An Opulent Bronx Library in Decay, and in Search of a Purpose
By DAVID W. DUNLAP
November 19, 2015

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Under the chairmanship of Samuel G. White (Stanford’s great-grandson) and the day-to-day leadership of Michael Parley, a group called Save Gould Memorial Library will advise on the study of conditions in the largely empty, little-used 116-year-old building; help estimate what it would cost to repair and preserve it; and then set out to raise a sum that may need to be $50 million or more.

That’s a daunting task. In fact, it may be impossible. But it’s certainly worth trying.

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“The mere fact that we live in the Bronx doesn’t necessarily mean we can’t provide a first-class environment,” Dr. Isekenegbe said.

And Gould is first class, even though it was firebombed in 1969, a period of tremendous campus upheaval nationwide. The building was soon thereafter abandoned as a library by New York University.

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For more than four decades, Gould has been a landmark in search of a purpose, beyond being an awe-inspiring assembly space and a retreat where students — many of whom are adults with jobs, families and tough lives — can briefly immerse themselves in the calming “sound of time,” as Thomas Wolfe said about Pennsylvania Station (also by McKim, Mead & White).

There is no way for the City University system to undertake the restoration of Gould within its already stretched financial resources. “It matters to CUNY, but we’ve got to keep heat going for students,” Robin Auchincloss, the Bronx Community College’s director of campus and facilities planning, said.

Deterioration continues apace. On the roof last month, Charlie Kramer of the architectural firm Beyer Blinder Belle reached under a copper shingle, expecting to find some deteriorated
waterproofing membrane. When he pulled out his hand, he found he was holding a small chunk of structural masonry.

Mr. Kramer’s one-word reaction cannot be published.

Yet even with most rooms in a state of abandonment and decrepitude, Gould remains one the city’s splendors. Besides being the gateway to the Hall of Fame for Great Americans, it is the crown jewel of University Heights, commanding imperial vistas. Hawks circle its copper dome.

No stranger to opulence, White laddled it out in this commission. His design dictated the budget, not the other way around. The library was a gift of Helen Miller Gould, an alumna of the New York University Law School. Her father, Jay Gould, was one of the richest and most ruthless financiers of 19th-century America.

The central rotunda is encircled with 16 columns of richly veined green Connemara marble.

Hundreds of rosettes stud the deep coffers of the gilded dome. Glimpsed behind the classical statuary around the drum of the dome are the words of Job 28: “Where shall wisdom be found? Where is the place of understanding?”

The answer used to be: all around the rotunda, where the library stacks were constructed with translucent glass floors to permit the greatest amount of daylight to reach the shelves.

Directly below the rotunda is the auditorium, which is still in use. A laylight between the two halls was blown out in 1969, as was a stained-glass window at the rear of the auditorium.

Dr. Isekenegbe has formed a committee to recommend new uses for Gould. Last month, a survey was sent to faculty and staff members and students. Karla Renee Williams, executive counsel to the college president, said suggestions have included a performance and exhibition space, a conference and visitor’s center, a student services center — or a combination of the ideas.

There is $4 million in hand from the city and state to repair the upper parts of the dome structure, including replica copper shingles and new waterproofing. Mr. Parley said drawings of the building by McKim, Mead & White, archived at the New-York Historical Society, would be copied and digitized with a gift from Gary Barnett, the president of the Extell Development Company.

That still leaves tens of millions of dollars to be raised.

Above the main floor, much remains as it was when the books and maps and geological specimens were moved out. The doors of small study rooms, tucked along a balcony between the big Connemara columns, are still labeled “Greek,” “Latin,” “Semitic,” “Romance,” “German,” “English.”

The “Romance” door seems to be locked. (Hmm.) But the other rooms are empty; empty, that is, of everything but a new flicker of hope.
Pathmark Closure Jars East Harlem

One less shopping option in neighborhood known as a ‘food desert’
By Melanie Grayce West
November 17, 2015

At the 1997 groundbreaking for East Harlem’s Pathmark, well-wishers in attendance included the governor, the mayor and the neighborhood’s U.S. congressman, as well as a sea of businessmen, philanthropists and Latino and African-American community leaders.

With less fanfare, the supermarket is now scheduled to close by Saturday, leaving behind a storefront the width of an entire city block and more than 200 out-of-work employees.

There is little left on the store’s shelves: birdseed, charcoal briquettes and a few dented cans of coconut water.

Researchers at Hunter College’s New York City Food Policy Center estimate that the store served 30,000 customers a week, who will have to find another grocery store in a neighborhood often characterized as a “food desert.”

One of them, Millie Whyte, lamented the closure last week, saying she relied on the supermarket to help feed her family of five.

“When I come to Pathmark, I would shop for the month,” the 52-year-old said.

With the store’s final days near, questions and acrimony remain. Is the Pathmark closing because the site was sold to a developer or because its parent company is in bankruptcy?

What will replace the supermarket? Where will residents shop now?

Financed through a combination of private and public money, the Pathmark site was majority-owned by the East Harlem Abyssinian Triangle Limited Partnership, which was backed by local charity Abyssinian Development Corp., and the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle. The city’s Economic Development Corp. was the minority owner.

In April 2014, the partnership, led by Abyssinian Development, sold the site for nearly $39 million to Extell Development Co. The city wasn’t involved with the transaction, according to a spokesman for the Economic Development Corp.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts, head of Harlem’s Abyssinian Baptist Church and chairman of Abyssinian Development, attributed the sale to “the complexities of real estate and development” but declined to comment further on the reason behind it.

Some proceeds from the sale of the Pathmark site are sitting in escrow, he said, and the final accounting hasn’t been completed. The Economic Development Corp. hasn’t
received any proceeds from the sale, and the matter is the subject of pending litigation, the agency spokesman said. Leaders of the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle say they also haven’t seen all of their proceeds.

Mr. Butts said he hopes another grocery store will open at the Pathmark site. An Extell spokeswoman said it was too early to discuss the company’s plans.

Both Mr. Butts and the Extell spokeswoman said the Pathmark closure wasn’t a result of the sale of the property. Pathmark stores around the region are closing amid the bankruptcy of Pathmark’s parent company, Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co., commonly known as A&P.

The East Harlem supermarket, which contained a pharmacy and bank, opened in 1999, serving as a beacon for further big-box development in the neighborhood.

Nicholas Freudenberg, a professor of public health at Hunter College and director of the New York City Food Policy Center, said he and students have been studying the impact of Pathmark’s closure for the past year. Mr. Freudenberg described the neighborhood, which he said has the highest rate for diet-related diseases in New York City, not as a food desert, but a “food swamp.”

“There are lots of places to buy food,” he said, “but particularly unhealthy food, fast food.”

While there are 13 other grocery stores and many bodegas in a one-mile radius of the soon-to-close store, said Mr. Freudenberg, Pathmark was valuable because it always carried fresh fruits and vegetables. New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito is hosting an emergency meeting on the Pathmark closure Wednesday night to address the loss of the store.

Farther west on 125th Street, a Whole Foods Market is set to open in late 2016 or 2017, but is a long walk, and potentially too expensive, for many East Harlem residents, Mr. Freudenberg said.

Carey King leads the New Harlem East Merchants Association, a trade group representing neighborhood businesses. She would regularly stop by the Pathmark on her way home from work.

“It was never like heaven to walk in there,” she said, “but you could get everything there, and it was 24-hours.”

Sonia Ayala, lived near the supermarket for 16 years and still traveled from the Bronx to shop there. Its service had never been stellar, she said, but it was better than nothing.

“It’s still a supermarket, and you still need food,” said Ms. Ayala. “Food is very important to us. Why take it away?”
Ask Brianna: I Want to Go to Grad School. How Should I Pay for It?

by Brianna McGurran
November 18, 2015

Welcome to "Ask Brianna," a Q&A column that helps 20-somethings prepare for the job search, handle money and manage student loans. Every other week, a new "Ask Brianna" will address these topics with tips I’ve picked up while writing about this stuff.

Have a question? Send it to askbrianna@nerdwallet.com, and I’ll send back my best answer. Your question may appear in a future column.

You couldn’t pay some college grads to go back to school. Working full time, and no longer having papers due or finals to study for, is too good to pass up. Others, myself included, soon feel an itch to go to grad school so they can learn something new, change a career or specialize in the field they chose in undergrad. When you start thinking about an advanced degree, a natural next question is:

*I want to go to grad school but it seems really expensive. What's the best way to pay for it?*

**Answer:**

There’s no one way to pay for grad school. Students often cobble funds together using savings, student loans, income from work (at the university and elsewhere) or an employer stipend if that’s available. Since a lot of graduates interested in an advanced degree are still paying down loans from undergrad, it’s perhaps most important to make sure grad school is the right decision before you apply.

Taking on more loans, and not earning full-time wages while you’re in school, will have both short- and long-term effects on your finances. Here’s how to make sure you’re giving grad school the full consideration it deserves, and how to get the most from your money if you go.

**Step 1: Pick a school you know you can afford**

A big part of your decision will depend on the graduate programs available to you. Even a comparatively low salary after graduation can be feasible if you choose an affordable school.

I had thousands of dollars in student loan debt from undergrad at New York University when I made the tortured decision to go to grad school for journalism. Everyone told me I didn’t need a master’s degree to be a journalist, but I also knew I didn’t have the experience to get a reporting job without one — or the self-discipline to build my skills by freelancing on my own.
So I searched for a program that wouldn’t cost a lot. I saved as much money as I could the year before I started school so I wouldn’t have to take out loans to pay for living expenses. I lived in an impossibly tiny room in Brooklyn for too long because it was cheap. Looking back, I’m glad I chose to go to the City University of New York, a public school, because I graduated with almost no debt at all. I did this because journalism traditionally is not a well-paying field. I had to be realistic.

You can also consider moving to a place where your rent, food, transportation and other expenses will be lower when you decide to go to school. Affordable rent combined with in-state tuition at a public school may make your grad school choice more feasible.

**Step 2: Exhaust scholarships and grants before you take out loans**

You probably remember hearing this when you applied to college, but there’s a huge number of scholarships available, some of which don’t get a lot of applicants. Search for professional organizations focused on the field you’re interested in, for instance, and see if they offer graduate scholarships.

To get access to federal, state and school-specific financial aid, including grants you don’t need to pay back, fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

It’s available from Jan. 1 to June 30 every year, and the earlier you fill it out, the better chance you’ll have of getting aid through programs that have limited funds. Complete it even if you don’t think you’ll qualify for need-based support; you never know what funding might be available to you. NerdWallet’s FAFSA tutorial can help.

**Step 3: Borrow only the amount you need**

You’ll also need to complete the FAFSA to be eligible for federal student loans. When you’re accepted to grad school you’ll get a financial aid award letter, which will include federal and private loans to cover the cost that scholarships, grants and your personal contributions won’t. But you don’t need to take the full amount of loans your school offers you.

Most grad schools will have an online portal where you accept your loans before they’re disbursed to you. Consider whether you really need that amount of money, or if you can use savings or income from part-time work to cover some expenses. You also have 120 days to return loan money you’ve realized you don’t need.

Minimize the amount of loans you take on by graduating on time, so you don’t have to borrow additional money, and by paying the interest on your federal loans while you’re in school. That will prevent the interest from capitalizing, or being added to your balance when your loans go into repayment.
Step 4: Pick the right student loan repayment strategy

When it’s time to pay back your grad school loans, there are lots of ways to make your monthly bills manageable. If you have federal loans, you can choose from six repayment plans, some of which tie your monthly payments to your income. So if you don’t earn enough to afford the 10-year standard repayment plan, you can pay up to 10% of your income on income-based repayment or the Pay As You Earn plan instead. Your loans will be forgiven after 20 years of payments on those plans too.

Work in certain jobs after graduation and your student loans could also be forgiven.

Public Service Loan Forgiveness cancels your remaining federal loan balance after 10 years of payments if you work as a teacher, nurse, firefighter or in other public service jobs. The government offers additional forgiveness programs for teachers who specialize in certain subjects or who work in low-income areas.

Finally, if you earn a steady income after graduation and have excellent credit history (or access to a co-signer), you can refinance your student loans to get a lower interest rate and monthly payment. This is especially useful for doctors, lawyers, pharmacists and Master of Arts grads, a recent NerdWallet study found. Although you can refinance both your federal and private loans, it’s best to keep your federal loans separate if you plan to take advantage of the government’s flexible repayment options or forgiveness programs.

You’ll lose those benefits when you refinance federal loans.

NerdWallet’s resources will help you make sense of your grad school loans:

- Pick the Best Student Loan Repayment Plan in 3 Simple Steps
- 10 Questions You Should Ask Before Refinancing Your Student Loans
- NerdWallet’s Guide to Student Loan Forgiveness

In the end, grad school might be a step you need to take to get you where you want to go. But as with most adult decisions you’ll make, it’s not one you want to jump into without thinking hard about your finances first.
Free tuition doesn’t solve the biggest problem with college in America
By Allison Schrage
November 18, 2015

Last week, students marched across America demanding free tuition. But if their goal is making higher education more accessible, free tuition won’t work. It is a blunt and ineffective tool to increase the number of college-degree holders. Not only because it benefits richer students more, but also because it doesn’t address the biggest risk facing low-income students—dropping out of college before they finish.

In an age of growing economic inequality, expanding and improving education is the most growth friendly way to ease widening income disparities. But merely sending more people to college isn’t working. Recent research shows the income gains from enrolling in college education is riskier than ever. While on average, college pays off, you take a chance that the debt and years of forgone earnings won’t increase your income after all.

The figure below illustrates the range of lifetime incomes for men, estimated from the March Current Population Survey. The first column is the 10th percentile of lifetime earnings, what low achievers will earn. The middle is the median, what average earners will earn. The third is the 90th percentile, what high achievers earn.

College is no sure bet. You might only earn $600,000 in your lifetime, while someone with a high school diploma earns $800,000. But the odds are good: if you finish a four-year degree, you will earn significantly more money. Even if you fall into the lower tail of earnings, a college graduate earns a decent amount. It is better to be an under-achieving college graduate than a low-earning high school diploma holder. There’s even some value to completing a two-year degree, especially if it is technical. However, if you drop out, your odds of out-earning the high school graduate are not as good. You may earn slightly more, but if you end up on the low-earning track, your time in college was a waste of time and money. College is a risky bet, but the biggest risk is going and not finishing.

The authors of the college wage risk study speculate that students destined to be under-achievers are the ones who drop out or wind up underemployed (they have a degree but not a job that requires one). They argue free tuition may induce more people to enroll, but it will do little to increase the number of graduates or earnings. The paper suggests some people just don’t belong in college, and those marginal waste their time and money enrolling. But this doesn’t square with the fact that students from low income families tend to be the ones who flounder and drop out. Their high drop out rate suggests what’s going wrong masks a deeper problem free tuition can’t fix.

Other research shows that free tuition doesn’t keep high-achieving, low-income students from dropping out, if they attend a low quality school. Fees aren’t the only problem they face, school quality and the resources per student make a big difference. Low-income
students often enroll poorly prepared from inadequate secondary school and many lack family support to push through when college gets hard. Negotiating the college bureaucracy is hard, it’s even harder to persevere when you have few college graduate role models.

More resources can help at risk students with these issues. The City University Of New York (CUNY) launched a pilot program in its community college system, called Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). It not only offers tuition assistance, most critically it offers emotional support, tutoring, and accountability to help low-income students thrive. The program so far has been very effective, 57% of students in the program graduated, compared to just 17% across all of CUNY. The program also increased the number of students who went on to a four-year degree by 7.8 percentage points, 25% compared to just 17% in the control group.

Programs like ASAP are expensive and labor intensive. But they can make college pay off for those who need it and it’s a much better use of money than free tuition for all.
CUNY Students’ Tuition Freeze Rally Turns Anti-Semitic
November 18, 2015

City University of New York (CUNY) students who planned to protest for a tuition freeze and debt cancellation on Thursday, November 12, issued a surprising anti-Semitic call in their protest announcement, blaming the "Zionist administration" for their financial situation.

Students at Manhattan's Hunter College, together with other students from the CUNY system which is the largest urban university system in America, planned the protest as part of the "Million Student March" campaign.

But when they posted an ad for the upcoming protest on Facebook, the students made very clear who they held guilty for their debt - the Zionists.

"On November 12th, students all across CUNY will rally to demand a freeze on tuition and new contracts! We must fight for funding for our university, and for CUNY to be accessible to working class communities in NYC as the public university system," wrote the students.

That's when things took a turn, as they wrote: "the Zionist administration invests in Israeli companies, companies that support the Israeli occupation, hosts birthright programs and study abroad programs in occupied Palestine, and reproduces settler-colonial ideology throughout CUNY through Zionist content of education."

"While CUNY aims to produce the next generation of professional Zionists, SJP (NYC Students for Justice in Palestine) aims to change the university to fight for all peoples (sic) liberation."

The students then called for an end to "the privatization of education," demanding "tuition-free education, cancellation of all student debt, $15 minimum wage for campus workers."

They also demanded "an end to racial and economic segregation in education" by stopping "racialized college-acceptance practices, work program requirements for students on public assistance, rapid gentrification and privatization of public school property."

In a final set of demands for "transparency in administration," they called for "gender resources centers and perpetrators of sexual assault expelled," and took an anti-Semitic tone again by demanding that "CUNY divests from Israel, companies that maintain the Zionist occupation, private prisons, and prison labor." They also pressed for "pay parity for adjunct professors" and "a fair contract for CUNY professors."
The Facebook post concluded by listing groups endorsing the statement, including:

"NYC Students for Justice in Palestine; Students for Justice in Palestine at Hunter College; Students for Justice in Palestine at Brooklyn College; Students for Justice in Palestine- St. Joseph’s College; Students for Justice in Palestine at College of Staten Island; Students for Justice in Palestine at John Jay College; CUNY School of Law Students for Justice in Palestine; Students for Justice in Palestine at Pace University – Pleasantville; NYU Students for Justice in Palestine; Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine." (INN)

On Friday morning, November 13, a statement condemning the “anti-Semitic comments” made at the rally was released by the administration at Hunter College.
On the college’s website, the “Joint Statement of Hunter College President Jennifer Raab, USG President Chika Onyejiukwa and Hunter College Senate Chair Sandra Clarkson in response to hate speech used at Campus Rally” was posted. It states:

“We, the President of Hunter College, the President of Undergraduate Student Government and Chair of the Hunter College Senate, on behalf of our campus constituencies, strongly condemn anti-Semitic comments made at a rally last night seeking to exclude members of our campus community based solely on their identity. As the Chancellor said in remarks today, CUNY is “a place of inclusion, not exclusion.” While we are committed to the right of free speech and free expression for all within our campus community, there is no place for hate speech and other acts of bigotry, harassment, intimidation, exclusion and intolerance based on an individual’s beliefs and backgrounds. Such behavior is unacceptable on our campus. Hunter must be a community where all express their views and opinions, without personally attacking others based on who they are and what they believe.”

Before the rally, on Thursday morning, CUNY vice chancellor for student affairs Frank Sanchez responded to an inquiry from The Algemeiner, saying:

“At the City University of New York, we cherish the freedom of students to express their views, consistent with the protections provided by the First Amendment. Student freedom in this regard is an essential attribute of a great University where the independent search for truth is held in the highest esteem. With such freedom, however, comes an abiding responsibility. This responsibility includes respect for the rights of others inside and out of CUNY and for the University’s obligation to maintain a safe environment for all members of its community. Students should also be cognizant of the efforts of a few to distract attention from important issues in higher education such as learning, access and quality by invoking discriminatory language reeking of thinly veiled bigotry, prejudice, antisemitism or other behavior inconsistent with our educational mission. We can help assure such recognition by the high premium we place on dialogue and discussion at CUNY and by the expression of our own views while respecting the rights of those with whom we may disagree. At the end of the day, CUNY will retain its status as a great institution of higher education where valuable knowledge is both transmitted and created and our sense of community is affirmed and strengthened.”
The lack of response by the university to its students anti-Semitic messages, both on campus and on social media, has caused outrage among CUNY alumni and Jewish organizations.

The Algemeiner received a copy of an email that Jeffrey S. Wiesenfeld, a graduate of the CUNY system who served as a trustee for 15 years, sent to CUNY Executive Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson to complain about the outrageous response of the university to the event. He wrote:

“I am cautioning you and strongly urging that you have [CUNY Chancellor James B.] Milliken make a statement of condemnation of this virulent anti-Semitism. The blanket, meaningless omnibus statement about “free speech” is itself abhorrent, as we would not tolerate these activities against any other ethnic or minority group.

Failure to do so will have economic consequences for several of our schools’ foundations. I have received many angry e-mails, which I would be pleased to share with you. If these “pareve” responses from CUNY central continue, we must all remember that by far and away – that Zionists pay the bills in the donor category – and they’ll take a hike.”
City University of New York faculty protest for higher wages and defense of education
By Isaac Finn
November 18, 2015

On November 4, hundreds of City University of New York (CUNY) faculty and professional staff participated in a demonstration in Midtown Manhattan for a new contract and salary increases.

Roughly 25,000 members of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) at CUNY have worked the past five years without a contract, and have not received a wage increase for six years. Prior to the demonstration, CUNY officials proposed a 6 percent wage increase covering the period from October 20, 2010 to October 19, 2016.

The administration’s proposed wage increase is an insult to the faculty and staff workers, since inflation over the last five years has increased by more than 8 percent. According to the Economist, the cost of living in New York City has also skyrocketed, increasing by roughly 23 percent between 2009 and 2014.

Currently, associate professors earn approximately $90,000 a year while adjuncts, who make up the majority of CUNY’s professional staff, earn only $3,000 per course. The PSC and CUNY administration are still undergoing negotiations on the final contract.

The de facto wage freeze for faculty over the past six years is part of the larger attack on public education, including the $1.5 billion worth of cuts from the State University of New York (SUNY) and CUNY — the first and third largest public university systems in the US, respectively — since 2008.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo as part of his 2011 budget intensified this assault on CUNY. In the budget, he agreed to cut $91.5 million from CUNY’s senior colleges, and $12.3 million from CUNY’s community colleges.

The budget also included a $300 per year tuition increase for five years — roughly a 30 percent increase — for both CUNY and SUNY schools as part of the governor’s “Rational Tuition Plan.” Following the announcement of the plan, many CUNY and SUNY students risked arrest by protesting against tuition hikes, which made college unaffordable for many low-income students.

Despite Cuomo’s initial claims that the tuition increase would go towards improving education, CUNY and SUNY administrations have been forced to use revenues from tuition to maintain current programs and mandatory costs — such as rent.

As a result of the state’s refusal to cover these expenses, CUNY has become increasingly dependent on revenue from tuition to cover its’ $3.2 billion budget. State aid has dropped
from 74 percent of the budget at CUNY’s senior colleges in 1990-91 to 53 percent in 2014-15. Currently, 45 percent of CUNY’s total budget comes from tuition, another 45 percent comes from state aid, and the remaining ten percent comes from the city.

Cuomo plans to further extend the underfunding public universities. The 2015-2016 state budget fails to cover any part of the $62.9 million mandatory costs at CUNY’s senior colleges.

The 2015-2016 budget also cuts aid to the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), which provides a grant of up to $5,165 per year for low-income full-time students—defined as an individual making less than $40,000 a year—by 14.6 percent for the 2016 fiscal year compared to the previous year.

In the past, the state has underfunded CUNY leaving the university system strained to pay the “TAP gap,” the difference between the TAP grants and tuition that CUNY legally has to pay for. It is estimated that TAP will cost CUNY $49 million for this academic year.

By cutting TAP the state further shifts the costs of low-income students onto the CUNY budget. Approximately two-thirds of CUNY’s undergraduate students are awarded both the TAP and federal Pell grants allowing them to attend college tuition-free.

The result of years of budget cuts has led to many CUNY schools facing funding problems and budget shortfalls worsening the situation for students and faculty.

CUNY’s City College of New York (CCNY), for example, is experiencing a $14.6 million budget gap as a result of the state’s decision to decrease funding by $4.2 million and the CUNY administration cutting $1.7 million for the 2016 fiscal year, despite CCNY’s costs expected to increase by $5.4 million. CCNY also fell $3.3 million short of its’ 2015 tuition target of $88 million due to shrinking enrollment.

CCNY has responded by offsetting the costs on both students and faculty. Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance Matthew Sapienza has already requested that the state renew part of the 2011 budget allowing the school to raise tuition after a five-year deadline expires. The school has also announced that, as part of its “Deficit Closing Strategies,” it will freeze hiring new faculty, sabbatical funding will be returned to the divisions, implement a five percent reduction from all administrative divisions, and impose a 3.6 percent reduction from all academic divisions.

The situation at CCNY is emblematic of the conditions facing the entire CUNY system for decades. In 1975, the last year CUNY was tuition-free, the school employed 11,500 full-time faculty. In the 2014 fall semester, CUNY schools tuition was $3,015 per semester and employed only 7,698 full-time faculty, and has become dependent on the 12,000 adjuncts to teach the 270,000 degree-credit students.
Both the full-time faculty and adjuncts have expressed massive hostility to the ongoing attacks on education and their living standards by voting to authorize a strike last October.

Under these conditions, the PSC called the demonstration in Midtown Manhattan that drew 800, including a civil disobedience stunt in which 54 PSC members were arrested after locking arms and sitting down in front of the doorway to 205 East 42nd Street building that houses CUNY administration offices.

In a letter posted on the PSC web site, PSC/CUNY President Barbara Bowen claimed that the demonstration made CUNY propose a 4 percent wage increase in 2016, far below the rise in the cost of living in New York City over the past few years. She went on to state, “The union’s escalating campaign has shown that we can force CUNY to move on economics. We must keep the pressure on [CUNY] Chancellor [James] Milliken and take our demand to Governor Cuomo.”

Bowen’s claim that CUNY faculty and adjuncts should appeal to the governor, who has overseen the attack on public education and their living conditions, is absurd and politically malignant.

The faculty and professional staff at CUNY have expressed a desire to fight against austerity and the continued attacks on their living standards, but like the autoworkers and New York City school bus drivers, they are held back by their union, which has put forward the bankrupt perspective of pressuring the Democrats for reforms. Faculty and adjuncts must draw the lessons of recent workers’ struggles, and break with the Democrats—which have proven to be no less ruthless in attacking living standards than the Republicans—and their union hangers-on.
U.S. cops need bigger guns: Critics of police 'militarization' need to wake up to the new reality of urban terrorism

BY Eugene O'donnell
November 18, 2015

The horrific slaughter in Paris should again remind us that closing our eyes and hoping for the best is no way to protect the people of our country.

After the tumultuous events of Ferguson — when an armored personnel carrier was rolled out — critics of police “militarization” pounced: This, they said, was proof that the American police were out of control and overequipped.

Why, they wondered, was it necessary for cops across the country to be armed with hardware typically associated with the Army: armored vehicles, night goggles and assault rifles? (Of course, eight-ton vehicles are much harder to flip over during riots than police cruisers.)

It wasn’t a partisan question. Republican Sen. Rand Paul joined Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill in outrage. The White House stepped in to order a review of programs gifting surplus military gear to local police departments. It was a moment in the sun for libertarian outfits like the Cato Institute, which has chummed out reports suggesting that the nation’s police, like boys with toys, harbor a sinister obsession with arming themselves to the teeth.

While it is no doubt true there are parts of the country where there are too many poorly trained and overarmed SWAT teams, some of which are being used for penny-ante drug raids and the like, the events in Paris alert us to a far larger problem. In this country, which unlike many other Western nations does not have a domestic terror-fighting agency, law enforcement in places large and small is our infantry.

They are our front-line first responders, the only ones willing and able to go head-to-head with those bent on dying while committing mass murder. In Paris, perpetrators wore suicide vests and carried AK-47s.

At present only a handful of police departments have the capacity to intimidate would-be terrorists and, if need be, wage sustained combat against them in the streets of America. This is a weakness to correct, not a condition to celebrate.

It is all but certain that, if ISIS and its affiliates can find an opening, the horrors of Paris and Beirut will find their way to New York or Portland or suburban Denver. The terrorists are certainly trying: Federal agents have been overwhelmed with cases of individuals from the U.S. going to the Middle East to fight with ISIS.
The typical U.S. police officer carries a semiautomatic pistol. While that is fine for routine duty, it's not up to the attacks that have been staged worldwide, in Paris, but also in India and elsewhere.

The NYPD has just smartly deployed a new, specially armed and trained anti-terrorism unit that, at full strength, will have 500 officers — and can respond to simultaneous attacks and hostage situations. Good. But they can't be everywhere. We have to give serious thought to having more ordinary New York City patrol officers carry more sophisticated weapons, even if only in vehicle trunks.

The absence of an attack to date does not mean that we are safe in the long run. Those who traffic in terror are patient. They carry out attacks at times and places of their choosing.

Recall that the City of Boston and a swath of its surroundings were essentially shut down after the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings. The scope of the attacks and number of attackers were not immediately apparent, and police and federal agents scrambled to scour a huge area. While fleeing, the Tsarnaev brothers executed a police officer, shooting him twice in the head and once between the eyes, according to federal prosecutors.

Those who sneer at enhanced protective measures as futile should note that the Paris attackers were kept out of the stadium due to heightened security — which likely saved many from perishing in a stampede.

Some are using the Paris attack to call for more guns in the hands of ordinary civilians, arguing that concealed weapons are the best defense against terrorism. This might in some cases help, but it has a serious downside. Those guns might also be used to commit crimes, mass shootings or acts of terror. It is unclear whether an ordinary individual armed with a handgun in Paris would have been able to stop trained assassins wielding weapons of mass destruction. It might have simply added to the chaos and casualties.

The answer is ensuring that cops — trained officers — have the means to defend the public should the worst happen.

No doubt as a nation, our first wish is for a world less dangerous. However, our next wish should be that if the time comes again, the nation is not as completely unprepared as it clearly was on that early fall day in 2001 when so many lives were lost and so much enduring damage was inflicted on America.

O'Donnell, a former police officer and prosecutor, is professor of law and police science at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY.
Hunter College Condemns Anti-Semitic Chants

Chanting ‘Zionists out of CUNY,’ pro-Palestinian student group hijacks tuition-hike protest.
By Amy Sara Clark
November 17, 2015

Hunter College and Jewish organizations are condemning a pro-Palestinian student group that took over a student rally for free tuition by chanting “Zionists out of CUNY” and “Long live the intifada.”

The Nov. 12 rally outside the Upper East Side school — part of a national “Million Student March,” which advocates free tuition and cancellation of student debt — drew more than a hundred students, who chanted and listened to speeches on a variety of causes (Black Lives Matter, prison reform, communist revolution) for several hours before marching to the chancellor’s home, where police ordered the crowd to disperse.

Interspersed with such chants as “no tuition, open admission,” were the anti-Israel chants. As students spoke, a large Palestinian flag waved nearby and students held such signs as “Hunter students for Justice in Palestine” and “Divest CUNY Tuition from Israeli Apartheid.” A small group of students, including one wrapped in an Israeli flag, held a counter protest with one student holding a sign that said “Pro-Israel, Pro-Affordable Tuition, SJP doesn’t Speak for Me” and another with one calling for “Lower Tuition, not Terrorism against Israel.”

The group NYC Students for Justice in Palestine explained their reasoning for piggybacking their cause onto the free-tuition movement in a Facebook post the same day: “The Zionist administration invests in Israeli companies, companies that support the Israeli occupation, hosts birthright programs and study abroad programs in occupied Palestine, and reproduces settler-colonial ideology throughout CUNY through Zionist content of education. While CUNY aims to produce the next generation of professional Zionists, SJP aims to change the university to fight for all peoples liberation.”

The post was signed by NYC Students for Justice in Palestine and the group’s chapters at Hunter College, Brooklyn College, St. Joseph’s College, the College of Staten Island, John Jay College, the CUNY School of Law, Pace University-Pleasantville, New York University and Columbia.

In response to the chants, Hunter College student @becca wrote via Twitter, “Full-blown anti-Semitism allowed at my college. What’s next @Hunter_College?! I witnessed this and froze in fear,” and linked to a video of the chanting students that the Israel-advocacy organization StandWithUs posted on Facebook.

Another student, @The_Slavinator wrote “Is @Hunter_College condoning #antisemitism? Sure seems like it. Are they content to be deemed a #HotbedOfHate?”
Hunter College quickly condemned the statements, with Chancellor James B. Milliken stating Friday that CUNY is “a place of inclusion, not exclusion.” While “free speech, debate and the open exchange of ideas” are essential, he said, “intolerant, hateful and bigoted speech, while it may be legally protected, is anathema to our values.”

“Those voices,” he added, “stop rather than encourage the dialogue and real debate that makes us stronger.”

Other anti-Israel students also used the march to promote their agenda, with similar messages posted at Temple University and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, according to the Anti-Defamation League, which commended the school for issuing a statement making clear that “invoking discriminatory language reeking of thinly veiled bigotry, prejudice, anti-Semitism or other behavior” is inconsistent with its mission.

UIA-Federation of New York also protested the rhetoric and praised the college’s swift action, saying that “Students of all backgrounds deserve a campus experience that is free from intolerance and prejudice” and urging “all parties involved to disavow hateful language against other students and take appropriate measures to ensure this does not happen again.”
Dear Diary:

When I was a high school senior I don’t remember anyone making a big fuss over college admissions. In fact what I remember most about senior year was shopping with my mother for my college wardrobe, walking around Greenwich Village with my friends, and slow dancing to ’50s rock ‘n’ roll in dark living rooms.

And I surely don’t remember writing my college essay, because in fact my father wrote it. I don’t remember why; I guess I was just too busy trying on clothes at Loehmann’s, wandering around the Village and dancing to the Platters.

My dad went to N.Y.U. Heights and loved it, and was sure I’d love it too, so he sat down one night and wrote my essay. I think the gist of it was, “My dad went to N.Y.U. Heights and loved it, and I’m sure I will too.”

Well, apparently it did the trick because I got in. And of course I did love it and not for a minute did I feel guilty about that ghostwritten essay.

In 1973, nine years after I graduated, New York University closed its arts and engineering schools at University Heights and sold the buildings and grounds to CUNY.

My old alma mater then became the new, leafy campus of Bronx Community College.

I guess some things change.

Years later, when my son was too busy studying his Torah portion, my husband sat down one night and wrote the kid’s bar mitzvah speech.

I guess some things never change.
Famous Harvard professor rips into 'tyrannical' student protesters, saying they want 'superficial diversity'
By Abby Jackson
November 17, 2015

High-profile incidents of racial discrimination at the University of Missouri have spurred students across the US to protest racism on their own campuses.

And while many civil libertarians have lauded the students' actions, Alan Dershowitz, a prominent Harvard Law School professor, has ripped into these students for what he argues are hypocritical demands.

"The last thing these students want is diversity," Dershowitz told Business Insider.

"They may want superficial diversity, because for them diversity is a code word for 'more of us.' They don't want more conservatives, they don't want more white students, they don't want more heterosexuals."

Dershowitz, a leading proponent of civil liberties and a defense attorney who advised on the O.J. Simpson murder trial and numerous other celebrity cases, was commenting on what he calls a dangerous trend of "tyrannical students" on college campuses.

At numerous schools — including the University of Missouri and Yale University — students have protested racism on campus and called for the resignation of administration members who they say are creating a dangerous environment. And at Amherst College, students have threatened to respond in a "radical manner" if their demands are not met.

At Mizzou, Tim Wolfe stepped down as president after months of tension on campus.

Students there have now demanded a more inclusive campus and to see black faculty grow to 15% within 10 years.

But Dershowitz counters that students don't want actual diversity on campus.

"I think the most important thing to point out is the double standard and the hypocrisy," Dershowitz said. "These are students who want safe spaces for themselves but not for others. They're prepared to spit on people going out of lectures."

Dershowitz is referring an incident after a free-speech conference at Yale earlier this month in which several attendees were spat on and called racist, people who went to the conference told the Yale Daily News. One minority student who attended the conference told the YDN he was called a traitor.
Further, Dershowitz, who is Jewish, argues that he has been the victim of anti-Semitism and hateful language on campus by the very students who intend to remove all harmful language from campus.

When he spoke at the City College of New York (CUNY), he said, he was met with shouts of "Zionists out of CUNY." At Johns Hopkins there were posters showing his face defaced with Hitler mustaches, he said. When he attends lectures or gives speeches on campus, Dershowitz says, he needs police officers to escort him around campus for his own safety.

"These students don't want me to be safe," he said. "They don't want students who agree with me to be safe. They just want their ideas to be safe and protected from any contrary point of view."
Confronting the ‘Shadows From My Past’
By BARRY DAVIS
November 17, 2015

Gita Weinrauch Kaufmann speaks to the ‘Post’ about her moving documentary, which chronicles her visit to Austria, the country she escaped from as a child in 1940.

My Vienna-born mother still remembers the palpably frightening atmosphere she sensed as a little girl in the immediate aftermath of Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass.

Exactly 77 years ago German and Austrian storm troopers, and members of the general public, went on the rampage across their respective countries, smashing and looting synagogues and Jewish homes, businesses and schools. Close to 100 Jews were killed on the night between November 9-10 and around 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to Nazi concentration camps.

Gita Weinrauch Kaufmann was also around, in the Austrian capital, for that horrific event, although thankfully she managed to escape to the United States together with her parents and siblings. That was a rare occurrence, especially as they didn’t get out until 1940, when World War II was raging and Jews in all Nazi-occupied countries were being systematically persecuted and murdered.

While the Kaufmanns began to find their feet in the New World, their relatives – Kaufmann’s aunts and uncles and grandparents – were left behind and managed to send letters to the States. It is those letters, and ones written by Kaufmann’s parents from the States to their beleaguered relatives who were trapped in Austria and Poland, that inspired a documentary called Shadows From My Past, principally made by Kaufmann and her husband Curt, who died four years ago. Austrian filmmaker and producer Dieter Pochlato was also instrumental in bringing the project to fruition, as was Austrian historian Oliver Rathkolb.

Last week, Kaufmann received a tribute at a special Kristallnacht commemoration program in Brooklyn at New York City College of Technology (CUNY).

Kaufmann accepted the 2015 Distinguished Lifetime Humanitarian Achievement Award on behalf of herself and Curt. Former honorees include Polish-American architect Daniel Libeskind, whose better known works include the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the Denver Art Museum, and Nobel laureates Roald Hoffman and Gunter Blobel.

Although Shadows From My Past is not exactly the most polished end product, it is an emotive work and contains some important historical footage.

The A-lister interviewees include the likes of racist Austrian politician Jorg Haider, who was killed in a car crash in 2008, and former Austrian president and United Nations secretary general Kurt Waldheim, who died in 2007 and whose WWII activities were
suspiciously skirted around in an autobiography he published in 1985 leading to allegations of knowledge of Nazi atrocities, if not taking an active part in them. Late Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal is also interviewed by Kaufmann and the film’s celebrity roll call also features the likes of current Austrian President Heinz Fischer, Archbishop of Vienna Cardinal Schönborn and 91-year-old Vienna-born former Hollywood studio chief and multi-Oscar Award winner Eric Pleskow.

Kaufmann and her family got out at the last minute – literally.

“I was born in Vienna, and escaped on the day we were going to be deported to Dachau,” she says. “If we hadn’t received the affidavits that allowed us to leave for the States, that day, I’d not be around now.”

The exchange of correspondence had been carefully stored at the Kaufmann family home for over half a century before Kaufmann and her husband Curt, who taught himself film editing, got to grips with the written material which included the letters Kaufmann’s parents had sent their entrapped relatives and which found their way back to them several years later.

Shadows From My Past was sparked by an invitation, in 1998, by the Bruno Kreisky Foundation to read the family letters at the University of Vienna.

“We received the invitation on our fax machine, in German,” recalls Kaufmann. “We thought it was another rejection of our screenplay. We dealt a lot with German producers. I couldn’t understand why we were getting Bruno Kreisky Award for Outstanding Achievement In Human Rights. We didn’t even apply for anything.”

The surprise announcement also afforded Kaufmann the opportunity to return to Vienna for the first time since she and her family escaped the Holocaust by the skin of their teeth.

“That’s how the work on the documentary began,” she explains.

Even so, Kaufmann say she didn’t quite jump for joy.

There was a lot of emotional baggage to be sorted before she and her husband could board the plan for Austria.

“I hesitated about going back to Vienna. I consulted Michael Berenbaum [project director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC]. I wondered if it was right to go back, after all that my family went through, and he said that, if it’s for consciousness raising, I have to go back.”

Although she was only four years old when she left Vienna, Kaufmann says she has fond memories of being spoiled by the members of her wider family, and also by the family cook.
“I was the only girl, so I was fussled over a lot,” she notes. But she has some terrifying memories too. “I do clearly remember the night they arrested my father, and remember even more clearly when we went to visit him in the hospital.”

Kaufmann’s father was arrested by the Gestapo and severely beaten which, says Kaufmann, ironically saved his life.

“He was treated at the Rothschild Hospital, which was the only Jewish hospital left then, and while he was there the Nazis would come to our home every day, bang on the door, and shout ‘where’s the Jew!’ My father was in hospital for two-three months and that turned out to be our good luck; otherwise I wouldn’t be here today.”

Rathkolb was the key to getting the Kaufmanns back to Vienna and, consequently, to kick-starting Shadows From My Past, a shortened German-language version of which has been shown at schools throughout Austria, while the full-length work was screened at last year’s Vienna Jewish Film Festival and also at the Austrian Embassy in Washington, DC.

“Oliver is head of contemporary history at the University of Vienna,” says Kaufmann.

“His specialty was [Austrian history from] 1945 and I thought what’s the big deal about 1945? 1938 is when it [Nazi persecution of Jews] all broke out. Then I realized it was because the Austrians did not do anything to make up for the [Nazi] past. They just kept quiet about it and let Germany take full responsibility.”

Kaufman says that Rathkolb helped to change that lamentable state of affairs.

“I think he has done a lot of work in trying to get the truth told in Austria. I think that’s why we were invited back to Austria, not because of the letters, but because he was one of the few Austrians trying to get the truth told about their country, instead of this mythology about them being a victim [of Nazism].”

In addition to the now departed important historical figures among the interviewees, Shadows From My Past also includes some thought-provoking material. Former member of the Austrian resistance Fritz Molden, for instance, notes that it wasn’t only the Austrians who welcomed the Nazis, and that countries like France, Holland and Norway happily collaborated and even arrested Jews and helped to do the Nazis’ dirty work. He could have added Hungary and Latvia to that list.

Initially, Kaufmann talks about meeting the likes of Haider and Waldmann equanimously but, surely, she must have felt some emotion when she encountered people who – to put it diplomatically – may not have had a particularly good view of Jews.

“I learned a good lesson from my mother,” recalls Kaufmann. “I taught English at a university in Upstate New York and I had an Austrian student who wanted to meet my mother. I warned my mother that she had to behave herself [and not blame the student for the Holocaust].
The student came over and my mother just told her that it was because of her that she was in America.

With that kind of a background that was a good lesson for me. You have to keep your cool."

Kaufmann would, naturally, be delighted if Shadows From My Past, unpolished warts and all, made it to one of the various film festivals in this country.
Anti-Gentrification Activists Protest Real Estate Summit at Brooklyn Museum
by Benjamin Sutton
November 17, 2015

More than 100 activists and artists affiliated with community groups from throughout the city gathered at the Brooklyn Museum this morning to protest its hosting of the 2015 Brooklyn Real Estate Summit. Beginning at 7:30am, protesters were stationed at the Washington Avenue entrance to the museum’s parking lot — through which most summit attendees and speakers arrived — and on Eastern Parkway in front of the museum.

“The Brooklyn Museum should never have booked the summit,” Alicia Boyd, a member of Movement to Protect the People, told Hyperallergic. “Don’t tell me that you’re not aware of the suffering that’s going on in your community. You should never have done that.”

The demonstration was organized by the Brooklyn Anti-gentrification Network (BAN) and brought together members of organizations who are part of its network, a constellation of groups working on gentrification and related issues including police brutality, homelessness, and community gardens. Crying chants including “If we don’t get no housing, they don’t get no peace” and “Fight, fight, fight — housing is a human right,” the protesters spoke with and handed leaflets to passersby. At the parking lot entrance they booed summit attendees (and a few museum employees) as they arrived.

“I don’t expect anything of this, I know they [developers] are going to take over Brooklyn eventually, but what I want people to know is what happens when they take over our communities — I want them to know the hell they’re going through,” Carlos Molina, a Brooklyn College student and member of three BAN-affiliated groups, told Hyperallergic. “Of course I’d be happy if gentrification stopped, but I’m being realistic, it’s not.”

The response from passersby on foot, bike, and at the wheel ranged from vulgar dismissal to vocal encouragement. “He hates gentrification,” a woman said of the dog she was out walking around 8:15am. “He just peed on the museum.”

After beginning with just a couple dozen protesters, the demonstration grew in the buildup to a press conference at noon. Orange tents emblazoned with slogans like “They say gentrify, we say occupy” and “Foreclose on developers not people” were placed on either side of Eastern Parkway. A bright yellow banner incited passing motorists to “Honk if the rent is too high.” Museum security staff and between six and ten NYPD officers stood by throughout, but remained civil. Gradually, members of organizations from other boroughs, artists, and local residents drawn by the loud chants joined the crowd.
“It’s a politically dumb decision for the museum to host this summit,” Amanda Browder, a Greenpoint-based artist, told Hyperallergic. “As a citizen you feel like your voice is so small, and museums are supposed to be a place where those voices are heard. As artists, this is the one thing we can do — make our messages visual and visible.”

At noon, Imani Henry of BAN began introducing speakers who addressed how their groups have been fighting various aspects of gentrification. Speakers included members of the NYC Community Garden Coalition, the Sunset Park organization UPROSE, Picture the Homeless, 596 Acres, #TheBronxIsNotForSale, Black Lives Matter, and Movement to Protect the People. One of the most rousing speakers, ironically enough, was a real estate agent named Sharon who has lived directly opposite the Brooklyn Museum on Eastern Parkway for more than 40 years and asked to speak to the protesters after hearing their chants.

“It pains me when my people come to me, I can go from the end of Brooklyn to Downtown Brooklyn, I can’t find them anything anywhere that they can afford,” she said.

“What they’ve done is they’ve changed the verbiage from ‘low-income’ to ‘affordable housing.’ Well it’s only affordable if you can afford it, and that pushed us out years ago …. I applaud you for being out here this afternoon, but we’ve been complaining about this for years. I’m happy to see you all here and I hope that somebody is listening and something will be done, because it affects us before it affects you. I can’t afford $3,000 a month, but my neighbor can …. There’s a double-standard in this city and it has to be stopped.”

 Asked for comment on this morning’s protest, the Brooklyn Museum gave Hyperallergic the following statement: “As a place of learning and engagement, the Brooklyn Museum is a center for conversations for our many diverse communities — we cherish this role.”

A second protest, organized by the Artist Studio Affordability Project, is scheduled to take place between 4pm and 6pm.
'Brooklyn' Chronicles The Heartache Of The Irish-American Immigrant Experience

Director John Crowley and actress Saoirse Ronan join Fresh Air to discuss Brooklyn, a film about a homesick immigrant forced to choose between her familiar hometown and an unpredictable new life.

November 17, 2015

TERRY GROSS, HOST:

This is FRESH AIR. I'm Terry Gross. My guests are the director the new film, "Brooklyn," John Crowley, and the star, Saoirse Ronan. Ronan was nominated for an Oscar at the age of 13 for her performance in the 2007 film "Atonement." She starred in the 2009 film "The Lovely Bones." In Wes Anderson's recent film, "The Grand Budapest Hotel," she played Agatha, the fearless and loyal girlfriend of Zero, the lobby boy. Ronan and Crowley are Irish. "Brooklyn" is adapted from a Colm Toibin novel, set in the 1950s, about a young woman named Eilis from a small town in Ireland, who's encouraged by her older sister to cross the Atlantic to New York City where she might have a better future. After a miserable voyage by ship, she arrives in New York, homesick and disoriented. With the help of the Irish priest who sponsors her, she finds a room in a Brooklyn boarding house and a job in a department store. But loneliness is unending until she meets a young Italian man at a dance. Just as she's on the verge of starting a new life with him, she's called back to Ireland. Once there, she has to decide which life to choose - the familiarity and limitations of her hometown or the possibilities and unpredictability of America. Let's start with a short scene after Eilis has arrived in Brooklyn. She's talking with the priest, played by Jim Broadbent, who sees how homesick she is.

(SOUNDBITE OF FILM, "BROOKLYN")

JIM BROADBENT: (As Father Flood) I'd forgotten just how bad it feels to be away from home. I've enrolled you in a night class for bookkeeping - Brooklyn College. It'll be three nights a week and I've paid your tuition for the first semester.

SAOIRSE RONAN: (As Eilis) Why?

BROADBENT: (As Father Flood) Why? Not thank you?

RONAN: (As Eilis) Sorry, thank you. Why?

BROADBENT: (As Father Flood) I was amazed that someone as clever as you couldn't find proper work at home. I've been here too long. I forget what it's like in Ireland. So when your sister wrote to me about you, I said the Church would try to help. Anyway, we need Irish girls in Brooklyn.

RONAN: (As Eilis) I wish that I could stop feeling that I want to be an Irish girl in Ireland.

BROADBENT: (As Father Flood) All I can say is that it will pass. Homesickness is like most sicknesses - it'll make you feel wretched, and it'll move on to somebody else.

GROSS: John Crowley, Saoirse Ronan, welcome to FRESH AIR.

JOHN CROWLEY: Thank you.
GROSS: What personal meaning does this story have for you?

CROWLEY: Well, when I was 27, I moved from Dublin to London to carry on directing plays. I was offered a play at the National Theatre in London. And when I moved there, I was struck by how different the city seems when you actually move there, when you don't have a return ticket, as it were. And my relationship to Ireland changed fundamentally. And I was quite struck by that. I did - I thought homesickness was - I don't know, I suppose I thought it was the preserve of unhappy immigrants who had to leave because of economic deprivation. And because I had been over and back to London all the time, I didn't actually think I'd feel that. And this book by Colm Toibin captures that sense of sort of displacement and Dublin-ness (ph) that you feel when you leave your country, which is that you're obviously not from the country that you are now calling home and - but equally, you're not from home anymore either. You've - you become something else, which is an exile, I suppose, for a while.

GROSS: Saoirse, I know that the story of "Brooklyn" has personal meaning for you.

RONAN: I think initially, when I read the script, I was still living at home. And, you know, I'd been working in films since I was about 10. And I was always very...

GROSS: Do you mean at home with your parents in Ireland or just in Ireland?

RONAN: With my parents in Ireland, yeah. And it was always very important for me to find the right Irish project to be involved in. It was always very important for me to be involved in Irish film. And the right one hadn't come along. And then when I read this script, it was - even though it's a different era, it was very much my mom and dad's story and such a similar journey to one that they had taken over to New York in the '80s. So, you know, when you're handed a script where the story is based in the two places that sort of make up who you are, you're immediately kind of curious and connected to it.

GROSS: Your parents came to the U.S. from Ireland in the 1980s. Your character in "Brooklyn" comes to the U.S. in the 1950s. Why did your parents come to America?

RONAN: Like most young people, they came over to New York for work. There was a very bad recession at home in the '80s at that time. And they, you know, both left school when they were around 15, 16. And there just weren't any jobs at home, you know? And so when they were in their kind of early to mid-20s, I think my dad's family knew someone over there. And this guy got him set up with a job. And him and his friend went over, actually on the Fourth of July, which I only found out recently. And mom and the friend's girlfriend followed over a couple months later.

GROSS: So you were born in New York, but your family moved to Ireland when you were 3. Your parents returned there and took you (laughter) with them. Why did they return to Ireland?

RONAN: I think when they had me over here in New York, you know, my dad was working. He had been discovered - you know, while he was a bartender in this pub that he worked in - by another Irish actor called Chris O'Neill. And so he had started in the theater and was very much a part of that Irish theater community. So for the first couple years of my life, he was working away in America. And work was quite steady, I think, when it came to the theater and different films that he was doing. And then the work just took him back home, and he started to get roles at home. And, you know, I think, my mom - she's actually said to me - she looked at me one day - she was a nanny - and I had a cold. And it was during a brutal New York winter. And she was
taking care of the other kids and, of course, I was there as well. I went to work with her. And she just looked at me and I was, you know, sick. And she thought, I can't raise my kid like this anymore. My kid needs a - her own couch to snuggle on and for me to just be able to focus my time on her. It was something that was, you know, very important for her. And also just to know my cousins and go to an Irish school. And so we went back when I was about 4 - 3 and a half, 4.

GROSS: Since the film is so much about homesickness, I thought I'd play an excerpt of the author of the novel, "Brooklyn," from which the movie is adapted, reading a section about homesickness from the novel, "Brooklyn." So this is Colm Toibin reading from "Brooklyn," as recorded on our show back in 2012. This is a description of the character that you play, Saoirse, in Brooklyn shortly after she's arrived.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED BROADCAST)

COLM TOIBIN: (Reading) She was nobody here. It was not just that she had no friends and family. It was rather that she was a ghost in this room, in the streets on the way to work, on the shop floor. Nothing meant anything. The rooms in the house in Ireland belonged to her, she thought. When she moved in them, she was really there. In the town, if she walked to the shop or to the vocational school, the air, the light, the ground - it was all solid and part of her, even if she met no one familiar. Nothing here was part of her. It was false, empty, she thought. She closed her eyes and tried to think, as she had done so many times in her life, of something she was looking forward to. But there was nothing, not the slightest thing. Not even Sunday. Nothing, maybe, except sleep. And she was not even certain she was looking forward to sleep. In any case, she could not sleep yet since it was not yet 9 o'clock. There was nothing she could do. It was as though she had been locked away.

GROSS: And that's Colm Toibin reading from his novel, "Brooklyn," which is the basis of the new film, "Brooklyn." And that reading was from FRESH AIR in 2012. With me is John Crowley, who directed the film. Also with me is Saoirse Ronan, the star of the film. You know, that part of the story really speaks to the loneliness and sense of being cut off that you experience, I think, not only as an immigrant, but anytime you're in a strange place with no one you know and you're yearning for home. And in that sense, I think, you know, it's such a universal experience, even if you've never been an immigrant. Of course, it's probably worse (laughter) if you're an immigrant and this is, like, your whole future, and you don't know if you'll ever get to the point where it feels like home. In the story of "Brooklyn," when she returns - when, Saoirse, your character returns to Ireland - she's been changed by living in America. Time has elapsed. Everyone she knows has changed a little. The town has changed a little, not that much. But her experience of the town has changed a lot because of everything that she's experienced. And have you gone through similar experiences of, like, returning home and feeling different about it because of how you've changed?

RONAN: Yeah, I have. Colm's writing just captures it so perfectly and beautifully. And it's so kind of heartbreaking. You know, and I think that's the real heartbreaking experience when you're homesick is actually when you return home and you realize that you've had experiences that are now separate from this place that was so familiar to you and was very much your identity for your whole life. And Ellis actually says, when she returns back to Ireland - and there's a scene between her and Jim walking on the beach - and she says, you know, I wish it could've been like this before I left. But, of course, it couldn't have been because she was - she wasn't the person that we see kind of blossom in New York, you know? And, yeah, I mean, I've been experiencing that, I suppose, my whole life. I mean, it's certainly more extreme now that I'm older and I actually lived away on my own. But, you know, from the age of about 10, just going...
away for a month at a time to America and working over there and having an experience that just in no way could be shared with, you know, other kids my age that I went to school with. And again, kind of like what you have to do when you move away and you leave a piece of you back at home, when you come back home then, and you've had these experiences, I kind of felt like that was something that needed to be kept separate. So it wasn't really something I talked about.

GROSS: If you're just joining us, I have two guests. Saoirse Ronan is the star of the new film, "Brooklyn." John Crowley directed it. Let's take a short break, then we'll talk some more. This is FRESH AIR.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

GROSS: This is FRESH AIR, and if you're just joining us I have two guests. John Crowley is the director of the new film "Brooklyn," and Saoirse Ronan is the star of the film.

Saoirse, you were not only emotionally close to the story, you were geographically close to the story. The parts in Ireland were shot, I think, within a half-hour of where you grew up, and where your family continues to live. Do I have that right?

RONAN: Yeah, almost. My family live in Dublin now, but yeah, I grew up in County Carlow which is one county over from Wexford. And, you know, there were times when I was a kid where the one-screen cinema in our town might not have had the film that we wanted to see. So we'd go to Enniscorthy because they had, like, you know, three screens in their cinema. That was the big cinema.

GROSS: That - that's where "Brooklyn" is set.

RONAN: That's where "Brooklyn" is set, in Enniscorthy. And we shot it there. And, you know, to go there, as I said before - my childhood and that part of my life and work were always kept separate. And we moved away when I was about 18. And so that phase for me is very much in the past even though it's something I still sort of crave in a way. So to go back into that with work and meet people who were part of that stage of my life that had nothing to do with film at all was very, very surreal. It really was.

GROSS: Are these people who actually ended up in the film?

RONAN: Yeah, extras in the film, and the dance hall and the church. And, you know, a lot of them were my age, and they were kids that I had competed against, say, in sports days and at our competitions and things like that. And there were loads of the kids that came up to me and were, like, Saoirse, do you remember me? Do you remember that race that we took or that, you know, 400-meter relay when we were 10? And it was mad. It was, like - it was a lot of pressure because you don't want to let any of these people down. You very much feel - I very much felt like I was representing all of us. So I didn't want to mess that up, and to have them there in the scene as well was crazy. But I think ultimately, in retrospect, even though it could be kind of tough at times emotionally to just focus on the character and what you were doing there and not kind of get overwhelmed by all the other stuff, it was probably the best mindset to be in for this girl who's about to go through this massive change in her life.

GROSS: I'm hearing a difference between how you're speaking now and how you speak in "Brooklyn" - how your character speaks in "Brooklyn."
RONAN: Oh, thank God.

(LAUGHTER)

RONAN: Because so many people have said to me, so how does it feel to do your own accent? And I keep saying to them, I'm not doing my own accent. I'm doing a different one.

GROSS: Yeah, so what's the difference between the two?

RONAN: My family are all from Dublin. And so I really kind of consider myself a Dub first and foremost. I sound like I'm from Dublin. Whereas Ellis' accent is a country accent. And it's an accent that I grew up listening to and they can usually be very, very strong. So we didn't want it to be - you know, we wanted people to be able to understand it basically. So it's made a little bit gentler and sort of the sounds are rounder - just a bit softer than my accent which is a little bit harsher.

GROSS: Do you plan on doing American films with an American accent? So many actors from other countries learn an American accent.

RONAN: Yeah well, most of the films I've done have been American.

GROSS: I guess that's true, yeah.

RONAN: Yeah, I've done that accent more than any other. My ear's always been open to different sounds. Maybe because I lived in two very different places from an early age. And I also - I grew up with somebody who mimicked other people a lot. My dad did that a lot, and so did my mom, actually. Actually, I think that's just an Irish thing. John does it as well. We all do it when we're having a crack with each other. We, you know, imitate people. That's a very Irish thing to do anyway. But I grew up watching, you know, "Seinfeld," and "The Three Amigos," and "Fawlty Towers" and all these different, really great comedies that came from different places. And so I guess that was how I expressed myself - was by quoting scenes from all these different TV shows and films that I've watched. And I would naturally do the accent. So it was always a part of how I expressed myself, I think.

GROSS: Did you talk to the author of "Brooklyn," the author of the novel, Colm Tobin?

CROWLEY: Oh yeah, yes.

GROSS: What did you get from him that was helpful in guiding you in directing the film adaptation?

CROWLEY: We had - I mean, he was incredibly hands-off, both with me and with Nick Hornby. And he really just wanted to sit, talk about - I sort of heard the approach overall, and then give a blessing, you know. And one of the things he said to me when we had lunch together in London was he said he thought that "The Dead" - John Huston's film, "The Dead," was the greatest Irish film ever made. And he looked at me with a twinkle in his eye, and he said, would you agree? And I said well, I wouldn't disagree. (Laughter). And he said he felt it was one of the greatest films ever made because of the level of detail in the casting in every single small part. And I said well, that I definitely would agree with. Yeah. And I think he wanted to know that we would go at this with a similar eye to getting every single last part - even somebody who has
three lines would be cast as lovingly and carefully as the actor sitting in front of me, as it were. And so that you would get a complete world from it.

And I guess the other thing he wanted to hear my thoughts about were music. What was the approach to music? And I was clear from that point that I didn't want the score to have a particularly strong Irish identity. When you point a camera at small-town Ireland you oftentimes - it's accompanied by a tin whistle or an uilleann pipe and it's sort of plaintive, you know, Irish score. And I didn't want that. And I wanted it to have a more emotionally direct quality and that would take us straight to the heart of Ellis, as it were. And that then in the film - there's a scene on Christmas day where we have an Irish singer who's singing in what's called a sean-nos style which is a very old style of traditional singing. And he's singing in Irish a traditional song. That we would do that and do it exactly right and that that would not, in any way, be softened or have the edge taken off. So that it would - you would go, you know, 110 percent down that road when you needed to. But other than that he was delighted to have updates. He would answer the odd question for me - the odd email.

GROSS: This scene that you're referring to on Christmas Day is a very good scene. Saoirse volunteers at, basically, a soup kitchen at the suggestion of the priest who sponsored her trip to Brooklyn. And the priest says these are the men who built the bridges and the tunnels and the highways. And they're clearly kind of down and out now because they're eating at a soup kitchen. And one of them gets up and sings solo. And it's a beautiful song, and everybody nearly has tears in their eyes. You could tell that that song is bringing back so many memories for everybody. And that even though they wanted to leave, or needed to leave home for whatever reason, that part of their heart is still in Ireland. Who was doing the singing?

CROWLEY: He's a singer called Jarla O Lionaird who's one of the great, great Irish singers. And he's with a band called The Gloaming for those of your listeners who follow contemporary traditional Irish music they might hear of them. It's a sort of - it's like an Irish traditional super group as it were. And he grew up in West Cork in and amongst the family in Coolea which is the Gaeltacht area - the Irish-speaking area of West Cork. And steeped in that tradition of sean-nos singing. But equally, he's got one foot in the contemporary music world. So he was for years a member of a band called the Afro Celt Sound System. But The Gloaming is a more - is a different kind of project.

GROSS: Well, he's got a beautiful voice.

CROWLEY: Amazing.

GROSS: It made me think, like, with both of you - if you were nostalgic for the music you grow up on when you were in Ireland, it would be probably be, you know, like, pop music, you know, rock tunes. It was probably not - correct me if I'm wrong here, but it was probably not going to be like traditional Irish music.

CROWLEY: Yeah, absolutely.

GROSS: Because you grew up with radio, and television, and videos, right?

CROWLEY: It would be The Police would bring a tear to my eye, Terry.

(LAUGHTER)
CROWLEY: If you want to make me cry nostalgically, play "Message In A Bottle," OK?

(LAUGHTER)

RONAN: Oh, my God. Oh, my Lord.

CROWLEY: But it was years later.

RONAN: But we'd have to plan it on a banjo.

CROWLEY: It was years later that traditional music - I, you know, yeah I grew up, like, late '70s into the '80s, right? And for me traditional music - and in a way, Irishness (ph) was - I was a bit embarrassed by it. I didn't really want to know about it. And it was sort of years later - this was all pre-U2 and all of that - before Irishness became a little bit cool for a minute, you know. I just made a journey back to it and realized that it wasn't quite what I thought it was, to put it mildly.

GROSS: My guests are John Crowley, the director of the new film "Brooklyn" and Saoirse Ronan the film's star. They'll be back after a short break. And we'll talk with novelist David Mitchell. Here's the Irish song we were just talking about that's performed by Iarla O Lionaird in the film "Brooklyn." I'm Terry Gross and this is FRESH AIR.

(SOUNDBITE OF FILM, "BROOKLYN")

IARLA O LIONAIRD: (Singing in foreign language, as Frankie Doran).

GROSS: This is FRESH AIR. I'm Terry Gross, back with John Crowley, the director of the new film "Brooklyn," and Saoirse Ronan, who stars as a young Irish woman who immigrates to New York in the 1950s. Ronan also starred in "Atonement" and "The Lovely Bones." She played Agatha in "The Grand Budapest Hotel." John, I have a few questions for you. In addition to "Brooklyn," our listeners might know you from having directed several episodes of the second season of HBO's "True Detective," including the season finale. And I would like to know what's the most brutal or sadistic scene you had to do (laughter) for that? It's a very different tone than "Brooklyn."

CROWLEY: Slightly different tone, yeah. It couldn't be more different.

GROSS: Couldn't be more different.

CROWLEY: I think supervising Colin Farrell beating up Rick Springfield in such a mean fashion is probably the most brutal thing.

GROSS: Do you want to describe what happens?

CROWLEY: He throws him against the wall and sort of, you know, takes out his rage. There's a long pent-up range in his character at that point. And yeah, he threatens to yank his plastic surgery apart if he doesn't speak and give him the answers that he wants.

GROSS: When you're directing something like "True Detective" and each episode is as well shot as a movie, is the budget pretty large for the episode? Like, how does it compare to an hour worth of movie?
CROWLEY: I - you know...

GROSS: You don't know.

CROWLEY: They don't tell you, no. I don't know. But yes in the sense that the size of that crew and the - you know, we shot with two cameras all the time, sometimes three cameras, inconceivable on a film the scale of "Brooklyn," unless you nominated one specific day, which we did once or twice, for very big set pieces where you had to have a second camera. But we shot always with two cameras. So yeah, it's a completely different scale of operation. And it's almost industrial, you know? This thing was in motion when I joined it. And it was sort of thrilling to step on this fast-moving vehicle and then step off it again. It's very different to anything I'd done before.

GROSS: So I'm going to ask you a stupid question. What's the difference between shooting with one or with two cameras?

CROWLEY: I prefer shooting with one personally because it's the way I see the world, which is one image at a time.

GROSS: (Laughter) Right.

CROWLEY: And I don't see it in multiple frames. And I prefer the focus that happens on set when everybody is talking about one image, and that's the next half an hour's work is to get this shot and this moment right.

GROSS: So when you're using two cameras, how did you use it? Like, what can you do with two cameras that you can't with one?

CROWLEY: Well, occasionally, you can shoot both sides of a scene, which is quite thrilling to me. You have two single shots and you have two monitors and you're looking at the nuances in the way in which each actor is listening to the other actor's line that's just happened. And that means the sort of dance between you and the actors can really take off. And you have a lot of fun in terms of - and the scene grows very quickly from to take to take, that it's an organic thing, which then gets exponentially better because nothing is being lost. You know, one of the things about working with a camera - with one camera is a lot of stuff gets lost. There's a lot of acting that happens off-camera.

GROSS: Saoirse, you started acting when you were how old?

RONAN: When I was about 8 or 9, I did a small TV show at home called "The Clinic," where a lot of people actually got their start and did that. Then I did another show the next year, and then I did my first film when I was 10. So...

GROSS: So "Atonement," which is an adaptation of an Ian McEwan novel, is the third film that you did. And in this...

RONAN: Yeah.

GROSS: ...Story, your character, who's 13, wrongly accuses a young man of raping her cousin. She thinks she's right and then realizes he's wrong but never really changes her story. And
everybody suffers the consequences of this. And the consequences play out for the rest of their lives. It's a heavy role for a child to play. How old were you? Were you 13?

RONAN: I was 12. I had just turned 12.

GROSS: That's interesting because usually actresses play older than the character - I mean, actresses are usually older than the character they play. You were actually a little younger.

RONAN: I was a little bit younger, yeah. She was supposed to be 13, and I was completely wrong for it. You know, I physically was completely wrong for the role. Briony in the book is described as dark haired, brown eyes. I think she's supposed to have olive skin, and this little mole on her face was very important. And instead they cast a pale, Irish, blue-eyed, blonde-haired child. And - I don't know, it was a strange thing where I think that's where my love for playing someone completely different to me started, you know? I was playing someone who in every way was just - was very different from me. I think the only thing we really had in common was the imagination. And the thing is - the fascinating thing about a character like Briony is that she doesn't really know what she's seeing. There's so much that happens within one day. And, you know, we have to remember she's growing up in the 1930s in an upper-middle-class English family. And I'm sure whatever questions she had, nobody really answered them ever. So she sees, you know, a few pretty confusing events that take place. And her imagination, which is kind of her only friend apart from James' character - James McAvoy's character started to kick in. And that's what she relies on, you know? And she makes herself believe it.

GROSS: How did you become an actress so young? I know your father was an actor.

RONAN: Yeah.

GROSS: Did you see him act and want to do that, too?

RONAN: No, I didn't. I - basically, when me moved back to Ireland, he was starting to be involved in Irish projects. And there was a short film that he was doing up in Dublin, and they needed a kid for the day. And he asked me to do it because they were stuck, so I did. And I just kind of took to it straight away. I felt very comfortable there. I didn't feel intimidated by it at all. And I remember there was this guy on set, who, you know, would've been in his 30s or something, and he kept talking. And we were about to roll, and he kept talking and he kept talking and he kept talking - and we'd been on set for a few hours at this stage. And I just turned to him and I just went shhh - quiet on the set. And I think from then on, the bug just kind of got me, you know?

GROSS: Well, I want to thank you both so much for talking with us. John Crowley, Saoirse Ronan, thank you.

CROWLEY: You're welcome. It was a pleasure.

RONAN: Thanks so much.

GROSS: Saoirse Ronan stars in the new film "Brooklyn." John Crowley directed the film. After we take a short break, David Mitchell will talk about his novels, his stammer and trying to understand the world of his autistic son. This is FRESH AIR.
No place for fear-mongering in debate over Syrian refugees
Editorial
November 18, 2015

IN light of the terrorist attacks in Paris, caution is advised as it pertains to U.S. refugee policy. Political posturing should not be part of the equation, but naturally it's in full bloom, particularly among Republicans.

The governors in at least 23 states have taken various actions designed to curb or stop the flow of Syrian refugees. Twenty-two of those governors are Republicans, including Oklahoma's Mary Fallin, who on Monday asked President Barack Obama to stop accepting refugees from Syria, at least for a time.

That country has seen millions flee as the Islamic State has expanded its murderous stronghold. The terrorist group claimed credit for the multiple attacks in Paris last week that left 129 dead and dozens seriously wounded. A Syrian passport was found near one of the attackers. According to Parisian officials, fingerprints from the attacker match those of someone who passed through Greece last month.

The Obama administration has committed to accepting 10,000 Syrian refugees in the next year. In remarks Monday in Turkey, the president said those fleeing Syria “are parents, they are children, they are orphans” and that it’s important that “we do not close our hearts to these victims … and somehow start equating the issue of refugees with the issue of terrorism.”

Yet that’s precisely what’s happening across the country, including in Oklahoma, where some state lawmakers are irresponsibly fanning the flames of anxiety.

In calling for Fallin to suspend Oklahoma’s effort to make this state home to Syrian refugees, state Rep. John Bennett, R-Sallisaw, cited an article as saying “dozens” of such refugees had settled in the Jenks area. Fallin's office pointed out later, citing information from Catholic Charities in Tulsa, that three Syrian refugees had come to Oklahoma since 2012.

They were brought there to live with family members.

Reps. Sean Roberts, R-Hominy, and Casey Murdock, R-Felt, issued a news release saying Fallin should deny refugees into Oklahoma. “If the federal government is not going to keep the American people safe, it is up to the states to keep us safe,” Murdock said. This implies that the federal government hasn't done so, or doesn't care to do so, neither of which is true.
These pronouncements serve to rile people up — the governor's office was flooded with phone calls Monday from people concerned about Syrian refugees — but they're otherwise empty. Immigration experts widely agree that states don't have a legal leg to stand on in trying to somehow ban refugees.

"The one thing I feel very comfortable saying is there is absolutely no constitutional power for a state to exclude anyone from its territories," Washington University law professor Stephen Legomsky told USA Today.

In the same story Anna Law, a political scientist at Brooklyn College, noted that it falls to the federal government to decide whether to admit refugees. "Whether these refugees are admitted to the United States, that is not their call," she said of the states. If in the interest of trying to keep this country safe politicians and others want to encourage the administration to reconsider its Syrian refugee plan, or bolster its vetting process, or suspend the plan for a time, that's one thing. But fear-mongering and misinformation from elected officials should have no part in this debate.
Who’s News: Brown Harris Stevens names senior managing director, Compass appoints VP
November 17, 2015

Brown Harris Stevens of the Hamptons and North Fork announced that broker Robert M. Nelson has been named senior managing director.

Working with Peter Turino, president and executive managing director Cia Comnas, Nelson will help to oversee operations of all seven offices in the Hamptons and the North Fork and will be directly managing our Southampton, Westhampton Beach and Sag Harbor offices.

Nelson has worked in real estate for over 31 years and closed over a thousand properties, including multi-family investments in addition to the premier properties.

Citi Habitats welcomed Dennis Colwell as the new senior managing director of their West Village office.

Colwell will be responsible for helping agents grow their real estate careers. He will assist them in building/maintaining a strong presence in the city’s sales market, as well as in generating a strong referral-based business.

He will be supported by Trevor Williams, who will continue in his role as manager.

Colwell has 12 years of experience in the industry, and has been a licensed agent at both Citi Habitats and Corcoran. He was most recently an executive at Skyline TRG Title Company in Manhattan, a sister Realogy firm, where he covered both Citi Habitats and Corcoran offices.

There he learned a different side of the real estate business, and made connections with skilled attorneys, bankers and lenders.

Originally from Houston, TX, where is family in the custom homebuilding business, he has lived in New York City for 15 years.

Compass announced the appointment of Christina Allen as vice president of product.

Allen has more than 25 years of experience in business technology development and comes to Compass from online professional networking giant, LinkedIn, where she has served as director of product management since August 2010.

Among her achievements at LinkedIn, Allen led the product team in building tools for the LinkedIn Alumni program which helps students in each professional milestone, from college selection to their first job.

She is an alumna of Carnegie Mellon University, where she received her BFA and MS in Design and Computing.

She went on to receive her PhD in Communication and Anthropology from Northwestern University.

Ed Bruehl has joined Saunders & Associates, company executives announced.

Bruehl launched his real estate career with Alan Schneider & Associates more than 13 years ago and, over the next several years, became a top-producing broker at Sotheby’s.

Since then, his knowledge of the East End communities have fueled a superior sales record. An extensive personal network has helped him represent and sell new developments, restaurants, hotels, commercial properties, and private estates.
Prior to his career in real estate, Bruehl graduated with a BS from California Polytechnic University and moved to New York City with his wife, Mariah, to work at Morgan Stanley.

Argo Real Estate announced the expansion of its property management leadership team.

Cynthia Grafeo has been appointed director of client relations, a newly created position within the company, and Emily Astrof-Bernstein has joined the company as director of management Operations.

Cynthia Grafeo will spearhead the customer relations of Argo’s current building portfolio consisting of 80 properties around the greater New York City area.

Grafeo joined Argo Real Estate in early 2014 with more than 10 years of experience as a property manager in New York City’s luxury building market. She previously held positions at Buchbinder & Warren, LLC and Rose Associates, Inc. She went to City University of New York Baruch College, and was a practicing accountant, then computer networking professional before entering the real estate industry.

Emily Astrof-Bernstein will oversee Argo’s entire property management division including 26 personnel. She will be responsible for managing and strengthening the team and creating certification programs.

Astrof-Bernstein has over 20 years of experience in the property management industry.

Prior to joining Argo, she served as a property manager at Rose Associates, Inc. where she managed five high-rise luxury rentals and opened two buildings from construction to operation. Raised in a real estate family,

Astrof-Bernstein holds a Masters of Science in Real Estate Development from the NYU School of Professional Studies Shack Institute of Real Estate.

Level Group announced the hiring of eight Manhattan real estate agents.

Robert Balonek has put his studies in Communications, Marketing and Public Relations to work in driving a successful real estate career.

In his three years of real estate experience, Balonek has developed a no-nonsense approach to negotiations. Prior to real estate, he pursued a career as an international opera singer.

Brooklyn native and resident Crystal Green specializes in all Brooklyn neighborhoods, but is also thoroughly versed in Manhattan real estate.

With 12 years of experience, Green has made excellent follow-through her signature, following up with each client after the transaction to answer questions and concerns.

Fluent in both Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese, Connie Guo, began her real estate career in Shenzhen in 1997.

In the subsequent 18 years, eight of those in Manhattan, she has become noted for her ability to understand her clients’ individual needs.

Savvy with the latest in communication technologies, she has developed a specialized knowledge serving Manhattan condo and foreign buyers.

Donald Sheffey, a Manhattan resident, has seven years of real estate experience, focusing on high end luxury residential property sales and rentals.
A licensed real estate person, Sheffey closely follows trends in the Manhattan market and stays up to day on trends and projects that impact the current market.

Prior to entering real estate, Sheffey founded and ran a successful media production company, Weezie Productions.

In his 10 years of experience in the NYC market, F. Lee Williams, III has developed deep ties within the brokerage community.

He stays close to his clients and has developed expertise in helping “accidental landlords,” that is, clients who choose to relocate but decide to continue to own and lease their apartments.

Williams, who holds a B. S. in Business Administration from Seton Hall University, regularly addresses industry organizations.

In the four years she has been in real estate, Paula Schafer has closed more than $20 million in real estate deals. Many of these transactions have involved foreign investors.

Schafer represents both buyers and sellers and takes pride in advising first time homebuyers as they make one of the most important purchases in their lives.

She has a Bachelor’s in Communications from the University of St. Thomas, The Philippines. Prior to entering real estate, she was a successful executive at a high-end fashion company.

Nancy Wishmeier, a commercial real estate specialist with six years of experience, focuses on office leasing. She founded the NYC-Alternative Invest Team at Level Group to market to companies and investors.

Prior to real estate, she was a consultant to institutional investors and generated revenue for hedge fund conferences from investment banks, accounting and law firms, and risk management companies. Nancy holds a B.S. in Retail/Business from Colorado State University and an M.S. in Integrated Marketing from Northwestern University.

A long time Tribeca resident, Ann Zemaitis has lived and worked in New York City for 35 years. In seven years in real estate, she has specialized in Tribeca and downtown NYC luxury sales as well as Brooklyn Heights and DUMBO brownstones and lofts.

Zemaitis is noted for marketing expertise and has worked successfully with many well-known clients.

With graduate level marketing courses under her belt, Zemaitis also holds an M.A. from Graduate School & University Center of C.U.N.Y. and an M.Ed from Hunter College.
Silicon Mechanics Announces 5th Annual Research Cluster Grant
November 17, 2015

Silicon Mechanics, a provider of servers, storage and high-performance computing solutions, announced the opening of its 5th Annual Research Cluster Grant (RCG) program at Supercomputing 2015. Two institutions will be selected, and both will be awarded a complete high-performance computing (HPC) cluster. The competition is open to all United States and Canadian qualified post-secondary institutions, university-affiliated research institutions, non-profit research institutions, and researchers at federal labs with university affiliations.

"We designed the Research Cluster Grant program to provide computational and storage technology resources to researchers who may not have been able to keep pace with technology acquisitions through traditional grant-funding programs like those at the National Science Foundation or the National Institute of Health," said Art Mann, Silicon Mechanics' Sr. Director, Life Sciences Practice. "With the ever-growing demand for more powerful IT infrastructure to support research, the RCG represents a tremendous opportunity to work with our technology partners and support these research efforts. I'm excited and truly honored to see the RCG program achieve its fifth year."

Silicon Mechanics created the RCG in 2012 as a way of giving back to the educational community, as obtaining needed research funding for technology advancements continues to be challenging and can limit future impact at some educational institutions.

In particular, the program is helping to jumpstart research efforts where access to high-performance computing is limited, outdated or was not previously available. The RCG program also provides institutions with an opportunity to showcase how collaboration across departments and researchers by providing cluster technology can positively impact research efforts through the use of cluster technology.

Previous RCG awardees include The City College of New York (CCNY) and Dordt College in 2015, Wayne State University in 2014, Tufts University in 2013 and Saint Louis University in 2012. Silicon Mechanics' partners currently committed to supporting this year's grant include: Intel, NVIDIA, Mellanox, Supermicro, Bright Computing, HGST, Avago, Kingston, Micron and Seagate.

At CCNY, the HPC cluster is being used for cutting-edge research in biochemistry, chemistry, biology, physics, earth and atmospheric sciences, computer science, engineering, medicine, mathematics, social science, humanities and writing pedagogy.

"For many of our research programs, this computer cluster was the missing piece that lowered the barriers that kept our work from moving forward smoothly," said David Jeruzalmi, professor of chemistry and biochemistry in CCNY's Division of Science, who wrote the grant proposal last year. "This award has touched the research of many
colleagues by bringing together researchers from across CCNY, many of whom never knew that their work could be positively impacted by colleagues down the hall or in the next building over."

At Dordt College and at its research partner, Hope College, the HPC cluster supports eight STEM-based research groups and nine distinct faculty members focused on a wide variety of research activities. Those activities include bacterial statistical genetics, processing and analysis of RNA sequencing, phylogenetic trees, computational chemistry, engineering integrity, analyzing genomic sequencing data, population genetic data and more.

"Dordt has traditionally been a liberal arts school," said Dr. Nathan Tintle, Dordt College's Director for Research and Scholarship. "In recent years, however, we have ramped up our research department in partnership with Hope College and, in doing so, created a demand for an HPC system. Unfortunately, we didn’t have the budget to purchase a cluster that would suit our computational needs. Fortunately, Silicon Mechanics offered the annual RCG, a program that we are proud to be involved with. We feel fortunate to have been awarded this grant."

Submissions for the 2016 RCG will be accepted December 15, 2015, through March 1, 2016. The grant recipients will be announced April 2016. Submissions will be reviewed for merit and for the potential impact the research may have on the institution's mission.

Silicon Mechanics strongly encourages collaboration, within and across departments of a single institution, or across multiple institutions. Details on RCG rules, application requirements, and cluster technical specifications are available at www.researchclustergrant.com.
Enough with the French Flag Facebook logo
By James Mulyaney
November 18, 2015

Enough with the French Flag Facebook logo please.

I was as horrified as anyone when teams of ISIS terrorists ripped through Paris with bullets and bombs on Friday, killing at least 129 people. And I, too, was taken back to September 11, 2001, and the horrifying images of the collapsing World Trade Center and carnage at the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania.

That was a life-altering morning for America. We quickly accepted the need to partially disrobe to get on airplanes, to open our purses at ballparks, to assume the government might be listening to our telephone calls and reading our emails.

Now, the Paris attacks will change the French way of life -- substantially in the short term, and perhaps significantly in the long term, as well. And, as a fellow citizen of the free world, I offer my support to France and encourage American leaders to do everything possible to assist our friends.

But I am not going to tricolor my face.

The truth is that this perhaps well-intentioned show of solidarity cheapens the suffering of Parisians and trivializes the war on terror. ISIS is not a boogie man in a video game, it is a true threat to all who believe in self-evident freedoms, including the right to worship (or not) as we wish.

Indeed, a core component of American and French democracy is freedom of religion and the rejection of theistic triumphalism. ISIS, in contrast, hides behind a religious cloak to distract attention from its self-serving lunacy. It needs to be treated seriously, and so Facebook makeup is not the correct response.

The new cycle of response to terrorist attacks is this: Grieve loudly, adopt a symbol, justify suspicions of anyone different from ourselves and eventually go back to our relatively carefree and careless lives.

In the wake of the World Trade Center attacks, the nation rallied around Gotham, embraced the FDNY, the NYPD and the hardhats. Yet 14 years later, there may not be the political will to even pass the Zadroga Act to extend health care benefits for people injured saving others that day. Rudy Giuliani, meanwhile, went from being "America's Mayor" to someone with less political oomph than Donald Trump or Ben Carson, men who never held elected office nor stood in the pit at ground zero.

Soon, the French flag will fade from Facebook. In another couple of news cycles, Paris will drop from the headlines. The terrorists, though, will not evaporate, and they will not be scared off by cheap symbols.
Instead, American leadership needs to translate the requirements for the war on terror from symbols to tangible action. We will see more heavily armed police on our streets.

The director of the CIA claims he needs more leeway to track terrorists, to listen to more telephone calls and capture more communications. Yet many of those Facebook patriots will claim that armored cops are polarizing, and that the privacy of our innermost thoughts shared on social media is constitutionally protected and should be exempt from scrutiny.

An American with a French Facebook flag demeans the war on terror and is as effective as a smiley face.

_James Mulyaney is an adjunct professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and works as a consultant for an international intelligence firm. The views expressed are his own._
'Epidemic' of overdoses prompts major new effort to halt heroin trafficking
By Matt Buedel
November 17, 2015

Multiple agencies representing every level of law enforcement in central Illinois are on the verge of launching a major new initiative aimed at heroin trafficking.

The move to consolidate federal, state, county and municipal efforts will center on the Peoria Multi-County Narcotics Enforcement Group and see that covert agency’s ranks swell with the return of Peoria police officers six years after the city withdrew financial and manpower contributions to the group.

Peoria Police Chief Jerry Mitchell dedicated five officers — four rank-and-file officers and a sergeant — to P-MEG on a temporary but long-term basis to undertake the new initiative and pledged continued contributions to the multi-agency group beyond the term of the new program.

“If we look at simply the deaths associated with (heroin overdoses), it surpasses our violent crime,” Mitchell said Tuesday at a P-MEG Board meeting where representatives from all member law enforcement agencies in a five-county region unanimously voted to make the heroin initiative the group’s primary focus.

The city technically disbanded its vice unit when it implemented the Don’t Shoot anti-gun violence initiative in 2012, though all of the city’s specialized drug investigators remained in the then newly created Target Offender Unit and continued to perform some narcotics investigations.

The heroin initiative will be patterned after a similar program developed by David Kennedy, the criminologist from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City who created Don’t Shoot and has worked with local authorities on its implementation.

Kennedy has pledged his support for the new local effort, Peoria County State’s Attorney Jerry Brady said Tuesday at the meeting.

“It’s focused deterrence, and by that you engage all the providers, not just law enforcement,” Brady said. “We are going to need the entire community to come together to address this.”

Full details of the new initiative are set to be unveiled at a news conference in the first week of December, but law enforcement will target individuals at every level of narcotic distribution networks, from top-level suppliers to buyers, Mitchell said. The initiative also will integrate addiction treatment.
“The help we need to get these people at the lower level — it’s going to be a lot of work,” said Peoria Assistant Police Chief Mike Eddlemon.

The initiative will focus on dealers in Peoria, the regional heroin distribution hub, but use P-MEG agents’ ability to cross into other jurisdictions to build cases throughout the region.

“(Heroin users) come from the outskirts and go into the city to buy,” said P-MEG Director Dave Briggs. “We’ve seen guys come into the city to work and stop on their way to (a job) to buy heroin.”

A majority of fatal overdoses in the city involve residents of other nearby towns, and emergency responders in Peoria have been handling an average of four to eight overdoses per week for months. Police, firefighters and paramedics have administered the overdose reversal drug naloxone more than 700 times so far this year.

“It’s an epidemic,” said Peoria County Sheriff Mike McCoy, who serves as chairman of the P-MEG Board. “We’ve got a serious obligation to take care of it.”