CUNY will request continuation of annual senior college tuition hikes

The City University of New York will seek to continue to increase tuition at its senior colleges by $300 per year, vice chancellor for budget and finance Matthew Sapienza said.

Tuition at CUNY's senior colleges is $6,330 for in-state residents for this academic year, the last for which CUNY has legislative authority to raise tuition. In 2011, the state Legislature authorized CUNY and the State University of New York to raise tuition by $300 per year for five years.

"We support renewal of the tuition legislation for the senior colleges," Sapienza said Monday evening during a meeting of the university board's finance committee.
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"We support renewal of the tuition legislation for the senior colleges," Sapienza said Monday evening during a meeting of the university board's finance committee, according to a video of the meeting posted by CUNY. "Our budget request does include the revenue for a $300 increase at the senior colleges for next falls."

In June, university chancellor James Milliken said it was "likely" the board of trustees would seek to raise tuition.

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Sapienza presented to the finance committee federal education department tuition data comparing CUNY senior colleges to other four-year public colleges.

"We are, still, even with the $1,500 increases that have taken place over the past five years,
on the low end of the curve of public higher ed
institutions," he said. "We're a couple of
notches lower than SUNY ... New Jersey [is]
more on the high end."

SUNY tuition this academic year is $6,470,
before fees, for in-state residents.

Sapienza also said that, between state Tuition
Assistance Program grants, which have a
maximum award of $5,165 per year, and federal
Pell grants, whose maximum award is $5,775,
about two-thirds of CUNY student attend
college tuition-free.

CUNY will not seek to raise tuition at its community colleges, he said. Community
college tuition this academic year is $4,800, before fees.

"While on the senior colleges we're very much on the low end of the scale, on the
[community] colleges you can see we're more on the higher end," Sapienza said,
pointing to another chart of federal education department data. "Our budget request
does not plan any increase in community college tuition for next fiscal year. We are
planning to keep community college tuition flat at $4,800 for next year."

Sapienza also said the budget request includes asking the state to close what be called
"the TAP gap," the difference between TAP grants and tuition, which CUNY must cover
under law. He said that will cost $49 million this academic year.

"We're asking the state ... to provide additional funding so that over the next five years
that $49 million gap will be closed," he said.

Sapienza also mentioned the "maintenance of effort bill," which would require the state
to cover year-to-year "mandatory increases," including collective bargaining increases,
and which he termed a "key component" of the budget request. CUNY's main union, the
Professional Staff Congress, has been working without a contract since 2010.

"None of our mandatory cost increases were funded on the stateside and so we had a
shortfall of $31 million, mostly emanating from fringe benefit costs," Sapienza said.
"There is revised legislation that has passed both the state Assembly and the state
Senate that strengthens the maintenance of effort language and calls for the state to
fund all mandatory cost increases including fring, including collective bargaining,
including energy, building rentals. And so it's been passed by the both the Senate and
Assembly, has not been sent to the governor's desk yet for signature. But that's a key
component of the upcoming budget and legislative session."
Germany's humane prison system: Ellis Cose

Ellis Cose 4:30 p.m. EST November 3, 2015

Focus on preparing prisoners to return to society could provide model for reforming our failed criminal justice system

Last month, President Obama told law enforcement officials from around the country that America was experiencing a "unique moment" (https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/22/remarks-president-arm-chair-discussion-criminal-justice-law-enforcement) — one in which people of all stripes were "asking hard questions about... criminal justice." Indeed, in thoughtful circles, virtually everything is being questioned: prosecutorial power, lengthy prison sentences, police behavior and various policies that push kids (particularly black (http://www.npr.org/sections/code/2015/08/25/434505842/study-tracks-vast-racial-gap-in-school-discipline-in-13-southern-states) and poor kids) out of school and one step closer to jail.

That questioning has taken some thinkers abroad. Nicholas Turner and Jeremy Travis (presidents, respectively, of the Vera Institute of Justice (http://www.vera.org/users/nicholas-turner) and John Jay College of Criminal Justice (http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/faculty/jeremy-travis)) recently led a delegation to Germany. Upon returning, they wrote in praise of the German commitment to reintegrating prisoners into society. "We hoped that we were getting a glimpse of what the future of the American criminal justice system could look like," they wrote (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/07/opinion/what-we-learned-from-german-prisons.html?_r=0). I went to Germany to see for myself, and after several days touring Berlin prisons — a youth facility and two adult penitentiaries — I was just as impressed, if perhaps not as optimistic.

My first stop was Jugendstrassenklinik Berlin (https://www.berlin.de/en/justiz/justizwolfinzupisa), a facility for young males. There, I hung out in an English class as youths peppered me with questions about America's death penalty. The prison features nicely kept grounds and neat compact residences (one with balconies). It offers schoolwork or vocational training during the day and sports and other leisure activities in the afternoon. No one has to share a cell. Some of the young men (32 in a prison that currently houses 315) are so trusted that they leave the facility daily, unescorted, to go to work. An additional 20 or so can leave to seek employment or get drug treatment or other therapy.

I asked Thorsten Lux (https://www.berlin.de/en/justiz/presse/pressemitteilungen/2016/pressemitteilung_340094.php), the prison governor, whether he worried about the men escaping. No, he replied. Last year, only three failed to return. "But they came back a day later," he said. The errant youths were not trying to flee but had simply overstayed a visit to someone's house or lingered too long at a pub.

Berlin's newest prison, Heldenering, is, in some ways, even more laid back. That adult male prison, which opened in 2015 (http://www.dw.com/en/germany-debates-five-star-slammer-in-berlin/a-16687044), was always intended to be different. Gero Meinek (http://congress.spf.de/php/artdehp/generaldirekteinrichtungen/generaldirektor-gero-meinek.php), director general of the Berlin Prison Administration, recalled numerous architectural proposals for a dark place designed by steel and concrete. He and his colleagues had a different idea. "Prisons should be bright," Meinek said. They "should have a lot of light."

POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media (http://policingusa.today.com/)

As I toured the landscaped grounds with Heldenering director Anke Stein (http://www.depolitix.com/news/1892326/ceremonial-opening-new-berlin-prison-iva-heldeneringmedia-1892315) (who pointed out that in 17 years walking through men's prisons alone, she had never been attacked), I saw basketball, badminton and volleyball courts, a table tennis area, a fitness room, a radio station, a small lending library (open to both prisoners and staff), and a 400-meter running track. In a small classroom near the track, I happened upon a willowy, pretty woman watching over inmates. Nadin Tiltinski, the 31-year-old single mother, had spent several years at Berlin's State Ballet School. She had become a corrections officer because she thought it was interesting work. Did she ever feel endangered among prisoners? She smiled: 'It's safe. It's OK.'

For the rest of the day, I could not shake the thought of a prison that employs a ballerina as a guard — that does not see corrections officers as enforcers but as resources for its prisoners, that puts prospects through two years of training, much of it designed to help them understand their job is to befriend prisoners, not humiliate them.

Germany has not always followed such a philosophy. The shift began in the late 1960s, with a prisoner's complaint against officials who had refused to mail a letter he had written. That complaint made its way to the federal Constitutional Court, which sided with the prisoner. So began the revolution.

A new generation had come of age, said Frank-Ulrich Eichhorn, an executive with the prison authority. "It was the first generation that revolted against Nazi parents and Nazi authorities." Many people, including those on the Constitutional Court, were looking for a new way. Over the years, that court has...
So corrections officials in Berlin talk. They try to de-escalate and defuse tense situations. And instead of hiring testosterone-fueled macho men, Berlin employs a ballerina prison guard. “We treat (prisoners) as neighbors,” Stein said to me. “Perhaps we can accept them as neighbors.”

American culture is more violent. Our issues with guns and gangs run deeper. Instead of showcase prisons such as Heidering, we are known for harsh, oppressive (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/02/magazine/inside-americas-toughest-federal-prison.html), heavily guarded compounds.

In The House of the Dead, Fyodor Dostoevsky made a statement a century and a half ago (https://books.google.com/books?id=KzOcmJtn4GCA&pg=PA285&dq=the+house+of+the+dead+dostoevsky+1862&source=bl&ots=Lo9774W9aQ&sig=CaqTEzJMCZekK8CmIPmbl2onYyZy%3Am&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CDQ6AEwvMBIoVCMjzOyoaWlVvQmCh7y_ASliv=onepage&q=the%20house%20of%20the%20dead%20dostoevsky%201862#f.0) that still rings true. Harsh treatment, he pointed out, has “no effect but to develop in men profound hatred, a thirst for forbidden enjoyment, and frightful recalcitrance.”

Although it is not clear that Berlin’s approach would work in America, it is clear that our way has not. We lock up roughly nine times as many people (http://www.usa.org/noc/2014/10/incarceration.aspx) per capita as Germany, under generally harsher conditions and for much longer periods of times (http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/sentencing.pdf). Yet Germany is far safer, with a murder rate (http://www.rjostormer.com/country-info/compare/Germany/United-States/Crime) that is between one-fifth and one-sixth of ours. America’s violent crime rate (http://prisontheory.uchicago.edu/levitt/Papers/LevittUnderstandingWhyCrime2004.pdf) has indeed dropped since the early 1990s, but our lock-them-up approach doesn’t seem to deserve much credit for that. As the National Academy of Sciences put it, The impact of those policies is “unlikely to have been large” (http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12766.html). Any criteria, our fighting crimes success pales by comparison with Germany.

For all its achievements elsewhere, in this sphere American exceptionalism has been a spectacular failure.

Our comedians joke about people being brutalized, even raped, in prison, as if that is a convicted criminal’s just desserts. Germany reminds us that someday, most of those people will be back among us, that they, in many respects, are us. If nothing else, the German model ought to make us reflect on whether ours is a sane way to treat that troublesome (and often-despised) part of ourselves.

Ellis Cose, a member of USA TODAY’s Board of Contributors and senior adviser to The Pinkerton Foundation, is the author of The End of Anger and The Rage of a Privileged Class.

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At Work: Is Telecommuting The Way to Go?

By RACHEL EMMA SILVERMAN
Updated Nov. 3, 2015 11:10 p.m. ET

If you want to convince the boss you should start working from home, chances are there is a study out there that says it makes employees more productive. If you’re a boss and would prefer your employees stay tethered to their office cubicles, a sheaf of academic research will bolster that argument, too.

A team of social scientists recently set out to review the research on telecommuting, in hopes of finding out once and for all whether it’s a net positive for workers and their employers.

The resulting study, published last week in the journal Psychological Science in the Public Interest, boldly declares: It depends.

Remote work has undeniable benefits, researchers found. Remote workers are happier with their jobs, feel less work stress and show improved performance. People who frequently work from home show loyalty to their jobs and fewer intentions of quitting than do workers on-site. A company’s profit can even rise when more employees participate in work-from-home programs.

But there are plenty of exceptions. At the start of new projects, “face-to-face time may be particularly important,” wrote researchers Tammy D. Allen of the University of South Florida, Timothy D. Golden, of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Kristen M. Shockley, of the City University of New York.

In 2015, some 60% of companies permitted employees to work in any sort of telecommuting arrangement, up from about 53% in 2011, according to a survey of more than 450 employers of all sizes by the Society for Human Resource Management.
The time employees spend telecommuting may make a difference when it comes to employee satisfaction. Previous research reviewed by the authors of the latest study found that employees who telecommute just a few hours a week—around 15 hours—are more satisfied than those who telecommute far less or more, perhaps because these moderate telecommuters get both the social ties of the office and the joys of doing laundry while typing up reports.

Remote workers generally have better relationships with their managers, but this may be because supervisors permit employees with whom they have better relationships to telecommute, the researchers say. Unsurprisingly, remote workers have weaker links to colleagues.

Jobs with lots of autonomy and that require little input from co-workers seem to be the optimal conditions, researchers say, for a productive telecommuting arrangement.

Working from home isn’t for everyone. Procrastinators are more likely to slack off when out of office, according to previous research. And remote work may lead to longer work days and can blur the boundaries between work and personal time, the report found.
STATEN ISLAND — Patricia Howard wanted to go to college, but she was in a bind. She worried she'd get off track if she stayed in her densely packed neighborhood of Corona, Queens. But her mom needed her, and out-of-town options were too expensive, even with financial aid.

She had heard of the College of Staten Island. It seemed impossibly far away, across two boroughs and the New York Harbor. Then she found out about a free shuttle bus that would significantly ease her commute. One look at the course catalog and then the expansive lawns on a campus dotted with trees and low-lying brick buildings, and she was sold.

"The shuttle does make it easier. It helps out a lot," said Howard, 18, whose commute takes about two hours. "It keeps you on track for class. If I had stayed in the city, it would have been too comfortable, too easy not to study."

The national conversation about helping more low-income students of color like Howard go to college has produced a complex set of potential solutions. But on Staten Island, a simple blue shuttle bus seems to have opened doors that administrators had been struggling to unlock for years.

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Overall enrollment at the college, which is part of the City University of New York, has risen by only 15 percent since the shuttle began.
operating — but the numbers of black and Latino students have shot up by 49 and 43 percent respectively.

The experience may provide lessons for colleges seeking to attract more diverse student bodies.

"Transportation is an access issue," said Jennifer Brown Lerner, deputy director at the American Youth Policy Forum. "Research indicates that it is one of the barriers students face for enrollment and keeping up in college, both in terms of access and cost."

It's an issue not just in poorer urban neighborhoods where black and Latino youth are overrepresented but also, she said, in rural and suburban areas where public transportation is scarce.

Administrators at the College of Staten Island say that even though other initiatives — like more outreach programs and the addition of dorms two years ago — may have helped boost diversity, the shuttle bus has been key.

An early ridership study showed that nearly half of students were coming from other city boroughs. The college — now 12 percent Asian, 14 percent black and 17 percent Latino — is more diverse than Staten Island itself.

Administrators also say the shuttle bus has broadened access for Staten Island residents as well.

"The places where there's a lot of diversity on Staten Island, there's not a lot of transportation, so it's not easy to get to the campus unless you have a car," said Michael Kress, vice president of information technology and economic development, who has worked at the college for 47 years.

Shuttle bus ridership rose to 360,000 passengers last year, a 60 percent increase from when it began.

The shuttle now reliably runs every 20 minutes from the ferry terminal during peak hours, and the ride takes 25 minutes — about half the time of a city bus. And unlike the shuttle, city buses' departure times can be unreliable.

Word of the school's shuttle's success has spread within the CUNY system and beyond.

Last fall, Queens College, which has faced similar problems with city bus reliability, added a shuttle bus to run between the college and two main public transit hubs in Jamaica and Flushing.

And at Connecticut's Asnuntuck Community College, a free shuttle bus now picks up students from Hartford, takes them to the college about 25 minutes away and drives them back at the end of the day.

A major barrier to providing such efficient transportation at a low cost to students is, of course, the price tag.
The Co-ops Collapse: How GOP & HMOs Undercut Obamacare's Nonprofit Option, Leaving 500K Uninsured

As the Obamacare open enrollment period begins, it's the end for many healthcare co-ops, leaving hundreds of thousands of people scrambling to find coverage. The co-ops were founded to offer a cheaper alternative on insurance exchanges after Democrats stopped demanding a public option. But since going live three years ago, the co-ops have faced major cutbacks from the Republican-controlled Congress.

Now the system is faltering, with at least eight health insurance co-ops shutting down. The co-op closures have left some 500,000 people without insurance—and a marketplace of fewer choices and higher prices. It's the kind of scenario that advocates of a single-payer system warned about from the outset: With Obamacare relying on for-profit insurance companies to provide coverage, the market will find a way to squeeze out those who need it most. We are joined by three guests: physician, professor and single-payer advocate Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, Wendell Potter, a former insurance executive turned whistleblower, and Julia Hutchins, chief executive officer of Colorado HealthOP, a consumer-directed, nonprofit health cooperative in Colorado that was forced to shut down last month.

TOPICS
Healthcare

GUESTS

DR. STEFFIE WOOLHANDLER
primary care physician, professor in the CUNY School of Public Health at Hunter College, and co-founder of Physicians for a National Health Program.

WENDELL POTTER
former health insurance executive. He's author of Deadly Spin: An Insurance Company Insider Speaks Out on How Corporate PR is Killing Health Care and Deceiving Americans and Obamacare. What's in it for Me?: What Everyone Needs to Know About the Affordable Care Act. Potter is a regular contributor for The Huffington Post and HealthInsurance.org.

JULIA HUTCHINS
chief executive officer of Colorado HealthOP

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AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT.

This is a rush transcript. Copy may not be in its final form.

AMY GOODMAN: Open enrollment has begun in the health exchanges created under the Affordable Care Act for uninsured Americans. But this year, many shopping for coverage find themselves without their most affordable choice: independent, nonprofit cooperatives. The co-ops were founded to offer a cheaper alternative after Democrats stopped demanding a public option. But since going live three years ago, the co-ops have faced major cutbacks from the Republican-controlled Congress. The GOP has slashed funding by more than half and stopped the Obama administration from helping offset the unexpected high costs of covering sicker beneficiaries.

Now the system is faltering, with at least eight health insurance co-ops shutting down. A turning point came last month when all exchange providers were told the federal government would only pay them a small percentage of what they were expecting. The co-op closures have left some 500,000 people without insurance—and a marketplace of fewer choices and higher prices. It's the kind of scenario that advocates of a single-payer system warned about from the outset: With Obamacare relying on for-profit insurance companies to provide coverage, the market will find a way to squeeze out those who need it most.

For more, we're joined by three guests: Dr. Steffie Woolhandler is with us in New York, primary care physician, professor at the CUNY School of Public Health at Hunter College, co-founder of Physicians for a National Health Program, where she's been a vocal advocate for single payer.

Wendell Potter also joins us in Philadelphia, a former insurance executive turned whistleblower and senior analyst on healthcare at the Center for Public Integrity.

And we go to Denver to Julia Hutchins, chief executive officer of Colorado HealthOP, a consumer-directed, nonprofit health cooperative in Colorado. Last month, state regulators forced Colorado HealthOP to shut down, saying it isn't in strong-
enough financial shape to pay out its members’ claims. Colorado HealthOP tried to challenge the closure but was denied.

We welcome you all to Democracy Now! Steffie Woolhandler, let’s begin with you. In New York, there are well over 200,000 people who are—have insurance under what’s called Health Republic, one of these healthcare co-ops. Suddenly, last Friday, to the shock of many—even people working within the system—they were told that this healthcare co-op will close by the end of the month. That's November. That's before you can even get coverage in this open enrollment period. The next time is January 1st. So they have to sign up twice—right now, to fill the gap to the end of December, and then, because of IT issues—they can't just sign up now and get that insurance from now on in another company—they have to sign up now till the end of December, and sign up within the open enrollment period, like a day later, for getting insurance in January. Over 200,000 people are out of insurance.

DR. STEFFIE WOOLHANDLER: Yes.

AMY GOODMAN: Just in New York alone.

DR. STEFFIE WOOLHANDLER: Just in New York. And 10 of the 22 co-ops have closed, and several more are expected to close soon. These nonprofit co-ops, many of us felt they were never going to be viable. These tiny insurance co-ops were like the peewee football going against the NFL. They just didn't have the size to make it in the marketplace.

But also, they weren't cheaters. And the way the health insurance market works is good guys finish last, and cheaters win. The way you make a killing in the health insurance market is by signing up lots of healthy people, collecting as high premiums as possible and giving them as little care as possible—and, if they get sick, figuring out ways to force them out of the insurance. That's the way the U.S. insurance market works. And these small nonprofit co-ops were not very good at playing the game. Many of them didn't want to play that game.

So, we're not surprised they went under. You know, the only way to insure a population, that has worked, is through some form of nonprofit national health insurance. That's what every other developed nation uses. And then you have everybody in what we call the same risk pool—everyone in, nobody out.

AMY GOODMAN: We'll talk about single payer in a moment. But, Wendell Potter, can you go back to when the Affordable Care Act was being debated and what was promised and what you said at the time? Now, you worked in several insurance companies. You worked, what, for Aetna—you were a top executive—as well as?

WENDELL POTTER: Humana and Cigna.

AMY GOODMAN: Mm-hmm, so Humana, Cigna, Aetna. Talk about what you were saying then. You were a whistleblower back in 2009.

WENDELL POTTER: Yeah. What I saw was that the—as you may remember, the public option was being proposed and had quite a bit of support in Congress. But over in the Senate, in the Senate Finance Committee in particular, Max Baucus, who was chairing the committee at the time, put together what came to be called the Gang of Six—three Republicans and three Democrats that he handpicked. He chaired this little group, with the idea, the hope, that some bipartisan legislation—some bipartisan reform legislation could be crafted and passed. It was a fool's errand from the beginning, obviously. But out of that, Senator Kent Conrad, a Democrat of North Dakota, proposed that instead of the public option, Congress should authorize funding to create these co-ops.

And I wrote at the time that it would be great if that could—if we had a world in which those co-ops could succeed, but it was just sheer folly to think—and fantasy, to think that that could actually happen. And it's because of largely what Steffie said: They would have to compete with these very, very large for-profit insurance companies, like the ones that I used to work for. I know what the barriers to entry—and in any market in this country, what those barriers are. They're very, very high. And unless you have incredible capitalization, they're just not going to succeed. I told—I testified before a Senate panel—a congressional panel, just a few weeks after that, that if Congress passed legislation without a public option, that they might as well call what they ultimately passed the Health Insurance Profit Protection and Enhancement Act.

And, Amy, that's exactly what has happened. Since the Affordable Care Act went into effect, the for-profit insurance companies have thrived. Their stock prices more than tripled, and in some cases quadrupled, while the co-ops have been starved of funding, have not been able to overcome those barriers. And as we know, many of them are closing and leaving a
AMY GOODMAN: Julia Hutchins, you’re the CEO of the Colorado HealthOP. Tell us how many people you served, when you were established and what happened in the last period.

JULIA HUTCHINS: We were established through this program, the co-op program under the Affordable Care Act. And we still today serve 80,000 Coloradans through the end of the year.

AMY GOODMAN: So tell us what happened.

JULIA HUTCHINS: It was the story—maybe it’s an old story of politics and fear. Certainly, the program, part of a bipartisan compromise, it may be one of the only programs in the Affordable Care Act that really addressed competition and the need to make health insurance affordable for people. We talk a lot about access to care, but access to care is so connected to cost. So we’re a program—from the beginning, if the rules had stayed the same, which they never do, we’d still be here. But through continued cuts by Congress and then, really, at the end—I mean, where was Obama? Where is Obama now? At a time when the big insurance companies are getting bigger, what this country needs is solutions that keep healthcare local and that really engage people in their own healthcare and provide options for personalized care. And the co-op program is still around. And really, while it lost—though it was politically orphaned in the process, it still is a strong foundation to build from.

AMY GOODMAN: So, what do people do? How do you get in touch with them to tell them that their health insurance has ended? Is it possible they’ll miss it?

JULIA HUTCHINS: It is. And we’ve done everything we can. We’ve been very, very vocal. And even before we closed, we—all our members were up in arms. We had over 500 people write to Congress in one day, and have been doing everything we can to make sure people know. We do worry about, as it gets closer to the end of the year, that there are people who are in the hospital or in treatment programs, and that they’re focused on their health and not their health insurance. And a lot of our efforts, as we close out the year, are making sure we find those people and help them transition to something else and help them keep coverage. I mean, that was one of the beautiful things about the co-op program, regardless of where we sit today, is that we were the ones hitting the streets and talking about the value of coverage and getting people insured. And in some ways, we were a very cheap way to be able to do that.

AMY GOODMAN: Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, you’re smiling as you hear that.

DR. STEFFIE WOOLHANDLER: Well, I think we are going to need a national financing system. We can certainly have a local control of healthcare. In fact, a national financing system would give people their free choice of doctors or hospitals, which facilitates local control. But I do think we’re going to need that single-payer, nationally based financing to make this work.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you see that at all happening? And this goes to the issue of single payer. Where is the state of the movement today? You have the Republicans attacking Obamacare, saying they’d like to see it end. It’s one of their number one issues, though they’ve let go a little bit, saying it’s unrealistic, as millions more people have been insured and the healthcare system is now completely—revolves around the Affordable Care Act.

DR. STEFFIE WOOLHANDLER: Yeah, well, the Affordable Care Act is the new status quo, and it’s completely inadequate. We’ve still got 33 million people uninsured. Even when we’re fully implemented with the Affordable Care Act, we’re going to have 25 million uninsured. That’s just unacceptable. And then tens of millions more are getting these plans that are really underinsurance, with huge copays and deductibles, meaning they pay for the insurance and they still can’t afford care. So we still need to be working for single payer, which is the only thing that can really provide everybody with affordable coverage.

I was just at the national meeting of Physicians for a National Health Program. We had hundreds and hundreds of people in Chicago. The students were there. They formed 52 new medical school chapters of Physicians for a National Health Program in the last year. There was a large Healthcare-NOW! meeting, which is the non-physician organization. It was sponsored by the steelworkers’ union and the national nurses’ union, with hundreds of non-physician activists. They are committed to single payer. So, we know we have a ways to go, but we’re on our way to really building the movement that will get Americans the single-payer health system that they deserve.
You know, single payer works because you save $400 billion a year in administrative costs, and you can take that money and improve care for everyone. And that's what we need.

AMY GOODMAN: In December 2009, during the debate over the Affordable Care Act, Vermont Senator—now presidential candidate—Bernie Sanders advocated for a single-payer system. This is what he said.

SEN. BERNIE SANDERS: What's the answer? Well, I don't think anyone has a perfect answer, but I do think that the United States should be looking at other countries around the world. Why do we end up spending so much and get relatively poor value for what we are spending? And I think when we do that, when we look at countries throughout Europe, Scandinavia, Canada and so forth, I think it leads one to the conclusion that if we are serious about providing quality, affordable care to all Americans in a cost-effective way, then we must move toward what many of us call a Medicare-for-all, single-payer program. Now, I understand, as I think many people do, that because of the power of the insurance companies and the drug companies and the medical equipment suppliers, because of their campaign contributions, because of their lobbying, the truth of the matter is that a single-payer program has never been on the table from day one, since this whole discussion began. And I think that that is very, very unfortunate.

AMY GOODMAN: Now, that's a Democratic presidential candidate, Bernie Sanders. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump also spoke about how he supports a single-payer healthcare.

DONALD TRUMP: As for as single payer, it works in Canada. It works incredibly well in Scotland. It could have worked in a different age, which is the age you're talking about here. What I'd like to see is a private system without the artificial lines around every state. I have a big company with thousands and thousands of employees. And if I'm negotiating in New York or in New Jersey or in California, I have like one bidder. Nobody can bid. You know why? Because the insurance companies are making a fortune, because they have control of the politicians—of course, with the exception of the politicians on this stage. But they have total control of the politicians. They're making a fortune. Get rid of the artificial lines, and you will have yourself great plans. And then we have to take care of the people that can't take care of themselves. And I will do that through a different system.

BRET BAIER: Mr. Trump, hold on one second.

SEN. RAND PAUL: Hey, Bret, Bret, I've got a—I've got a news flash.

BRET BAIER: I know, hold on, Senator Paul.

SEN. RAND PAUL: News flash: The Republican Party's been fighting against a single-payer system—

BRET BAIER: OK.

SEN. RAND PAUL: —for a decade. So I think you're on the wrong side of this if you're still arguing for a single-payer system.
DONALD TRUMP: I'm not—I'm not—I don't think you heard me. You're having a hard time tonight.

BRET BAIER: All right.

AMY GOODMAN: That was Donald Trump and a little bit of Rand Paul there. Donald Trump in the first Fox presidential debate, and before that, Bernie Sanders. Your response to this, Wendell Potter?

WENDELL POTTER: Well, I think Senator Sanders is exactly right. And it's such a shame that Congress did not give serious consideration to single payer when it began debate on healthcare reform. And he's right, too, we should have looked at what works in other countries. But we didn't. We only looked at what we currently have. And as Uwe Reinhardt, a health policy expert, has called it, the Affordable Care Act is, in many cases, an ugly Band-Aid on an ugly system. And it's not a system that can be sustained.

Donald Trump made a very good point that other countries really like their single-payer systems. And in those countries, they spend far less on healthcare, and their outcomes are much better than ours in this country. And there's no reason to think that the era has passed that we can't do that in this country.

I think what you're going to be seeing is that not just individuals and physicians are going to be becoming less and less enchanted with their healthcare system, but I think you're going to see business leaders become more and more disenchanted, as well, too. The Affordable Care Act has done some good. It's reformed—it put some insurance reforms in place and has brought some people into coverage. But again, as Stephanie said, many of those people now are uninsured, and it has not done very much at all to control cost. And the private insurance companies—this is where I think business leaders are finally going to start catching on. Private insurance companies cannot control cost. If they could, we would not be in this situation we are now. So I think that we will start seeing a broader coalition of people coming together to support single payer in the months and years ahead.

AMY GOODMAN: Julia Hutchins, do you feel that the private insurance industry worked together to try to get your co-op and the other co-ops across the country defunded?

JULIA HUTCHINS: Absolutely. In some ways, we were so heads down, doing the right thing for our members, and a populist movement at its core, we really underestimated how threatening we were to the existing players in the healthcare system. And this country needs something that works for people and for physicians. And that's what healthcare care is about. It's about that patient-physician relationship, and we're getting farther and farther away from that through big health insurance companies. We don't need mass-produced healthcare. We need it to be local and personalized.

AMY GOODMAN: You know, we heard that in New York this massive healthcare co-op, Health Republic, which serves over 200,000 people, would be closing at the end of the year. Then suddenly, last Friday, they announced, no, it will be at the end of the month, which leaves people to sign up twice. Now, who benefits from this? Why leave 200,000 people out in the lurch? Is it the providers that put pressure, fearing that they would get, what, 50 cents on the dollar, or whatever, so the hospitals and the doctors say, 'No, we want to be paid, so they will be shortchanged, the patients'? Is this a matter of organizing and grassroots activism?

DR. STEFFIE WOOLHANDLER: OK. Well, an insurance company needs large reserves to do its job, and the state regulators came in and said, "You didn't have enough reserves." The question is why they didn't have enough reserves. And it's twofold. First of all, these were the good guys, who were cooperative and were trying to enroll people and provide them with the care they needed. And that's why they were spending more money. That's why they had low reserves. And the second thing is that Congress has repeatedly cut the funding to the co-ops, so that they started with lower reserves, and they got—they missed out on the subsidy that they had been promised to subside the care for high-cost patients. So, the regulators were just doing their job. You can't run an insurance company without reserves. But the question is, you know, why the reserves were so low. And the fingerprints of the health insurance industry are all over this. They are some of the biggest lobbyists in Congress, along with the pharmaceutical industry, which also doesn't want any sort of a public, nonprofit involvement in the healthcare system.

AMY GOODMAN: Wendell Potter, you talk about "the casino effect." What is that?
WENDELL POTTER: Well, the casino effect is, we, in this country, have to gamble on our lives and with our money. What we are forced to do in this country is, especially if we don’t get coverage through the workplace, of going through the exchanges to get coverage, and make some assumptions about how healthy we’re going to be in the coming 12 months. No one can really do that. You can’t predict if you’re going to come down with a serious disease or get badly injured. But a lot of people just think that they’re going to continue to have another year of good health, and so often they make very bad decisions. They make bad bets in this, what I call a casino of health insurance. And even if you do get coverage through the workplace, you’re often having to make the same decision, because even employers are pushing more and more of their workers into these high-deductible plans, with the promise that your premiums might not be as high as they otherwise would be, but you’re going to have to pay a lot more money out of your own pocket. And most people are just not able to predict, obviously, how much money they might need to spend on their healthcare. So, unfortunately, so many people are finding themselves now underinsured, and only find that out, frankly, when it’s too late. And in many cases, people who have insurance are still having to go to bankruptcy because of high medical debt.

AMY GOODMAN: We’re going to leave it there, but of course we’ll continue to cover this issue. I want to thank Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, primary care physician here in New York, professor in the CUNY system, City University of New York. Julia Hutchins, thanks for joining us from Denver Open Media, chief executive officer of Colorado HealthOP, which has just gone under. And thanks so much to Wendell Potter, former health insurance executive, author of Deadly Spin: An Insurance Company Insider Speaks Out on How Corporate PR is Killing Health Care and Deceiving Americans.

This is Democracy Now! When we come back, The Price We Pay. Stay with us.
The Death and Life of Digital Archives

Preserving the present doesn't always work in the future.

By Will Fenton

This article is part of Future Tense, a collaboration among Arizona State University, New America, and Slate. On Thursday, Nov. 12, Future Tense will host an event in Washington, D.C., on the future of the library. For more information and to RSVP, visit the New America website.

When I entered the Sept. 11 Digital Archive, I did not expect to murder Osama bin Laden. Nevertheless, I found myself with a handgun. After I agreed to "Shoot that worthless motherfucker," I fired a bullet into his eye socket. In another animation, a noosed bin Laden teeters atop a wall-eyed camel with the cue "Hang Him!" In a bit of macabre symmetry, players may even weaponize box cutters and commercial airliners.

The Kill Bin Laden game is among hundreds of homespun Flash animations—like The Torture Chamber, Fry Osama Bin Laden, and Turban Shooting—that speak to the undercurrents of confusion, fear, and hate in the aftermath of Sept. 11. In spite of or perhaps because of their DIY quality, these unofficial records invite visitors into a grieving process that is simultaneously intimate, ugly, and elliptical.

The Sept. 11 Digital Archive is not as a product of top-down curation but a process of open-ended participation, composed of born-digital ephemera. It is less a catalog than a swamp—a site of diversity, growth, and resistance. Its superabundance, some 70,000 online items, conspires to disorient. While visitors might begin on a path like the "September 11 Bearing Witness" Exhibition, the search bar—pinned to the top of every screen—entices them to get lost in the contents of the digital archive.

I use the catch-all term digital archive with some trepidation. Digital does not distinguish between digitized (e.g., scans, transcriptions, recordings) or so-called born-digital materials (websites, emails, and digital photos). The term archive is itself contested, as detailed in Trevor Owens' aptly titled entry for the Library of Congress. Owens, who is the senior program officer at the Institute of Museum and Library, recently shared with me several projects that illuminate the eclecticism of approaches to digital archives. One of the earliest projects, the Rossetti Archive, digitizes the correspondence and manuscripts of 19th-century writer Dante Gabriel Rossetti, alongside contextual materials such as contemporary periodicals; the result is, in Owens' words, a "hybrid" of a critical edition and literary archive. The Salman Rushdie Papers, meanwhile, allow researchers to access born-digital materials by loading an emulator of Rushdie's Macintosh Performa. The Sept. 11 Digital Archive was
the first to crowd-source the collection of born-digital items, movement suggesting sustainability reveals how such projects are untenable without the human financial support of universities, philanthropic organizations, and federal grants.

The Sept. 11 Digital Archive germinated in early 2002, when a team of 14 faculty and staff at the City University of New York's American Social History Project and George Mason University's Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media began collecting born-digital materials related to the terrorist attacks. Without today's most ubiquitous online platforms—Facebook, Instagram, Twitter—the team was forced to experiment with curatorial approaches: They created a Spanish language version of their websites; collaborated with the Museum of Chinese in America to videotape and translate interviews with Chinatown residents; and one of managing directors of the project, Fritz Umbach, used his Arabic background to capture Flash videos from websites across the Middle East. The team also found that they received surges of materials around anniversaries. By 2011, they had gathered more than 150,000 digital items from across the world.

Stories about digital projects tend to stop here: a celebration of a specific, quantifiable achievement. Celebrated projects, such as Hypercities, Mapping the Republic of Letters, and Whitman Archive, have become indispensable teaching and research tools. (I referenced case studies from the Republic of Letters in the first chapter of my dissertation, and I have used historical maps from Hypercities to contextualize Horatio Alger stories.) However, as along as conversations about digital projects and with a product, there is a tendency to overlook the processes that enable proponents to sustain—and improve—resources. The Sept. 11 Digital Archive reveals a problem unique to born-digital materials: Unlike print materials, preserving them requires continuous translation. Whereas a manuscript might fall into disrepair over centuries, a file format might go obsolete with a software update. And just as it is unfair to ask progenitors to support projects indefinitely, it is disingenuous to promote online resources as finished when they are imbricated in cycles of growth and decay. Without continuous financial support and a long-term sustainability plan, a digital project relies upon the benevolence—and ad hoc maintenance—of advocates. These zombie projects, capable of neither growing nor dying, do a disservice to their publics.

Despite a continuous stream of submissions, funding for the Sept. 11 Digital Archive has come in spurts and sprints. The project began with a generous grant ($300,000) from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, which covered administration through 2003. For the next eight years, the burden fell on the universities. At CUNY, one of the original team members, Stephen Brier, described an ongoing struggle to obtain institutional support. In 2003, the team anticipated that the Library of Congress would take ownership of the project; however, while the LOC has used the corpus to perform stress-testing, it has not assumed responsibility for the site. Instead, a handful of staff at George Mason University continues to maintain the servers. While upgrading metadata pro bono may be a labor of love, it is not a long-term sustainability plan.

After applying for numerous grants, the team finally secured funding through a National Park Service “Saving America’s Treasures” grant in 2011. That federal grant ($156,000) was generous, but it was no free lunch. The team had to report all spending to the National Endowment for the Humanities, and as a 1:1 cost share, George Mason University donated an equal amount of staffing. (No small feat given that most staff at the Center for History and New Media are funded by the university or grants that cannot be cost-shared). Even so, the grant enabled the team to perform much-needed upgrades: migrating the site to a more stable platform (Omeka), upgrading metadata to make items easier to search and sort, reopening the collection portal to submissions, and making more items in the archive (such as oral histories) Web-accessible. Before the upgrade, about one-third of the 150,000 digital items were accessible online. Since, the number has grown to more than half.

Lest we assume this is the happy ending, the team had exhausted the grant by 2014. They cannot apply for an extension because the funding no longer exists. The Sept. 11 Digital Archive was both the first and last digital project to receive the grant, which was terminated as one of many “tough choices” in the FY 2011 Budget. The NEH has also struggled with budget cuts. Thanks to a substantial endowment, which supports more than 100 such projects at George Mason University, the Sept. 11 Digital Archive will endure, though without continuous investment, its contents will inevitably become illegible, one file type at a time.

When they first lent support to Sept. 11 Digital Archive, the Sloan Foundation
challenged creators to consider "what historians fifty years hence would want to know about the September 11 event to construct a full historical narrative of what transpired." While that challenge informed the methodology of the Sept. 11 Digital Archive, the nature of digital tools might prevent future visitors from accessing materials. Even today, I had difficulty viewing some materials. In fact, the Kill Bin Laden game I described at the top of this piece would not play in my default Web browser. In the future, barriers to entry will likely increase.

This problem is not unique to the Sept. 11 Digital Archive. Rather, the Sept. 11 Digital Archive registers a challenge for both print and online repositories: They do not sustain themselves. Unless citizens and institutions invest in long-term sustainability plans, all but the most noteworthy (and likely safest) records are at risk. It does not have to be that way. It is a choice, and one upon which collective memory depends.
A Gallery Grows in Harlem

A new gallery space will explore social issues through art, inviting conversation about timely topics
BY LEIDA SNOW

Is there an upside to death?

Arden Sherman wants to start a conversation about a subject most people would rather avoid. "There's a power and beauty that comes from acknowledging that there's an end to life," she said.

And as curator and director of Hunter College's East Harlem Gallery, Sherman wants to talk about a lot more.

The space — snugly housed on the ground floor of Hunter College's Silberman School of Social Work, at West 119th Street and Third Avenue — had been dark for a year when Sherman, 32, came to her post a year ago. Part of the attraction, she said, was building from scratch.

Sherman said the gallery's mission is to present artists who focus on social issues. As such, the space — within a neighborhood in transition, with upscale boutiques and restaurants bumping up against longtime retail businesses — will host temporary exhibits rather than a collection.

"I want the neighborhood to think about this place as a platform for conversation. I want to build this space beyond any exhibition, so that people know it's available to them and to the art world," she said.

The gallery, free and open to the public, is a first for the East Harlem community, she said.

The current exhibition spotlights 12 international contemporary artists, each looking at the way death is acknowledged by the living. Sherman's hope is that the installation, titled "If You Leave Me Can I Come Too?", will provoke, while steering clear of the funereal.

The exhibition's title is taken from a large abstract painting by Friedrich Kunath. The question, coupled to the depiction of a black, closed door, might seem to point to a fear of mortality, according to Sherman. But, she said, the colorful rainbow in the picture allows the spectator to imagine what might lie beyond the door.

The work and the exhibition are "hopeful and life affirming," she said. Kunath, she said, is hinting that the bond between people remains despite an end that's assured.

"People can talk about this subject," she said. "It shouldn't be taboo."

Artist Justine Reyes photographed the contents of a dresser drawer sometime after its owner had died. The viewer is reminded about how everyday objects become sanctified and preserve our memories.

The work of Brad Kahlhamer, whose heritage is Native American, recalls a legend within the Hopi and Pueblo Indian tribes about beneficent spirit-beings, kachinas, who brought good luck. At some point, the spirit-beings evolved into carved, colorful dolls that could be given to tribal children. Kahlhamer's
installation reveals these joyful objects, which seem to link the spirit world to the land of the living.

One wall of the small space is covered with Xaviera Simmons’ large-scale grid of 32 photographs of people on boats. The groups, backgrounded by turquoise waters, could be those out on an excursion. But these are migrants who have risked everything to escape death. They are reaching for life in precarious vessels. The photos From Cuba, Javier Castro’s video, “Ossuaries,” documents the exhumation of remains from overcrowded graveyards and the conveyance of bones, now pressed together in small boxes, to their final resting places. Castro’s video chronicles the cemetery workers going about their repetitive tasks, underlining the routine nature of death.

The exhibition is dedicated to Jean Seestadt, one of the featured exhibitors. During a phone interview, Seestadt acknowledged that she is obsessed with her own mortality. “I was hoping for clarity,” she said about research she did for the exhibit at the Carter Burden Center for the Aging in East Harlem.

Seestadt said the women she met at the Center “led fuller lives” than she did. “These women are amazing,” she said. “They are active, they continue to learn. They are inspirational.”

Most of all, the women at the center are not afraid of dying, Seestadt said. For her part, she “cannot accept that there’ll be an end.” The artist’s vibrant installation of balloons – which will deflate over time – is celebratory.

The balloons, inscribed with single words and short phrases, are meant to make people think of a life well lived. “The artist has a vision, but the viewer may have different ideas,” she said.

On one of the gallery walls is a copy of a letter Seestadt wrote to her husband, sharing her fears with him: “There are so many wonderful memories that I don’t want to die with me,” she wrote. “The love I feel for you and my family is sacred and it is going to end. … So this is what we have. Just us and we are going to end.”

Seestadt doesn’t look at her art as therapy, yet she said that talking about her fear of death has made her more comfortable with herself. “I don’t seem to have the panic attacks anymore,” she said. “I’m more comfortable with my anxiety.”
NYPD Undercover Officer Posed as Muslim Student to Investigate Brooklyn College Students for 4 Years

By Jack Phillips, Epoch Times | November 3, 2015
Last Updated: November 4, 2015 6:23 am

People walk on the campus of Brooklyn College in the Brooklyn, New York, on Oct. 7, 2011. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

The New York Police Department recently carried out an undercover sting operation at Brooklyn College, and it produced some interesting findings as well as the arrests of two women who were planning a terrorist attack, according to a report this week.

The Gothamist reported that an NYPD officer spent four years undercover making friends with students in the school’s Islamic Society to spy on the students.

It’s of note because Mayor Bill de Blasio’s administration last year closed the NYPD unit that spied on Muslim communities amid a lawsuit by a coalition of Muslims accusing the police force of spying on them without cause. In 2014, a lower court had ruled that the group didn’t have legal standing to sue the NYPD, but on Oct. 14, a federal court reversed that decision opening the door to future suits.

“To many Muslims, the squad, known as the Demographics Unit, was a sign that the police viewed their every action with suspicion. The police mapped communities inside and outside the city, logging where customers in traditional Islamic clothes ate meals and documenting their lunch-counter conversations,” The New York Times reported in April 2014.

Four-Year Operation

The undercover officer befriended two Queens women, Noelle Velentzas and Asin Siddiqui, who were eventually arrested and charged with planning to build a bomb. The women had four propane gas tanks and instructions on how to turn them into improvised explosive devices. They allegedly had in-depth talks with the officer about what they were going to do.

Some students told the Gothamist that the undercover officer who spent four years at the college was the cop in contact with the two women.
When the women were arrested in April, reports indicated that they were influenced by the ISIS, and the Boston Marathon bombings.

Three Brooklyn College graduates close to the undercover officer, not the two aforementioned women, said they weren’t pleased with the undercover operation.

"I felt violated," said a 30-year-old student who only used the name Jehan and met the officer in the Brooklyn College prayer room years ago. "You trust someone, you talk to them. And they were just gathering information about your community."

Officials at Brooklyn College denied having any knowledge of the undercover officer's presence on campus.

Another student, Shereen, said when she found out, it traumatized her. "For three days I couldn’t eat, sleep," Shereen told the Gothamist. "I covered all the cameras on my phone."

Karen Hinton, a spokeswoman for the Mayor’s Office, told the website that the police force carries out investigations into specific individuals or organizations. It does not target religious or communities, she said.

A 2011 Mother Jones report said there were approximately 13,000 FBI informants planted across the United States to investigate Muslim communities.

"There are a few of us who trust each other, and that’s good that we have each other—some don’t even have that," added Shereen. "But in the back of all our minds, there’s always that suspicion, that either you are [a spy], or you think I’m one."

"We’re acting like criminals, even though we haven’t done anything."
University Faculty: Don't Let Undercover NYPD Officers On Our Muslim Students

"To be surveilled by police in this way is disturbing."

By The Huffington Post | November

In this file photo of Feb. 26, 2010, New York University students, faculty and clergy gather on the NYU campus to discuss the discovery of surveillance by the New York Police Department on Muslim communities. (AP Photo/Craig Ruttle, File)

Over 100 faculty members of the City University of New York have signed a petition calling on the school's chancellor to oppose surveillance of Muslim students by undercover New York City police officers.

"Such surveillance chills the atmosphere of free speech and open dialogue that educational institutions require, and it violates constitutional protections that require specific search warrants," reads the petition, written in the form of a letter to CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken.

"You must formally state your opposition to these operations and work actively to stop them," it continues. "Their continuation will be a great stain on the university."

The petition comes a day after Gothamist published an investigative report by Aviva Stahl that an undercover NYPD officer who went by the name "Melike Ser" staged a conversion to Islam to Brooklyn College, a CUNY school, in order to befriend and spy on law-abiding students in the Muslim Society. For years afterwards, Ser frequented the group's activities, and grew intimate with the one female student even being a bridesmaid at a student's wedding — all while trying to elicit incriminating information from the students in support of terrorism.

Earlier this year, an undercover investigation by Ser led to the arrest of two Queens women on. It's unclear how the two women came into contact with Ser, or what role Ser played in the pair's plot to build a bomb.
Gothamist's report raises concerns that the NYPD may have violated what's known as the Hanisch agreement, which stipulates that police can spy on constitutionally protected activity — such as Brooklyn College's Islamic Society meetings — only when there is credible information of criminal activity, and only after its surveillance plan is approved by an overseer called the Handschuh authority.

Karen Hinton, a spokeswoman for Mayor Bill de Blasio, told Gothamist in a statement that "investigations by the NYPD Intelligence Bureau follow the Handschuh guidelines in accordance with a federal court ruling."

"Both the Mayor and [NYPD] Commissioner Bratton are committed to keeping crime low, preventing terrorism and hate crimes," Hinton continued. "With that comes the obligation to police fairly and constitutionally. We will never waiver from that commitment."

In 2013, at the beginning of his term as mayor, de Blasio pledged to end the blanket surveillance of Muslim communities in New York and New Jersey that had been uncovered by a Pulitzer-Prize winning Associated Press investigation.

The NYPD may have also breached a 1992 Memorandum of Understanding it made with CUNY, which allowed police to enter CUNY campuses in non-emergency circumstances only after getting the permission of CUNY officials.

It's not clear if the CUNY administration permitted or had knowledge of the NYPD's most recent undercover exploits. Chancellor Milliken didn't immediately respond to a request for comment Friday.

In 2011, a report by veteran NYPD reporter Len Levitt, published in The Huffington Post, revealed that between 2003 and 2006, the department had used undercover officers to monitor Muslim student groups at Brooklyn College. Levitt wrote that NYPD documents he uncovered did "not make clear whether the police had evidence or suspicions of criminality to justify" the spying.

After that episode, Karen Gould, Brooklyn College's president at the time, denied knowing about the undercover officers and condemned "the alleged intrusion of the NYPD into campus life."

"It's troubling," Anna Law, the Herbert Kurl Chair of Constitutional Rights at Brooklyn College, and a signee of Friday's petition, told The Huffington Post. A college campus, she said, is "where students are supposed to have a safe environment and explore ideas and their identities. To be surveilled by police in this way, it's very disturbing."

Another signee, Corey Robbins, a political science professor at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center, urged his fellow faculty members to sign the petition Friday.

"Tolerating, actively or passively, undercover officers of the state on our campus, allowing them to spy on our students, to report back to the state what our students say, as they meet with their friends to share in their studies, swap their stories, figured out their faith, about the shit, or whatever it is that students do when they believe themselves to be among friends, is a betrayal. Of the worst sort," he wrote in a blog post.

The petition comes one week after the federal Third Circuit Court of Appeals reinstated a lawsuit against the NYPD over its surveillance of Muslim communities since Sept. 11.

"We have been down similar roads before," the court wrote in its decision. "Jewish-Americans during the Red Scare, African-Americans during the Civil Rights Movement, and Japanese-Americans during World War II."

"We are left to wonder why we cannot see with foresight what we see so clearly with hindsight — that 'loyalty is a matter of the heart and mind, not race, creed, or color,'" the court added.
Hyndman takes Scarborough seat in landslide win

Alicia Hyndman, Democratic candidate for the 29th state Assembly seat, swept the voting Tuesday night in the off-year general elections.

by Sadeh All Kelly
TimesLedger Newspapers

Democrat Alicia Hyndman defeated the Republican candidate, Scherie Murray, Tuesday night in a landslide victory in the off-year general election for the state Assembly seat formerly held by William Scarborough.

On an unusually warm November day, the votes came in low and slow, according to the unofficial city Board of Elections results. With 87.1 percent tallied, Hyndman won 3,149 votes and Murray had 250 votes.

The unofficial total number of votes reported as 87.1 percent was 3,439, including write-ins -- the lowest voter turnout in the history of the district.

The lowest voter turnout for the 29th Assembly District up until now was in 2014 when

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17,226 votes were cast for Scarborough, when he ran unopposed on the ballot.

The position in Assembly District 29—which covers Hollis, Jamaica, St. Albans, Laurelton and Rosedale—opened up when Scarborough resigned in May after pleading guilty to state and federal corruption charges.

The total population of the 29th State Assembly District is 124,000 people and an estimated 80 percent of the population is of voting age, according to CUNY's Center for Urban Research.

Based on 2010 U.S. Census data, almost 50 percent of the citizens voting age group are African American. While both Asians and whites are estimated at 11 percent among the citizens of voting age, Hispanics are the third largest at 9 percent in the district.

Hyndman has been the president of District 29 Community Education Council for almost a decade. She announced her campaign in June and was endorsed by major Democratic elected officials and district leaders, including drawing strong support from former City Councilman Archie Spigner. Hyndman's platform mainly focused on education, but she has spoken out on police community, criminal justice, the foreclosure crisis, job security and development in Jamaica.

Hyndman said she became an advocate for parents and students after she had trouble registering her daughter into a good school.

She voted earlier in the morning with her two daughters, 16-year-old Nia and 5-year-old Nyla Hyndman by her side.

Republican and Reform Party candidate Sherrie Murray, a member of the Republican State Committee, was endorsed by the Republican and Reform Party. Murray founded the Estrel Group Inc., a television production and advertising company. She also ran against Councilman Donovan Richards (D-Laurelton) in a 2013 special election for the 31st City Council District.

Murray has contended in past debates that the district needed a positive change in leadership due to a corrupt Democratic regime in southeast Queens.

Reach Reporter Sadeh Ali Kally by e-mail at skally@cnonglocal.com or by phone at (718) 269-4546.

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Joe Moretii from Jamaica says:
You got to give it to Jamaica/Southeast Queens folks, they have set the bar so low, that they are content with the same old crap elected officials, the same ones that have done very little to improve their community for decades. I mean why do you think folks like Comrie, Smith, Scarborough and Meeks have been in office for so long while doing so little.

In not only the lowest voter turnout for Assembly District 29th (3,439 voters), candidate Alicia Hyndman, backed by the powerful and corrupt Democratic Southeast Queens machine, won easily beating Republican candidate Sherrie Murray. Hyndman won 3,149 votes and Murray had 250 votes and you know well, that Comrie, Spigner and the whole crew of clowns made sure that their people went out to vote for Hyndman, knowing that this type of off year election has a low voter turn-out and that the majority of people in the community really don't care and are apathetic.

So now the community has another member of the good ole boy's club of Jamaica/Southeast Queens.
But to be fair, let's just see exactly what Hyndman will do in office. Improvements or just more of the same old crap that Jamaica has come to know and is famous for.

https://cleanupjamaicaqueens.wordpress.com/

marytwinstead from marytwinstead24 says:
my neighbor's step-mother makes $64 every hour on the internet. She has been without a job for nine months but last month her pay check was $13498 just working on the internet for a few hours. try here... www.cashnewbic.com
Success Metrics Questioned in School Program Funded by Goldman

By NATHANIEL POPPER  NOV. 3, 2015

It was, in the vernacular of corporate America, a win-win: a bond that paid for preschool for underprivileged children in Utah while also making money for investors.

Goldman Sachs announced last month that its investment in a Utah preschool program had helped 109 “at-risk” kindergartners avoid special education. The investment also resulted in a $260,000 payout for the Wall Street firm, the first of many payments that is expected from the investment.

Gov. Gary R. Herbert of Utah hailed the program as a model for a new way of financing public projects. Such so-called social impact bonds are a new kind of public-private partnership, promising financing from Wall Street and imposing a goal on local governments.

Yet since the Utah results were disclosed, questions have emerged about whether the program achieved the success that was claimed. Nine early-education experts who reviewed the program for The New York Times quickly identified a number of irregularities in how the program’s success was measured, which seem to have led Goldman and the state to significantly overstate the effect that the investment had
achieved in helping young children avoid special education.

Goldman said its investment had helped almost 99 percent of the Utah children it was tracking avoid special education in kindergarten. The bank received a payment for each of those children.

The big problem, researchers say, is that even well-funded preschool programs — and the Utah program was not well funded — have been found to reduce the number of students needing special education by, at most, 50 percent. Most programs yield a reduction of closer to 10 or 20 percent.

The program’s unusual success — and the payments to Goldman that were in direct proportion to that success — were based on what researchers say was a faulty assumption that many of the children in the program would have needed special education without the preschool, despite there being little evidence or previous research to indicate that this was the case.

“We’re all happy if Goldman Sachs makes money as long as they are making it with smart investments that make a real difference,” said Clive Belfield, an economics professor at Queens College in New York, who studies early childhood education. “Here they seem to have either performed a miracle, or these kids weren’t in line for special education in the first place.”

The concerns about the program are a reminder of how hard it is to properly structure public-private partnerships like social impact bonds, which depend on easily verifiable and commonly agreed-upon methods of measuring success for goals that can be hard to define, such as student success.

Finding such measurements is increasingly important as government programs face cutbacks, and public officials look to find private investors willing to address the funding gap. Social impact bonds have been described as one of the most promising ways to harness this money.

Indeed, these bonds will be the focus of a conference hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia on Wednesday, when the mayor of Philadelphia, Michael Nutter, and a representative from the White House will speak, along with the Goldman executive who oversaw the Utah program.
But the criticism of the Utah program points to issues that could hinder the wider adoption of the concept of social impact bonds. Kenneth A. Dodge, a professor at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke, who has been an advocate for the pay-for-success model, said that if the model was to succeed it would have to be done differently than it was in Utah.

"It is a step in the right direction, but this is not the criteria I hope we hold ourselves to ultimately," he said.

More immediately, the apparent overstatement of the Utah program's results mean that the payments that Goldman — and a philanthropic partner, the J.B. & M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation — recently received from the state of Utah and the local United Way were probably also higher than they should have been.

A spokeswoman for Goldman, Leslie Shribman, deferred questions about the methods used to determine the payments it had received to Utah officials, who she said had developed the methodology.

"We were approached by community leaders in Utah to help address an important local priority," she said in a statement. "Social impact bonds allow the government to avoid paying for programs that don't work. In this case, targets were set publicly, impact was measured transparently, and the government paid for success based on those targets."

Brenda Van Gorder, director of preschool services at the local school district, said she was happy with the program because it had induced Goldman to pay for a program that the state would not have otherwise supported.

But she and the researcher who tested the local children, Mark Innocenti, acknowledged that they lacked certain basic data on what would have been expected to have happened to the students without the Goldman-funded preschool, and the difference in the performance of the students in the program versus other similar students who did not attend preschool.

"If we had the data — if we could follow kids without intervention — we would be able to come up with a clearer idea of what is happening," said Mr. Innocenti, a researcher at Utah State University. "Time for another study, I guess."
Early-childhood education experts said that the results from Utah should have been viewed skeptically from the start, just based on the amount of money being spent on the program.

Ms. Van Gorder said the preschool that the bank had paid for cost $1,700 a year for every student, or barely enough to cover the cost of part-time day care. Some of the children Goldman paid for were sent not to preschool but to a local day care center or Y.M.C.A., according to Ms. Van Gorder.

The preschools that have been found, in previous research, to reduce the future need for special education usually cost four or five times what Goldman spent in Utah.

"There are hundreds of studies of programs like this, and none of them find a large positive impact," said W. Steven Barnett, the director of the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University. "You have to spend real money to get results."

The rate of success being reported by Goldman — and the success of the whole program — is a product of the program's method of identifying a population of low-income 3- and 4-year-olds who were likely to need special education without preschool.

The school district tested each incoming preschool student using a picture and vocabulary test known as the P.P.V.T. Any child who, before entering preschool, received a score below 70, a very low score, was labeled likely to later need special education.

For Goldman, the children identified in this way were crucial to its investment, because the bank was paid for each at-risk child who ended up not needing special education after leaving the preschool program.

But early childhood experts said it made little sense to base Goldman's payouts on the assumption that all of the children who scored low on the P.P.V.T. test would end up in special education without the preschool.

At the most basic level, the P.P.V.T. is not usually a test used to screen for special
education, particularly on its own, education experts said. What is more, non-English-speaking students have been shown to score very poorly on the test when it is administered in English, which is not a sign of any learning disability, but of a need for English instruction.

“To just assume that all these children would have gone to special education is kind of ridiculous,” said Ellen S. Peisner-Feinberg, a senior scientist at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute.

Mr. Innocenti, who administered the tests in Utah, said that from 30 to 50 percent of the children in the preschool program come from homes where English is not the only language. He said the school decided to test the children in English, despite the many non-English-speaking children, because the preschool program is conducted in English.

Before Goldman executives made the investment, they could see that the Utah school district’s methodology was leading large numbers of children to be identified as at-risk, thus elevating the number of children whom the school district could later say were avoiding special education. From 2006 to 2009, 30 to 40 percent of the children in the preschool program scored below 70 on the P.P.V.T., even though typically just 3 percent of 4-year-olds score this low. Almost none of the children ended up needing special education.

When Goldman negotiated its investment, it adopted the school district’s methodology as the basis for its payments. It also gave itself a generous leeway to be paid back. As long as 50 percent of the children in the program avoid special education, Goldman will earn back its money and 5 percent interest — more than Utah would have paid if it had borrowed the money through the bond market. If the current rate of success continues, it will easily make more than that.

Ms. Peisner-Feinberg said that before these sorts of investment are considered again, investors and schools needed better ways to measure them.

“You have to be sure you have very rigorous ways of measuring the impact to make sure that it’s legitimate in terms of the outcome you get,” she said. “That didn’t happen here.”
Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, will visit LaGuardia Community College on Wednesday, Nov. 4, as part of her on-going efforts to underscore the importance of community colleges to America's future. Dr. Biden, joined by Jean Chatzky, financial editor of the TODAY Show, will visit LaGuardia
Community College’s "Heads Up America Open House," which is expected to be attended by approximately 200 local high school students and current LaGuardia students, showcasing the role that LaGuardia plays in our community, and the many opportunities for our students, including:

- Connecting students with prospective employers for jobs or internships;

- Programs and clubs available that empower our students for success in the other roles in their lives – e.g., helping immigrant parents improve their English skills so they can communicate better with their children’s’ teachers; and

- NYDesigns, an economic incubator program at LaGuardia that supports entrepreneurs and small businesses in the design, technology, and maker communities.

Dr. Biden, Jean Chatzky, and LaGuardia Community College President Dr. Gail O. Mellow, will discuss President Obama’s America’s College Promise proposal that would make two years of community college free for anyone willing to work for it, and the many advantages that eliminating two years of community college tuition would have for low-income, working parents, new immigrants, and other types of students who seek an associate’s degree as a means of reaching the middle class and providing for their families.