide them with training and support to get on the right track.

But of 162 Chicago police officers with 10 or more misconduct complaints in the past four years, just one was enrolled in the department's program as of October, according to a Chicago Reporter analysis of data obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request.

An officer is eligible for the program if he or she receives two sustained complaints or three excessive force complaints within 12 months, though they can also be recommended for the program based on a pattern of complaints. Less than 4 percent of all complaints filed against CPD officers are sustained.

Overall, there were just 11 officers enrolled in CPD's two primary early intervention programs, out of more than 12,000 sworn officers in the department—the nation's second-largest law enforcement agency.

"Those numbers defy belief," said Samuel Walker, an emeritus professor at the University of Nebraska, and a leading national expert on police early intervention systems. "It says the system isn't working and is designed not to work."
It's no wonder, experts said, that the system failed to effectively intervene before Officer Jason Van Dyke, who had 19 citizen complaints (http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/wall-police-shooting-16-shots-04---met-20150425-story.html) and two misconduct lawsuits against him, shot and killed 17-year-old Laquan McDonald in October 2014. Van Dyke was not in the program on Oct. 15 of this year, according to the records received by the Reporter, and it is not clear whether he was previously enrolled.

Past efforts at police reform in Chicago have included calls for improving early intervention. The same response is likely today as the city reels from several allegations of police abuse and corruption. Mayor Rahm Emanuel has mentioned an "early warning system" several times since the McDonald shooting video was released last month, and the U.S. Department of Justice has consistently recommended early intervention programs after its investigations into "patterns and practices" of police abuse, like the one now under way in Chicago.

Chicago's early intervention system is likely to be in the sights of Justice Department's investigators, because it lags far behind best practices, Walker said.

How the early intervention system works

One of the problems with CPD's system, experts said, is that it can't consider unfounded misconduct complaints or complaints that are more than five years old, a requirement of the police union contract (http://chicagoreporter.com/chicago-police-contract-scrutinized-in-the-aftermath-of-laquan-mcdonalds-death/).

Nationally, only about 10 percent of police misconduct complaints are sustained, said Dennis Kenney, a professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.

"If you are excluding 90 percent of complaints right off the top, then you have a flawed early warning system," he said.

A high number of prior complaints, even those that are not sustained, is a strong predictor of future misconduct complaints, according to a recent analysis (http://firehydrantmedia.com/features/how-to-predict-which-chicago-cops-will-commit-misconduct/) of Chicago police complaint data by the data-journalism website FiveThirtyEight.

None of the complaints against Van Dyke was sustained, and most of them were too old to make him eligible for the intervention programs.

Chicago's two primary intervention systems also look at other indicators, such as excessive tardiness, misuse of medical leave or a low grade on an annual performance review.

But officers must hit certain arbitrary thresholds—for example, being late five or more times in 12 months—to even be considered for the intervention program. Even then, it is at the discretion of command staff members in the human resources department whether to enroll an officer in the program.

A third non-disciplinary intervention program deals with officers who have minor incidents of being rude or disrespectful toward civilians that don't reach the threshold for a formal misconduct investigation. The interventions for that program are far too light to be taken seriously, Walker said.

"After the first incident, it's a conversation with a supervisor," he said. "And then it escalates very slowly."

Only after the fourth incident in five years is an officer eligible for one of the more serious intervention programs.

As of October, there were 516 officers enrolled in this program, about 4 percent of all officers on the force.

Better data produce better outcomes

Experts say the first step to a successful early intervention program is an effective mechanism for collecting and analyzing the right data on officer behavior and flagging those who may need additional counseling or training.

"To have a truly robust [early intervention] system, you want to have as much information as possible," said Ilana Rosenzweig, the former head of Chicago's independent police oversight agency.

Unlike many others around the country, Chicago's early intervention systems do not use computer programming to identify potentially problematic officers.
On that front, CPD was actually more advanced in the mid-1990s than it is now.

In 1994, the department purchased off-the-shelf software called BrainMaker (http://www.eatec.com/brain.html) for $850. It analyzed 200 officers who had been fired for disciplinary infractions to determine what behaviors or character traits they had in common. BrainMaker then used that information to create a predictive algorithm, which could be applied to the rest of the force to identify other officers who might need help.

At the time, there were 12,500 officers on the force, and the software identified 91 for intervention, a rate nearly eight times higher than today's early intervention system.

The department was initially enthusiastic about the results, but later said (http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1997-10-15/news/9710152467_1_police-bratilty-police-department-matt-rodriquez) the program was never implemented because of opposition by the Fraternal Order of Police, the union that represents Chicago's rank-and-file police officers.

By 1997, the BrainMaker program was gone, and the data it had collected was deleted.

At the time, CPD's deputy superintendent said the size of Chicago's force makes it "pretty much impossible for all at-risk individuals to be identified [by supervisors]."

But that is exactly how CPD's early intervention programs are set up today.

Data doesn't replace supervision

Even with the best data, early intervention doesn't work without supervisors who are willing and able to identify the underlying problem that causes the behavior and find the right intervention to address it, experts said.

"What really counts is the mindset of the people running the program," Walker said. "Is there a tendency to excuse the officer's behavior? Or is it to say, 'I think there's something wrong here, we need to look deeper?'"

Chicago's small number of enrolled officers indicates that supervisors are using the program as restrictively as possible, rather than actively trying to intervene when an officer's behavior seems awry, Walker said.

Precinct-level sergeants and commanders are in the best position to identify officers who may be experiencing personal problems that can affect their performance, he said.

But in Chicago, an officer has to be recommended for early intervention by a command staff member or one of the heads of the three police oversight bodies, and approved by the human resources division. Those individuals are far removed from an officer's day-to-day behavior.

"An early warning system is not intended to replace supervision, it is intended to augment supervision," said Kenney, the John Jay professor.

The combination of solid data and good supervision can help identify those officers who are not "bad apples," but simply need a little something extra.

"The vast majority of officers, even those who get complaints, are trying to do the right thing," Rosenzweig said. "The question is, are you giving them the tools, the training and the supervision that they need to do the right thing and to perform at the level the public expects?"

The resources for successful early intervention could be right in CPD's backyard.

Last summer, students in a program at the University of Chicago's Center for Data Science and Public Policy (http://deapp.org/teamn) worked with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (N.C.) Police Department to improve its early intervention system. They developed a predictive model that was more effective at identifying officers who would go on to commit misconduct, and also officers who didn't actually need intervention.