Black Engineers Group Wants 10,000 Grads a Year by 2025

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By Emily DeRuy
October 26, 2015

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While blacks make up about 13 percent of the general population and earned about 10 percent of all the bachelor’s degrees awarded in 2010, just 1 percent of the nation’s black college first-year students selected engineering programs in 2010, according to the organization. Only about 3,620 black students earn bachelor’s degrees in engineering each year. What’s more, only about a third of the black students who begin an engineering degree finish within six years.

Neville Green, NSBE’s national chair, is a 24-year-old senior in chemical engineering at the City College of New York who plans to pursue an engineering career after graduation. But until a few years ago, he hadn’t considered engineering as a possibility. “It’s hard for a young child to aspire to become something they don’t even know exists,” he said.

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Green’s high school only had math classes through precalculus, and no one in his immediate family had engineering experience. He had to take remedial courses in college that classmates had completed in high school. Green also had to work, and because internships that pay well can be hard to come by, he took a job in a bagel shop while classmates who didn’t need the money gained valuable engineering experience. Finances and remedial courses have delayed Green’s graduation several years, and, at times, made him question the decision to pursue engineering.
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“That’s the greatest challenge we face,” he said, “a generation of students who aren’t confident in their ability to do well in school because they’ve been told by instructors they can’t, by others in their community that they won’t amount to anything. They’re not encouraged to dream or be imaginative.”

Green hopes the campaign will expose more young black people to the idea of engineering and what their life as an engineer might look like. There’s an “opportunity gap” in this country, Karl Reid, executive director of NSBE, told Next America, and it’s hurting not only black students, but the overall economy. “Diversity stimulates better strategies, better ideas.”

MINDING THE GAP

Science and engineering jobs are predicted to grow nearly 19 percent between 2010 and 2020, compared to just 14 percent for all occupations, according to federal statistics. Currently, tech companies often turn to foreign workers to fill those jobs. Reid wants them to look a little closer
to home. "We need to tap all populations available here, rather than just relying on international populations to fill this growing demand," he said. The percentage of students graduating with a bachelor's in engineering who are black has been declining for the past decade and reached 3.5 percent last year.

To increase the number of black engineering graduates, NSBE plans to take a multipronged approach:

- Reach out to black seventh-graders and their families with online resources and mentoring to pledge to take algebra, chemistry, and physics, the foundation courses for engineering.
- Expand its Summer Engineering Experience for Kids (SEEK) program, which serves elementary and middle-school-aged children, and push more school districts to offer calculus.
- At the college level, where the group has more than 200 chapters, NSBE will partner black engineering students with mentors and work with colleges to increase black student enrollment.

"We want engineering to become a mainstream word in homes and communities of color," Reid said, "and for every black child to see themselves as possibly becoming an engineer."

The NSBE campaign draws inspiration from President Obama's pledge at the start of his presidency that America would lead the world in college graduates by 2020. While that goal is far from being a reality, Reid saw how the announcement mobilized foundations and sparked investments in increasing college attainment. NSBE, he said, needed "a similar kind of Sputnik-like goal."

The group has formed a government affairs department to promote policy initiatives it thinks will help achieve the goal. Reid says Common Core, for instance, promotes "inquiry-driven learning." The group will also urge officials to hold schools accountable for providing students access to the tools and classes they need to go to flagship universities.

"There seems to be a new openness," he said, adding that the group is beginning discussions with other engineering organizations, including the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, about partnering to reach a broader goal of increasing the number of women and engineering graduates of color to 50,000.

Companies including Facebook and Twitter are also taking steps to increase the number of engineers of color. The former just launched TechPrep, a site aimed at introducing young people of color to coding. Girls Who Code created an alumni network this month to ease the transition from STEM classes to careers, and the Obama administration unveiled plans to allow some students to use federal aid to pay for coding bootcamps. This week, the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science will urge lawmakers on Capitol Hill to increase federal investments in programs to raise the number of STEM students of color.

The demographics of the nation are changing and the workforce needed to keep the economy strong is evolving. NSBE argues that too many people who could contribute positively to the shift are left behind before they even have a chance to get started.
‘Psyching Team’ Provides Mental Boost to NYC Marathon Runners
By Theresa Juva-Brown
October 26, 2015

Sometimes even the huge cheering crowds aren’t enough to boost the spirit of a struggling competitor in the New York City Marathon.

That’s when Dr. Ethan Gologor’s Psyching Team comes in.

Scattered throughout the 5-borough course on Nov. 1, about 50 mental health professionals will encourage and console individual runners during their toughest moments.

“Running 26.2 miles is not just about the legs, lungs and heart, but also the head,” says Gologor, the team’s captain since 2003 and a NYC Marathon finisher. Gologor is also chair of the psychology department at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn.

Whether there’s a veteran runner battling pain or illness or a rookie marathoner dealing with self-doubt, Gologor’s team is prepared to jump in with a pep talk. Many ride the shuttle buses to the start and coach jittery runners before the race.

“Don’t try to get rid of all your anxiety,” Gologor says of one piece of advice he gives.

“A little bit of anxiety actually motivates you more, but you don’t want to be overwhelmed.”

The Psyching Team, which was formed in the 1980s, is there “to enhance (runners’) marathon experience and help them achieve their goals,” says Emily Gallagher, a spokesperson for New York Road Runners.

These volunteers are required to attend a general orientation and then a specialized one for the Psyching Team, she says.

Though the team isn’t new to the New York City Marathon, Gologor acknowledges that many runners aren’t aware of it.

On race day, members will have a few signs and wear the same jackets as the medical crew.

“We keep a pretty low profile,” he says. “We just want to help the runners.”

The New York City Marathon isn’t the only running event that provides mental and emotional support.
The Toronto Marathon and Columbus Marathon and Half Marathon, for example, also have mental health professionals on hand. In addition to helping runners on race day, these volunteers offer mental preparation tips at the marathon expos.

Jennifer Lipack, a licensed social worker, had to postpone her New York City Marathon entry, so she joined the Psyching Team as a way to still participate.

The 34-year-old from Long Island knows all about the disappointment many runners face. She had secured a spot in the marathon, but chronic asthma and sinus problems have forced her to sit it out.

She hopes to get stationed near the end of the course, where she thinks runners will need the most support.

“If you have three miles left and you can’t finish for whatever reason, that’s the worst,” Lipack says. “This is a major marathon—the emotion to compete or achieve your goal is extremely high. To get into this marathon is very hard. You can’t always say, ‘There’s always next year.’”

When a runner falls short of a goal, it’s important to encourage that person to focus on the positives, she says.

“Remind them of the bigger picture,” she says. “They are present, and they were able to be part of it.”

First-time participant Melissa Gibilaro, 35, says her biggest worry is not the final miles, but the start of the race across the Verrazano Bridge from Staten Island to Brooklyn.

“I am nervous about mile one,” says the Staten Island resident. “Knowing that bridge is uphill for the first mile—that’s daunting to me.”

It’s comforting to know the Psyching Team will be on the course, Gibilaro says.

“During training when you have those long runs, your mind goes to deep, dark places. That’s bound to happen, too, during the race,” she says. “If there are people intentionally there keeping an eye out for runners to take you out of that place, that’s good. There are so many unknowns going into it.”

But the team is not just about lifting runners from dark moments—it’s also about reminding them to enjoy the experience.

“When they are lining up, we try to get to the front of the corrals on the (Verrazano) bridge and just give them some cheerleading,” Gologor says. “They appreciate it.”
Why the AIDS Reporting of Jeffrey Schmalz Must Be Remembered
By John A. Oswald
October 26, 2015

From his return to the newsroom a year after he suffered a brain seizure in December 1990, to his death in November 1993 at the age of 39, Schmalz spent his final days putting a face — including his own — on the disease and exposing the chronic federal underfunding of HIV medical research.

Schmalz’s illness also marked his coming out as a gay man, says Times columnist Samuel G. Freedman.

“Within the Times — a newspaper that was late to the AIDS story and had a sad history of newsroom homophobia — he created a much greater sensitivity about the lives of gay people,” Freedman told The Forward.

Freedman and fellow Columbia journalism professor Kerry Donahue are the forces behind a book and radio documentary about Schmalz, called “Dying Words: The AIDS Reporting of Jeff Schmalz and How It Transformed The New York Times.”

The multimedia project will be released on December 1, 2015, to coincide with World AIDS Day.

The Times scribe said he feared Schmalz’s “Dying Words” would be forgotten.

“One of the mandates of Judaism is to remember, to bear witness,” said Freedman, who is Jewish. “The whole reason I undertook this project was because I found it unbearable that Jeff’s legacy might be lost, that his groundbreaking work might be forgotten.”

He and Donahue raised $26,000 for the project on Kickstarter and were heartened by the response.

“The response on Kickstarter was a tremendous confirmation of the importance of Dying Words. Doing this documentary and book was a mission for me, a passion project, and it was so moving to have people go into their own pockets to support it,” Freedman said.

THE SCHMALZ LEGACY

The gay wedding announcements in today’s Times, pro-LGBT rights editorials, and extensive news coverage, are the result of changes Schmalz helped set in motion, the authors contend.
Those seeds of change were partly the result of the “tremendous respect Jeff commanded in the newsroom and partly because of the ground he broke in his AIDS articles,” said Freedman.

“Outside the Times, the deep empathy in Jeff’s articles put a human face on AIDS,” Freedman told The Forward. “He portrayed a wide area of people with AIDS — gay, straight, black, white, artists, politicians, athletes — and that helped the American public realize that AIDS was a national calamity in need of a national response.”

Among his big interviews: famed AIDS activist Larry Kramer, basketball great Magic Johnson, and two women with HIV, Mary Fisher, who spoke at the Republican convention in 1992 and the late Elizabeth Glaser, who spoke the same year before the Democrats.

Those interviews and other examples of Schmalz coverage are all part of Dying Words.


“I have come to the realization that I will almost certainly die of AIDS,” Schmalz wrote.

“I have lived longer than the median survival time by 10 months. The treatments simply are not there. They are not even in the pipeline. A miracle is possible, of course. And for a long time, I thought one would happen. But let’s face it, a miracle isn’t going to happen.”

“Dying Words” is available for pre-order now on the [CUNY Journalism Press website](http://www.cuny.press). The radio documentary will on radio shows nationwide in November. ‘Dying Words’ is on Twitter @DyingWordsProj ; and on Facebook.
Pokey Progress on Pay Has PSC Eyeing Strike
By DAN ROSENBLUM
October 26, 2015

Professional Staff Congress officials said the union will hold a strike-authorization vote if there isn’t progress soon in reaching a new contract between its members and the City University of New York. In a recent letter to her members, PSC President Barbara Bowen called the vote a “significant escalation” of the union’s campaign for a new agreement.

The PSC will hold a Nov. 19 meeting to prepare for the vote, which wouldn’t trigger a strike but would allow the union’s executive council to call one if it deemed it necessary.

‘Can’t Rule It Out’

“I want to be clear: the PSC leadership is not calling for a strike,” she said. “We are doing everything we can to reach a fair contract settlement without the need to strike. But given CUNY management’s continued failure to secure state funding and put an economic offer on the table, we cannot rule out being prepared for a strike.”

The de Blasio administration has settled pacts covering at least 83 percent of the city’s employees, but about 35,000 CUNY employees represented by the PSC and District Council 37 have been working under expired contracts since 2010 and haven’t gotten across-the-board raises in six years. Members argue that increases in both the cost of living and the use of part-time educators are discouraging them from staying at CUNY.

Because the city and state both fund the university, the Mayor and Governor Cuomo both need to approve any agreement. So far, the university hasn’t yet put forward an economic offer, according to PSC officials.

Under the state’s Taylor Law, most public employees or their unions may not “cause, instigate, encourage or condone” a strike. Unions can face steep penalties, including losing the right to have dues automatically deducted from members’ paychecks, and employees lose two days’ pay for each day on strike.

An ‘Intolerable’ Delay

Ms. Bowen said the law doesn’t bar employees from engaging in a strike-authorization vote or urging others to vote in favor of one. She said that members shouldn’t attempt to conduct job actions on their own and that it wasn’t the union’s goal to walk out, but to instead achieve a contract through political negotiations. “But six years without a raise, six years of erosion of competitiveness and conditions at CUNY, is intolerable — especially in one of the richest cities in the world,” she said. “If Chancellor Milliken will not defend CUNY, we will.”

Earlier this month, hundreds of PSC and DC 37 members held a “wake-up call” at CUNY Chancellor James Milliken’s apartment to dramatize their stalled negotiations. The union
is planning a Nov. 4 “disruptive action” and has conducted trainings in civil disobedience and street protests.

University spokesman Michael Arena said in an e-mail that “CUNY is working with state and city officials to obtain a fair and equitable contract, and our Chancellor has indicated that a settlement is the university's highest priority.”

PSC has reached other non-economic agreements with CUNY management since 2010 that include paid-parental leave, adjunct health insurance, a sick-leave bank and research grants.

The union won its first contract in 1973 after a strike-authorization vote, which passed by a four-to-one margin, according to PSC’s newspaper, The Clarion.
The hit musical “Hamilton” has excited critics and audiences with its hip-hop exploration of America’s revolutionary era. Now educators and philanthropists are hoping it can excite high school students as well.

The Rockefeller Foundation and the producers have agreed to finance a program to bring 20,000 New York City 11th graders, all from schools with high percentages of low-income students, to see “Hamilton” at a series of matinees beginning next spring and running through 2017. The lead producer, Jeffrey Seller, said he was planning to continue the program, both in New York City and on the road, once the show — a bio-musical about Alexander Hamilton with Hispanic and black actors playing the founding fathers — begins its expected touring life.

The Rockefeller Foundation president, Judith Rodin, said in an interview Monday that her organization had committed $1.5 million for student tickets and for the development of a curriculum that will help students contextualize the show. Ms. Rodin said she had twice seen “Hamilton,” first during its Off Broadway run at the Public Theater, and then on Broadway in July (the day President Obama was in the audience).
"I started thinking, here’s a story that talks about American history and the ideals of American democracy, and it features an immigrant who is impoverished initially and shows through perseverance and grit what he can achieve, in a vernacular that speaks to young people, written by a product of New York public education,” she said. “Could there possibly be a better combination in terms of speaking to students?”

Lin-Manuel Miranda, the 35-year-old creator and star of “Hamilton,” attended the Hunter College public elementary and high schools for gifted students. Mr. Miranda said that he was frequently asked at the stage door how the show, which is both costly to attend and often sold out, can be made more accessible to young people, and he said finding a way to do that has been a priority for him.

“If we can excite curiosity in students, there’s no telling what can happen next,” he said.

“Not to say we’re going to make 1,300 history majors or 1,300 musical theater writers every time we do the show, but hopefully they will take away how much Hamilton did with his life in the time that he had.”

Mr. Seller, who plans to announce the student program at a news conference Tuesday, has agreed to sell tickets to the foundation for $70 each — about half the $139 current average ticket price for the show. The foundation, in turn, will make tickets available to students for $10 each — the denomination that has Hamilton’s face on it — because school officials have advised that paying a nominal admissions fee encourages students to take such activities more seriously.

Mr. Seller said that about 17,000 students would attend student-only Wednesday matinees, supplemented by educational programming at the theater the same morning.

Another 3,000 would join regular ticket-buyers at other Wednesday matinees, with the educational component presented in their classrooms. He said the student performances would earn back their cost, but would not make a profit.

The musical’s language and content would not be toned down or altered for a student audience, according to Mr. Seller; the show already has some young people attending.

The lyrics for “Hamilton” include a few instances of profanity, and the plot includes an extramarital affair, two deaths by dueling, and, of course, violent resistance to a repressive government authority (Britain). Educators love the show because it is also a passionate civics lesson and a de facto love letter to the American experiment, with rap battles over federalism and foreign policy and a paean to democracy sung by an actor portraying George Washington.

“It’s extremely appropriate — you’re not fighting a revolution and saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ to everyone,” said Carmen Fariña, the New York City schools chancellor and
a history buff who read “Alexander Hamilton,” the biography by Ron Chernow that inspired the musical, before seeing it to assess whether it might work for students.

Although attending will be optional for students, Ms. Fariña said she hoped that by bringing students to the theater, “we will begin to talk about history as something alive and exciting.” But she said she saw lessons for Broadway, as well. “I think we need to give a message to the arts community that the arts are for everyone,” she said.

The curriculum will be put together by the nonprofit Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, which plans to create a website with copies of the primary documents that undergird the show’s book and lyrics, and teaching materials about Hamilton and the founding fathers.

The institute’s executive director, Lesley S. Herrmann, said the initial round of students would be drawn from advanced placement history classes at Title 1 schools — those where a high percentage of students qualify for free or reduced lunches — in all five boroughs. She said the students would be invited to create their own artistic responses to Hamilton’s life, and the best ones would be performed for other students.

“The first time I saw the show, I was lamenting that the audience was all your usual theatergoers,” said Ms. Herrmann, who has seen “Hamilton” three times. She said she would count the project as a success “if we’ve inspired a young generation to take history seriously, to get personally involved in it, and someday to serve the country as Hamilton did.”
Multiracial Teens Talk About Their Identity Rip Tides

The pressures and rejections come from within, from peers, from different sides of their families. "No matter how hard I tried I was always too white for the black kids and too black for the white kids," says one girl. The second in a three-part series on multiracial teens.
By Stephanie Geier
October 27, 2015

In middle school, Allyson Gonzalez thought befriending white girls would stop the other Brooklyn public school students from teasing her about her thick eyebrows and hairy arms.

However, her new friends acted outright, "horribly" racist to certain students. Gonzalez went along with them, but would be nice to the other students in private. After witnessing this behavior, she then decided "if anything was bad, it was being white."

Now a college freshman at Hunter College, Gonzalez, who is German, Irish and Puerto Rican, identifies as a "multiracial white-Hispanic woman." She blames "social pressure" for the delayed acceptance of her mixed background, she said in an email interview.

Young people who are multiracial are four times more likely to switch their racial identity than to consistently report one identity, sociologists Steven Hitlin, J.Scott Brown and Glen H. Elder found in their 2006 research, cited by sociologists Kerry Ann Rockquemore, David Brunsma and Daniel J. Delgado in their 2009 piece published in the Journal of Social Issues.

This is part of the multiracial "journey," according to freelance writer Hannah Gomez, who also works with the advocacy organization We Need Diverse Books. In her 2013 paper "This, That, Both, Neither: The Badging Of Biracial Identity In Young Adult Realism," she combined evidence from modern fiction and scientific research to identify a three-step process in multiracial identity development. First, individuals are confronted with a situation causing them to reject one side of their race. They then seek a community that does not pressure them to disconnect with one of their sides. Finally, they achieve a sense of empowerment that successfully leads to identifying with a mixed label.

"Structural, systemic racism says that people must be easily defined and sorted into groups, and race is an easy way to do that," said Gomez in an email interview.

While she added that no one needs to embrace all of her background, individuals are often told to embrace just one, resulting in "a lot of undue stress."

Peer Pressures

Not fitting into one easy category led Lexi Brock, who is white and African American, to Project RACE, where she is co-president of its teen initiative. The 16-year-old Georgia native grew up in the predominantly white suburb of Toccoa and did not realize she had a
blended background until middle school. The adversity she faced there toward multiracial people lowered her self-esteem and increased her need to "blend in," she said in a phone interview.

Every morning for three years, Brock would spend two hours straightening her thick curly hair to conform to the sleek thinner hairstyles of her white peers.

"I did not want to bring to light my African American features," Brock said. "I would look in the mirror and think 'I don't look like the other girls.' I tried losing weight to make my hips not be so protruding."

"I remember people saying 'oh you can't date her, she's mixed' as if having tanned skin affected my character," Brock said in a speech this spring at an event celebrating people in Toccoa who overcame personal obstacles. "No matter how hard I tried I was always too white for the black kids and too black for the white kids."

Like Brock, 18-year-old Raina Salvatore from Queens, N.Y, faced peer pressure that made it feel hard to embrace her Italian, Portuguese and Indian heritages.

"When I was younger, I'd have peers who'd tell me, 'you're not Indian' or 'you're not Portuguese,'" she said in an online interview. "I have friends who make jokes about it, but truth be told, it's really rude."

She was often told she was "too white" to be Indian or couldn't be a certain race because she wasn't "culturally proficient in any." Thus, until seventh grade, she identified more with her Italian heritage.

While teenage sisters Angela and Julie Lavarello never rejected their background, some members of their cultural community did make them feel self-conscious about being mixed at weekly Polish classes in Queens and Brooklyn. The girls, who have a part-Polish mother and Peruvian father, recalled students asking them why they were there.

"Nobody [at Polish school] really takes you seriously," said Angela Lavarello during an interview in the Bronx, N.Y. "I feel like every time you come upon somebody who thinks you're an oddity . . . you have to explain why you're there."

Family Pressures

Still other multiracial teens have felt uncomfortable with their identity due to familial rather than peer pressures.

Sarah DeFilippo, 16, felt more pressure from her family than her friends when it came to her mixed heritage. DeFilippo, who is from Queens, N.Y, has a Trinidadian mother and Italian-German father.

She said in an online interview that her mother's side of the family treats her differently.
"They assume we can't handle pepper in our food, that we don't know what anything is, and that's hurtful because it's like 'here's my family,' but I don't think we're much alike," she said.

Her Italian-German aunt "acts really confused" whenever DeFilippo plays soca music, a highly rhythmic genre of Caribbean music originating in the 1970s from a subculture in Trinidad and Tobago. She remarked, "I think it's harder for her because that whole side of the family was pretty racist against people of color, so there was a lot of culture shock for her."

Others have experienced more explicit familial pressure.

Stephanie Surjeet, 22, who is Punjabi and Haitian, said being multiracial was "kind of like a curse" because her family wanted her to follow differing cultures.

"I could never really relate to my father's side because I just felt ostracized. They would talk about my hair being too curly," she said in a phone interview from her home in Brooklyn, N.Y. "They would say we would act too African American."

Thus, she felt more at home with her Haitian family, who accepted her race. Surjeet's predicament is an issue that Gomez touches on in her paper. People, she writes, tend to perceive certain mixes "as a sort of betrayal" on the part of the individual for identifying, or appearing to identify, with just one race and rejecting the other.

Despite these struggles, Surjeet acknowledges that being multiracial also leads to more open-mindedness. "Sometimes it's hard to fit in, especially as a kid," she said, "so you have to start kind of figuring out your identity early on."
Cuomo taps former staffers in latest round of appointments, recommendations
By Matthew Hamilton
October 26, 15

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced Monday a round of appointments and nominations, including three for a trio of former high-level members of his administration.

Ex-Cuomo aides Benjamin Lawsky, Josh Vlasto and Matthew Wing all were tapped for different spots. Lawsky, the former superintendent of Financial Services, was recommended to New York City for appointment as director of the trust for Governor’s Island. Vlasto, Cuomo’s former chief of staff, was appointed as the governor’s designee to the Cornell University Board of Trustees. Wing, Cuomo’s former press secretary, was recommended to Empire State Development for appointment as director of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation.

That news coincidentally comes as one of Cuomo’s closest confidants, Joseph Percoco, plans his exit from state service.

“It was a personal life decision,” Cuomo said of Percoco at an event in Manhattan. “He’s been in state government a long time. He’s been a fantastic public service employee. But he had needs that he had to attend to for his family.”

The full release from Cuomo’s office is below:

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced a number of appointments to his administration, adding to a team committed to implementing his bold agenda.

“These men and women bring a depth of knowledge and practical experience to their new positions, and I am confident that they will help us continue to move New York forward,” Governor Cuomo said. “I am inspired by their commitment to public service, and pleased to welcome them to their new roles in the administration.”

Benjamin W. Lawsky has been recommended to the City of New York for appointment as Director of the Trust for Governor’s Island. Mr. Lawsky is currently the Chief Executive Officer of The Lawsky Group, a firm that specializes in helping companies, boards, and individuals manage their most complex, emergent and dynamic challenges.

From 2011-2015, Mr. Lawsky was New York State’s Superintendent of Financial Services. Prior to serving as Superintendent of Financial Services, Mr. Lawsky was Governor Cuomo’s Chief of Staff, and before that a senior aide in the New York State Attorney General’s Office. Previously, Mr. Lawsky spent more than five years as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Southern District of New York. He began his career as Chief Counsel to Senator Charles Schumer on the Senate Judiciary Committee and as a Trial Attorney in the Civil Division of the Department of Justice. Mr. Lawsky is a graduate of Columbia College and Columbia Law School.
Josh Vlasto has been appointed as the Governor’s designee to the Cornell University Board of Trustees. Mr. Vlasto is currently a vice president at MacAndrews & Forbes Incorporated. Mr. Vlasto previously served as Chief of Staff to Governor Cuomo and prior to that Deputy Communications Director. From 2004–2010, Mr. Vlasto worked for U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer, first as Legislative Aide for transportation and homeland security and then Press Secretary 2007–2010. Mr. Vlasto graduated from the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations in 2004.

Matthew Wing has been recommended to Empire State Development Corporation for appointment as Director of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation. Mr. Wing is currently the Northeast Communications Lead for Uber where he runs communications for its New Jersey, New York and Connecticut Markets. Prior to joining Uber, Wing served as Governor Cuomo’s Press Secretary in his first term and as communications director for his re-election campaign in 2014. Prior to that he served as Communications Director and Deputy Advocate for Communications to then Public Advocate Bill de Blasio. He also briefly worked in the City Council, for the national labor federation Change to Win in support of Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign, in the New York Attorney General’s Office under then Attorney General Andrew Cuomo and was a Roth Fellow in the New York State Senate. He has a B.A. from Bard College.

Mark Colón has been appointed President and Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Housing Preservation at New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), after having served as HCR’s Deputy Counsel since 2008. Previously, Mr. Colon practiced law as an Associate at Dechert LLP and at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP. Mr. Colon has also clerked for the Honorable Julio M. Fuentes, Third Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals. He holds a B.A. from Hunter College and a J.D. from Yale Law School, where he was the Managing Editor of the Yale Law & Policy Review.

Nora Yates has been appointed Assistant Deputy Secretary for Human Services.

Previously, Nora served as the Director of the Community, Opportunity & Reinvestment (“COCR”) initiative, which was launched by Governor Cuomo in his 2013 State of the State agenda to enhance the well-being of communities and ensure that all New Yorkers have the opportunity to thrive in a safe and stable community, from a supported childhood to a productive adulthood. Ms. Yates joined the administration as an Empire State Fellow in the Executive Chamber and before the Fellowship, she served as Executive Director of the Pride Center of the Capital Region and Field Director for the Empire State Pride Agenda, in Albany. Ms. Yates earned an M.S. in Public Administration from Sage Graduate School, and an M.A. and B.A. from the University at Albany.

Benjamin Voce-Gardner has been appointed Assistant Secretary for Public Safety for the Executive Chamber. Previously, Mr. Voce-Gardner served as a Litigation Associate at Zuckerman Spaeder LLP and as an Appellate Prosecutor in the United States Navy’s Judge Advocate General’s Corps. While in the Navy, he also held positions as Law Clerk

Colin Brennan has been appointed Press Officer for the Executive Chamber. Mr. Brennan previously worked as a Public Information Officer at the New York State Department of Health and Communications Manager at the New York State Thruway Authority. Mr. Brennan has a B.A. from the University at Albany.

Camonghne Felix has been appointed Speechwriter for the Executive Chamber. Ms. Felix has written for Teen Vogue since March of this year, and has been published by Huffington Post, Poetry Magazine and other publications. She’s served as a mentor and facilitator for Urban World NYC since November 2014. Her previous experience includes work as a curriculum specialist with the Harlem Children’s Zone, work as a Campaign Lead at DoSomething.org, and as a research associate and speechwriter for the campaign of Assemblyman Michael Blake. Ms. Felix is pursuing an M.A. in Arts Politics from New York University.
In Rutland, Vt., a rare glimmer of hope in battle against opioid addiction
By Brian MacQuarrie
October 26, 2015

It’s morning, and local and state police cruisers already are criss-crossing an opioid-ravaged neighborhood of this small city. Rutland Sergeant Matthew Prouty slows to a crawl past boarded-up homes. His radio crackles with questions about an out-of-state license plate.

Within minutes, the state trooper has pulled over a car and put a Rutland mother of five through a battery of drug-sobriety tests. Neighbors stop and watch, some on the sidewalk, some on their porches.

This small grid of blighted streets in the city’s Northwest section is the hardest-hit neighborhood in perhaps the hardest-hit community in a state reeling from opioid addiction. But house by house, block by block, the city is working to reclaim its streets — offering a rare glimmer of hope in the fatal opioid crisis that has afflicted communities across New England.

In Rutland, crimes related to drug use are plummeting, hundreds of people are receiving addiction treatment, and notorious drug dens are being razed and replaced by parks. It’s an aggressive counterattack, called Project Vision, that has enlisted residents and community leaders in a sweeping collaboration that is gaining national attention.

“We’re a community on the rise,” said Sandy Fitzgerald, a 59-year-old woman who stood near a Northwest intersection long known for its brazen drug trade. A few weeks ago, a block party was held there.

The all-hands-on-deck philosophy behind Project Vision is familiar to many communities battling the opioid scourge: By sharing ideas and resources, cities and towns can be more effective.

But Rutland, population 16,500, has embraced that thinking in a big way. Since it was launched in late 2012, before opioid addiction began gaining widespread attention, Project Vision has attracted more than 300 members from 100 disparate agencies, and they meet regularly.

Mental health clinicians and correction officers, among others, are embedded in the police station to help officers take back the city. Social workers now accompany police on some calls; advocates for victims of domestic violence ride along, too.

It’s an open-arms approach that seeks to help troubled residents rather than simply build up arrest and incarceration numbers.
“It’s not a police problem that needs to be solved. It’s not a health problem. It’s a community coming together,” said police Commander Scott Tucker, executive director of Project Vision. “Building great neighborhoods is really the focus of what everybody is trying to do.”

On Tuesday, in Chicago, Rutland police planned to speak to the International Association of Chiefs of Police about their approach to opioid addiction. It’s a challenge starkly at odds with the idyllic view of Vermont as a laid-back, bucolic paradise.

Rutland had once been a railroad hub that shipped marble worldwide from nearby quarries. But when that industry declined, many residents moved out and sold their homes to indifferent landlords who subdivided them into low-rent apartments.

Lorraine Bedard, 82, lives in the Northwest home she has shared with her husband, Donald, since the late 1950s. The two-story house is neat and well maintained, but nearby is a succession of boarded-up and dilapidated homes with a sordid history of drug use.

“It was heartbreaking,” Bedard said of the neighborhood’s transformation from family-friendly to dangerous. Several residents said that despite the improvements, they will not allow their children to walk to a nearby park, even in daylight.

“This area is drug central,” said James Hodgdon, 42, a recovering opioid addict, as he stood a block away. “You have crack houses. You have heroin houses.”

A sense of safety is slowly returning. Donald Bedard, who owns a small store across from his home, credits an increased police presence. Sometimes, he said, officers spend an entire afternoon in the neighborhood, walking from door to door, talking with residents, listening to concerns and suggestions.

It’s old-school policing, complemented by intense attention to data that direct officers to the worst problem areas. Once there, Prouty said, police might park their cruisers outside a suspect’s home for a weekend or pull up chairs on the sidewalk and watch for hours.

“We can make a location radioactive,” Prouty said.

Such attention is part of a plan to disrupt the markets where drug buyers and sellers come together, a strategy encouraged by David Kennedy, director of the National Network for Safe Communities, a project of John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.

Eliminating either the supply of drugs or the demand for them has proven impossible, said Kennedy, who helped devise Operation Ceasefire in Boston, the 1990s effort to curb youth gun violence. But by disrupting the marketplaces — by clearing them of drug traffic and keeping them clear — the areas eventually are no longer seen as drug markets and return to normal, Kennedy said.

The strategy is paying off in Rutland, authorities said.
Since fiscal 2013, crimes linked to drug use have dropped dramatically. Burglaries are down 53 percent; larceny and theft from motor vehicles, 31 percent; disorderly conduct, 37 percent; and vandalism, 49 percent.

“People are beginning to speak out. Before, they were scared,” said the Reverend Hannah Rogers, pastor of the United Methodist Church.

The road to hope also is being paved at a downtown drug clinic, which opened in 2013 and now provides treatment to more than 400 people. And it’s being built nail by nail in the Northwest neighborhood, where private investors are renovating crumbling and abandoned homes.

Authorities here shrug their shoulders when asked why Rutland became a regional hub for heroin. Kennedy said the choice of Rutland might simply be an accident that, through word of mouth, morphed into a crisis.

“Brooklyn dealers came up and off-loaded their product, and people from other neighborhoods started going into the neighborhoods where heroin was being sold. Then, others from the outside came in,” Kennedy said.

Although Rutland is seeing positive signs, opioid addiction might take generations to curb in a city where the menacing and the mundane are close together. On one block, Prouty, the police sergeant, pointed to a school, a church, a doctor’s office, and a den of drugs and prostitution.

“I bet you there is not one family in this whole county who does not have somebody who has an addiction issue” with drugs or alcohol, said Tracie Hauck, director of the Turning Point Center of Rutland, which offers counseling and drug-prevention services.

Still, Rutland officials believe they have found something in their mix of collaboration and pinpoint policing.

“There’s violent people out there, and there are people creating chaos out there, and those people need to spend time in jail,” said Tucker, the police commander. “But there are also those who have created a mess out of their lives and deserve a second chance.”
3 Different Types of Education Grant Projects
By Mary Velan
October 26, 2015

The state and federal funding available for public schools can be used for a variety of initiatives such as new technology, coursework or workforce development.

CPS Tech

Chicago recently received a $38 million federal technology grant that will allow Chicago Public Schools to be fully wired and equipped with state-of-the-art technology and high-speed internet. The funding comes from a Federal Communications Commission grant and will be used to modernize more than 500 schools throughout the city.

The new technology upgrades will connect students with the latest innovations to enhance coursework and provide hands-on experience using modern tools valuable in the workforce. Students will be able to access information instantly throughout the school day as well as outside of school. This will ensure students receive the most out of their education, which will improve academic outcomes.

Furthermore, the modernization strategy is part of the city's commitment to make computer science a requirement for graduation from Chicago Public Schools, The Chicago Sun-Times reported.

How STEM Is Taught

The National Science Foundation recently awarded $1.2 million to three college professors in an effort to change the way science and technology coursework is taught in public schools. The goal of the innovative grant opportunity is to discover new ways to boost the success rate in STEM subjects when taught in underrepresented communities.

According to the professors at California State University, there is a new theory in teaching STEM classes that focuses on building important skills in children in a younger age. When students are equipped with problem-solving and critical-thinking skills earlier in life, tackling complex subjects such as math and technology is less daunting as they progress through school. The professors want to incorporate more computational thinking in the classroom so students feel comfortable with the topics and eager to experiment and learn.

The research project will focus on 5th and 6th graders and professors will train participating teachers on the new techniques they are testing. The professors will also deploy after-school resources - such as video games - to support STEM teaching and learning. The goal of the project is to understand what it takes to empower students and teachers to increase participation and success in STEM academic programs, particularly in underserved communities.
Immigrants and Low-Income Students

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has allocated a $3.2 million grant to the City University of New York to better educate immigrant and disadvantaged students at LaGuardia Community College. The four-year grant will be used to train 27 Ph.D. students who, in turn, will teach about 2,500 undergraduate students at the Long Island City school. The goal of the program is to diversify the academic staff while encouraging more students to advance to baccalaureate and graduate degrees, NY Daily News reported.
Downtown Student Slashed and Robbed by 6 Men, Police Say
By Irene Plagianos
October 26, 15

A Borough of Manhattan Community College student was slashed and then robbed of more than $2,000 in belongings by a group of six men, police said.

The 36-year-old victim told police that he saw a man lurking near the 199 Chambers St. school when he left class at about 9:45 p.m. on Oct. 15.

The victim explained that the man saw him and said, "What's up dude?" before pulled out a black gun, according to the police report. The attacker put the gun away and instead came at the victim with a switchblade, slashing his wrist, police said.

The student soon realized there were other men standing near the attacker, so he ran into a deli at 66 West Broadway and asked for someone to call 911, according to the police report.

The victim said everyone in the deli left after a man walked into the store a moment later and said something in Spanish that the victim didn't understand, police said. Soon after, the man who cut him came into the deli along with four other men and began attacking him, pushing him into the glass counter, police said.

The suspects grabbed the victim's $300 Burberry tan wallet, $400 in cash, a $1,300 Andrew Marc black jacket and a backpack before fleeing, police said.

The victim then chased the man who slashed him to a 7-Eleven at 140 Church St. but the attacker soon fled, police said.

The owner of the deli where the incident happened was not immediately available to comment.

None of the men have been caught. Police were still investigating the incident.
Riveting and Powerful Dreams and Prayers
by Vance R. Koven
October 26, 15

Ashmont Chamber Music, the Dorchester-based presenter, survived a near-death experience and has, under its new-ish artistic director Mary Beth Alger, resumed high-quality programming that should bring more people down to this corner of our city.

Sunday afternoon's offering by the young Æolus Quartet (violinists Nicholas Tavani and Rachel Shapiro, violist Gregory Luce, and cellist Alan Richardson) with clarinetist Todd Palmer constituted the most recent evidence.

The two programmed pieces, Dvořák's String Quartet No. 14 in A-flat Major, Op. 105, and Osvaldo Golijov's Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind, at first blush don't seem to have much connection. The former, Dvořák's last-composed quartet—indeed, his last essay in chamber music—is on its surface an abstract construction along conventional lines, with hat tips to late Beethoven, while the latter, one of the Massachusetts-resident Argentine's most popular pieces, is an exploration of Jewish history, psychology and mysticism. Yet, the Dvořák reveals that its concern, beyond its formalities, is the relation of the Czech people to its history and culture, preoccupation Dvořák had always dwelt on but that intensified in his mind during his three-year sojourn in the US: he began writing the quartet before returning home.

While the form of the quartet is the standard “international” style of his day—and, perhaps, the constraints of the received traditions of writing in standard forms informed the composer’s decision to move on to the operas and tone poems that comprised the remainder of his output in the last decade of his life—the content celebrates Czech particularities, from fiery public declarations to lyrical folksong to bumptious peasant dances. After taking a couple of minutes to settle its intonation, the Æolus responded with youthful gusto rather than elegant refinement, but with keen ensemble cohesion. Tavani indulged a predilection for portamento, most notably in the second-movement scherzo.

The slow movement saw fine attention to long melodic lines, a lovely passage in which Shapiro brought out a lilting accompaniment figure, and a mellow richness in Luce's part. The bouncy and playful finale carried intense highlights in a race to the finish.

Palmer, who like the quartet calls New York home (but who probably should move to Boston, he is such a frequent sight on our concert stages), introduced Golijov's 1994 work, which he recorded with the St. Lawrence Quartet in 2002, as one of the greatest chamber works of the late 20th century. His point has merit: unlike the oh-so-hip-and-cool detachment of so many composers of our era, Golijov has never been averse to making big, emotional connections, whether in the Jewish-themed pieces like Isaac or his Latin American influenced material such as his Pasion según San Marcos. Of course, the clarinet quintet gets this affect naturally from its subject matter, the writings of Rabbi Yitzhak (Isaac) Saghi Nahor of 12th-13th century Provence. The blind rabbi was noted for his contributions to Kabbalistic philosophy, a mystical linking of the divine presence with
symbols derived from the Hebrew alphabet. Golijov constructed the quintet in three central movements, sandwiched by a prelude and postlude with similar musical material, though presented in different styles. The composer thought of the work as representing three languages used by Jews over the millennia, the prelude and first movement in Aramaic, the second movement in Yiddish and the third and postlude in classical Hebrew; the stylistic changes these represent are striking, with Middle-Eastern cantillation effects in the first, full-throated earthy klezmer in the second, and a stately yet awed formality in the third.

Palmer and the Aeolus gave everything one could hope for. A palpable tension pulled between the laid-back hipness of the Kronos Quartet in their premiere recording, available here, or even the St. Lawrence recording (movement 2 here), and the where the clarinetists (David Krakauer and Palmer, respectively) were heading. The quartet fully matched Palmer’s intensity (he joked that as a Methodist he really shouldn’t know anything about klezmer—we might add “or mysticism”—but that study can overcome all obstacles), as he tore up the air on four different clarinets (the usual B-flat and A, plus a C for the klezmer sound and a bass, on which he brilliantly executed the highest pitches we’ve ever heard on one). The strings, too, were well on top of Golijov’s more evocative effects, like saltando in harmonics. Our notes are full of expressions like “visceral,” “emotive,” “soulful” and so forth. Bottom line, a riveting performance of a powerful work.

Vance R. Koven studied music at Queens College and New England Conservatory, and law at Harvard. A composer and practicing attorney, he was for many years the chairman of Dinosaur Annex Music Ensemble.
The Decriminalization Delusion

America doesn’t have an incarceration problem—it has a crime problem.
By Heather Mac Donald
Autumn 2015

In July 2015, President Obama paid a press-saturated visit to a federal penitentiary in Oklahoma. The cell blocks that Obama toured had been evacuated in anticipation of his arrival, but after talking to six carefully prescreened inmates, he drew some conclusions about the path to prison.

“These are young people who made mistakes that aren’t that different than the mistakes I made and the mistakes that a lot of you guys made,” the president told the waiting reporters.

The New York Times seconded this observation in its front-page coverage of Obama’s prison excursion. There is but a “fine line between president and prisoner,” the paper noted. Anyone who “smoked marijuana and tried cocaine,” as the president had as a young man, could end up in the El Reno Federal Correctional Institution, according to the Times.

This conceit was preposterous. It takes a lot more than marijuana or cocaine use to end up in federal prison. But the truth didn’t matter. Obama’s prison tour came in the midst of the biggest delegitimization of law enforcement in recent memory. Activists, politicians, and the media have spent the last year broadcasting a daily message that the criminal-justice system is biased against blacks and insanely draconian. The immediate trigger for that movement, known as Black Lives Matter, has been a series of highly publicized deaths of black males at the hands of the police.

But the movement also builds on a long-standing discourse from the academic Left about “mass incarceration,” policing, and race.

Now that discourse is going mainstream. As the press never tires of pointing out, some high-profile figures on the right are joining the chorus on the left for deincarceration and decriminalization. Newt Gingrich is pairing with left-wing activist Van Jones, and the Koch brothers have teamed up with the ACLU, for example, to call for lowered prison counts and less law enforcement. Republican leaders on Capitol Hill support reducing or eliminating mandatory sentences for federal drug-trafficking crimes, in the name of racial equity.

At the state and city levels, hardly a single criminal-justice practice exists that is not under fire for oppressing blacks. Traffic monitoring, antitheft statutes, drug patrols, public-order policing, trespass arrests, pedestrian stops, bail, warrant enforcement, fines for absconding from court, parole revocations, probation oversight, sentences for repeat felony offenders—all have been criticized as part of a de facto system for locking away black men and destroying black communities.

There may be good reasons for radically reducing the prison census and the enforcement of criminal laws. But so far, the arguments advanced in favor of that agenda have been as deceptive as the claim that prisons are filled with casual drug users. It is worth examining the gap between the reality of law enforcement and the current campaign against it, since policy based on fiction is unlikely to yield positive results.

Two days before his Oklahoma penitentiary visit, Obama addressed the NAACP national conference in Philadelphia and raised the same themes. The “real reason our prison population is so high,” he said to applause, is that we have “locked up more and more nonviolent drug
offenders than ever before, for longer than ever before." This assertion is the most ubiquitous fallacy of the deincarceration movement, given widespread currency by Michelle Alexander’s 2010 book, The New Jim Crow. That a president would repeat the myth is a demonstration of the extent to which ideology now rules the White House.

Pace Obama, the state prison population (which accounts for 87 percent of the nation’s prisoners) is dominated by violent criminals and serial thieves. In 2013, drug offenders made up less than 16 percent of the state prison population, whereas violent felons were 54 percent of the rolls and property offenders, 19 percent. (See graph below.) Reducing drug admissions to 15 large state penitentiaries by half would lower those states’ prison count by only 7 percent, according to the Urban Institute.

True, drug traffickers make up a larger (though declining) portion of the federal prison population: half in 2014. But federal prisons hold only 13 percent of the nation’s prison population. Moreover, it is hardly the case that “but for the grace of God,” as Obama put it, he could have been incarcerated in Oklahoma’s El Reno for getting stoned as a student. Less than 1 percent of sentenced drug offenders in federal court in 2014 were convicted for simple drug possession, according to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, and most of those convictions were plea-bargained down from trafficking charges. Contrary to the deincarceration movement, blacks do not dominate federal drug prosecutions.

Hispanics were 48 percent of drug offenders sentenced in federal court in 2013, blacks were 27 percent, and whites 22 percent.

Even on the state level, drug-possession convicts are relatively rare. In 2013, only 3.6 percent of state prisoners were serving time for drug possession, often the result of a plea bargain, compared with 12 percent of prisoners convicted for trafficking. Virtually all the possession offenders had long prior arrests and conviction records. The meth users that Tustin, California, police officer Mark Turner encountered in his undercover narcotics days were sentenced to drug classes. “Then they would skip out of the classes and always re-offend,” he says.

Nor is it true that rising drug prosecutions drove the increase in the prison population from the late 1970s to today. Even during the most rapid period of prison growth—from 1980 to 1990—violent prisoners accounted for 36 percent of the rise in the state prison population, compared with 33 percent from drug offenders. (See “Is the Criminal-Justice System Racist?,” Spring 2008.) From 1990 to 2000, violent offenders accounted for 53 percent of the census increase and all of the increase from 1999 to 2004.

Obama and other incarceration critics have targeted mandatory minimum sentences for federal drug crimes. The current penalty structure is hardly sacrosanct, but mandatory sentences are an important prosecutorial tool for inducing cooperation from defendants.

The federal minimums are also not lightly levied. A ten-year sentence for heroin trafficking, for example, requires possession of a kilogram of heroin, enough for 10,000 individual doses, with a typical street value of at least $70,000. Traffickers without a serious criminal history can avoid application of a mandatory sentence by cooperating with investigators. It is their choice not to do so.

The critics of “mass incarceration” love to compare American incarceration rates unfavorably with European ones. Crime is inevitably left out of the analysis. Jeremy Travis and Nicholas
Turner, head of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Vera Institute, respectively, penned a classic treatment of this theme in the New York Times in August 2015. Germany’s incarceration rate is one-tenth that of the U.S., they fumed. “To be sure,” they acknowledged, “there are significant differences between the two countries.” And might those “significant differences” have anything to do with crime, perhaps with the fact that the U.S. rate of gun homicide is about 17 times higher than that of Germany? Of course not. No, for Travis and Turner, the key difference is that “America’s criminal justice system was constructed in slavery’s long shadow and is sustained today by the persistent forces of racism.” The same people who denounce American gun violence and call for gun control in a domestic context go silent about gun violence when using Europe as a club to cudgel the American prison system. The U.S. homicide rate is seven times higher than the combined rate of 21 Western developed nations plus Japan, according to a 2011 study by researchers of the Harvard School of Public Health and the UCLA School of Public Health. This disparity is largely fueled by the American firearm homicide rate: 19.5 times higher than in the comparison high-income countries, according to 2003 data. Among 15- to 24-year-olds, Americans kill with guns at nearly 43 times the rate of their counterparts in those same industrialized nations. Since the American prison system is driven by violent crime, it is not surprising that America’s incarceration rate is higher than Europe’s.

Contrary to the advocates’ claim that the U.S. criminal-justice system is mindlessly draconian, most crime goes unpunished, certainly by a prison term. For every 31 people convicted of a violent felony, another 69 people arrested for violence are released back to the streets, according to a 2007 Bureau of Justice Statistics analysis of state courts. That low arrest-to-conviction rate reflects, among other reasons, prosecutors’ decisions not to go forward with a case for lack of cooperative witnesses or technical errors in police paperwork. The JFA Institute estimated in 2007 that in only 3 percent of violent victimizations and property crimes does the offender end up in prison.

Far from being prison-happy, the criminal-justice system tries to divert as many people as possible from long-term confinement. “Most cases are triaged with deferred judgments, deferred sentences, probation, workender jail sentences, [and] weekender jail sentences,” writes Iowa State University sociologist Matt DeLisi in a forthcoming issue of the Journal of Criminal Justice. Offenders given community alternatives “are afforded multiple opportunities to violate these sanctions only to receive additional conditions, additional months on their sentence, or often, no additional punishments at all,” DeLisi adds. In 2009, 27 percent of convicted felons in the 75 largest counties received a community sentence of probation or treatment, and 37 percent were sentenced to jail, where sentences top out at one year but are usually completed in a few weeks or months.

Only 36 percent of convicted felons in 2009 got a prison term. Among convicted violent felons in 2009, 17 percent received community supervision and 27 percent were sentenced to jail, leaving 57 percent on their way to prison. (The numbers have been rounded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.) A 17-year-old gang member in Tustin, who has just been arrested for stealing a bike and leading the police on a chase through residential backyards, tells of a friend who stole a car and took off on the freeway with the police in hot pursuit. His friend had a gun at the time.

Though this car thief already had a serious felony on his record, he was given a ten-month jail sentence and was out in five months, hardly an overly harsh sentence for the public danger he caused. The bike thief himself has a long record of burglaries, assault, and absconding but has never gone to jail.
The vast majority of felony defendants whom a district attorney decides to prosecute rather than divert out of the system have an extensive criminal history, yet were still in the community committing crime. Half of the defendants charged with a felony in 2009 in the 75 largest counties had five or more prior arrests, and 36 percent had ten or more.

About three in five had at least one prior conviction, and 30 percent had multiple felony convictions, with 11 percent of felony defendants having five or more previous felony convictions. Yet the majority of those offenders will still not get a prison term. Among those who wind up sentenced to prison, the prior records are even longer. The average number of prior convictions for inmates released from state prison in 2005 was five; the average number of prior arrests was more than ten.

The Los Angeles County Probation Department has supervised a “frequent flier” whose extensive arrest record includes multiple charges of assault with a deadly weapon, grand theft, auto, taking a vehicle without the owner’s consent, threatening a crime with intent to terrorize, robbery, escape from custody, failure to appear, driving without a license, possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia, false imprisonment, exhibiting a deadly weapon, and murder. He has twice been sentenced to prison for those crimes, but he is out on the streets as often as not. In August 2015, he was in jail after getting arrested for another violent crime.

Steve, a 49-year-old convict in Santa Ana, is a typical career criminal who is unconfined and still offending. He has a long rap sheet for burglary and firearms charges. His last prison stint ended in 2013, with a three-year term of supervision; recently, a case implicating him in 12 burglaries in nearby Irvine was thrown out by the district attorney because of technical flaws in the police report. In August 2015, he sat with his brother, son, and a friend on the cement back porch of his classic California bungalow, surrounded by a Mercedes 300 SL, a pickup truck, and a jumble of household detritus, as probation officers searched the bungalow’s dark interior for contraband and other occupants. The probation team found a semiautomatic handgun in a backpack and a 30-year-old female probationer hiding in a bathroom. She was absconding from her probation officer and high on meth. Steve claimed that he had found the backpack on the front porch a few days earlier and put it in the front hall closet but that he had no idea that it was still there and that it contained a gun. “If it was my pack, I wouldn’t keep it in the hall closet,” he told the officers.

The syringes for his diabetes medicine that were also in the backpack seemed to belie his claim that the pack was not his.

The biggest myth about the criminal-justice system is not that it mindlessly metes out overlong sentences but that the disproportionate number of blacks in prison reflects bias by police, prosecutors, and judges. “The bottom line is that in too many places, black boys and black men, Latino boys and Latino men experience being treated differently under the law,” President Obama told the NAACP conference in July, echoing a line he has made with increasing frequency over the last year. Incarceration “disproportionately impacts communities of color,” Obama said. “African Americans and Latinos make up 30 percent of our population; they make up 60 percent of our inmates.”

Naturally, Obama said nothing about crime rates. It is not marijuana-smoking that lands a skewed number of black men in prison but their elevated rates of violent and property crime. A 2011 study of California and New York arrest data led by Pennsylvania State University
criminologist Darrell Steffensmeier found that blacks commit homicide at 11 times the rate of whites and robbery at 12 times the rate of whites. Such disparities are repeated in city-level data.

In New York City, blacks commit over 75 percent of all shootings, according to the victims of and witnesses to those shootings, though they are only 23 percent of the city’s population. They commit 70 percent of all robberies. Whites, by contrast, commit under 2 percent of all shootings and 4 percent of all robberies, though they are 34 percent of the city’s population. In the 75 largest county jurisdictions in 2009, blacks were 62 percent of robbery defendants, 61 percent of weapons offenders, 57 percent of murder defendants, and 50 percent of forgery cases, even though nationwide, blacks are 12 percent of the population. They dominated the drug-trafficking cases more than possession cases. Blacks made up 53 percent of all state trafficking defendants in 2009, whites made up 22 percent, and Hispanics 23 percent, whereas in possession prosecutions, blacks were 39 percent of defendants, whites 34 percent, and Hispanics 26 percent.

Repeated efforts by criminologists to find a racial smoking gun in the criminal-justice system have come up short. If the prison population were not a reminder of a reality that the political and academic establishment would rather cover up—the black crime rate—it is unlikely that the deincarceration movement would have generated the same momentum. After all, the nearly fourfold rise in the prison population since the early 1980s played a major role in the record-breaking crime drop since the early 1990s. That prison buildup represented a backlash against the anti-confinement ideology of the 1960s and 1970s that had lowered the incarceration rate, as crime was exploding in cities across America. Many of the same alternatives to penal custody that are now being proposed had been put into place in the late 1960s and early 1970s to keep criminals out of prison.

But these alternatives lost support as crime spun out of control. Legislators started lengthening sentences, especially for repeat felony offenders, and pressing for a greater confinement rate.

During the 1980s, crime rates fluctuated as the prison population steadily grew; it was only in the early 1990s that crime began a steady downward trajectory, ultimately to be cut in half by the mid-2000s. Anti-incarceration advocates point to the divergent paths of crime and imprisonment in the 1980s to argue against the role of prison in the 1990s crime drop; University of California at Berkeley law professor Franklin Zimring, however, has argued that it was not until the 1990s that the prison buildup reached its most effective incapacitative strength and kicked in as a sustained antidote to lawlessness.

Statistical war continues to be waged over incarceration’s role in the last two decades’ crime decline, with all activists and many academics still denying that incarceration contributed to the crime drop. Given the nonstop pressure from the Black Lives Matter movement, we may be embarking on another real-world experiment testing the relationship between incapacitation and crime. If the country is really serious about lowering the prison count, however, it is going to have to put aside the fictions about the prison population. The legendary pot-smoker clogging up the rolls is long gone, if he were ever there. Cutting the prison population will require slashing the sentences of violent criminals and property offenders (many of whom have violent histories) and keeping more of them in the community after their convictions. The problem is not the “Michelle Alexander story that we have too many harmless people in prison,” says New York University public-policy professor Mark Kleiman. “Most of the problem is that we have too many murderers in prison.”
Compared with the rhetoric around “mass incarceration,” current sentences do not seem outrageously high. In 2009, the median sentence length for all felony convictions was 30 months.

For violent felonies, the median was 48 months, and for nonviolent felonies it was 24 months. In 2011, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 43 percent of new admissions to state prisons were sentenced to two to four years; 57 percent of all prisoners had sentences of four years or less. About 42 percent of incoming prisoners had sentences of five years or more. Whether you find those numbers shocking depends on your view of retribution and incapacitation. To be sure, some very long sentences are meted out. California, for example, has one of the strictest sentencing-enhancement laws in the nation for the use of guns during felonies. Rob someone with a knife, and you may get two years in prison. Threaten your victim with a gun, however, and you may, depending on your criminal history and plea bargaining, face an additional ten years. In Iowa, class B felonies like armed robbery have a 25-year prison sentence, of which at least 70 percent must be served.

Still, it will take a lot of sentence cutting and diversion to the community to make a difference in the prison population. Cutting the time served by violent felons in New Jersey state prisons by 15 percent, for example, would lower the prison population there by only 7 percent by 2021. Cutting violent felons’ time served by half would still only bring down the population by 25 percent, according to the New York Times’s Erik Eckholm, using an Urban Institute estimation tool. Such measures will hardly end the era of “mass incarceration.” To get back to our historical level of incarceration, we would need to reduce the prisoner headcount by 80 percent.

Some reincarceration advocates argue that increased social programs for criminals can significantly reduce the risks of letting offenders out early or not confining them in the first place. We have entered the era of “evidence-based practices,” or EBP, they say.

Evidence-based practices are social-services and therapeutic programs delivered to the “at-risk” population that have allegedly been scientifically shown to reduce offending.

The EBP movement represents an “embrace of scientific data and expertise” and a “rejection of penal populism and of ill-informed common sense,” writes Stanford University law professor Joan Petersilia. Of course, it was the “expert”-run corrections regime of the 1960s and 1970s that ushered in “penal populism” and “ill-informed common sense,” in response to the ensuing crime wave.

The problem with the EBP movement is that there is not much E for the P. As Petersilia herself acknowledges, few programs have been shown to work. And if a program produces an effect in its initial iteration, that result may not be replicable, especially at a larger scale. None of the six programs evaluated by the Justice Department for prisoner reentry was rated as effective. Two had no positive results, while the efficacy of the others had not been established. The federal government funded a large “collaborative” reentry program for serious and violent offenders.

Though “collaborative” is almost as favored a term as “evidence-based,” the program had no impact on employment or the rearrest and re-incarceration rates of the ex-cons.

Even programs concentrating on work may not have lasting effects. Fifty-five percent of ex-offenders placed in government-subsidized jobs in Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, and St. Paul had been rearrested two years after the program ended, compared with 52 percent of ex-offenders in a control group who were not placed in jobs, the MDRC found in an evaluation.
Twenty-nine percent of the subsidized jobs recipients had been reconvicted two years out, compared with 27 percent of the control group.

Moreover, it is hard to find an offender who has not already been given programs galore, whether “evidence-based” or not. “These guys have been through so many programs,” says an Orange County probation officer. The officer is checking up on a heroin dealer and user in Santa Ana. “I’ve offered this guy programs, but he’s declined. I’ve forced him into residential programs. We tell them to get counseling, they don’t show up. I offer people resources, but they don’t follow through because they’re addicts.” The dealer is not home, but his sister complains that nearby Saddle View Park is a favorite hangout for druggies and an easy place for her brother to get high.

The female meth user hiding in Steve the burglar’s house during the Santa Ana probation check had previously been given a government-subsidized job with the department store Marshalls as a “women’s associate” in the handbags section. She has also received residential treatment for drugs and alcohol use and been placed in a maternity home.

When the job subsidy ended, the store cut back on her hours, and the probationer, who falsely gave her name as “Yvette” during the probation check, stopped showing up. She was fired. Six months later, she returned to a practice that she had begun at age 15: stealing cars, this time from an auto dealership when she noticed a bunch of keys left unattended.

Other deincarceration advocates are frankly skeptical about programs as a means of reducing the prison population. “To lower the prison population we need to change the penal code,” says James Austin, president of the JFA Institute. “Don’t talk to me about programs. We need to bring sentences back to a rational level.” The advocates even admit that letting prisoners out after a shorter time in prison will lead to more crime, though such acknowledgments rarely make it into the public discourse. But under a cost-benefit analysis, a crime increase may be an acceptable result, if the incarceration savings are put to better uses, they argue—though here, deincarceration advocates seemingly reimport a belief in programs. “If we let everyone out six months earlier, some guy will throw a little old lady off the roof,” says Michael Jacobson, executive director of the Institute for State and Local Governance at the City University of New York. “The substantive argument to be made is that reinvesting the enormous savings from reduced prison populations into programs that we know effectively reduce crime will make us all safer in the end.”

Fordham law professor John Pfaff says: “If we are experiencing more $30 thefts because we aren’t spending $6,000 or $7,000 per year to lock someone up, that could be an efficient reallocation of costs,” especially if the savings are put toward greater treatment options.

In defense of this bracingly honest argument for shorter sentences, one has to recognize that all sentences are arbitrary to begin with. Though there is political risk in reducing sentences once they have been established at a certain length, if the sentence had always been set at the reduced level, no one would notice or complain. Even deincarceration advocates ignore the inherent arbitrariness of sentences. In the American Society of Criminology newsletter, Jeremy Travis and Bruce Western recently called for sentences to be “proportionate” to the crime, echoing a 2014 National Academy of Sciences panel that they chaired. This is a meaningless principle, since no objective, “proportional” relationship between a crime and its punishment exists.
But though we have no ideal, Platonic length for sentences, we have arguably arrived at our current sentences through trial and error. During the halcyon days of “expert”-driven corrections in the 1960s and 1970s, crime was raging. Sentences got longer until, in conjunction with a policing revolution that began in New York City, they finally put a lid on crime, ushering in the biggest national crime drop in recorded history.

Further, the costs of prison are comparatively modest, contrary to deincarceration advocates on both the right and the left. The states spent $48.5 billion on corrections in 2010, the last year for which a full breakdown of corrections expenditures is available.

Never acknowledged is the fact that more than one-fifth of that amount goes to noninstitutional oversight, such as probation and parole, as well as to training. The amount spent on operating prisons and jails was about $37 billion in 2010. The 2010 budget for the federal Bureau of Prisons was $6.1 billion, bringing total federal and state expenditures on institutional confinement that year to $43 billion. (Groups such as the Koch brothers–supported Coalition for Public Safety regularly claim $80 billion in annual prison spending.) That $43 billion is a small fraction of the $1.9 trillion that the states alone spent in 2010, an outlay dominated by education and welfare payments. In 2011, the states contributed $283 billion to federal means-tested welfare programs like Medicaid and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families cash aid. Los Angeles has proposed a $5.8 billion budget to host the 2024 Summer Olympics, an amount lowballed by several billion. Americans spend $7.4 billion on Halloween, according to the National Retail Federation. By comparison, $43 billion nationally to incapacitate serious offenders seems a bargain.

The costs of uncontrolled crime dwarf $43 billion—or $80 billion. Efforts to estimate those costs inevitably fall short. Immeasurable is the psychological toll of feeling unsafe in your own neighborhood. It is conventional in anti-incarceration circles to dismiss property crime as “nonserious” and an acceptable consequence of lowered law enforcement. But a street experiencing home or car break-ins is under siege, its residents restricted in their freedoms and well-being. Add violence, and the inhibition on lawful civic and commercial activity intensifies.

The loss of business-generated wealth and tax revenue in crime-plagued inner-city areas across the country has spurred usually useless government spending to try to jump-start those crime-strangled economies. That spending eclipses prison outlays. The federal Housing and Urban Development agency alone spent $88 billion in 2014 on Community Planning and Development grants to troubled communities.

Per-prisoner costs are also exaggerated. A widely quoted figure is $2,600 a month per prisoner.

But that is an average that includes fixed capital costs and wages. The marginal cost of each new prisoner is closer to $500 a month, according to John Pfaff, at least until a threshold is crossed that either allows the shutting down of a wing or facility or requires the addition of a new one.

The current case against incarceration may have been built on multiple fictions, but prison unquestionably is, on average, a squalid, spirit-killing enterprise that can turn borderline offenders into more hardened criminals. (Research is divided on whether incarceration in the aggregate increases recidivism: some studies find increased lawbreaking among ex-prisoners, some studies find no effect, and some find a decrease in recidivism. The impact on future employment and earnings is also contested, with some studies finding no negative effects and others even finding a short-term bounce in employment upon release.) If there were alternatives
to arresting and confining criminals that provided the same anticrime benefits, they should be implemented.

California provides a test case for how not to go about deincarceration and decriminalization. In November 2014, voters passed Proposition 47, a ballot measure to reclassify retroactively many drug and property felonies as misdemeanors. All thefts under $950, including of someone’s car or of an illegal gun, or yanking a handbag or laptop from someone’s hands, would now be a misdemeanor, which can be punished, at most, only by time in jail, not prison. In fact, misdemeanor convictions only infrequently yield jail time. Misdemeanor offenders are not put under probation or parole supervision in the community, which means that they are not subject to search by probation officers; they cannot be ordered into drug treatment. DNA cannot be collected from misdemeanor suspects, diminishing law enforcement’s ability to solve past and future crimes. Many officers have stopped making arrests for a range of drug and property offenses, since the “juice is not worth the squeeze,” as a Santa Ana gang detective put it: the time spent processing a case exceeds the consequences to the offender. Prosecutors previously could file a shoplifting incident as a felony commercial burglary if the facts warranted it and the thief had a serious criminal history. They have lost that tool when the goods stolen are worth less than $950. “Now many so-called misdemeanor offenders are hard-core criminals,” says Jennifer Contini, an assistant district attorney in Orange County.

Prop. 47 was sold to voters as a way to remove from offenders the stigma of a felony record and to lower the prison and jail populations, with their attendant racial disparities.

Someone arrested for a misdemeanor, if he has identification and no outstanding warrants, is cited in the field and asked to come back to court on another day, rather than being taken into a police station or jail for booking. As a result, the state’s jail population dropped after Prop. 47 passed, though it is starting to rise again, thanks to crime increases. The measure also promised to reroute the money saved on incarceration into truancy, treatment, and mental-health programs, starting in 2016.

Crime increased immediately after Prop. 47 passed. “We had 10 years of crime reductions,” Los Angeles county sheriff Jim McDonnell told the Associated Press in August, “and all of a sudden, right after November when 47 kicked in that changed and fairly dramatically, very quickly. It would be naive to say that 47 didn’t play a major role in that... People are no longer incarcerated, they’re not in treatment, they’re out reoffending on the street.” In the city of Los Angeles, violent crime rose nearly 20 percent through August 22, 2015, compared with the same period in 2014; property crime was up 11 percent. Shooting victims were up 27 percent. Arrests were down 9 percent. In Santa Ana, felony crime was up 33 percent in May 2015, compared with May 2014.

Violent crime was up 28 percent, property crime up 43 percent, and robbery up 89 percent. In nearby Costa Mesa, violent crime increased 47 percent, and theft was up 44 percent, through late July, compared with the same period in 2014. In San Francisco, violent crime was up 13 percent, and property crime up 22 percent, through June 2015 over the previous year. Granted, cities across the U.S. have experienced a sharp crime increase during the last year, as officers back off of proactive policing in response to the anti-cop calumnies of the Black Lives Matter movement.

But the addition of Prop. 47 in California appears to be adding to law enforcement’s challenges.
The criminal world is well versed in the new regime. “Sure, I know about Prop. 47,” says Mitchell, a 62-year-old vagrant hanging out in Santa Ana’s perennial Civic Center homeless encampment. Mitchell, who sports sunglasses, cargo shorts, and a ponytail, has spent 22 years in prison for 24 felony convictions, including for burglary and meth trafficking. “I’ve seen 47 in action,” he says. “If someone is busted, the police cite and release them right there. People [i.e., criminals] are getting a little sloppier. If it’s a felony and I’m sitting there with the cops, I’m going to be a little nervous. Now it’s just a ticket.” Mitchell winces: “I think that’s a little lax.”

Theft should be serious, he says.

Even when theft was a felony, the system used discretion in prosecuting: “If you’re caught at Kmart, you’re not going to do time for your first offense. If it’s your second, maybe you’ll do 30 days in jail.” Now there’s more dope flowing and the drug trade is picking up, Mitchell says.

“There’s more people on the streets. It’s fast living and a fast life.”

Los Angeles’s Skid Row is the most anarchic and squalid homeless colony in the nation, compared with which the tormented figures of a Boschian hellscape might as well be in a fête galante. (See “The Reclamation of Skid Row,” Autumn 2007.) Through August 22, 2015, violent crime in the area was up more than 57 percent over the previous year, shots fired were up 350 percent, and property crime up over 25 percent. In July, a man was nearly decapitated with a machete. “I see the effects of 47 every day. People are emboldened,” says Wendell Blassingame, the self-described mayor of San Julian Park (known as “marijuana park”), in the heart of Skid Row. Blassingame is seated at a cardboard table with flyers for social programs, as mentally ill addicts stumble past headed for the park’s picnic tables. Prop. 47 has made it harder to keep order, he says, because police can’t ask the gang members who prey on the local population if they are on parole or probation. It has led to the “WDNC phenomenon: ‘We do not care,’ ” says Blassingame. “People say: ‘What can they do to me?’ Everyone knows they’re not going to prison. Even if they commit a violent crime, the DA may let them plea out. And they’re back on the streets.”

The proponents of Prop. 47 say: not to worry. By 2016, the promised savings from prison and jail diversion will have materialized and been redirected to treatment programs. This reassurance overlooks the fate of another California prison-diversion program, Proposition 36, which has fallen out of official memory. That ballot initiative, passed in 2000, gave nonviolent drug offenders the option of free treatment in lieu of incarceration.

One-quarter of defendants who chose treatment never showed up; less than a third who did start treatment completed it. Arrests increased, even among those who completed treatment, according to Angela Hawken, a public-policy professor at Pepperdine University. Prop. 36 has quietly been shelved, but 47 seems to be treading the same path by removing the threat of confinement as a means of getting people to change their behavior. The number of offenders enrolled in California’s drug courts has dropped sharply since Prop. 47, since they no longer face the threat of prison time for most drug and property crimes.

Deincarceration advocates still applaud Prop. 47 anyway. The fact that prosecutors have lost discretion to charge a felony for most theft and drug offenses is a good thing, says John Pfaff, since prosecutors needed reining in. Their excessive zeal to prosecute was a significant cause of “mass incarceration,” Pfaff and others argue.
California’s experience with Prop. 47 to date suggests that a wholesale downgrading of offenses is a reckless solution to “mass incarceration.” There might be another way to keep people out of prison while also constraining crime, however: tight supervision in the community, accompanied by infallible but modest sanctions for slipping up. A movement known as Swift and Certain (SAC) argues that what changes criminal behavior is not the severity of a punishment—its length—but its certainty and the swiftness with which it is imposed after the offense. Since most criminals have short time horizons, telling them that after six arrests they may face a prison sentence of five years is not as much of a deterrent as telling them that as soon as they offend, they will go to jail, if only for a day or two, according to SAC proponents.

The crown jewel of the SAC movement is the HOPE (Hawaii’s Opportunity Probation with Enforcement) program, developed by Hawaii superior court judge Steve Alm. Alm noticed that probation officers would regularly come into his court seeking to revoke probation for their clients in punishment for repeated meth use, which violated the conditions of their probation. But the probation officer would show up to Alm’s chambers only after the offender had accumulated his sixth or so dirty urine test— at which point, the exasperated officer would announce, in essence: “That’s it, no more Mr. Nice Guy. I’m sending you to prison on your original felony sentence” (which could be five or ten years for such offenses as sexual assault or burglary). This pattern was the opposite of how best to modify behavior, Alm concluded. It sent the message that the offender could expect to get away with drug violations almost indefinitely, until some arbitrary and unpredictable moment when the system would come down hard by reimposing the original long prison term. By contrast, we train teenagers by meting out punishment exactly as promised, after, say, a weekend curfew violation. The longer that punishment is deferred, the less relationship it seems to have to the underlying behavior and the less deterrent and retributive effect it possesses.

Alm devised HOPE as a fundamentally different probation regime. Probationers would be randomly tested for drug use six times a month—a more frequent testing regime than usual. At their very first dirty urine, they would immediately be sent to jail for a few days. Other probation violations, such as missing an appointment with a probation officer or skipping out on mandated treatment, would also immediately be sanctioned with a short jail stay. Subsequent violations would bring lengthening jail commitments, ultimately culminating in a probation revocation to prison. Alm called every probationer entering the HOPE program into his court and explained the system, so that the probationer would know exactly how to avoid sanctions and what to expect if he violated the rules.

The results were startling. Half of the probationers in Alm’s experimental program never tested dirty for meth again. Another quarter of the experimental population stopped using meth after one trip to jail. Those who continued to use after repeated short stays were ordered into treatment. Arrests for new crimes also dropped in the HOPE population. One-fifth of probationers in the HOPE program were rearrested after a one-year follow-up, compared with nearly half of the probationers in a control group given traditional probation without swift and certain sanctions.

HOPE revealed a previously unrecognized fact: many drug users can stop on their own, without treatment, if the right incentives are in place. Placing all drug offenders in treatment is a waste of resources; a sanctioning regime like HOPE acts as a sorting mechanism to distinguish the drug users who can control themselves from those who can’t—about 9 percent in the original HOPE sample. HOPE is crucially different in that respect from drug courts, which place every enrolled
offender in mandated treatment without seeing if he can stop on his own. Drug court should be something you fall into, says New York University’s Mark Kleiman.

HOPE also validated the principle that lengthy punishment is not necessary to change behavior, at least regarding substance abuse; short sanctions can work so long as their application is certain and immediate. The question is how far the SAC principle can go in transforming the criminal-justice system. As of July 2015, 28 states had a SAC program operating within them, with interest in the concept growing daily; the largest jurisdiction so far is the entirety of Washington State, where the statewide probation department has retooled itself for immediate, no-discretion sanctions for probation violations. An evaluation of the Washington State program will be out shortly. South Dakota created a SAC program for DUI offenders that requires twice-daily alcohol testing, while otherwise allowing convicted offenders to drive so long as they blow clean. Half of the participants never skip or fail a test. Jurisdictions are experimenting with how minimal sanctions can be and still change behavior; some are assigning offenders to community service instead of sending them to jail. Others are using carrots in addition to sticks: in Washington State, for example, if a probationer complies with all the conditions of his probation for 18 months, he can free himself from further oversight. Preliminary results show that those released probationers are not rearrested.

Could the Swift and Certain principle provide the key to unlocking prisons, by so closely regulating offenders’ behavior in the community that they can remain there without needing long-term confinement in prison or jail? Perhaps, but the implementation challenges are great.

Swift and certain sanctioning sounds intuitively obvious, but it takes an enormous amount of institutional buy-in and coordination. Everyone in a local criminal-justice system, including police and probation officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges, must be committed to making sure that offenders are immediately punished; if the sanctioning is not consistent, the credibility and legitimacy of the threat are undermined.

Some jurisdictions have been unable to ensure uniformity of response. Sometimes this lack of uniformity represents lack of manpower and management capacity; at other times, it reflects disagreement with the program. Many probation officers take satisfaction in the exercise of discretion regarding punishment; they see an individualized response to each probationer’s situation as a mark of justice. “I give people chances. I am fair,” says an Orange County probation officer proudly. SAC removes that discretion to give an offender a second, third, or fifth chance; every offender who violates the conditions of his freedom must face immediate and preset consequences. (The tension between uniformity and discretion pervades the criminal-justice system. Do we want police officers to arrest everyone for drinking in public, or should they make an ad hoc judgment about whether simply to pour out the liquor and warn the drinker, at the risk of unequal treatment?

Judicial discretion in sentencing, once the norm, was curtailed during the 1980s and 1990s because of the perception that judges were being too lenient with criminals. Now the pendulum is swinging back.)

Taking SAC to scale in large urban jurisdictions would require a revolution in management. New York City has more than 1 million open arrest warrants for failure to appear in court or pay a fine for a low-level offense. No one is going after those absconders. In Los Angeles, 2,000 felon absconders are still at large who never checked in with authorities after a 2011 California law changed their confinement status, according to Los Angeles assistant chief Michel Moore. Under
such conditions, it is almost unthinkable that someone who skips out of a Breathalyzer or drug test would be immediately picked up and brought to court. SAC advocates suggest starting small in urban areas. Probation departments would need to be enlarged. But once the deterrent effect of immediate sanctioning kicks in, the caseload requiring sanctions would drop precipitously, SAC advocates maintain.

More foundational questions arise as well about Swift and Certain’s potential to lower crime and the prison population. The trigger for SAC sanctions at present is substance abuse, as well as violations of other easily monitored probation conditions, such as showing up for appointments.

There is not a technology now available for immediately detecting property and violent crimes, though GPS monitoring holds out some promise.

Yes, a huge proportion of criminals abuse drugs and alcohol and are thus candidates for SAC monitoring and sanctioning: a 2009 study by the Office of National Drug Control Policy found that 87 percent of arrestees test positive for drug use. The theory is that by reducing a criminal’s substance abuse and by rigorously enforcing key probation conditions, he will have less opportunity and inclination to commit crimes and can be kept safely in the community. The theory seems plausible, but more data are needed on changes in re-offending rates among SAC enrollees.

A final question is whether short but certain punishments are always as effective as long but uncertain ones. Offenders facing their first institutional confinement will likely be traumatized by a weekend in jail. But for seasoned offenders, short-term sentences are less of a deterrent.

California has a flabby version of SAC called “flash incarceration,” which allows probation officers, at their discretion, summarily to send a client to jail for ten days. “A career criminal can do ten days standing on his head,” says Steve Martin, a frequent court consultant on prison and jail management. Another Steve, the burglar on probation in Santa Ana, had recently done a ten-day flash for associating with his felon girlfriend, in violation of his probation terms. He seemed to regard it as the equivalent of a trip to a spa: “I just wasted the time, it was a chance to catch my breath and get some exercise with push-ups,” he said. “When you’re locked up, at least you’re working out inside your cell.”

The response to Prop. 47 would also seem to suggest that length of sentence matters, since criminals are scoffing at the lowered sanctions associated with misdemeanor offenses. A SAC proponent would respond that those shortened misdemeanor sanctions lack the swiftness and certainty of application essential to behavior modification. A persistent offender may brush off a short jail sentence to be imposed at some indefinite day in the future, but if you tell him that he’s going to jail now and losing his Saturday night out with his homies, you’ve got his attention, claims Kleiman.

Many criminologists and prisoner advocates resist SAC because they think that it is too punitive and because it de-emphasizes services and treatment. “Deterence-oriented programs [should be] subsidiary to the delivery of therapy aimed at fixing the deficits (or criminogenic needs) leading to reoffending,” argued three criminologists from the University of Cincinnati in the 2014 Federal Probation Reporter. But it is precisely its simple, behaviorist approach to criminal offending that makes it so appealing. We don’t need more services—we need more immediate consequences, says Kleiman.
For all the challenges of bringing SAC principles to scale, the concept is the most promising alternative to the carceral status quo. At the end of 2013, there were twice as many criminals in the community on probation and parole than confined in prison or jail.

Those 4.7 million probationers and parolees are already not being particularly well supervised. If the institutional population—2.3 million at the end of 2013—is greatly reduced, many more offenders will be in the community needing supervision. The more that probation and parole departments can embrace the idea of SAC sanctioning, the better the chances for keeping offenders out of trouble. Mark Kleiman has proposed the most radical application of SAC yet, as part of a reentry program for violent offenders.

Violent felons would serve the final part of their sentence in small scatter-site apartments, where they would initially be under something close to house arrest, permitted to go out only to work or to look for work, to make necessary purchases, and to meet with their correctional supervisor.

Employment attendance would be monitored. A GPS ankle bracelet and camera in their apartment would track their movements. Every day that they comply with every condition of release would gradually gain them more freedoms.

Violations of those conditions would be immediately sanctioned. The costs would be offset with savings on incarceration. The idea of early release for violent felons, however, strikes even some SAC advocates as a step too far. “Let them serve their time if they’re violent offenders,” Judge Alm told me. “It’s not that easy to get into prison.” Alm predicts that well-organized victims’ rights groups would browbeat any legislator who contemplated Kleiman’s reentry program.

The other major alternative to incarceration is policing—above all, pedestrian stops and Broken Windows policing. New York’s prison population dropped 17 percent between 2000 and 2009, while the number of prisoners in the rest of the country continued to rise.

The decrease in the New York prison population is all the more surprising, since the average sentence meted out to convicted felons over that period increased considerably, in violation of the deincarceration platform. The different trajectories of the New York and national prison counts reflect the onset, in 1994, of the New York Police Department’s practice of aggressively enforcing quality-of-life laws and stopping and questioning people engaged in suspicious behavior. Misdemeanor arrests in New York City doubled from 1990 to 2009, while felony arrests (and thus, felony convictions) plummeted, as documented by Michael Jacobson and James Austin, in a 2013 study for the Brennan Center for Justice. Even though convicted felons in New York were being sentenced to longer terms, there were far fewer such convicts, so the overall incarcerated population fell. And the reason for that drop in felony crime is that the NYPD was apprehending potential felons for lower-level quality-of-life offenses and getting them off the street before they had the opportunity to commit more serious crimes.

Reasonable-suspicion stops represent an even earlier intervention in potentially serious criminal behavior: questioning someone who looks to be casing a jewelry store in an area plagued by burglaries may prevent a subsequent break-in. And the possibility of getting stopped deters crime in the first place. An NYPD detective who used to work the club scene in midtown Manhattan during the Rudolph Giuliani mayoralty recalls talking to someone who had come into Manhattan from the outer boroughs to party. “We don’t carry guns into Manhattan,” the club goer said.
“I’ve been stopped three times since I got off the train.” Now, according to the detective, under the Bill de Blasio mayorality, “no one is getting stopped and everyone’s carrying.” Of course, the political opposition to policing, especially to misdemeanor enforcement and pedestrian stops, is even more pointed now than the opposition to incarceration.

No matter how effective the police are at deterring crime, there will always be criminals who should be incarcerated. It is a truism that prisons should be safe, orderly, and conducive to self-reform. But that is easier said than done, or it would have happened long ago. Ideally, all prisoners would work, since there is no better rehab program than the discipline and self-esteem that come from regular labor. The larger the prison, however, the harder it is to get the entire incarcerated population productively engaged, since the logistics of moving large numbers of prisoners from cells to a workplace without a violent incident are complex and labor-intensive.

Unions fight prison labor as unfair competition. Prisoner advocates complain if prison work is not paid the minimum wage, raising its costs further. Most prisoners, however, if given the choice between earning minimum wage and earning significant time off from their sentence for a flawless work record, will unhesitatingly choose the latter option. High-quality vocational training should also be available for the off hours when prisoners are not working. Such a universal work and training regime would be expensive but may pay off in lower recidivism costs.

In the final analysis, America does not have an incarceration problem; it has a crime problem.

And the only answer to that crime problem is to rebuild the family—above all, the black family.

The media troll incessantly for an outlier case of a hapless bourgeois who got slammed in prison for a one-shot mistake. In fact, the core criminal-justice population is the black underclass.

“Young black males between the ages of 17 and 26 drive the system,” says corrections expert Steve Martin. “Family is the solution—and the work ethic. You show me people with intact families and those folks work—their chances of ending up in prison are zero.”

The demonization of the police and the criminal-justice system must end. As the Black Lives Matter movement marches forward with no apparent diminution of strength, there are signs that the very legitimacy of law and order is breaking down in urban areas.

Resistance to lawful police action is becoming routine. Officers are reluctant to engage, given the nonstop campaign against them. Homicides in 35 large U.S. cities were up nearly 20 percent by August 2015. Liberal elites have successfully kept attention focused exclusively on phantom police and criminal-justice racism while squelching even the most nascent discussion of the crime-breeding chaos of inner-city underclass culture. We are playing with fire.
The Global Depression and Deflation Is Currently Underway!
By: Chris Vermeulen
October 26, 15

"The clear and present danger is, instead, that Europe will turn Japanese: that it will slip inexorably into deflation, that by the time the central bankers finally decide to loosen up it will be too late." Paul Krugman, "The Euro: Beware of What you Wish for", Fortune (1998)

Most central bank policy makers, investors, and analysts around the world today are gripped by the worry of declining growth rates, dwindling international commodity prices, high unemployment, and other macroeconomic figures.

However, not many have given much consideration to one economic factor that has the potential to disrupt global economies, shut down economic activities, and become a catalyst for a worldwide depression. We are talking about 'deflation' that if not tamed, could bring global economies to their knees creating a worldwide chaos never seen before in scale or length.

Paul Krugman, the renowned American economist and distinguished Professor of Economics at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, had forewarned about the threat of deflation for European economies. He suggested that the European Central Bank policy makers need to look into the situation now before it's too late for them to do anything about the situation.

The Eurozone today has well entered into a deflationary phase with other major economies including the US, UK, and Japan slowly heading into the same direction. In Japan and many European economies such Greece, Spain, Bulgaria, Poland, and Sweden, prices have been decreasing gradually for the past decade. This has created a number of problems for the central bank policy makers as they try to find out ways to diffuse the negative effects of deflation such as a slump in economic activity, drop in corporate incomes, reduced wages, and many other problems. What the World can Learn from Japan's Lost Decade (1990-2000)

The impact of the ongoing global deflationary trends on economies can be gauged by what Japan had experienced during the period between 1990 - 2000, which is also known as Japan's lost decade. The collapse of the asset bubble in 1991 heralded a new period of low growth and depressed economic activity. The factors that played a part in Japan's lost decade include availability of credit, unsustainable level of speculation, and low rates of interest.

When the government realized the situation, it took steps that made credit much more difficult to obtain which in turn led to a halt in the economic expansion activity during the 1990s.
Japan was fortunate to come out of the situation unhurt and without experiencing a depression. However, the effects of that period are being felt even today as corporations feel threatened of another deflationary spiral that could eat away at their profits. The situation analysts feel is about repeat in the Western economies, and that includes the US.

**Deflationary Trend Could Threaten the Fragile US Economy**

Inflation rates in the US is hovering near zero percent level for the past year. The Personal Consumption Expenditure Price Index has stayed well below the Fed's 2% target rate since March 2012. Although, the US economy hasn't entered into a deflationary stage at the moment, the continuous low level inflation despite the fed's rate being at near zero levels for about a decade has increased the possibility that the US economy could also plunge into a deflationary stage similar to that of the Euro zone.

The deflationary trend could turn out to be a big concern for policy makers and investors that may well lead to a global depression. The lingering memories of the 2008 financial crises that had literally rocked the world are still fresh in the minds of most people. That is why it's important for central banks to implement policies to fight the debilitating effects of deflation.

But, the question is how can the central banks combat the current or looming deflation trend? The Japan's lost decade has taught us that trying to contain the possibility of deflation and its negative effects can be difficult for policy makers. Economists have suggested various ways in which the debilitating effects of deflation can be countered.

However, one policy that central banks can use to fight off deflation is what economists call a Negative Interest Rate Policy (NIRP).

NIRP simply refers to a central bank monetary measure where the interest rates are set at a negative value. The policy is implemented to encourage spending, investment, and lending as the savings in the bank incur expenses for the holders. On October 13ths I wrote in detail about NIRP. Then on October 23rd Ron Insana on CNBC talk about it here.

This unconventional policy manipulates the tradeoff between loans and reserves. The end goal of the policy is to prevent banks from leaving the reserves idle and the consumers from hoarding money, which is one of the main causes of deflation, which leads to dampened economic output, decreased demand of goods, increased unemployment, and economic slowdown.

Central banks around the world can use this expansionary policy to combat deflationary trends and boost the economy. Implementing a NIRP policy will force banks to charge their customers for holding the money, instead of paying them for depositing their money into the account. It will also encourage banks to lend money in the accounts to cover up the costs of negative rates.
Has the Negative Rates Policy Been Implemented in the Past?

Despite not being well known or publicized in the media, NIRP has been implemented successfully in the past to combat deflation. The classic example can be given of the Swiss Central Bank that implemented the policy in early 1970s to counter the effects of deflation and also increase currency value.

Most recently, central banks in Denmark and Sweden had also successfully implemented NIRP in their respective countries in 2012 and 2010 respectively. Moreover, the European Central Bank implemented the NIRP last year to curb deflationary trend in the Eurozone.

In theory, manipulating rates through NIRP reduces borrowing costs for the individuals and companies. It results in increased demand for loans that boosts consumer spending and business investment activity. Finance is all about making tradeoffs and decisions.

Negative rates will make the decision to leave reserve idle less attractive for investors and financial institutions. Although, the central bank's policy directly affects the private and commercial financial institutions, they are more likely to pass the burden to the consumers.

This cost of hoarding money will be too much for consumers due to which they will invest their money or increase their spending leading to circulation of money in the economy, which leads to increase in corporate profits and individual wages, and boosts employment levels. In essence, the NIRP policy will combat deflation and thereby prevent the potential of global depression knocking at the door once more.

Final Remarks

The possibility of deflation causing another global recession is very real. Central policy makers around the world should realize that deflation has become a global problem that requires instant action. In the past, even the most efficient and robust economies used to struggle in taming inflation rates. In the coming months, most economies around the world, including the US, will have difficulty curbing the effects of deflation.

The fact is that central bank policy makers have largely ignored the possibility of deflation causing havoc in the economy similar to what happened in Japan during its "lost decade". The quantitative easing program that is being used in the US by the Feds to boost economy is not proving effective in raising the inflation rate to its targeted levels. In fact, the inflation level is drifting even lower and is hovering dangerously close to the negative territory.

Blaming the low inflation levels on the low level of oil prices is not justified. Inflation levels were hovering at low levels well before the great plunge in commodity prices.
Moreover, low level inflation rates cannot be blamed on muted wage levels. The fact is that unemployment rates have decreased both in the US and the UK in the past few years, but consumer spending has largely remained unmoved.

Taming deflation is necessary if the central banks want to avoid its debilitating effects on the economy. Policies like the Quantitive Easing program used by the Feds may allow easy access to credit, dampen exchange rate, and reduce risks of financial meltdown; but it cannot prevent the possibility of another more severe situation of deflation wreaking havoc on the economy.

The concept of NIRP may seem counter intuitive at first, but it is the only effective way of combating the deflationary trend. The world economy could sink further into a deflationary hole if no action is taken to curb the trend. And the time to start thinking about it is now. Any delay could result in a global economic meltdown that may cause deep financial difficulties for millions of people around the world.

We as employees, business owners, traders and investors are about to embark on a financial journey that couple either cripple your financial future or allow to be more wealthy than you thought possible. The key is going to that your money is position in the proper assets at the right time. Being long and short various assets like stocks, bonds, precious metals, real estate etc...
CPD introduces 'Train the Trainer' community policing initiative
October 26, 15

The Chicago Police Department introduces a new procedural justice initiative for its officers to help build community trust.

Police superintendent Garry McCarthy unveiled the new program called Train the Trainer.

The initiative is spearheaded by Yale University, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and UCLA.

McCarthy says reducing crime includes friendlier policing and building trust in the eyes of communities they serve.

"We went about training the entire department in how to treat people fairly, be neutral and give people a voice," McCarthy said.

Six police departments from across the country are in Chicago for several days to learn the new program to take back to their communities.
Lynn Appelbaum to Receive PRSA’s Outstanding Educator Award
October 26, 2015

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) announced today that Lynn Appelbaum, APR, Fellow PRSA, will receive its Outstanding Educator Award. The award will be presented at the PRSA 2015 International Conference during the Monday Networking Luncheon on Nov. 9 in Atlanta, Ga. The Outstanding Educator of the Year award recognizes a PRSA member who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of public relations education through college or university teaching.

“Public relations students must be even more aware, resourceful and skilled in various communication disciplines to effectively navigate the complexities of this ever-evolving field,” said Kathy Barbour, APR, PRSA 2015 National Chair. “Over the past two decades, Lynn’s students were privileged to have a dedicated, knowledgeable and caring educator and mentor guiding them through their journey into our profession. I am honored to congratulate her on receiving this important award.”

Appelbaum has been a public relations professional and educator for more than 30 years.

She has worked in both the public and private sectors in media relations, strategic planning and communications. Appelbaum has been a member of the City College of New York (CCNY) faculty since 1993. She currently serves as director of the advertising and public relations specialization and professor in the Department of Media & Communication Arts.

“It’s been my great honor and privilege to teach at CCNY for over 20 years and to help so many of our students launch their communication careers,” said Appelbaum. “PRSA and PRSSA have played an essential role at the Chapter and national levels to give my students and me the professional and networking tools to be competitive and to grow as professionals. I am deeply honored.”

Throughout her tenure at CCNY, Appelbaum created scholarship opportunities for deserving students and built strong relationships with leading agencies for student internships and entry-level hires. She is a founding faculty member of CCNY’s master’s degree program in branding and integrated communications, which launched in 2013.

Appelbaum organized the college’s first PRSSA chapter in 1996 and continues to serve as its faculty advisor. In 2008, she received The City College Alumni Association’s Faculty Service Award. CCNY honored her in 2014 by creating a scholarship in her name. Prior to joining CCNY, Appelbaum was press manager for “Today” on NBC, director of public affairs for The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, and marketing director of Merkin Concert Hall. Her past clients have included MSNBC, The New York Public Library, Lighthouse International, New York Road Runners Club and Hudson Guild Settlement House.
Appelbaum currently serves on the PRSA New York Chapter Board of Directors, where she chairs the committee for New York City metro PRSSA chapters. A major proponent of fostering diversity within the public relations profession, she co-authored a newly released national study on the experiences of young black and Hispanic PR professionals in the workplace, funded by a grant from the PRSA Foundation. She is a member of the PRSA Foundation Board of Directors and served on PRSA’s national board from 2008 – 2010.

The 2015 PRSA International Conference will be held at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis, November 8 – 10. A full lineup of speakers and registration information can be found at the Conference website.
New supports for first-gen students: Helpful or just ‘drop in the bucket?’
by Arianna Skibell
October 26, 2015

Audrey Olmos-Govea sat in her first sociology class at Smith College and couldn’t believe what she had just heard. As she remembers it, a guest lecturer turned to the class and said: “You understand, you’ve all been to Europe, right?”

Olmos-Govea watched most of her classmates nod in agreement, and at that moment experienced the culture shock she’d been warned about. The Pomona, California native had flown only once, for a college-sponsored tour. Europe was out of the question in her home; she is first in her family to attend college and the $15,000 a year her mother earns working as a balloon artist is the family’s sole income.

Her hand shot up in the air. “I haven’t been to Europe,” she said. “My family didn’t take vacations. I worked every summer.”

The lecturer turned beet red and apologized. Olmos-Govea felt embarrassed. “I thought, what have I done?” she recalled recently. “I’ve just isolated myself in this small group of people. But after the fact, I knew it was the right thing to do.”

By the time she arrived on the idyllic New England campus with just two suitcases and a backpack (her roommate’s belongings required two cars), Olmos-Govea, who is Mexican-American, had already overcome tremendous odds that set her apart from the majority of first generation students, who are more likely to be found at community colleges. Now a junior, she came from a town where 38 percent of residents over 25 did not graduate high school; the majority don’t speak English at home. A mentor encouraged her to apply to Smith, a private all-girls college with a combined annual cost of $63,950, not including books. A generous financial aid and scholarship package made it possible.

In recent years, though, a growing number of costly, selective four-year institutions are trying to help high-achieving first generations students like Olmos-Govea survive and thrive. Nationally, just 31.6 percent of first generation low-income students (and 47.8 percent of low-income non-first generation students) who enroll in a four year college will graduate within six years, according to the most recent data from the Pell Institute. Those in the bottom income quartile, like Olmos-Govea, have only a nine percent chance of graduating by age 24.

At Smith, where 19 percent of this year’s freshmen are first generation, efforts include a designated orientation program, encouraging first generation students to connect and learn about campus resources before classes begin. The optional program includes activities like scavenger hunts and group discussions. “It gives them an opportunity to reflect on their experience and identity as a first generation college student,” said Donique McIntosh, this year’s orientation coordinator.

Many of these colleges – among them Amherst, Hamilton and Franklin & Marshall and some large public universities – are recognizing the array of challenges that keep first generation students from graduating. In addition to financial strain, such students may be less prepared for
the demanding course loads, have difficulty navigating the complicated college system and be afraid of asking for help.

"Last year I was talking to a student who was homesick. I started talking to her like I would any other homesick student," said Marge Litchford, assistant dean of students at Smith and founder of their first generation orientation program. "But then I realized she wasn’t going to see her parents for the whole year because she couldn’t afford to fly home. And they couldn’t fly to visit her because they were undocumented."

Finding kindred spirits

Over Labor Day weekend in Northampton, about twelve new Smithies sat in a circle inside a small green house, listening to Smith President Kathleen McCartney recount her own experiences as first in her family to go to college. McCartney said her guidance counselor declined to write her a letter for Dartmouth, instead encouraging her to apply to local state colleges. Because Tufts University was around the corner, McCartney applied and was accepted.

She described the struggle of living at home and working part time while taking classes.

After her talk, one student asked if the group could take a photo with the president.

"I could tweet it out," McCartney said to enthusiastic agreement. "What should it say?"
Students volunteered suggestions, and they decided on: "Hanging with my people @smithcollege #FirstGenSmithies"

Ángel Pérez, vice president of enrollment and student success at Trinity College in Connecticut, said he sees more support and acceptance for first generation students now than when he graduated from Skidmore in 1998.

"When I went to college I don’t know that I would have broadcast that I was a first generation college student, or even fully understood what that meant," said Pérez, who grew up in the South Bronx. "I’m just so shocked that students are willing to talk about it so freely."

Smith’s Angela Lool, a chemistry major from Los Angeles, says there are still difficult situations that unfold "behind the scenes" which she keeps to herself. For example, her parents don’t speak English, so it’s up to her to complete all financial aid forms every year.

"My parents see that I get frustrated and then my mom starts crying and she says, ‘I’m sorry, I can’t.’ And then my dad tries to calm me down. Sometimes it ends bad because we just start yelling at each other," Lool said. "I know it’s hard for them because they can’t understand. We get through it, but it’s hard."

Drop in the bucket?

Overall, first-generation students are hardly well represented at competitive four-year institutions. A University of Michigan study found that when looking at the bottom half of income earners, only 14 percent of their children attend the most selective colleges. A mere five percent of those from the lowest income quartile attend elite schools. There are exceptions: in California, nearly half of freshmen in the UC system this fall are among the first in their family to earn a degree, according to University of California data.
Some small private colleges that are making an effort to recruit and retain first generation students are reporting some success. Franklin & Marshall, where some 17 percent of this year’s freshmen class are first generation students, expects 87 percent will graduate within six years – the same as the general population. At Amherst College, 17 percent of this year’s freshmen class is first generation and 94 percent are expected to graduate within six years – not far from the 96 percent rate overall.

Some of the efforts come at a time of increased attention to first generation students from federal and state policymakers, foundations and President Barack Obama’s push, along with First Lady Michelle Obama’s Reach Higher initiative and the “I’m First,” video she released in 2014 describing her own first generation experience at Princeton.

All efforts matter, said Richard D. Kahlenberg, a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, who does not think the contributions of four-year schools should be dismissed as ‘a drop in the bucket,’ because the majority of low-income students don’t attend them.

“I still think it’s important what small liberal arts colleges do to improve socioeconomic diversity, because our leadership class disproportionately comes from a fairly small set of selective four-year colleges,” Kahlenberg said. “Our democracy is stronger if more of our leaders have experienced firsthand the struggles that come with having grown up in a family where the parents haven’t gone to college.”

Gail Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community College in Queens, New York, said she wishes community colleges had resources to provide intensive individual supports like a first generation orientation.

“It would require me to do something special for 67 percent of my students, so it doesn’t make the same amount of sense when you are the majority at an institution,” Mellow said. “It does make sense at a place like Smith or Vassar, where there are many legacies, and where generations have gone to college. But I want the children of the students I serve to not be first generation. You break that down by helping these students succeed.”

How first generation students are grouped and singled out once they arrive on campus can be important to their success, said Michael McPherson, president of the Spencer Foundation and former president of Macalester College, who notes that some might prefer not to be.

“It’s a delicate thing,” McPherson said. “Whether anyone intentionally does it or not, they’ll be lumped in together because of their common self-awareness that they don’t really fit in,” he said, adding that such students may not want to be perceived as weaker or more vulnerable.

At Smith, where the orientation program began five years ago, officials say graduation rates for first generation students have been consistent over the last 10 years: 86 percent in four years.

Litchford said the program is aimed mostly at increasing their sense of belonging and empowerment, although she hopes the next step for Smith is a first generation coordinator available to students year round.

Lool, who took advantage of Smith’s first generation orientation, said if the program weren’t there, she’d probably be ashamed of revealing that her parents didn’t go to college.
“It made me feel like you’re not alone. It’s okay to be first generation,” Lool said. “When I talk to my parents or anyone back home about college, they’re really proud of me. And when they feel proud of me, I feel proud of myself.”

Pérez of Trinity wants students to know that it’s okay to ask for help. “Often students who are first generation become almost terrified because they feel like maybe everyone around them knows something that they don’t,” he said.

Pérez speaks from experience. “I grew up in a culture as a Latino male where my parents always said the only counseling you need is God and your family. And so I would never have thought to go to the counseling center. What we’re trying to do on our end is begin the conversation really early and give them a heads up of what might come.”

And sometimes, he added, “The best support can sometimes come from students themselves.”

Olmos-Govea’s sister Emily, a freshman at Smith, learned this firsthand when she arrived on campus last month, without her parents. At the financial aid booth, a woman told Emily—who, like her sister, is attending Smith with financial aid and scholarship help—that she owed a balance of over $2,000 for Smith’s health insurance, on top of a late fee.

“I saw Emily’s face fall and turn red when the woman accused us of not paying on time,” Olmos-Govea said. “It was nerve-wracking. It’s just as an example of how scary this whole process can be for people like Emily and I who have no clue how to navigate this stuff.”

The sisters explained that they qualify for that fee to be waived, and they had submitted the paperwork a month before. The woman confirmed that Smith had made the error. But before Emily signed a document stating that all the paperwork was in order, Olmos-Govea asked the woman to write a note confirming they didn’t owe any money.

Over the past three years, Olmos-Govea says her initial discomfort has been replaced by newfound confidence. And Smith has learned lessons as well; spokeswoman Stacey Schmeidel said in a statement that she was glad Olmos-Govea spoke up freshman year and hope it helped shape classroom discussion.

“Being here,” Olmos-Govea said, “has taught me how to handle myself in those situations. It hasn’t made me any less scared. But Smith has taught me to question … it’s up to me to voice what I’m feeling, and advocate for myself. Because nobody else is going to do it.”
TAP offers job training, mentoring to ex-offenders
By Amy Friedenberger
October 26, 2015

Robert Wormley marched into a wood-paneled room inside a Roanoke barbershop one October morning because he knew he would find the sort of people he was seeking.

Garry Smith trimmed a man’s hair as Wormley delivered his pitch: He wanted them to become life coaches to ex-offenders. In upcoming months, about 160 former federal inmates are scheduled to return to western Virginia. They need the tools to succeed, including positive influence, Wormley said.

“If we don’t have something for them to do, it’s going to be bad, but we can do something about this as a community,” Wormley said, holding out an application.

Smith said he wasn’t perfect. He got out of prison 15 years ago and has been clean since.

“I’m not looking for perfect people,” Wormley said. “I want people who get it, will walk with them and accept them.”

“I support you, man,” Smith said. He said he’d post Wormley’s flier and spread the word. Wormley is hoping to recruit nearly 100 life coaches for a new program to provide skills, jobs and positive influences to ex-cons and help steer them away from crime.

Total Action for Progress, a Roanoke-based anti-poverty agency, launched the program this month with a $1.3 million U.S. Department of Labor grant that will span three years.

The program is designed to help get ex-offenders work, support and a chance.

“We want to help people rewrite their stories,” said Melissa Woodson, assistant director of TAP’s This Valley Works.

Getting and keeping ex-offenders on a positive path in the days after their release is critical, research shows.

The stakes are high, not just for the former inmates but for the state. Virginia’s annual prisons and corrections spending tops $1 billion. The state’s prison population grew for the first time in five years in December 2013 and since has increased by about 1.3 percent to 30,359 as of last month.

Woodson said TAP is reaching out to federal probation and parole officers about the inmates who might return to the area as a result of changes that curbed punishment for some of the nation’s strictest drug laws. Of the roughly 6,000 inmates the Bureau of Prisons plans to release between Friday and Nov. 2, about 160 people will return to western Virginia.
“You want the people living in your community to feel like they are a part of society and doing the right thing with gainful employment and taking care of their families the right way,” said Russ Poindexter, a program manager with TAP involved with the new initiative. “You don’t want to walk down the street where the unemployment rate is skyrocketing, because what is that going to bring? It’s going to bring a lot of crime.”

TAP operates other programs that help ex-offenders find work, but life coaches are unique to the Training to Work program. The life coaches will receive training so they’re supported as well. They’ll learn about issues ex-offenders might confront, such as substance abuse and depression. They might be the kind of figures the inmates coming out of prison never have had in their lives, Wormley said.

“You can have people who motivate you to do right or do wrong,” Wormley said. Mentoring provides an added dimension to a more holistic program focused on finding an ex-offender job training, employment and a living wage, said Ann Jacobs, director of the Prisoner Reentry Institute at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City.

“Mentoring can be beneficial by providing someone with support and with patience,” Jacobs said.

Wormley — a local hip-hop artist known as “Fhat Rob” — had a life coach help him through one of the most difficult periods of his life. He said he made a living on the streets until he served several months in jail on a drug possession conviction in 2003, when he lived outside Philadelphia.

He moved to Greensboro, North Carolina, after his release. While he was there, his pregnant sister, Joyce Ann Payne II, and her boyfriend, Michael Lee Smith, were shot to death in their Roanoke apartment in April 2011. No one has been charged in their killings.

He moved back to Roanoke, but he struggled.

“When I lost my sister, one thing that was hard for me was just coming outside, to be honest,” said Wormley, 34. “I was in that depression mode, I was in that anger mode.”

A life coach got him out of the house or sat with him, offering emotional support. They’ve stayed in touch.

He’s hoping he can find people who can do the same thing for others.

“It’s a lot of entities that helped me,” Wormley said. “And that’s what’s up, because if they can help me, they can help anybody.”
Tisch departure prompts speculation about future policy
By KESHIA CLUKEY
October 27, 2015

Monday's announcement from state Board of Regents chancellor Merryl Tisch that she will be leaving the board when her term ends in March wasn't unexpected, but it could lead to dramatic change.

Tisch has been a strong advocate of the Common Core learning standards, and she'll be departing amid calls from Governor Andrew Cuomo, as well as many critics, for an overhaul.

Tisch said she would like to take the last few months of her term to "calm the waters," adding that stepping away from the heated debates over education policy "will only help."

After former state education commissioner John King — a polarizing figure who was criticized for the rollout of the Common Core — stepped down at the end of 2014, Tisch became the new public face for the Common Core. David Bloomfield, a professor of education leadership at Brooklyn College and at the City University of New York Graduate Center, told POLITICO New York.

"Her time was up," said Bloomfield, who earlier this month called for Tisch’s resignation in a Daily News editorial. "If she had become a polarizing figure and had become a rallying point for the opposition, she might do more good for her cause by now removing herself."

Similarly, New York State United Teachers said Tisch not seeking another term presents an opportunity.

"Policymakers have clearly heard from parents and educators that more teaching and less testing is needed," said the union’s vice president, Catalina Fortino, in a statement. "The chancellor’s decision to step down opens the door for a new direction in state education policy."

Tisch has been on the Board of Regents through the implementation of the Common Core. She was appointed to the board in April, 1996 and has been chancellor since 2009.

In April more than 200,000 eligible students statewide refused to take the Common Core-oriented standardized tests, a trend the state education department has been trying to turn around.

Cuomo has called for a "reboot" of the system, and in his remarks applauding Tisch for her service Monday, said there needs to be "dramatic reform."
High Achievement New York executive director Stephen Sigmund said Tisch's decision "creates uncertainty."

"I don't think it's ever helpful to have someone who was such a champion and defender of the Common Core as Tisch leave," said Sigmund, the head of the pro-Common Core coalition. "In the short run it could help, as she said, 'calm the waters' and get to more consensus through the [Cuomo-appointed Common Core task force] and [education department] commission. In the long run, who knows?"

No longer being tied to the job could give Tisch "greater latitude to set her own agenda," Bloomfield said.

Tisch told the board she will continue to be independent and outspoken in the education debates.

"I want to do this with the least politics and most independence as possible," she said.

When asked what she will press harder on in the upcoming months Tisch told POLITICO New York: "Everything."

There is a possibility that new regents members who will be appointed this year could change the policies Tisch put in place.

"It would be tragic to walk away from the standards, to walk away from accountability, to walk away from professional development that has meaning and rigor and to walk away from evaluation. That would be really not great for the state," Tisch said when asked if she was worried about leaving in the middle of so much change. "Adjusting thoughtfully, totally great, totally appropriate ... abandoning progress that has been so hard to get to is not what I would consider is strategically in the best interest of the state."

Evan Stone, co-founder and co-CEO of Educators 4 Excellence, an advocacy group for public teachers, said he hopes Tisch continues to put pressure on the Legislature to allow more flexibility for districts.

"I hope the Board of Regents and the State of New York will take this opportunity to deepen their support of teachers transitioning to these important standards, and make sure they continue to be rolled out in a way that's fair, equitable, and clear way for parents and students," Stone said.

Regent James Tallon Jr. said the debate will always continue.

"The important point that Merry made today was that by doing this she wants to be a strong and independent vice in these months," he said. "This is where the future is going to go. She still intends to be a vital leader as she has been all along."
Tallon said Tisch’s announcement was timely because it gave the board “advanced warning.”

The seat left vacant by Tisch will be up for election along with a few other regent seats whose terms are up. The state Legislature will host public interviews and by March will have a joint session to elect new, or re-appoint current regents. The three-year regents terms begin April 1.

The chancellor is then elected by the board, a process that Tallon said will likely take place in March.

Tisch wouldn’t share what was next for her, but told reporters following the meeting, “Stay tuned, but I promise you that I will be deeply engaged in all these issues that have been the baseline of my daily existence for decades.”
Stop cheating spouse from getting permanent U.S. green card by doing nothing
By Allan Wernick
October 27, 15

Q. I married a man from Jamaica and helped him get a green card only to learn he was living a double life and had a relationship with another woman. He now has only conditional residence status. How can I keep him from getting his permanent card?

Name withheld, Queens

A. Yours is a far too common story. It's sad that your husband took advantage of you just to get a green card.

The best way to keep him from getting his permanent card (valid for 10 years, but renewable) is to do nothing. Don't sign the petition for his permanent card, and don't divorce him. Then the only way for him to get his permanent card will be to prove either that you abused him or that he will suffer extreme hardship if he returns to Jamaica. He may find proving either to be difficult.

JILTED HUSBAND CAN'T BLOCK WIFE'S BID FOR CITIZENSHIP

Your husband received a two-year conditional permanent resident card because he became a permanent resident within two years of your marriage. He can apply to remove the condition without your help only if he can prove that 1) he married you in good faith, the marriage was bona fide and it was terminated by divorce or annulment, or 2) he is the victim of spousal abuse, or his child has suffered abuse from you or, 3) leaving the United States will result in his suffering extreme hardship.

If your husband self-petitions for his permanent card claiming the marriage was bona fide, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services won't approve the petition until it sees proof of divorce or annulment. If he sues you for divorce and it is pending when he self-petitions, USCIS will give him only a short time to get divorced. Without a divorce, USCIS will refer the case to an immigration judge. The judge may give him additional time to get a divorce judgement, but if you vigorously fight a divorce action, he may end up getting deported.

You may wonder why I don't recommend that you contact USCIS claiming that your husband tricked you into a phony marriage. Unfortunately, that would be almost impossible to prove. After all, you married him thinking the marriage was real.

Allan Wernick is an attorney and director of the City University of New York's Citizenship Now! project. Send questions and comments to Allan Wernick, New York Daily News, 4 New York Plaza, New York, NY 10004 or email to questions@allanwernick.com. Follow him on Twitter @awernick.
3 Blacks among recipients of 2015 MacArthur Foundation Fellows
By Zenitha Prince
October 27, 2015

Three African Americans are among the 24 recipients of the 2015 MacArthur Foundation’s “Genius Awards,” which honor people who demonstrate “extraordinary originality and dedication in their creative pursuits.”

“These 24 delightfully diverse MacArthur Fellows are shedding light and making progress on critical issues, pushing the boundaries of their fields, and improving our world in imaginative, unexpected ways,” said MacArthur President Julia Stasch in a statement. “Their work, their commitment, and their creativity inspire us all.”

The annual awards includes a $625,000 stipend, distributed over the next five years, which recipients can use at their discretion. The aim, according to the Foundation’s website, is to “encourage people of outstanding talent to pursue their own creative, intellectual, and professional inclinations” without the burden of financial concerns.

The three Black fellows have ties to the academic world.

Patrick Awuah, 50, is an educator and entrepreneur who has forged a new vision for higher education in Ghana. A graduate of Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania and of the University of California, Berkeley, Awuah worked as a software engineer for Microsoft before returning to Ghana to establish Ashesi University. The Ghana native, who is a member of the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations and a fellow of the African Leadership Initiative of the Aspen Global Leadership Network, said he returned to his home country for a simple reason.

“I became a parent. And being the father of someone who was a member of a new generation of Africans, I felt that I needed to return and be a contributor to Africa’s rise for the sake of my children [and] for the sake of my children’s children,” he said in a YouTube video feature.

The answer to that lay in grooming a new generation of ethical, service-minded leaders to combat the pervasive corruption at the root of many problems across Africa, Awuah said.

With Ashesi University, Awuah eschewed the rote learning common in Ghana’s educational system created a core curriculum grounded in liberal arts and ethical principles and one that stresses critical thinking and problem solving.

Ta-Nehisi Coates, a native of Baltimore and the son of a former Black Panther, is a national correspondent for The Atlantic magazine. He also has served as a visiting scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the City University of New York’s Graduate School of Management. The prolific blogger and contributor to several
publications has become a distinctive and compelling voice in modern discussions of race, using both personal experience and historical scholarship to unpack complex and challenging issues such as racial identity, systemic racial bias, and urban policing.

“I was motivated to pursue a career as a journalist because I was always an inquisitive child. I was always one to ask questions. Journalism was a career in which I got to pick the questions I wanted to ask and then somebody paid me for asking them,” the 39-year-old said in a YouTube video posted on MacArthur Foundation’s website.

For example, in a long-form print essay in The Atlantic, “The Case for Reparations” (2014), Coates argues for the remuneration of African Americans after centuries of them being deprived of the economic advantages enjoyed by other groups.

The Howard University graduate also discusses nuances of race in his memoir, The Beautiful Struggle: A Memoir and Between the World and Me, a long-form essay addressed to his teenage son.

The third African-American 2015 MacArthur Fellow is LaToya Ruby Frazier, an assistant professor in the Department of Photography at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The photographer and video artist used visual autobiographies to capture the economic despair in her hometown of Braddock, Pa., a once-thriving steel town turned into a crumbling wasteland.

“When I realized I didn’t have any economic power, the only thing I knew to rely on was to document what was happening,” she said. “For the past 12 years, I’ve made portraits, still life, landscapes and performances using photography and video, documenting my hometown of Braddock, Pa. I make work that deals with the intersection of the steel industry, environmental pollution and the health care crisis.”

Frazier, 33, holds a bachelor’s degree from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and a master’s from Syracuse University. Her first book, The Notion of Family, was published in 2014.
How To Make A Difference
By: Pnina Baim
October 26, 2015

Readers of Olam Yehudi more than likely agree with my strongly-held viewpoint that it is extremely important to increase the visibility of women in our community.

Unfortunately, at least in America, there isn’t much being done about the lack of visibility of women. As a matter of fact, most women are not even aware that a phenomenon exists whereby women are excluded from publications or any visible role.

And, if they are aware, there reactions are either apathy at the ability to change a force that seems out of our realm of influence, acquiescence or even a condoning of the practice in the interest of loosely-defined tznius.

I tend to rely on my (Facebook) friends in Israel to get any type of inspiration or motivation that something can be done to change the trajectory of the erasure of the women. In Israel, there is a growing pushback against publications that erase women, the forced separation of sexes in non-religious venues, and the imposing of rigid modesty standards. Watching these brave women from afar, I try to emulate them – with, sadly, very little success.

Right before the holidays began, I noticed on Facebook that people were discussing a poster of prominent women for the sukkah. The poster was drawn by Debbie Kaszemacher Grovais and being distributed by Esty Shushan, creator of the Israeli political movement, No Voice No Vote. The platform is simple: If women aren’t represented in political parties, those parties should not receive the female vote. The posters have beautiful lifelike illustrations of Donna Gracia Nasi, the Rebbitzin of Lublin, Rebbitzin Batsheva Kaniefsky, Sara Schenirer, Rebbitzin Chaya Muska Schneerson, Rabbanit Margalit Yosef, and Rabbanit Asnat Barazani, all incredible role models who deserve a place of recognition.

I bought 20 copies and eagerly awaited the posters. Call ithashagacha or blame it on UPS’s inability to overcome office bureaucracy, but the posters only arrived on Chol Hamoed (thanks to my incredible husband who ran around for days trying to locate them; without Jacob, I probably wouldn’t have gotten the posters before Chanukah). I wasn’t able to give out the posters on Sukkos which is a good thing. Unlike in Israel, it poured in New York over the holiday, and the posters, although coated, were not laminated and would not have lasted more than the first few days.

Instead, I began to give out the posters as presents, encouraging my friends and relatives to put them up in their homes, for their daughters to see and to find out more about them.

Other than Sarah Schenirer and Rebbezin Batsheva Kaniefsky, the women on the poster were unknown to almost everyone.
Slowly but surely, I gave out the posters to women who would not on their own initiative consider purchasing a display of women, even one of such modestly dressed women.

However, after a little persuasion, nobody turned down a poster of women, who, despite their different limitations, affected tremendous change, each in her own way.

This wasn’t blanket marketing, or guerilla tactics, it was more of a stealth approach, a gentle reminder that women like to see other women, that these special people shouldn’t be lost to the pages of history. Women responded to this approach and were happy to receive the poster.

This little incident, my own contribution to the push for including women, reminded me that, sometimes, even a little effort can go a long way. After all, as I told Tzippy Shushan after she expressed her regret that the posters were so delayed in arriving, we are running a marathon, not a sprint.

Sometimes, the smallest action can make a difference. When a friend of mine realized that an advertisement for the company she worked for was only going to utilize male images, she went to her (female) boss and insisted that if women couldn’t be photographed, there shouldn’t be any images used at all. Another wealthy friend of mine was asked for a donation to support a well-known Torah class website. When she realized that there were thumbnail images of the male speakers, but not the female speaker, she told the fundraiser that although the site was doing good work, until those in charge allowed thumbnails of women on their website, she could not support their cause.

Over time, with gentle, positive actions and initiatives, putting our money and time towards organizations and institutions that respect and include women, it is possible to change perceptions and, then, our ultimate goal, policy.

About the Author: Pnina Baim holds a B.S. in Health and Nutrition from Brooklyn College and an MS.edu from Yeshiva University’s Azrieli Program. She works as a nutritionist, a certified lactation consultant, a home organizer, and in her free time writes as much as possible. She is the author of the Young Adult novels, Choices, A Life Worth Living (featured on Dansdeals and Jew In The City) and a how-to book for the Orthodox homemaker, Sing While You Work. The books are available at amazon.com. Pnina is available for speaking engagements and personal consulting. Contact her at pninabaim@gmail.com.
Doctor, Did You Wash Your Hands?: 9 things to know about the website and its developer Dr. Jonathan Metsch
by Kelly Gooch
October 27, 2015

As healthcare becomes increasingly complex, it also becomes more difficult for providers and consumers to manage and navigate industry issues.

But one website, Doctor, Did You Wash Your Hands?™, aims to make that process easier.

Here are nine things to know about the website and its developer.

The website

1. Doctor, Did You Wash Your Hands?™ was developed and is curated by Jonathan Metsch, DrPH. Scott Becker, JD, CPA, publisher of Becker’s Healthcare, stated, "Jonathan is a very smart, original and interesting thinker," and "his website/blog contains brilliant insights."

2. The idea for Doctor, Did You Wash Your Hands?™ began after Dr. Metsch returned to teaching Master of Public Health and Master of Business Administration courses. At the time, he began posting articles on a learning management system called Blackboard.

In a Lessons Learned exercise students were asked to evaluate their organizations' performance against industry disruption and innovation. The approach eventually evolved into Doctor, Did You Wash Your Hands?™.

3. Dr. Metsch’s premise for the website is: "Successful medical care is more likely when there is an open, two-way discussion, between patient and doctor." He poses the question: "Are you comfortable in asking your physician all the questions you have about your health concerns and diagnostic and treatment options: evidenced based medicine vs. best practices; narrow networks and out-of-network referrals; hospitalist care vs. care inpatient care managed by your PCP [primary care physician]; immediate treatment or 'watchful' waiting; necessary or unnecessary testing?"

4. Dr. Metsch describes Doctor, Did You Wash Your Hands?™ as an organic syllabus — updated daily. He also describes it as "a versatile platform for customized program development," a one-minute-a-day briefing for medical staff, an up-to-date "click" for a board of trustee member, and a bibliography for medical and nursing students, residents, and healthcare MBA/ MPH courses.

5. Within the website, there are numerous categories. For instance, the website features JNotes, which focuses on anchor policy and program topics related to healthcare, as well
as Health Insurance 101, which provides information on types of insurance coverage, provider networks and insurance cost, among other topics. *Doctor, Did You Wash Your Hands?™* also features a section on the Affordable Care Act and a Rapid Response section that provides breaking healthcare news.

**Dr. Metsch**

6. Dr. Metsch was president and CEO of Jersey City (N.J.) Medical Center for 17 years.

7. During his tenure at Jersey City Medical Center, from 1989-2006, the medical center received numerous designations, including regional Perinatal center, Level II trauma center and medical coordination center for statewide disaster preparedness. The medical center also began cardiac surgery/ interventional cardiology, and became a major teaching affiliate of Mount Sinai School of Medicine, among other accomplishments.

8. Previously, he also was a commissioner of the Hoboken (N.J.) Municipal Hospital Authority, and the organizer and co-chairman of the Hoboken H1N1 Swine Flu Task Force.

9. Currently, **Dr. Metsch** is clinical professor of preventive medicine at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City; adjunct professor of management at Zicklin School of Business, Baruch College's business school in New York City; and adjunct professor of Rutgers School of Public Affairs and Administration in Newark, N.J., and Rutgers School of Public Health in Piscataway Township, N.J.
Experimenter Makes Urgent Art Out of Milgram's Notorious Study
By Michael Atkinson
October 27, 2015

Completing a trifecta of recent cinema (after Masters of Sex and The Stanford Prison Experiment) suddenly fascinated with the social-science lab experiments of the Eisenhower-Nixon era, Experimenter is as cool as a grad student clamping electrodes onto a test monkey. One of our lowest-profile indie-film treasures, director Michael Almereyda never makes the same movie twice, toggling from Pixelvision experiment (1992's Another Girl, Another Planet) to downtown-hipster horror (1994's Nadja) to modern-day Shakespeare, art documentaries, postmod shorts, home-movie avant-garde, and weirdly meditative dramas with no definition. Experimenter may be his Zelig or American Hustle, the ironic, icy, self-conscious riff on history that lands him at the front of the cultural brainpan.

The history here is the work of Dr. Stanley Milgram (Peter Sarsgaard), the Yale psychologist who in 1961 decided to lab-test his ideas about "role-playing, authority, conformity" in what became an infamous masterpiece of clinical sleight of hand.

Milgram would set up a pair of test subjects in separate rooms, one answering memory-test questions — and, when missing an answer, receiving electrical shocks from the other.

Immediately, we see that the shock-receiver in this scenario (Jim Gaffigan) is part of the doctor's team, in actuality receiving no jolts and instead playing painful prerecorded vocalizations. Told to continue no matter what, the true test subjects (of whom we see scores, including subjects played by, among others, Anthony Edwards, John Leguizamo, and Taryn Manning) press on with varying degrees of distress. Most follow instructions, reaching the last dial on their shock machine, purportedly the highest setting, despite being traumatized by the experience.

Why did they go all the way? Would we? Yes, we would, it seems, just as the Germans followed orders under the Nazis. The world around Milgram was freshly wading through the Eichmann trials in Jerusalem at the time, and the doctor's express intent was to plumb the essential moral conundrum of the Holocaust: We all know why the Nazis did what they did, but why did the Germans do what they did, or not do what they didn't do?

Scientifically, Milgram saw only "obedience to authority" (the title of his book about the experiments), but under Almereyda's eye, the paradigm leaks creepy entwined intimations of sadism, guilt, secrecy, abasement, and soullessness. The movie is itself a rat maze of one-sided mirrors, windows upon windows, anonymous hallways, compartmentalized instances of watching, being watched, seeing and not seeing.

Just like movies, right? Almereyda jacks up the meta as Experimenter rolls: It's like a cellar-lab version of Rear Window, with the characters entranced by the framed-up
movie-views of human life in extremis. (Milgram's fiancée and then wife, played by a wide-eyed Winona Ryder, is at first appalled as she observes but evolves into an ardent fan.) There are even splats of obvious back-projection, theatrically two-dimensional green-screen backgrounds, bursts of song, hilarious product-placement parodies, reenactments of TV shows (including the 1975 TV-movie version of the Milgram story, starring Kellan Lutz as William Shatner as Milgram, and Dennis Haysbert as Ossie Davis), stock footage (Eichmann as Eichmann), and even a literal elephant in the room, walking surreally behind Sarsgaard as he chats directly at the camera.

Is watching complicity? *Experimenter* exudes an increasing sense of stylized unreality as it follows Milgram's life after the initial experiments, suggesting that the hyperawareness of human conformity began to fracture the doctor's syllogistic perspective. In reality and in the film, Milgram's most famous work reached no conclusion more useful than a chilling acknowledgment of our ovine amorality. Truth is, Milgram was not a fascinating figure by himself; his marriage and family never faltered, and his career wandered to CUNY after Yale refused him tenure thanks to controversy about his research. The experiments were accused of being cruel and dishonest (insofar as the subjects were lied to), and Milgram had to defend them for years.

That's hardly dramatic; to compensate, Almereyda toggles toward essay mode, about Milgram and the cultural fallout from the trials, ruminating in a shrugging fashion much as Milgram himself seems to have done before he died from heart failure at the age of 51.

Sarsgaard's saturnine suaveness lends Milgram's role as puppetmaster a menacing air, however unconvincing the actor might be as an egghead. Ryder still has two of the most watchful eyes in American cinema, but the human meat of the movie is in the one-offs, the parade of faces about whom we know nothing but the immediacy of their inner crisis as they face the knobs in that tiny room and hear the barks of pain next door. It amounts to a gallery of thumbnail acting coups, some only seconds long, and none requiring any "character" at all to get under our skin.

Almereyda seems fascinated by how the warning of the Milgram experiments went unheeded in America, even as we laid waste to Southeast Asia, tolerated the Nixon administration, and followed Ronald Reagan into a socioeconomic abyss as though he were blowing a pipe. His larger point may be, we think for ourselves even less ever since.
Tech alum sentenced after scamming investors, duping school
By Matt Jones
October 26, 2015

On the surface, Phillip Barnard Jr. was a successful Virginia Tech alum. He delivered the 2005 Department of Geosciences commencement address and had pledged a large gift to the school. But on Oct. 15, a judge in Alexandria sentenced him to five years and three months in federal prison for running a fake gold investment scheme.

Prosecutors say he stole over $800,000 from investors, including a VT professor and a dean. He also convinced the school that he would donate $30 million to build a new geosciences building that never materialized.

"As you can imagine, this is disappointing for obvious reasons," said Tracy Vosburgh, associate vice president for university relations. "He was an alum and a member of our family, so that’s disappointing. And then for me, I would rather be talking to you about a great news story about something we’re doing through one of our centers or some great faculty research as opposed to this."

Barnard graduated from VT with a B.S. in geosciences in 1983. Afterwards, he pursued a PhD at the City University of New York and worked for an oil and gas industry consulting firm. But, as Barnard said at the 2005 geosciences graduation, a dramatic decline in oil prices in 1986 changed his plans.

"I wanted to be an oil man," Barnard said in his commencement speech. "I dreamed of standing in front of my own handmade derrick, singing and dancing, with crude oil raining down all over my head. It took only a few years, after I graduated from this program, for me to realize that it wasn’t the oil business I was dreaming about. It was the singing and dancing."

Starting in 1986, he involved himself with expeditions to salvage precious items from shipwrecks and other locations. He set up companies that purported to manage and consult for projects and parties in transactions involving resource exploration and recovery, particularly gold. By 2005, Barnard claimed the projects and transactions requesting his services would have a value of over $1 billion.

Barnard also pledged $30 million to VT to build a new geosciences building to replace the aging Derring Hall. At the geosciences department’s 100th anniversary celebration in October 2007, Barnard revealed the plans for the building. According to court records, his proposed plans included a new geosciences museum, a gift shop and an IMAX theater.

The school took his promise seriously. It spent thousands to hire architects and obtained $4.2 million in matching funds from the state.
According to prosecutors, VT even flew the dean of the College of Science, Lay Nam Chang, on a private plane to meet Barnard and bring him to Blacksburg to meet with then-President Charles Steger.

"When he made that expression of interest and made that commitment, the University did move forward to be able to build the building, which was a strategic priority for Virginia Tech and something that they very much wanted to happen," Vosburgh said.

But Barnard was not the financial success he claimed to be. Between 2000 and 2014, he filed for bankruptcy eight times. He lived off of money that investors had given him, expecting big returns from gold transactions he claimed to be making.

Prosecutors say that Barnard spent investor money liberally, using it to pay for dinners at Ruth’s Chris Steak House, airline tickets to Las Vegas and elite private school tuition for his daughter. On one occasion in August 2007, prosecutors say Barnard transferred $19,800 of one investor’s money to a personal account to make purchases at, among others, the Virginia Tech Foundation.

Kevin Sullivan, associate vice president for administration and general counsel for the Virginia Tech Foundation, declined to comment on this story and referred questions to University Relations. According to Vosburgh, the money paid to the Foundation was for football tickets and a private suite he had obtained.

"(He was) stealing from the rest of us to pay these big bills," said Alvin D’Andrea, a retired postal worker who has known Barnard since 1994 and who prosecutors say lost over $190,000. "He didn’t have a dime to rub together for himself."

But in 2011, things started to go south for Barnard. Minutes from a VT Board of Visitors Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting on Aug. 28, 2011, described the geosciences building project as “on hold until further direction from the College.”

In October 2011, a law enforcement official served Barnard with notice of a federal investigation.

That investigation culminated in a federal grand jury indicting him on one count of wire fraud and three counts of money laundering in February 2015. The case went to trial in July but only lasted three days before Barnard reached a plea agreement with prosecutors.

“It’s more usual that they will plead (guilty) before it starts, but it does happen, not rarely, that after a few days of trial things become clearer and they decide to settle,” said Paul Rothstein, professor of law at Georgetown University.

A federal judge on Oct. 15 ordered Barnard to pay $816,612 in restitution to seven of his victims. The judge also sentenced Barnard to 63 months in prison, the maximum under federal sentencing guidelines.
“He pretended to be people’s friend, he duped a university and he cheated some people out of a major portion of their savings, some people who are not particularly wealthy,” Rothstein said. “Those are considered aggravated facts, and it seemed to me that this was about the same amount of time that a person would get in similar cases.”

Barnard left a trail of destruction in his wake. Although VT redirected the state matching funds to the construction of the Moss Arts Center, it still lost thousands spent in preparation for construction. At least two of his victims declared bankruptcy after investing with him. One investor canceled a child’s eye surgery because they did not have the money.

“My advice is don’t find yourself in this position to begin with,” D’Andrea said. “All Barnard did was spin a web of crap and lies and everyone believed it. You can’t trust people unless you investigate and see what kind of records they have.”
Merryl Tisch won't seek another term as chancellor of N.Y. Board of Regents

BY LISA L. COLANGELO
October 26, 2015

Merryl Tisch, an educator who focused on tougher academic standards tied to high-stakes testing as the head of the state Board of Regents, announced Monday she will not seek another term.

Tisch, 60, was first elected to the board in 1996 and rose to chancellor in 2009.

Under her watch, the state adopted the Common Core standards which many parents and teachers have derided as too difficult and confusing.

Over the last two years, a growing number of parents had their kids skip taking the test as a form of protest.

During an emotional but brief speech before the morning Regents meeting, Tisch outlined the board’s accomplishments and defended its reform efforts before saying she won’t seek another term in March 2016.

“We focused on raising academic standards because too many of our children were graduating unready for college careers or independent lives,” she said.

“There are changes taking root in classrooms across this state that will lead to new, better and more equitable opportunities for all of our children,” she added.

Tisch, who has education degrees from New York University and Columbia University, was a first-grade teacher. She is married to James Tisch, the CEO of the Loews Corporation.

She also came under fire for supporting efforts to link test scores to teacher evaluations.

“Chancellor Tisch's decision is another major step in reversing the test-based education culture she led,” said David Bloomfield, professor of educational leadership, law, and policy at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center. “Her embrace of high-stakes standardized tests and rushed implementation of Common Core standards led to widespread fury and opting out of State exams she championed.”

But others lauded Tisch for her “integrity and independence.”

“(She managed) to always remain above and separate from the special interest-dominated politics of education,” said Jenny Sedlis, executive director of StudentsFirstNY.

“Tisch's commitment to higher standards and to raising the quality of teaching and learning will leave a lasting legacy in New York State.”
New Study Warns: Quit Smoking to Stay Sober
October 26, 2015

A new study found that patients with an alcohol use disorder who continue to smoke after they quit drinking are more likely to relapse within a three-year-period.

The study conducted by researchers at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and the City University of New York included tens of thousands of recovering alcoholics in the U.S. who were followed for three years. Smokers were two times more likely than nonsmokers to start drinking again, even after the researchers accounted for factors such as mood and anxiety disorders, illicit drug use and nicotine dependence.

Most adults battling alcohol problems also smoke cigarettes. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, an estimated 80-95% of alcoholics smoke cigarettes (compared with 21% of the general public), and 70% of them are heavy smokers. "Traditionally, treatment for alcohol abuse requires concurrent treatment for problems around illicit substance use," explains David Bohl, Executive Director of Kiva Recovery, a substance abuse treatment and recovery center in Vernon Hills. "However, for years, alcoholics were not encouraged to quit drinking and smoking at the same time because it was thought that the stress of quitting alcohol was enough to deal with without adding to it the stress of trying to stop smoking at the same time. It's also been assumed that smoking makes no difference to sobriety in the long run."

This study clearly casts doubt on this line of reasoning "Quitting smoking will improve anyone's health," says Renee Goodwin, PhD, an associate professor in the Department of Epidemiology at the Mailman School of Public Health. "But our study shows that giving up cigarettes is even more important for adults in recovery from alcohol since it will help them stay sober."

It's unclear why smoking makes alcohol relapse more likely, but the study's authors point to past research on the behavioral and neurochemical links between smoking and alcohol, and the detrimental effects of smoking on cognition.

Let me remind you: Smoking is an addiction. It's as likely to kill as any other addiction - maybe even more so. Because of the damage done to the body by years of heavy drinking, recovering alcoholics who smoke are at a much greater risk for developing health problems related to smoking - particularly cancer and cardiovascular disease.

Many recovering alcoholics (including one of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous who died of emphysema) have conquered alcohol -- their "primary addiction" - yet die from smoking - their "secondary addiction". In fact, data shows that smoking actually kills more alcoholics than alcohol.

Adds Bohl, "Remember that stopping smoking is no different than quitting drinking or doing drugs. Nicotine is another substance abused, so treat this the same way as you would any addiction. And substance abuse treatment and recovery centers can help you kick the habit. The clinicians at Kiva Recovery are expertly trained to help you stop smoking and successfully navigate your road to lifelong recovery."
Chancellor Fariña Announces Free SAT Access During the School Day for All High School Juniors
October 26, 2015

New SAT School Day Will Increase Equity and Access to College Exams
Announcement Comes as Nearly 300 NYC High Schools Kick Off College Application Week
SAT School Day, Expanded College Application Week Part of Commitment to College Access for All

NEW YORK – Chancellor Fariña today announced that New York City will offer the SAT exam free of charge to all students during the school day in the spring of their high school junior year, starting in the 2016-17 school year. By expanding opportunity to all New York City high school students, the new SAT School Day initiative will address disparities among students preparing for and taking critical college access exams and builds on the success of New York City’s PSAT School Day, which began in 2007 and has led to a nearly threefold increase in the number of students taking that exam. SAT School Day is a critical part of College Access for All, a citywide initiative to ensure equity and excellence in college access and planning opportunities for all students.

The Chancellor announced the initiative at the High School of Fashion Industries in Manhattan to kick off College Application Week, a coordinated national week-long effort focused on college planning and application activities for high school students. This year, the High School of Fashion Industries is one of 298 schools participating in College Application Week – the City’s third year in the program – nearly double the 161 schools that participated last year. High School of Fashion Industries is also participating in a pilot of the new SAT School Day.

“The opportunity to go to college should never be decided by students’ backgrounds or zip codes. The new SAT School Day and the expansion of College Application Week demonstrate our commitment to providing every student with the support and resources they need to pursue college,” said Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña. “I only became the first person in my family to go to college because a teacher let me know it was an option and supported me through the application and enrollment process so I could follow my dreams of becoming a teacher. All across New York City, our schools must offer students the College Access for All opportunities that can help them make good decisions and reach their potential.”

“We are thrilled to lead a whole City effort to increase college readiness and promote a strong college-going culture in every school,” said Deputy Chancellor Phil Weinberg.

“Our focus is to deliver rigorous, high-quality instruction from the moment students enter pre-K to the moment they graduate high school college-ready and with knowledge of all the opportunities that are available to them. Today’s announcement is a stepping stone on
the path we are creating to increase access to postsecondary success for every single high school student through our College Access for All initiative.”

The new SAT School Day and expanded College Application Week are part of the College Access for All initiative, announced last month in the Mayor’s plan for equity and excellence in education. Through College Access for All, every student will have the resources and supports at their high school to pursue a path to college. This can include schools providing students with opportunities to visit a college campus, get help completing applications, be paired with a college student who can serve as a mentor, or receive support in setting a strategy with their family on how they will afford college.

Additionally, every middle school student will have the opportunity to visit a college campus.

The new SAT School Day removes a number of barriers to SAT participation for students: individually registering for the test; requesting a fee waiver; traveling to an unfamiliar location; and having to take the test on a Saturday, when students and families may have other obligations. Incorporating the SAT as a school activity also promotes a strong college-going culture, encouraging students to think about college planning and college admissions assessments throughout their high school career. Research has shown that SAT School Day broadens opportunities for all students and particularly for Hispanic and African-American students.

“More New York City students will have a path to college through the SAT School Day program. Previously, only some students, no matter how talented, made it to the SAT on the weekend. Now, all students will take the SAT during the school day, which evidence shows has a deep impact on college access. Research shows SAT School Day administration has resulted in higher four-year college-going rates, particularly among first-generation college-bound students. In addition, students taking the SAT will each receive personalized practice accounts on Khan Academy and college application fee waivers if they need them. We thank the Mayor and Chancellor for extending access to SAT School Day and all the benefits that come with it,” said College Board President David Coleman.

“I applaud Chancellor Fariña for providing the SAT exam to all students free of charge to address current disparities among many of our hardworking children and families,” said Public Advocate Tish James. “No student should miss out on an opportunity for a better future because they are unable to afford a college entrance exam. We must continue to strive to provide our students with the best opportunities for college and careers, regardless of their socioeconomic status.”

“I congratulate Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña on their efforts to increase college access,” said Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan, Chair of the Assembly Education Committee. “It is so important that New York City's students get access to the resources and opportunities they so richly deserve.”
“This is a smart, practical initiative,” said Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer. “Ensuring each and every New York City public school student has the opportunity to take the SAT is another step toward putting higher education within every student’s reach.”

“As city officials and educators, we must do all that we can to ensure that our public school students are prepared for higher education,” said NYC Council Education Committee Chair Daniel Dromm. “Thanks to these new reforms implemented by the NYC Department of Education in recognition of National College Application Week, students will no longer be forced to travel long distances to other schools or pay a fee in order to take the SAT, an exam that most colleges require for their application process. I thank Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña for removing these potential barriers, thereby encouraging more students to take the SAT by making the process easier and cost-free. I will continue to work with her to provide our young people with greater access to the academic and career opportunities they need in order to thrive after high school graduation.”

To facilitate the transition to the SAT School Day, the DOE piloted SAT administration during school to 6,000 students at 40 pilot schools in Spring 2015. 92 schools will participate in the pilot SAT School Day in Spring 2016 – approximately 15,000 students.

These pilot years will ensure smooth implementation of the citywide SAT School Day in Spring 2017.

As part of the transition, the PSAT School Day – through which sophomores and juniors take the exam each October – will become part of the new SAT School Day: sophomores will now take the PSAT free of charge on the same day juniors take the SAT in the spring.

As part of efforts to strengthen college culture across all high school grades, the DOE will work with schools to develop college access activities for 9th and 12th graders – like college trips for 9th graders and college transition workshops for 12th graders – on SAT School Day while sophomores and juniors are taking the exam. The DOE will begin offering professional development around logistics and implementation of the SAT School Day to all high schools this spring, and will also provide support and communicate with parents and families about the initiative. The expected yearly cost of the citywide SAT School Day is $1.8 million.

As part of College Access for All, 298 high schools across every borough are participating in College Application Week this week – in comparison to 161 schools last year – reflecting the DOE’s increased outreach and support for College Access for All.

High schools are participating in expanded and new DOE-organized citywide events like a virtual college fair and college essay workshop, and have also received support in planning school-based activities.
Among the confirmed College Application Week activities across the 298 high schools are:

- A Citywide virtual college fair on Thursday, Oct. 29, giving students the opportunity to have live online conversations with admission officers and students from CUNY, SUNY and over 100 higher education institutions. Students and families can register online here.
- College essay workshop at John Jay College, where 80 students from across the City will receive coaching from admissions experts on crafting essays for scholarships and admissions. All NYC students are eligible to receive free online college essay support throughout this week and school year.
- The release of an updated DOE College Planning Handbook, which provides detailed information to help students apply to college, obtain financial aid, and transition to college.
- CUNY and SUNY-led workshops, where CUNY and SUNY representatives will answer questions and help students complete applications.
- Application sessions and challenges, where seniors will work on their applications and receive support from college advisors, staff, and volunteers – from “College Crunch Night” at a school in Downtown Brooklyn to “College Application Help Parties,” where students at a Staten Island school meet 1-on-1 with their college counselor.
- Alumni panels, where former graduates will share their college experiences and offer college planning advice.
- Events focused on 9th, 10th, and 11th-graders, including SAT and College Now registration and information sessions around graduation and transcript requirements.
After half a century, Tharp is still leaping

By Ellen Dunkel
October 27, 2015

Fifty years after Twyla Tharp created her first dance, the four-minute *Tank Dive*, she is among American's most successful female choreographers, and perhaps the one whose work is most often performed.

"It's obvious there's an inequity there," Tharp, 74, said by phone from the West Coast leg of her 10-week 50th anniversary tour, which comes this weekend to the Annenberg Center.

She would not comment beyond her own experience but said her success came "basically because men in the world of ballet have been big supporters, starting with Bob Joffrey.

He was a fantastic guiding factor in doing the first two ballets I did."

Each achievement begot more opportunities. "Misha [Mikhail Baryshnikov] figured he can nail solos, maybe he can do something for me, and Lucia Chase at ABT [American Ballet Theatre] figured he wanted it. Paris Opera asked me to make a piece for them.

Anthony Dowell asked me to work with his dancers" at the Royal Ballet.

"The men have appreciated that I can make dance for men in a way that hasn't been done before. It's physical; I was a very good jumper. I did a lot of weight training, which helped with partnering. I understand leverage. Many women might find it difficult, but I put myself in that position. To some degree, I studied that world. These are the tools you need, go and get them. It's about being competitive. If you want to do it, you do study it.

What are the resources I need here? Do I stack up?"

Yet, even in that first performance in 1965 at Hunter College, *Tank Dive* spoke to the unlikelihood that she'd succeed.

As her website explains, "The title *Tank Dive* reflects Tharp's belief that becoming a successful choreographer is equivalent to the chances of successfully diving into a thimbleful of water from a great height."

Yet over a half-century, she has found success - and visibility - as have few others: 129 dances, 12 TV specials, six Hollywood movies, four full-length ballets, four Broadway shows, two figure-skating routines, a Tony Award, two Emmys, a MacArthur Fellowship - the honors go on and on. She has written three books; a fourth is in the works.

Even those less familiar with dance may recognize her name from the movie *Hair* and the Broadway show *Movin' Out*.

All this has earned her a loyal group of elite dancers who form the latest iteration of a company she has several times formed and folded.

"The reality is that this group of dancers is a group of dancers I've been working with for a very long time. Several have been in all three [recent] Broadway shows or have done the works I've
made in other companies. We don't really audition. In a way, dancers come to us. I go out of my way to work as hard as I can to use specific dancers. Dancers appreciate this."

Their tour features two new pieces, *Preludes and Fugues* and *Yowzie*. Tharp describes *Preludes and Fugues* as "the world as it ought to be."

It is set to Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, which, not coincidentally, shares initials with the World Trade Center.

"In 2001, my company had been the last to perform at the World Trade Center's outdoor plaza," Tharp wrote on a blog post in the New York Times. "We danced on Saturday night, Sunday was dark, and Monday night's show was rained out. The attack was Tuesday morning."

*Yowzie* is "the world as it is," Tharp writes, full of messy, imperfect people, set to a jazz compilation.

Tharp has said she prefers not to harp on the past, but to move forward. But *Preludes and Fugues* offers nods to influential choreographers: Merce Cunningham, Jerome Robbins, Martha Graham, and George Balanchine, while in *Yowzie*, she quotes her 1971 piece *Eight Jelly Rolls*.

"I see [the past] as a launching pad," Tharp said. "It's a 50th anniversary work. I'm holding on to the past while reaching to the future."

She's on tour with the dancers for the run. "It's a privilege to watch the shows. I enjoy doing the rehearsals. It's good to be traveling with them, sharing things with them."

But she has also already planned for the future, choreographing a bit of work that's not included in the tour, to ensure there's something for the dancers to work on later. The plan is that the new work will tour next year. "Joined by several new pieces," she said.

"New work, of course - that's what I do.

How much has the dance world changed in 50 years?

"Not so much," Tharp said. "It was never easy. When we started working in the '60s, there was no federal funding. It's never been easy. In the arts, it's just not. And it's not going to be. It takes vision, commitment, and self-insistence in order to pursue an artistic endeavor.

"It's very, very romantic to see it any other way."
FBI chief's 'YouTube era' theory for violent crime worth considering, experts say
By Stephen Loiacono
October 26, 2015

One factor potentially contributing to a rise in violent crime in some major cities is the increased scrutiny of police brought on by videos of controversial arrests and shootings posted online, according to the head of the FBI.

In a speech before the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Monday, FBI Director James Comey reinforced comments he made last Friday about a "chill wind" over law enforcement agencies due to the scrutiny officers are facing and fear of being captured in a YouTube video that could ruin a career.

Violent crime has spiked in many major cities in 2015, but some criminologists say it is too soon to label it a statistical trend. Police and local governments have been struggling to understand exactly why the violence is rising.

Comey laid out a number of possible factors, but he focused on one that he said makes the most sense to him: officers becoming less aggressive because they do not want to be recorded making a mistake.

"Nobody says it on the record, nobody says it in public, but police and elected officials are quietly saying it to themselves," Comey said in a speech at University of Chicago Law School Friday. "And they're saying it to me, and I'm going to say it to you In today's YouTube world, are officers reluctant to get out of their cars and do the work that controls violent crime?"

Other prominent officials have made similar observations in recent weeks. At a gathering of top police officials in early October, the Washington Post reported, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel indicated that officers have backed down from situations that could result in negative media coverage.

"We have allowed our police department to get fetal and it is having a direct consequence," Emanuel said. "They have pulled back from the ability to interdict...they don't want to be a news story themselves, they don't want their career ended early, and it's having an impact."

The Chicago police union criticized Emanuel for suggesting officers have gotten "fetal," but they acknowledged that officers are aware they are frequently being recorded.

Some who have alleged a link between violent crime rates and the criticism of police that grew out of controversial deaths of black civilians like Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice at the hands of officers have dubbed it the "Ferguson effect," referring to the city where Brown was shot.

However, Emanuel later told the Chicago Sun-Times that New York City Police Chief Bill Bratton refers to it as the "YouTube effect." Comey has said he prefers to describe the current environment as the "YouTube era," rather than the "post-Ferguson era."
Confrontations between police and civilians posted online, such as this video of a South Carolina school resource officer struggling with a student, frequently go viral online and on cable news, playing over and over and generating allegations of misconduct and brutality, sometimes before all of the facts are known.

Officer Ben Fields assaults a female student at Spring Valley H...

Please make this video famous. This is Officer Ben Fields assaulting a peaceful female high school student at Spring Valley High School in Columbia South Carolina. Students and graduates both told me he has been brutal like this for years. This was earlier today. The Sheriff's Office just confirmed for me that this student was not physical, but that she was

Comey acknowledged in his speech Friday that he does not know how much cameras and YouTube videos are actually affecting policing, but based on the increases in crime in a number of cities that have little else in common, he believes that they are.

"I do have a strong sense that some part of the explanation is a chill wind blowing through American law enforcement over the last year." Comey said. "And that wind is surely changing behavior."

He connected this to a loss of "honest-to-goodness, up-close 'what are you guys doing on this corner at 1:00 in the morning' policing" that prevents violent crime.

His comments also questioned the notion that mass incarceration is a problem, argued for gathering better data on crime and shootings, and addressed the demographics of murder victims.

"Far more people are being killed in America's cities this year than in many years," Comey said.

"And let's be clear: far more people of color are being killed in America's cities this year. And it's not the cops doing the killing."

In his second speech on the issue Monday at the IACP conference, Comey softened some of his rhetoric and suggested that police can learn a lot from the Black Lives Matter movement, while Black Lives Matter activists could learn from police.

"Law enforcement can actually use hashtag Black Lives Matter, to see the world through the eyes of people who are not in our line of work and see how they might perceive us," he said, according to the Washington Post. "And I believe that those members of the black community can use hashtag 'police lives matter' to see the world through law enforcement eyes and see the heart of law enforcement."

Asked about Comey's comments, some of which have been seen as conflicting with the Obama administration's stance on criminal justice reform, at the White House press briefing Monday, Press Secretary Josh Earnest disputed the notion that police are becoming less proactive and taking fewer risks.

"I will say that the available evidence at this point does not support the notion that law enforcement officers around the country are shying away from fulfilling their responsibilities," Earnest said.
President Barack Obama is scheduled to speak at the IACP conference on Tuesday.

Comey's words have drawn criticism from who saw them as an attack on the Black Lives Matter movement and the call for police accountability.

The Baltimore Sun editorial board wrote, "Given what Mr. Comey admits is a lack of any real data to support it, the theory is a damaging one to advance, as it only underscores the disconnect between police and the communities they are supposed to serve."

David Graham of the Atlantic called Comey's comments "troubling."

"The implication of the Ferguson-effect argument is that police can't provide safe streets and low crime rates without massive civil-rights violations—aggressive use of physical force, racial profiling, searches that fall into legal gray areas, and so on—and without alienating black communities," Graham said.

"It is disappointing to see President Obama's former chief of staff join the ranks of those who insist we must treat police like hothouse flowers or Faberge eggs," wrote syndicated columnist Leonard Pitts. "First, we are told we may not criticize bad cops because that means we hate all cops. Now, apparently, we may not criticize them because doing so hurts their feelings."

The New York Times also noted that top officials within the Justice Department do not agree with Comey about this YouTube effect and were surprised and angered by his speech Friday.

Experts said Comey has identified a legitimate feeling shared by some police officers, but quantifying the scope of that problem is difficult and fixing it is even harder.

Robert Kane, a professor in the department of criminology and justice studies at Drexel University, said he has heard anecdotally from officers that they are stepping back from proactive policing, as Comey described, but not enough to determine how widespread it is.

"The FBI director's comments are probably not out of the realm of reality," Kane said, but the degree to which it represents a systemic change rather than just police "folklore" is unclear.

Kane was surprised to hear the head of the most visible law enforcement agency in the country say something that could be interpreted as claiming that scrutiny of police is a bad thing, even if that is not how Comey meant it.

For Kane, it is too soon to start looking for reasons behind the increased violence. Violent crime has been dropping since 1993 with some year-to-year fluctuations, so elevated figures in some cities for one year do not necessarily constitute a trend.

"To make something out of a year-to-year difference is really not valid," he said.

Even if it may take some time to confirm there is a trend of rising crime or that disengagement by police is related to it, Comey's explanation is better than others that have been suggested, according to Peter Moskos, an associate professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

"I've yet to hear anything that he said that's not worthy of discussion and reasonable-sounding," he said, adding that he was more surprised by the liberal backlash against Comey's comments
than by what the FBI director actually said. From talking to officers he knows in Baltimore, a city that was at the center of the strife earlier this year with the death of Freddie Gray, Moskos said it makes sense.

"It goes back I think a lot to, it's too easy to say what we don't want from police...but it's much harder to say what we do want cops to do," he said. If police start to worry that they could be punished for doing their job legally, it is only human nature for them want to stay out of trouble, and sometimes "it's easier to stay in your car and drive away."
"It's almost absurd to say it doesn't have an impact."

According to Jon Shane, an associate professor of criminal justice at John Jay College, there is limited empirical data to support the claim of a Ferguson effect, but there is some. The exact impact social media and negative media coverage have on policing is still unknown, though.

"Officers are pulling back," Shane said. "They're very concerned about things that they weren't necessarily concerned about in the past...Officers believe public sentiment weighs much more heavily against them today."

While some, like Pitts, argue that police who do their jobs right have nothing to worry about from being recorded, experts say it is not that simple. There are bad cops who do bad things and should be punished when caught, but some legitimate police work and justifiable force look bad when captured on camera.

"The job requires use of force sometimes," Moskos said, "and it never looks good...If you start criticizing cops for that, what are cops supposed to do?"

"Police work is heavily laden with discretion," Shane said. Officers make choices and members of the media and public who criticize them often do not know enough about police work to understand them.

"There's a tendency for people to question the decision...and say, well, why didn't you do it this way?" Videos can also be taken out of context or fail to capture the complete story.

"There's a fundamental lack of understanding about how police work is carried out," Shane said.

For those who do not see why police officers might have apprehensions about constantly being recorded, Kane suggested imagining every time you get out of your car, five people whip out cameras and follow you hoping you make a mistake.

"The reason people are recording them is because they're trying to find them doing something wrong," he said. Frustration and nervousness are not unreasonable reactions.

That said, Kane noted something like the Rodney King beating may have gone unnoticed by the public if it had not been caught on tape. Recording the police can be empowering for minorities that "historically have not had great access to our traditional mechanisms of police accountability."

If Comey is correct, though, and arrest videos and heightened scrutiny are contributing to a rise in violent crime, there is not much that can be done to quickly alleviate the situation.
"People aren't going to stop recording," Moskos said, "so it's inevitable...It's happening, it's going
to happen, cops have to get used to it."

He suggested police can sometimes do a better job of explaining their actions when they are
making an arrest.

In addition to officers ensuring that they act within the confines of the law and agency policy,
Shane recommended education of the public about police procedure and community outreach
programs could help.

"Educate the public about how police work is actually carried out," he said. "Most people have
really no idea how police work is done, and that's a big problem."

According to Kane, the situation may improve as people become more familiar with having
cameras in phones.

"To some extent, we are a society that is still immature in the ways in which we integrate video
recording into our lives," he said. "Any time a new technology is introduced into society, it
becomes disruptive."

"We're in this stage still where the camera on the iPhone is a disruptive force."

The important thing in the case of a controversial arrest or shooting caught on tape, according to
Kane, is to look at the totality of the circumstances.

"[The video] can't be the only piece of evidence used to prove the case."

Whether there is enough data to validate it or not, Moskos believes the possibility that this
YouTube effect is influencing policing is worth considering because, as Comey said, it is a
concern that police officers are talking about, and it is not going away on its own.

"We're not going to un-invent cellphones and video cameras," Moskos said, "so it is what it is."
Jay Bondar, 87, uniform company official, has died
By Frederick N. Rasmussen
October 26, 2015

Jay Bondar, a retired Baltimore uniform company official who was a civilian assistant for the Maryland State Police, died Oct. 7 in his sleep at his son’s Owings Mills home. He was 87.

The son of Herman Bondar and Tillie Bondar, Brooklyn, N.Y., delicatessen owners, Jay Bondar was born in New York City and raised in Bensonhurst, where he graduated in 1946 from De Witt Clinton High School.

He served in the Navy as a chief petty officer for two years aboard the destroyer tender USS Yosemite before being discharged in 1948.

Mr. Bondar earned a bachelor’s degree in education and physical education in 1952 from Brooklyn College and taught in New York City public schools.

In 1975, Mr. Bondar moved to Towson and became vice president and general manager of the Rentex Industrial Uniform Co. on Wilkens Avenue. He retired in the mid-1980s.

The former Chestnut Avenue resident, who moved to Reisterstown in the 1990s, served as a substitute teacher in Baltimore County public schools for several years.

After retiring as a substitute teacher, he became a civilian assistant with the Maryland State Police at the state trooper academy in Sykesville, where he was associated with Volunteers in Police Support.

"This organization provides administrative support on a voluntary basis so troopers can concentrate on law enforcement," said Courtney Yant-Haug, a granddaughter, who lives in Phoenix, Ariz.

"Poppy helped organize and participated in the Shop with a Cop for Christmas shopping with children," said Ms. Yant-Haug. "In addition, he was heavily involved in the training classes at the state trooper academy and loved attending graduation ceremonies."

Mr. Bondar also volunteered with the FBI at its Baltimore field office in Woodlawn and was a guide at the National Aquarium in the Inner Harbor.

"Everyone who met him loved him because he made everyone feel like they mattered," said Ms. Yant-Haug. "He never missed a birthday or holiday greeting. He lived life with an open heart and an open home."

His wife of 29 years, the former Barbara Ann Westberg, died in 1986.

At Mr. Bondar's request, no services will be held.

In addition to his granddaughter, Mr. Bondar is survived by his son, Stace Carlton Bondar of Owings Mills; a daughter, Rhea Leigh Bondar of Boise, Idaho; four other grandchildren; and two great-grandsons.
Woodstock town justice faces election challenge from former federal prison inmate
By William J. Kemble
October 26, 2015

Town Justice Franklyn Engel, a Democrat, is being challenged in his bid for a seventh four-year term by Libertarian Ben Gary Treistman, who has served time in federal prison for conspiracy to produce the drug ecstasy.

Treistman acknowledges serving five years in the Ray Brook Federal Correctional Institution in the Adirondacks.

He said he was arrested in 1992 in Schoharie and was sentenced to 11 years before having the term reduced after proving one of the counts, regarding use of a firearm, was invalid.

FRANKLYN ENGEL

Engel, 68, of 13 Streamside Terrace, is running on the Democratic, Republican and Working Families lines on the Nov. 3 ballot.

He has lived in the town for 28 years and, with wife Megan Daly, has two adult children.

Engel graduated from Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn in 1964, earned a bachelor’s degree in English literature from Brooklyn College in 1968 and received a law degree from SUNY Buffalo in 1971.

Engel said among priorities for the court is dealing with drug offenders.

“What can we do about them? Not put so many of them in jail but deal with them in treatment centers,” he said. “So much money has been taken from treatment centers, mental health right here in Ulster County, that it’s slim pickings. I would like to see us members of the judiciary think more in terms of treatment than in jail.”

Engel also is an attorney for children in Family Court.

“They called us law guardians, which was a misnomer from the beginning, and they changed it to attorneys for children,” he said. “It’s not just adults that are victims but children who are victims, and too many of them learn that this kind of behavior is OK, and that’s unacceptable.”

BEN GARY TREISTMAN

Treistman, 54, of 28 Garrison Road, is a self-employed electrical engineer who repair computers.
He has lived in the town for about 35 years and has one child. He ran unsuccessfully for town justice about 15 years ago.

Treistman graduated from Onteora High School in 1979, received an associate’s degree in electrical engineering at Capital Radio Engineering Institute in Washington and earned a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from New York Institute of Technology in Manhattan in 1983.

He is chairman of the Hudson Valley Libertarian Party and a member of Mensa, the Special Education Parent-Teacher Association for Onteora and Family Court Dads.

“It is my concern that most non-plead-out cases that come before the local Town Court are heavily biased ... against the defendants,” he said.

“Too often, I’ve had people complain to me about it,” Treistman said. “I’ll come to the office with a very strong sense of principles and a belief in our Constitution and a good knowledge of law and fundamental civil rights, and I believe that everybody should be given a fair shake in coming before a court, and I don’t believe that’s happening. I believe that once a person’s charged, there is not a presumption of innocence but rather a presumption of guilt.”
One Year Strong: The YMCA of Greater New York and Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow Celebrate the First Anniversary of the Bronx Y Roads Center

The Bronx Y Roads Center has helped the community's disconnected youth forge a path of success; Program is poised to grow in the year ahead

October 26, 2015

The YMCA of Greater New York, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT) and the New York City Department of Education Pathways to Graduation are this month celebrating the one-year anniversary of the Bronx borough expansion of the Y Roads Center, which places New York City's "opportunity youth" on paths towards higher education and careers. The first Y Roads Center opened in Jamaica, Queens, in 2013.

The Bronx Y Roads Center focuses on providing disconnected youth – the almost quarter of a million 16-24 year-olds in New York City who are neither employed nor in school – the jobs and learning experiences that increase their ability to build careers. Participants receive academic support, internship opportunities and skills training, including for industry-approved credentials such as Microsoft Office certifications, National Retail Federation certifications, and first aid and CPR certification.

In order to ensure that participants are positioned to succeed, Y Roads offers wraparound services including counseling, case management, linkage and referrals, crisis intervention, breakfast and lunch meals and an annual membership to the YMCA as well. This 360-degree model of Y Roads combines the Y's historic strengths as a youth service provider with OBT's proven expertise in job training and workforce development.

"The YMCA is dedicated to developing youth, which is why programs like Y Roads that provide opportunities for New York City's young people to make positive contributions to their communities are critical," said Roberta Solomon, Director of the Bronx Y Roads Center. "The success of the Bronx Center Y Roads program is an example of how we can work to uplift disconnected youth by providing them with the skills to make success possible and break cycles of poverty."

"The partnership between Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow and the YMCA of Greater New York offers a path to success for 'opportunity youth' who are in need of services to help them find employment and continue their education. Over the past year, our Bronx Y Roads participants have made great strides to a better future and we look forward to further working with the local community to better serve young adults," said Randy Peers, CEO of Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow.

"The New York City Department of Education and District 79 are delighted to have expanded our partnership with Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow and the YMCA of Greater New York to serve the residents of the Bronx. In our first year of operation, ten young people earned their high school equivalency diploma, and we look forward to many more graduating and soaring in the world of college and careers. Congratulations to all!" said Robert Zweig, Deputy Superintendent of District 79, NYC Department of Education.

Y Roads: By the Numbers
Since 2013, the Bronx and Queens centers have served more than 500 young adults from across the five boroughs, with this number expected to grow significantly as the program enters its third year.

Participants in the Y Roads program have an unprecedented 86.2 percent program completion rate and more than half of the workforce training graduates have successfully been placed in full-time jobs, post-secondary education programs, or more targeted occupational training programs. Together, participants have completed more than 1000 hours of community service and service learning. By the end of 2016, an anticipated 130 individuals will receive their High School Equivalency Diplomas.

Some of the additional successes of the Queens and Bronx Y Roads centers include:

- 245 young people – 79 percent of participants – completed the workforce development program at the two centers
- Nearly 100 enrollees participated in the Young Adult Internship Program where they interned at a variety of sites including the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, Jamaica Avenue Business District, and the Department of Motor Vehicles.
- Held more than 1,100 case management meetings, lasting more than 542 hours during the 2014-2015 school year.

**Spotlight on Y Roads Participants**

The best measures of the program’s success are the stories of the youth who have flourished thanks to opportunities made possible by Y Roads. Alisha, a participant at the Bronx Center, is one such example. After growing up in Guyana, Alisha came to the United States looking to finish her education. She found her way to the Y Roads program where she became a model student and over the course of a few months passed the TASC exam, earning her high school equivalency diploma. With help from the Y Roads staff, Alisha applied and got accepted in the YMCA's competitive Teen Career Connection program where she worked as an intern with the Clinton Foundation. Now, she is enrolled at the Borough of Manhattan Community College where she is currently studying Business Management.

"My Y roads experience has taught me that success is only possible once you put forth your best effort and remain optimistic throughout the process of achieving your desired goals," Alisha said of the program.

"It's overwhelming the amount of support I've gotten since I've been at Y Roads. I've accomplished a major milestone towards my employment goals within weeks of enrolling," said participant John Caseres, a 22-year-old husband and father who, with the help of Y Roads, was able to get a job as a Nursing Assistant. "Nobody has an excuse not to succeed being enrolled in this program because of the amount of support and ambition the staff has to help the students."

Curtis Harris, Jr., former participant and current volunteer spokesperson for the YMCA's 2016 Annual Campaign, praised the program for assisting him on his current path: "Y Roads was my lighthouse on a foggy ocean. The staff helped guide me back to where I belong."