SUNY, CUNY funding increase heads to Cuomo’s desk

By Jessica Bakeman  5:30 a.m. | Jan. 19, 2015

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The Senate on Thursday passed a bill that would require the state to cover “all mandatory costs” at SUNY and CUNY, including union-negotiated salary and benefit increases for employees. The Assembly approved the measure earlier this month.

When a law was passed in 2011 allowing for incremental tuition increases at SUNY and CUNY for five years, the state committed to a “maintenance of effort.” In other words, lawmakers said they would not cut general operating funding, a promise that would ensure revenue raised from higher tuition would be used for additional staff and
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But the state has not covered the contractually required personnel cost increases and other items, such as utility expenses and building rentals, which cost SUNY $131.4 million and CUNY $62.9 million this fiscal year.

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Meanwhile, public university leaders are already pushing lawmakers to allow for further incremental tuition increases since the law establishing the current schedule expires next year.
The Legislature's higher education committee chairs won't ask students to pay more unless the state holds up its end of the bargain, they said in recent interviews.

"The philosophy when we started with tuition increases was that, from the student standpoint, we needed a reliable, dependable source of revenue," Senate higher education committee chair Kenneth LaValle, a Long Island Republican, said this week. "And then, as part of that philosophy, we said if the student makes an investment, then the state has to make an in-kind investment. And the third part was that the campuses need to do all that they could do in saving money. So there were three investments that would come together. And we have not done a good enough job on the state side."

LaValle and his Assembly counterpart, Manhattan Democrat Deborah Glick, said they agree the personnel increases, as well as some utility costs that the state hasn't covered in recent years, fall under the pledge lawmakers made when approving the tuition hikes.

"The maintenance of effort that we put in place ... we thought it covered mandatory costs and it turns out that the interpretation hasn't been that," Glick said.

The bill, which would impact next year's state budget, is now headed to the governor's desk. It's unclear if Cuomo will sign it.

Glick said Cuomo has referred to Massachusetts' successes in K-12 education, so he should consider how that state has frozen tuition at public colleges.

Citing the tuition freeze, she said, "we're not even necessarily suggesting that. We're suggesting that the mandatory costs be covered and that's before we have a conversation of how much tuition might be increased or not going forward. That's next year."

LaValle said he's "hopeful" the governor will sign the bill.

"I am always wary of committing other people to what they will do," he said. "Obviously, I am going to lobby the governor very strongly to sign it, to ensure that we're making the same kind of commitment to higher education that I feel we're making to elementary and secondary education."

A spokeswoman for Cuomo said in an email, "The Governor's office is reviewing the bill."

Both university systems, as well as the unions representing their professors, support the legislation.

Fred Kowal, president of United University Professions, SUNY's union, said in a statement the state's unwillingness to cover the costs thus far means students "have in large part been paying for the day-to-day costs of SUNY."

"This legislation will help to ensure that the state at a minimum covers these mandatory, inflationary costs," he said.
CUNY’s Professional Staff Congress said in a statement: “It is time to fix the existing ... maintenance-of-effort provision so that higher tuition paid by students fulfills its original promise to improve educational services.”

A SUNY spokesman thanked lawmakers for passing the legislation that would increase aid to the university system but objected to their contention the bill must become law before they would allow more tuition hikes. He argued the incremental increases prevent sporadic, unmanageable hikes from threatening college accessibility and allow for the enrichment of academic programming.

“We appreciate the legislature’s efforts regarding maintenance of effort and are looking forward to continuing the conversation, but we simply cannot return to the chaotic tuition policies of the past,” the spokesman said.
Review: ‘Evaporating Borders’ Examines the Immigrant Crisis in Cyprus

Evaporating Borders

By NICOLAS RAPOLD  JUNE 18, 2015

Rived into Turkish and Greek regions, Cyprus is no stranger to internecine conflict, but as “Evaporating Borders” demonstrates, waves of immigration to the island have met with fresh rancor. Iva Radivojevic’s diffuse documentary essay melds a first-person voice-over that’s part musing, part news summary, with impassioned interview subjects and photography that encompasses postcard shots, protest-rally footage and overly mundane glimpses of city life.

Ms. Radivojevic’s multichapter feature debut takes us to one of the front lines in the European Union’s migrant crisis. This filmmaker, who now lives in New York but whose family once emigrated to Cyprus from the former Yugoslavia, meditates movingly on the warped logic of racism, going so far as to pick apart her own suspicious gaze of some strangers at night. But the film falls into a rut when shuttling between the suffering of immigrants from Iraq and the Philippines, and the hateful responses of some native Cypriots, from ignorant rumormongers to paranoid nationalists.

Originally completed as a master’s thesis project for Hunter College, “Evaporating Borders” has the trappings of arty visual essays, like pensively lingering street shots and a hushed, enveloping sound design. But despite the
urgent subject matter and lyrical touches, it's a film that needs further layers of complication and texture.

**EVAPORATING BORDERS**

*Opens on Friday*

*Directed by Iva Radivojevic*

*In Greek, with English subtitles*

*1 hour 35 minutes; not rated*

A version of this review appears in print on June 19, 2015, on page C9 of the New York edition with the headline: Review: 'Evaporating Borders' Examines the Immigrant Crisis in Cyprus.
Cuba Offers Its Citizens Better Access to Internet

BY VICTORIA BURNEIT  JUNE 18, 2015

MEXICO CITY — Cuba, one of the Western Hemisphere’s least-wired countries, is poised to expand access to the Internet by introducing about three dozen Wi-Fi hot spots around the island and reducing the steep fees that Cubans pay to spend time online.

The move, announced in Juventud Rebelde, an official newspaper aimed at the island’s youth, came amid new pressures to increase Internet access as the nation edges toward normalizing diplomatic relations with the United States.

Ted Henken, a professor at Baruch College in New York who has studied social media and the Internet in Cuba, said the decision could mark a “turning point.”

“‘Their model was, ‘Nobody gets Internet,’ ” he said in a telephone interview. “‘Now their model is, ‘We’re going to bring prices down and expand access, but we are going to do it as a sovereign decision and at our own speed.’”

Cuba’s Internet isolation is not the result of the United States’ five-decade economic embargo, Mr. Henken said, but President Obama’s announcement last December that he would restore diplomatic relations removed a pretext for fencing off the web.

The tentative steps toward a less restrictive online future could also
provide justification for Mr. Obama’s decision, which has come under criticism from Jeb Bush, the Republican presidential candidate, among others.

“Obama can say, six months later, ‘I have a piece of fruit in my hands. What have you got, after 50 years?’” Mr. Henken said.

Cuba’s poor Internet access is a grievance increasingly shared across political lines, by entrepreneurs and computer programmers as well as journalists and ordinary citizens who want to communicate with relatives overseas.

It is a source of frustration for young people, a growing number of whom — especially in Havana — own a smartphone that they cannot use to get online. The city’s one hot spot — at the workshop of the artist Kroko — is constantly packed.

“Young people don’t talk about politics,” said Hector, 25, an information systems manager in Santiago de Cuba, the country’s second-largest city. “What they are most worried about is being able to connect to the Internet.”

Over the past two years, the government has opened dozens of Internet cafes and introduced email service for the island’s million or so cellphone users. It signaled its willingness to expand connectivity this month in a leaked report that argued that lack of Internet access was holding back the economy. The report outlined plans to get broadband — albeit slow broadband — to half of Cuban homes by 2020.

By July, the state-run telecommunications company, Etecsa, will open 35 hot spots, mainly in parks and boulevards of cities, the company’s spokesman told Juventud Rebelde. Connection will cost just over $2 per hour, half of what it currently costs in an Internet cafe.

Hector, who asked that his full name not be used for fear of attracting the authorities’ attention, said that even at the reduced price he would spend little time at Santiago’s new hot spot.

“I can go there from time to time, but it’s a luxury,” he said, adding, “I also have to eat and pay rent.”

The decision to increase Internet connectivity — however slightly —
comes as American technology companies show growing interest in making their services available and helping get more Cubans online.

Google executives have visited Cuba twice this year, meeting with government officials as well as web developers, bloggers and journalists. According to news reports, they have proposed helping the Castro government increase connectivity. Twitter has approached the government about providing Cubans with the ability to make posts by text message — a service available in many countries.

A version of this article appears in print on June 19, 2015, on page A4 of the New York edition with the headline: Cuba Offers Its Citizens Better Access to Internet.
WASHINGTON (CNN) — The number of births in the United States went up last year for the first time since 2007, according to an annual report by the CDC National Center for Health Statistics.

The report found that there were 62.9 births for every 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 44, which represents an increase of 1 percent over the birth rate in 2013.

The spike was driven by women in their 30s and early 40s, who had 3 percent and 2 percent more births, respectively, than in the previous year. For women in their 30s, the birth rates were 100.8 per 1,000 women age 30 to 34 and 50.9 per 1,000 women age 35 to 39. In contrast, the birth rate among teens 15 to 19, which has been waning since 1991, plummeted 9 percent since 2013. It was 24.2 per 1,000 teens in 2014. The rate among women in their early 20s also dropped by 2 percent.

"The births to older women was enough to offset the decline in teen birth rate and you see this overall increase," said Brady E. Hamilton, a statistician and demographer at the National Center for Health Statistics and lead author of the study.

"In regards to the older women, this is kind of a continuation of a trend, but the decline in teens 15 to 19 really shocked me; 9 percent is really phenomenal," Hamilton said.

The birth rate among teens has gone down 61 percent since 1991. But the rate of decline has picked up speed in the last seven years, dropping 7 percent annually between 2007 and 2013 and now 9 percent in the last year.

The economic downturn that started in 2007 is probably partly responsible for the reproductive downturn among all age groups, including teens, Hamilton said. Now that the economy has improved, older women may be having the births that they postponed several years earlier, he added.

But the rate of teen births has not rebounded. This success story could be due to the number of programs and policies, such as those led by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, Hamilton said.

"There seems to be a cultural shift among teens and young adults valuing not getting pregnant," said Laura
Lindberg, a principal research scientist at the Guttmacher Institute. Teens and young adults are increasingly able to prevent undesired pregnancies because of improved access to contraceptives and other services, Lindberg added.

The decline has occurred in every racial and socioeconomic group and state, suggesting that the decline is due to a widespread increase in access to services and contraceptives, Lindberg said. "We are likely to see continued decline [among teens and young adults] driven in part by the increased use of IUDs (intrauterine devices)," Lindberg said.

The CDC abortion surveillance indicates that there has not been an increase in abortions among teens, at least since 2011 (the last year that data were available). The trend of fewer teen births is probably not because more teens are having abortions, said Theodore J. Joyce, professor of economics at Baruch College at the City University of New York.

The birth rate for women 30 to 34 and 35 to 39 has been increasing steadily since 2011 and 2010, according to the CDC report. "We are seeing this as sign of the times that people are responding to the end of the recession by being more comfortable in having a child," Lindberg said. However it is not clear if the trend will continue, she added.

The number of births among older women 40 to 44 has been increasing steadily since at least 1990, including over the period from 2007 to 2013. Women in their 40s may not feel like they have the option to postpone pregnancy as much as younger women, said Hamilton, author of the current report.

The overall birth rate increase in 2014 was observed among all races, except for American Indian and Alaska Native women. Hamilton and his colleagues are following up with an in-depth report on birth rates, which will include more information about these two groups as well as different Hispanic groups, such as Mexican and Puerto Rican.

The report also looked at several details of maternal and infant health. It found that the rate of preterm births continued to decrease, to 9.57 percent in 2014; the rate of low birthweight (newborns weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces) has been on the decline since 2007 and was 8 percent in 2014.

The rate of cesarean delivery also dropped 2 percent from 32.7 percent in 2013 to 32.2 percent in 2014. "This is the biggest drop in 20 years," said Dr. Aaron B. Caughey, chair of the department of obstetrics and gynecology at Oregon Health & Science University. "Ob gyns have become more conservative about doing cesarean deliveries in the last four or five years because there is a more clear recognition of the risk for the mother both for the current and future pregnancies," said Caughey, who co-authored the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommendations on cesarean delivery.
ARTS

Jack Rollins Dies at 100; Managed Comedy Greats Like Woody Allen

By ROBERT D. McFADDEN  JUNE 18, 2015

Jack Rollins, a producer and a sharp-eyed talent manager who saw more than a shy gag-writer in Woody Allen and believed that the manic improvisations of Robin Williams would crack up audiences, died on Thursday at his home in Manhattan. He was 100.

His daughter Susan Rollins confirmed his death.

Mr. Rollins did not just boost fragile young egos. To his clients — who also included Billy Crystal, David Letterman, Lenny Bruce and the team of Mike Nichols and Elaine May, an American pantheon of hilarity — he was a father-confessor, real estate agent, psychiatrist, marriage counselor and financial guru.

Mr. Rollins and his longtime partner, Charles H. Joffe, who was a co-producer of most of Mr. Allen’s films in the 1970s, were deans of comedy management for decades starting in the 1960s, nurturing generations of the nation’s funniest entertainers to fill the hungry maws of nightclubs, television, Broadway and Hollywood.

Mr. Rollins was the model, loosely, for the manager of bizarre variety acts played by Mr. Allen in “Broadway Danny Rose” (1984). Like Danny Rose, he was a sympathetic listener, a friend and adviser who catered to the idiosyncrasies and professional needs of performers, although unlike Danny he never handled a blind xylophone player, a one-legged tap dancer or a
performing penguin dressed as a rabbi. (Mr. Rollins appeared briefly in the film, playing himself.)

Mr. Rollins, who was tall and thin and typically wore a rumpled suit and smiled a lot with a cigar clenched in his teeth, got his start in show business after World War II as a Broadway producer. But it was a struggle, and in 1951 he founded a one-man talent agency in Midtown Manhattan. He began representing dramatic actors, writers and singers before, with Mr. Joffe, turning to handling comedians almost exclusively.

Many managers favored established performers, but he preferred to find and develop young comics, then focused on only a few for a closer working relationship. He was a regular at Greenwich Village clubs, where he scouted the talent. He helped clients pick clothes and find apartments, stood up as best man at their weddings and later mediated their marriage spats and consulted on life insurance.

One of his first clients was Harry Belafonte. Mr. Rollins suggested that he give up pop songs and sing calypso and folk music that reflected his Caribbean heritage. He also helped Mr. Belafonte develop an act that took advantage of his striking good looks and acting ability as well as his voice, which was husky and expressive but, as Mr. Belafonte acknowledged, not very powerful. Although they parted company, Mr. Belafonte soon became a sensation.

Mr. Rollins also promoted the early career of Lenny Bruce, the rebel comedian who was prosecuted for obscenity, and developed the comedy team of Nichols and May, who had a meteoric rise on television and Broadway in the 1950s before going separate ways.

One day in the late '50s, a bony, bespectacled face peeked in at the Rollins-Joffe door. It was a painfully shy Mr. Allen. “Woody wanted merely for us to manage his affairs in a conventional fashion, to better his career as a TV writer,” Mr. Rollins told The New York Times in 1985. “Well, we just thought he had the potential to be a triple threat, like Orson Welles — writer, director, actor.”

Mr. Rollins worked with Mr. Allen on routines, perfecting timely pauses,
the right inflections and gestures for punch lines, and prodded him to take risks. It took 18 months of stand-up club dates, but the Allen magic caught on. "He pushed me to always be deeper, more complex, more human, more dramatic — and not to rest comfortably," Mr. Allen told Eric Lax for his book "Woody Allen: A Biography" (1991).

"A Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Production" was the credit on many Woody Allen films, although both were not always involved. While their partnership continued, they often worked separately with different clients. Mr. Joffe moved to Los Angeles in the late 1970s, while Mr. Rollins remained in New York. Despite having a joint credit, Mr. Joffe alone accepted the 1977 Academy Award for best picture for Mr. Allen's "Annie Hall."

Robin Williams became a client in the late 1970s. Agents hardly knew what to do with his parodies of Shakespeare in iambic pentameter, his impromptu foreign dialects and improvisations like "and look, a gentle rose, dying here anon ... like myself." Mr. Rollins gave structure to the scattershot performances, breaking them down into beginnings, middles and ends. Mr. Williams was soon one of the hottest stars on television, playing a quirky alien on "Mork and Mindy" and on his way to stardom.

Jack Rollins was born Jacob Rabinowitz in Brooklyn around March 23, 1915, a date his parents agreed on years later because no one kept track. He was the oldest of three children of Louis and Sarah Rabinowitz, Yiddish-speaking immigrants from Russia. His father, a blacksmith in Kiev, became a garment worker.

Jacob and his sisters, Netty and Harriette, grew up in East New York. Jacob graduated from Jefferson High School in 1933 and the City College of New York in 1937, then changed his name to Jack Rollins and worked for two years at an orphanage in Chicago.

Drafted into the Army, he spent most of World War II in India, decoding communications. One of his commanding officers was the film star Melvyn Douglas, who staged shows for troops in the China-Burma-India theater and helped Mr. Rollins make contacts to get started as a producer
after the war.

In 1948, Mr. Rollins married Pearl Rose Levine. She died in 2012. Besides his daughter Susan, he is survived by two other daughters, Hillary Rollins and Francesca Rollins, and four grandchildren.

Mr. Rollins was the executive producer of "Late Night With David Letterman" on NBC from its debut in 1982 to 1992, shortly before Mr. Letterman moved to CBS. In 1990, he and Mr. Joffe sold their agency to associates and returned to a two-man partnership with only a few clients, including Mr. Letterman and Mr. Allen.

Mr. Joffe died in 2008. Mr. Rollins, who had lived in the same apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan for 50 years, and who also had a home in Old Chatham, N.Y., retired in 1992.

He had kept a reminder on his office wall: "It's difficult to soar with eagles when you walk with turkeys."

Sofia Leiby contributed reporting.

A version of this article appears in print on June 19, 2015, on page A24 of the New York edition with the headline: Jack Rollins Dies at 100; Produced Comedy Greats.
Allen Weinstein, provocative historian and former U.S. archivist, dies at 77

By Emily Langer  June 18 at 7:44 PM

Allen Weinstein, a historian who wrote a provocative book about accused Cold War spy Alger Hiss, was an early Western advocate for Russian leader Boris Yeltsin, and served as the ninth archivist of the United States, died June 18 at a nursing home in Gaithersburg, Md. He was 77.

The cause was pneumonia, said his son Andrew Weinstein.

Dr. Weinstein served from 2005 until 2008 as chief of the National Archives and Records Administration — the institution that preserves the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, as well as billions of documents, photographs, maps and other materials accumulated in more than two centuries of American history.

He had previously established himself as an academic, with professorships at Smith College in Northampton, Mass., Georgetown University and Boston University. Outside academia, he held leadership roles at nonprofit institutions — most notably the Center for Democracy in Washington, which he founded in the mid-1980s and led as president until 2003.

In that capacity, he became, as the Los Angeles Times once described him, the “advance team in America” for Yeltsin, the Russian reformist leader. When hard-liners attempted a coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991, Yeltsin and his camp used Dr. Weinstein as an intermediary in the United States, sending him faxes and other notifications of the news.

“It is military coup,” read the first. “Tanks are everywhere.”
As a pro-democracy activist, columnist David Ignatius of The Washington Post once wrote, Dr. Weinstein was “probably the dean of the new overt operatives” who aided Soviet dissidents, helped establish representative governments in Eastern Europe as the Soviet Union disintegrated and conducted election-monitoring in countries including the Philippines, Panama and Nicaragua.

As an author, Dr. Weinstein was most noted for his book “Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case” (1978). The volume delved into one of the enduring mysteries of the Cold War, in which Whittaker Chambers, a journalist and former Soviet agent, accused State Department official Alger Hiss of having once been a Soviet spy.

Hiss insisted on his innocence but was convicted of perjury in 1950 and imprisoned for 44 months. The case propelled the career of another Hiss accuser — future president Richard M. Nixon, then a young California congressman.

In his research, Dr. Weinstein obtained 30,000 pages of FBI and Justice Department records, interviewed Soviet spies and received cooperation from Hiss. The author professed that he had set out thinking Hiss was innocent but was ultimately persuaded of his guilt.

“We may expect that newer and perhaps more ingenious defenses of Hiss may emerge, if only because none of the many theories raised during the past six decades has proved persuasive,” Dr. Weinstein wrote in a later edition of the book. “There has yet to appear, however, from any source, a coherent body of evidence that seriously undermines the credibility of the evidence against Alger Hiss.”

Hiss, who died in 1996 at 92, dismissed Dr. Weinstein’s charges as “terribly thin stuff and childish.” Critics led by Victor S. Navasky, the editor of the Nation magazine, charged that Dr. Weinstein had misquoted some sources. Other historians complained that Dr. Weinstein had declined to make his research materials fully available for review, a violation of professional standards.

In other circles, however, the book was acclaimed as a triumph. Columnist George F. Will wrote in Newsweek that it was a “historical event” — “stunningly meticulous, and a monument to the intellectual ideal of truth stalked to its hiding place.”

“The myth of Hiss’s innocence,” Will wrote, “suffers the death of a thousand cuts, delicate destruction by a scholar’s
scapel."

In later years, Dr. Weinstein drew notice for "The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America — The Stalin Era" (1999), a volume he co-authored with former KGB officer Alexander Vassiliev. Their publisher, Random House, paid a reported $100,000 to retired KGB operatives for exclusive access to records, an unorthodox decision in the academic environment.

Commentator Jacob Heilbrunn later defended the authors, writing in the Los Angeles Times that while "pious indignation is touching," Dr. Weinstein and Vassiliev "had zero chance of obtaining the documents unless they complied with the Russian foreign service intelligence archive's onerous restrictions on access."

Dr. Weinstein's academic background prompted some controversy when President George W. Bush nominated him as archivist. Some critics suggested that Bush might have wished to install an archivist who would limit access to the presidential papers of his father, George H.W. Bush, which were due to be released.

"I am not in anybody's pocket," Dr. Weinstein told the New York Times, "and I am committed to maximum access." He was a registered Democrat but had supported President Ronald Reagan, a Republican, and described himself politically as a "raving moderate."

As archivist, he ended secret agreements with the CIA and the Air Force by which thousands of declassified documents had been removed from public view. "We're in the access business," Dr. Weinstein said, "not the classification business."

He also was credited with helping lead the transition of Nixon's presidential library from a private institution into a federal one. Dr. Weinstein resigned in 2008 as he struggled with Parkinson's disease.

Allen Weinstein, the son of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, was born in New York City on Sept. 1, 1937. He received a bachelor's degree in history from the City College of New York in 1960 and a master's degree in 1962 and PhD in 1967, both from Yale University and both in history.

Dr. Weinstein worked briefly on The Post's editorial staff in 1981. He held leadership positions with the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. Institute of Peace and the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, Calif.

His marriage to Diane Gilbert Sypolt ended in divorce. Survivors include his wife of 20 years, Adrienne Dominguez of Bethesda, Md.; two sons from his marriage to Sypolt, Andrew Weinstein of Washington and David Weinstein of Rockville Centre, N.Y.; a stepson, Alex Content of Wheaton, Md.; and three grandchildren.
He struck me as a quiet and respectful young man,' Muslim leader says of S.I. terror suspect

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — The Staten Island man arrested in connection with an ongoing ISIS-related investigation had deep roots in the community.

Fareed Mumuni, 21, of Mariners Harbor, was a college student at CSI; a volunteer in the court system and worshiped at the Noor Al-Islam mosque near his home.

"I've seen Fareed at the mosque many times over the last few years, and he struck me as a quiet and respectful young man," said Hesham El-Meligi, a founder of the Islamic Civic Association-Staten Island and a member of Noor Al-Islam Society in Mariners Harbor, in a statement to the Advance. "Everyone I spoke with about him today said the..."
same, including his neighbors. I haven't seen or heard anything from him that would indicate wrongdoing, and hope the investigation will prove his innocence."

Witness discusses FBI arrest during ISIS-related investigation

A 21-year-old man identified as Faresed Mumuni was taken into custody by federal agents with the Joint Terrorism Task Force at his Manhattan Avenue home in Marine Harbor for allegedly conspiring with terrorists. A neighbor who witnessed the raid describes the scene and Mumuni. (Video by Anthony DePietro)

(http://www.silive.com/northshore/index.ssf/2015/06/staten_island_man.html)

The defendant kept a knife in his bed in case law enforcement officials came looking for him, federal officials allege.

Federal agents were investigating Mumuni in connection with an alleged plot by Queens College student, Munther Omar Saleh, to explode pressure cooker bombs, according to court documents.

"There has been a pattern of arrests and killing of Muslims by law enforcement recently where we're told the Muslim tried to attack officers with a knife," El-Melligy said in the statement. "Why would someone being confronted with armed and trained law enforcement do something like that? There are many unanswered questions at this time; we have to wait for justice to take its course. It is our religious duty as Muslims to forbid evil and we would be the ones who proactively alert authorities if we know of wrongdoing.

"We are Americans, we are Staten Islanders, we have our children, homes, and businesses here. We want to be safe and we want our neighborhood, borough, city, state and country to be safe."

Mumuni was enrolled at CSI from 2012 until the spring 2015 semester, according to a college spokesman. He is not currently enrolled in summer courses or for the fall semester.

Mumuni's lawyer, Anthony Rico, said Wednesday at his client's arraignment in federal court in Brooklyn that the defendant was studying social work, but he was studying sociology and anthropology at CSI, the spokesman said.

Mumuni was never a resident at the school's dorms.

His family moved to Mariners Harbor about four years ago and is originally from Ghana.

"I just know that they're a nice family," said one of Mumuni's neighbors Thursday. "This is a quiet neighborhood."
Feds: Staten Island terror suspect kept knife in his bed in case FBI showed up

John M. Annese | annese@siadvance.com By John M. Annese | annese@siadvance.com

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on June 17, 2015 at 5:35 PM, updated June 18, 2015 at 9:25 AM

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- Fareed Mumuni kept a kitchen knife in his bed so he could attack any FBI agents or cops trying to take him, federal authorities said.

And sure enough, that's what he did when the FBI and NYPD came calling early Wednesday morning, the feds allege.

Mumuni plunged the knife into the chest of a special agent executing a search warrant, but couldn't penetrate the agent's body armor, a federal complaint against him alleges.

Federal agents and NYPD officers were investigating Fareed Mumuni, 21 -- who allegedly admitted to federal officials he "pledged allegiance to ISIL" -- in connection with an alleged plot by Queens College student Munther Omar Saleh to explode pressure cooker bombs.

When agents came to Mumuni's house at 63 Mersereau Ave. to execute a search warrant at about 6:35 a.m., he rushed at them, federal court papers allege.

"While the door was still open, FBI Special Agents and (NYPD) Task Force Officers observed Mumuni descend the main staircase of the residence," a federal complaint reads. "The officers, who clearly identified themselves as members of law enforcement, repeatedly directed Mumuni to move to a couch in the living room. Mumuni ignored the officers' commands and instead suddenly lunged at the officers with a large kitchen knife.

"As the officers attempted to restrain Mumuni, Mumuni repeatedly attempted to plunge the kitchen knife into the torso of an FBI special agent and reached out with his hand in the vicinity of a rifle used by another member of law enforcement. None of the stabs penetrated the FBI special agent's body armor, and the agent suffered only minor injuries."

He admitted that he had kept the knife wrapped in a T-shirt in his bed for just such an occasion, and that he kept another knife in his mother's vehicle in case he encountered law enforcement agents, the complaint alleges.
Witness discusses FBI arrest during ISIS-related investigation

A 21-year-old man identified as Fareed Mumuni was taken into custody by federal agents with the Joint Terrorism Task Force at his Merseneau Avenue home in Mariners Harbor for allegedly conspiring with terrorists. A neighbor who witnessed the raid describes the scene and Mumuni. (Video by Anthony DePrimo)

On Wednesday, Mumuni, wearing flip-flops and a religious robe, appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Vera M. Scanlon to be arraigned on a charge he attempted to murder a law enforcement officer.

He was ordered held without bail, after Assistant U.S. Attorney Alexander Solomon referred to "the extreme violence he tried to inflict on members of law enforcement."

Saleh, who was arrested along with an accomplice after trying to attack a law enforcement officer conducting surveillance on him, gave up Mumuni as one of his co-conspirators, the complaint alleges.

Law enforcement officers had been watching Saleh and Mumuni since at least May.

On May 12, the complaint alleges, Saleh came to Staten Island by ferry to meet with Mumuni outside a courthouse, possibly to discuss funding an illegal transaction. Saleh "performed counter-surveillance maneuvers and successfully eluded surveillance by law enforcement while in Staten Island," the complaint alleges.

On June 2, the two had a phone conversation to talk about attacking law enforcement officers, the complaint alleges. "Saleh instructed Mumuni that the best option was to use a bomb and then to fight afterwards. After Mumuni asked for more guidance, Saleh wrote to use a bomb and then to run over members of law enforcement with a vehicle, seize the weapons of any victims, and use the weapons to shoot at other victims."

And on June 12, Saleh sent a phone message to Mumuni, the complaint alleges: "I decided to tell my parents I will be gone in much less than a year, in sha Allah, you have two choices, either you let me go to Darul Islam or you watch me kill nonMuslims here."

Mumuni's alleged reply: "May Allah make it easy for you."

Mumuni's lawyer, Anthony Ricco, described him as "quiet, soft-spoken, a very bright young man" and a U.S. citizen who was raised on Staten Island. Ricco described Mumuni as a religious Muslim, but wouldn't answer questions about whether he "espouses violent jihadist beliefs," as is alleged in the complaint.

He was studying social work at the College of Staten Island, and is employed in the social work field, Ricco said.

Mumuni graduated from Curtis High School in 2012, according to Advance archives. He also participated in the Staten Island Youth Court training program on the justice system.

Mumuni will plead not guilty to the charges, Ricco said.

As for Saleh, Ricco said, "They do know each other. Beyond that, we can't say at this time."
Different court documents offer different accounts of how Saleh was arrested on Saturday. In the complaint that lays out the charges against Saleh, he and his co-conspirator get out of their vehicle and rush law enforcement agents, but neither have weapons in hand. Saleh’s accomplice has a tactical knife in his waistband, the Saleh complaint alleges.

The complaint against Mumuni describes a different scene when offering details of Saleh’s arrest -- Saleh is described as holding a knife in his hand as he rushes law enforcement agents.
Does ISIS arrest put end to danger? (commentary)

Tom Wrobleski | wrobleski@siadvance.com By Tom Wrobleski | wrobleski@siadvance.com

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on June 18, 2015 at 12:18 PM

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. – How much danger are Staten Island and the rest of New York City still in?

That's the question as news of the ISIS arrest here continues to sink in.

There's a lot that we already know about Fareed Mumuni, the 21-year-old from Mariners Harbor who was arrested here on Wednesday as part of an ISIS terrorism investigation.

But key pieces of the puzzle are still missing, and it's important that the FBI and the NYPD move quickly to fill in those blanks, for the safety of all of us.

How did Mumuni go from being our neighbor to allegedly becoming a terrorist?

Mumuni was arrested after trying to stab a federal agent who was part of an FBI-NYPD Joint Terrorism Task Force raid on his home. But his alleged crimes go far beyond that.

Authorities say that Mumuni had pledged allegiance to ISIS, the terrorist group that has taken the place of Al Qaeda as the biggest threat to U.S. national security. According to court papers, Mumuni "espouses violent jihadist beliefs" and wanted to take part in terror attacks against targets in New York.

But there's another side to Mumuni. A native of Ghana, he is a 2012 graduate of Curtis High School. He was a trainee at the Staten Island Youth Court who helped teens who were in trouble with the law. He studied social work at the College of Staten Island and was employed in the social work field.

Mumuni's sister also graduated from Curtis, and serves in the U.S. Navy.

On the surface, a perfectly ordinary life. A lot of positives in his background. A kid who looked involved, who was pursuing his education.
So how did he go from that to buying into the jihadist propaganda spewed by ISIS? How was he radicalized? What was the tipping point? That’s something the feds will have to answer, because it leads to the next logical question: How do we prevent this from happening in the future?

The feds have also told us that Mumuni was in cahoots with another ISIS-inspired wannabe jihadist, Munther Omar Saleh, a Queens College student. The two were apparently bent on conducting terrorism strikes in the city.

How did the two come to meet? How were they recruited? And, most importantly, are they part of a larger group? Is there a terrorist cell of like-minded people still out there, still aiming to carry out attacks against New York and America?

These are questions that have to be asked. And answered.

ISIS has been very successful at using social media, including Internet sites, videos and chatrooms, to attract recruits, for the most part the young and impressionable, like Mumuni and Saleh. Was this how those two found their way to jihad?

The arrest comes as Muslims begin to celebrate Ramadan, the holiest month of the Muslim calendar. It also comes amid reports that the FBI has launched a nationwide effort against ISIS-inspired jihadists here in the United States, and that there are expected to be more arrests ahead of the July 4 holiday.

The clear and present danger persists.
Study: Home-loan process skewed against non-whites

A new study of home-ownership loan applications in New York City shows that black and Hispanic households are far more likely to be denied a home loan compared with whites.

The study, conducted by StreetEasy, a listings service, used loan application data made available by the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act. The study found that only 15.8 percent of whites citywide were denied a conventional home loan, but 33.6 of black applicants and 29.2 percent of Hispanic applicants were turned down.

Alan Lightfeldt, StreetEasy’s data scientist, said the statistics show “how progressively less diverse home ownership becomes along each step of the application process.”

When it comes to loan applications, he said, “race certainly matters.”

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The racial breakdown of the home-loan application process is skewed from the outset, StreetEasy found. Only 32.6 percent of New Yorkers are white, but white households represent 46.3 percent of all conventional home loan applications citywide, and over 50 percent of conventional loan applications in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island. By contrast, black and Hispanic New Yorkers represent 22.4 and 28.9 percent of the city’s population,
respectively, but only 5 and 6.3 percent of conventional loan applications.

If this pool of conventional loan applicants is disproportionately white, the next step in the application process makes it even more so as a result of vastly different denial rates. (Asian households and households identifying as “other” are denied 18.5 and 18.4 percent of the time.)

The denial rates are even more dramatic in individual boroughs. The denial rate for white applicants in Manhattan is 14.1 percent, while denial rates for black and Hispanic applicants are 33.3 and 24.7 percent, respectively. On Staten Island, only 12.4 percent of white applicants are denied, while 51.1 percent of black applicants are turned away.

StreetEasy

Prospective homeowners usually include their race on loan applications. But the skewed denial rates aren’t simply the result of lenders discriminating against the race listed on a form.

“There are real socioeconomic factors involved here. Banks discriminate on credit rating and income,” Lighteldt said. “What we found is that blacks and Hispanics in New York City have a smaller median income. If you have a lower income, it’s harder to save up a down payment.”

A 2010 City University of New York study found that 92 percent of white households
earned at least $100,000 annually, while only 22.8 percent of black households and 19.1 percent of Hispanic households reached that threshold. A 2012 study by New York University’s Furman Center found New York’s white-majority neighborhoods had an average household annual income of $124,470, while black-majority neighborhoods had an average household income of $57,847, and Hispanic-majority neighborhoods had an average household income of $48,485.

Federal loan assistance can provide some relief to applicants whose conventional home loans are denied. The Federal Housing Administration, which insures private loans, offers lower credit standards and down payments, making loans more available to low-income applicants.

“The racial divide is less severe in the F.H.A. market,” Lightfeldt said.

Blacks make up 37.9 percent of the city’s F.H.A. loan applicants, while 19.7 percent are Hispanic, and 18.9 percent are white, StreetEasy found. White applicants still face lower denial rates (23 percent) on F.H.A. applications, but the divide was smaller, with 28.4 percent of black applicants and 26.8 percent of Hispanic applicants denied.

F.H.A. loans help balance New York’s home ownership numbers, but the statistics still show a skewed market. Just over 41 percent of white New Yorkers are homeowners, while only 26.5 percent of black New Yorkers and 16.1 percent of Hispanic New Yorkers own their own homes.
The Rise of Food-Studies Programs

Building off of the growing popularity of nutrition-based degrees, one Bronx community college is attempting to change how lower-income communities eat.

Sierra Lebron says that produce in the South Bronx, where she goes to school, is more expensive than it is where she lives—just two miles south, in East Harlem. The 25-year-old is studying to be a dental hygienist. But soon after she started her degree program, she found herself reading the works of Michael Pollan and Marion Nestle and selling soup that she and her
classmates made under a tent in a courtyard of Hostos College. For $2 a cup, customers could get a healthy lunch, a copy of the recipe, and a brochure written by Lebron and her classmates about farmer’s markets, processed food, and the agroindustrial complex.

Lebron has been aware of the power that food has had on her own health and well-being for a while—she says she reversed a diabetes diagnosis from her teen years with a plant-based diet. But it wasn’t until she took a writing class with Professor Elyse Zucker that she realized the politics involved in food.

“When you go to the supermarket and you have to choose [your food] just based on the price, it can be easy to go with the cheaper item,” Lebron said. “Dr. Zucker educated us with scientific studies that made making an informed decision more possible.”

Lebron is part of a growing movement of students and faculty at Hostos who have fueled the evolution of what’s now a Food Studies degree—a program that started from a single writing course about food. The first official class starts this upcoming fall.

“Dr. Zucker’s class really increased my courage to continue speaking up for what I know is a human right: nutritious healthy food.”

Food studies programs are growing in popularity in American higher-education institutions since they started cropping up in the 1990s—the first two at NYU and Boston University. Now such programs can be found across the country, often taking on the attributes and priorities of the surrounding demographics.

Take the Bronx: New York City’s Coalition Against Hunger’s 2014 report
found that between 2011 and 2013, one in three Bronx residents lived in a state of food insecurity, meaning they didn’t have reliable access to affordable and nutritious food. Though food-insecurity statistics vary depending on the source—The Food Bank of New York’s latest data puts that number at closer to one in five people—the Bronx is still the hungriest borough in New York. In 2010, nearly half of Bronx residents received food stamps through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.

Food insecurity is inherently racialized. African American and Hispanic families in the U.S., regardless of geography, are twice as likely to experience food insecurity as their non-hispanic white counterparts. Of the roughly 7,000 students at Hostos, 60 percent are Latino and 22 percent are African American. Nearly three quarters of Hostos students live in households with less than $30,000 income per year.

**RELATED STORY**

![Why Order a Salad at IHOP?](image)

When journalists write about food in the Bronx, they often start at Hunts Point Market. It’s a massive building—1 million square feet—full of fresh food: fruit and vegetables trucked, flown, or boated in from across the U.S. and dozens of countries, available to wholesale customers near and far.

The market is an anomaly to the surrounding area, which is one of the few sections of the Bronx that the federal government still characterizes as a “food desert.” In Hunts Point, more than one-third of the population lives farther than half a mile from a grocery store. Even though most of the Bronx has now met the minimum standard for fresh-food availability, the neighborhood still has a long way to go until residents are able to have
choices like organic or local produce in stores without having to get on a bus or a train. A 2014 report revealed that there are 10 bodegas for every supermarket in one South Bronx neighborhood whose demographic and income profile is almost identical to that of the Hostos student body.

"The issue for a big part of the community is you can find [fresh food] but you have to leave your community and those choices are not as plentiful,"
said Felix Cardona, the dean of academics at Hostos College.

Zucker has been teaching writing and service-learning courses at Hostos for seven years. Her writing class fulfills a general requirement that all students must meet. These first-year writing courses are a general introduction to writing at the college level and are offered on a range of topics. The classes are particularly important at Hostos since more than half of Hostos students have a native language other than English. Since Zucker started using food-system issues as source material for her expository writing class two years ago, she said, interest has been consistent and growing.

Zucker was one of a handful of professors using food-related content in their classes and Cardona took notice. He formed an exploratory committee in 2013 with several Hostos professors as well as community actors and academics from other institutions. The new program is the result of two years of research and a pilot semester of classes, which ended in May.

Big agriculture was the most popular topic among Zucker’s students this past semester.

“The topic of agriculture and social justice is relevant to students’ lives since it has to do with what they eat, and how they are taken advantage of,” said Zucker. Students in the class read the works of Wendell Berry, Bill McKibben and Cathrine Sneed, among others.

As a requirement of her classes, Zucker supervises the students in the farmers market, which they run on campus once a month. She secures donations from area retailers and even Hunts Point Market on occasion. And the students practice their writing skills by creating handouts about the agroindustry and processed foods.

It was this class that spawned the interdisciplinary associate’s degree program, which will start with Introduction to Food Studies and Botany of
Food. It will then branch off into tracks: food policy, health and nutrition, environment and sustainability, and social justice. About half of the classes needed for the program are already available at the college, while the rest are currently under development and slated to be lead by new faculty members who the college will hire on a rolling basis as the first class progresses through the program.

When the program starts in the fall, it will be the first of its kind in the country. Kristin Reynolds, who will be teaching two sections of Intro to Food Studies and leads similar courses at The New School in Manhattan, surveyed existing offerings across the country to help Hostos design the program. Community colleges, including Hostos often have programs that are more vocational in nature, focusing on fields such as hospitality, agriculture, and the culinary arts. Though a number of four-year institutions have launched similar programs, Reynolds found no other two-year institutions taking a liberal arts approach to food studies.

But perhaps unlike their counterparts in Manhattan, when Hostos students learn about the dominance and harms of processed food and the prevalence of food deserts, they are part of the statistics. Two-thirds of Hostos students live in the Bronx and even more live in low-income households.

Reynolds cites in her research that academic and media conversations about food insecurity in urban communities of color often lack voices from those communities.

"A lot of the academic writing about food activism and a lot of the media writing about food activism focuses on white people," said Reynolds. For example, in a 2010 New York Magazine article that profiled seven up-and-coming urban farmers, six of them white. Yet most of New York's roughly 1000 urban farmers are people of color. "The face of this movement looks
like white middle-class people, and that's problematic for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that there are actually many people of color who are leading change and have been for a long time.” Reynolds has co-authored a forthcoming book illustrating this phenomenon called *Beyond the Kale: Urban Agriculture and Social Justice Activism in New York City*.  

Reynolds taught the Intro to Food Studies pilot course this past semester. “What I have found in the classes I teach is that students really want to have some guidance on how to do that—how do you bring together food and social justice so that you can be an educated participant,” she said.

“*The face of this movement looks like white middle-class people, and that's problematic for a number of reasons.*”

Despite having fewer resources and a historically underserved student population, observers say the students are poised to combat the structural racism inherent in the food system. Eric Holt-Gimenez, the executive director of Food First, a think tank aimed at tackling social injustice in the food system, gave a talk about racism and food at Hostos in March where he met some potential students. He touted the impact community college students can have on their neighborhoods. “Universities produce a college-educated person with a big debt and debt makes them timid ... politically, it's a real handicap,” said Holt-Gimenez. “It will produce people from the community who will stay in the community.”

Zucker’s students are already asking questions as part of their everyday lives—talking to the managers at their local grocers to improve choices, for example. “Dr. Zucker's class really increased my courage to continue speaking up for what I know is a human right: nutritious healthy food,”
Lebron said.

Whether Hostos students transfer to four-year school or graduate and get a job with their associate’s degrees, their time at Hostos is meant to lead to greater employment opportunities. Right now, one-third of Hostos students continue on to a four-year institution, according to Cardona. That figure is double the national rate for first-time community college students, but it still leaves a lot of room for questions about what Hostos’ first food studies graduates will do with their degrees.

If economic mobility is the main goal, food studies might not be the ticket. If students are expected to walk out of community college and get a job without continuing on to a four-year degree, which is statistically more likely, a more skill-based education could be more practical and even more gainful in the long run—an argument that goes back to Booker T. Washington.

It’s an idealistic proposition to give students a course of study that points decidedly to a four-year program, when the majority won’t matriculate. But, they certainly won’t matriculate if the programs that universities look for are not offered.

Fifty students are signed up to take Kristin Reynolds’s Intro to Food Studies course in the fall. Sierra Lebron is going to stay in her dental hygiene program, but she is appealing to the college administration to allow her to work on two degrees simultaneously so that she can continue her study of food. “I think I might want to be a lobbyist,” she said, “like a fruit lobbyist.”