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Angela Chen

Tuesday 27 October 2015 13.18 EDT

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“That prize” Pardlo references is the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, which he won for his book Digest. Pardlo, a doctoral candidate at the City University of New York, was honored Monday night at a “diversity in publishing” panel jointly sponsored by Cuny and Pen American. He was joined by fellow poets Saeed Jones, Cate Marvin, and Willie Perdomo for the event, which came on the heels of a report claiming that the publishing industry is 89% white - hence the suggestion that the mysterious thing keeping these writers invisible is the fact that none are white men.

Looking from the outside, says Pardlo, it seems “really cool that the Pulitzer prize this year went to this black dude”, and he's keenly aware of what that means. “The fame thing is an opportunity to bring together communities like this,” he says. “It's an opportunity of responsibility and so I take it as a new job and not the kind of celebrity that I think is often ascribed to it.”
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But recognition, no matter how prestigious, for one black writer is not enough. “There are many revolutions that have to happen at once for a substantive change,” says Jones, a BuzzFeed culture editor who read from his essay Self-Portrait of the Artist as an Ungrateful Black Writer. He argues that the industry not only has enduring problems with racism, sexism and powerful gatekeepers that “don't have their act together”, but the proliferation of unpaid internships shuts people out and means that “we are depending on rich people to examine the human experience for us”.

According to Jones, the diversity report helps explain why so many blind spots are still present in the publishing world, to the extent that people outside the (white, male) norm end up doubting their own experiences. “Whenever I've had one of these moments and spoken to a woman about misogyny or a queer person about homophobia, they say ‘I thought I was kind of crazy, I thought I was whiny,’” he says. “It's cruel to do racism and
sexism but even worse to, you know, let someone sit with that silence - isn’t that the antithesis of our art?"

So what kinds of revolutions does Jones think we need? Fellowships for diverse writers, for one, and also efforts like those of Perdomo, who has been forcibly carving out platforms for new voices. “My tradition in publishing is a black tradition, by which I mean a pan-Africanist, Caribbean, East Harlemite tradition,” says Perdomo, whose latest book of poetry was a finalist for last year’s National Book Critics Circle award. To find a place for himself, and others like him, he co-founded the publishing house Cypher Books, which has released poetry by Rachel McKibbens and Suheir Hammad.

Social media, too, is another avenue for new voices, as seen in the story of Vida: Women in Literary Arts, a non-profit organisation that tracks gender equality in publishing. Marvin, the co-founder, says Vida began after she became furious that her proposal on women’s writing for the Association of Writers and Writing Programs was rejected. She “became very angry and very suspicious” after years of being seen solely as a “woman writer”, facing condescension when she finally had a baby, telling men that women weren’t being published and hearing that they didn’t agree and finally thinking: “That’s odd, maybe they only read Louise Glück.”

So, “totally sleep-deprived” and few glasses of wine in, she wrote and posted a letter that contained “everything she would never have said otherwise”. That letter went viral.

“What is hopeful about new media is that I got a million responses and someone who I didn’t know very well, Erin Belieu, went and took my letter and spent all night sending it to hundreds of people she knew and we started to build and talk about counting,” she says.

This kind of work is the contribution that artists can make to build diversity, beyond the writing itself, Marvin adds: “When we started Vida, I didn’t want to work on a national non-profit, I wanted to be writing poems. But I recognize that it was an opportunity to create something.”
Surge in Studies Hits Universities In Sandy's Wake

Three years since Sandy, universities see increase in scientific learning and sustainability research

Graduate student Chen Huixian prepares sediment samples at Rutgers University. PHOTO: MARK BONIFACIO FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By HEATHER HADDON
Oct. 27, 2015 8:53 p.m. ET

As someone who came to New Jersey specifically to study sea-level rise and catastrophic storms, Ben Horton felt superstorm Sandy had presented him with a gift, albeit a grim one.
“There was so much interest in science explaining why Sandy caused so much damage late in the hurricane season,” said Mr. Horton, a British native who is a professor of sea-level research at Rutgers University. “It provided a focus for us.”

Three years since Sandy caused historic damage to the region, scientific learning and research on sustainability, climate change and coastal studies have had a renaissance. Tens of millions of state and federal dollars have flowed to projects pertaining to climate change, and interest among students to study the topics has been high at area universities since the storm made landfall on Oct. 29, 2012.

What has varied is the interest of state public officials to solicit and publicly embrace climate-change research.

States such as New York, California, Oregon and Washington have commissioned research on how sea-level rise can affect their communities, while North Carolina banned the studies from informing coastal policies in 2012.

New Jersey has fallen somewhere in the middle. State Gov. Chris Christie, a Republican running for president, has said that climate change is real and that governments should respond, but he sees no direct link between global warming and Sandy.

“No one has shown me any evidence that Sandy happened by climate change. The climate is changing all the time,” said Mr. Christie, during a town-hall meeting earlier this month in New Hampshire.

State scientists and planning advocates argue climate change has fueled sea-level rise and storms such as Sandy to be more intense and frequent. They believe the administration should do more to include projections of rising seas into building codes and state policy.

“There are other states that are providing a more aggressive approach to working with communities to address sea level rise,” said David Kutner, a planning manager at New Jersey Future, a land-use nonprofit.
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection spokesman said that sea-level rise predictions vary widely and the state relies on the best science available from federal officials.

Arguments over whether Sandy was caused by climate change amount to hairsplitting, and the Christie administration is moving ahead with resiliency projects that will build back the state stronger, a spokeswoman said.

Mr. Christie is expected to make remarks in New Jersey to commemorate the third anniversary of the storm on Thursday and to highlight progress made in recovery.

The congressional disaster aid bill passed after Sandy earmarked $309 million in federal funding for research pertaining to severe-storm prediction and response. That money has flowed to research that includes a study at the University of Connecticut on improving storm warnings and a Massachusetts study to better predict storm strength in the Northeast.

The results of that funding will be featured in a Washington, D.C., briefing scheduled for Wednesday, a spokeswoman for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said.

The storm that did an estimated $70 billion in damage in New Jersey and New York acted as a catalyst to climate change-related research under way in the region.

Planning for the City University of New York's Science and Resilience Institute
research consortium at Jamaica Bay had already started when the storm struck, but it received $3.6 million in federal Sandy funding in 2014. The Cuomo administration provided more than $7 million for its efforts, including climate change studies.

At Stony Brook University, state officials started the New York State Resiliency Institute for Storms and Emergencies to study sea-level rise and conduct other research to be incorporated into New York's planning for future storms.

At the private Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, N.J., researchers have used an estimated $6 million in funding from the federal government and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to better predict flooding caused by storms. Student researchers have grown to about 20 from none before Sandy, said Alan Blumberg, director of the school's Center for Maritime Systems.

And at New Jersey's largest public university, the Rutgers Climate Institute opened in 2013. A paper co-authored by Mr. Horton was referenced by President Barack Obama in his State of the Union address earlier this year.

Regardless of the arguments over climate change, New Jersey students are showing an interest in studying it. Jennifer Walker, a Rutgers doctoral student who grew up going to Stone Harbor, N.J., was prompted to focus her studies on sea-level rise after Sandy devastated her Jersey Shore town.

"I wanted to choose a career in research that I would have a personal connection to," said Ms. Walker, a 23-year-old New Brunswick resident. "I understood after Sandy how much a longer term context of sea-level rise is needed."

Write to Heather Haddon at heather.haddon@wsj.com
Brooklyn native Steve Buscemi appointed to NYC's Cultural Affairs commission

BY JENNIFER FERMINO / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Tuesday, October 27, 2015, 11:37 PM

The Big Apple's Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission is getting a touch of Hollywood — via Brooklyn.

Tinseltown heavyweight and Brooklyn native and current resident Steve Buscemi was appointed to the commission, which advises the Department of Cultural Affairs on issues like creating affordable housing for artists and promoting diversity in the arts.

Mayor de Blasio — who is pals with the "Reservoir Dogs" actor — announced the appointment along with 15 other new additions to the commission.

Among the new appointees is Susana Torruella Leval, a professor at Hunter College.

TAGS: steve buscemi
Why Grammar Matters

OCT. 28, 2015

To the Editor:

How gratifying that someone has reached a broad audience with the message that grammar is meaningful ("A Texas History Lesson," by Ellen Bresler Rockmore, Op-Ed, Oct. 22).

The trend in linguistics is very much toward the view that grammar is not a purely formal mechanical structure but, along with vocabulary, functions in communication.

Yes, words matter, but so does grammar.

While there are times when the passive voice is appropriate, a presentation to children of the history of United States slavery is not one of them; the writer should not hide the responsibility of those culpable. There are actual linguistic devices (like word order and verb form) contributing to the rhetorical effect, but the rhetorical effect is a good window onto the operation of those devices.

We can all look forward to the day when writers consciously learn, among the tools of their trade, how to use grammar to achieve their desired effects, and when readers — even politicians and schoolchildren — are hip to their tricks.

JOSEPH DAVIS

New York

The writer teaches linguistics at the City College of New York, CUNY.
Why These 37 Colleges Haven't Rescinded Bill Cosby's Honorary Degrees

By Devon Irish

Bill Cosby has been the recipient of nearly 60 honorary degrees—everything from fine arts, music, education, and law—since his ascent into the world of comedy and acting in the 1960s. They are, like all honorary degrees, practically worthless. Even so, they do represent a public association between the conferring university and the recipient, one that in this case has become highly undesirable after the revelations of nearly 60 women who have publicly accused Cosby of sexual assault and rape. Some of the universities—including Fordham, Marquette, Spelman, Tufts, and Brown—have already severed ties with Cosby. Many of the rest find themselves in uncharted waters, wondering how and if to proceed.

Curious to learn more about how they view those honorary degrees (or if they're even aware they gave Cosby one), Vulture reached out to more than 40 of the remaining universities. Of them, 37 agreed to comment for this piece, while two schools—Amherst College and Springfield College—announced their decisions to revoke his honorary degree while this piece was in production. Many of the rest share a certain befuddlement over how to address a terrible situation for which they had no game plan. Unless otherwise specified, all responses are from official university spokespersons.

Berklee College of Music
“In 2014, the college removed Bill Cosby's name from an online scholarship awarded annually for online study. We are actively engaged in internal discussion to determine our course of action in regard to the honorary degree presented to Bill Cosby in 2004.”

Boston College
“Bill Cosby was awarded an honorary degree from Boston College in 1996 in recognition of his role as an actor and humorist and his work on behalf of education. While the recent allegations against him are reprehensible, as a matter of policy Boston College does not rescind honorary degrees.”

Boston University
“We're still monitoring legal developments in the cases.”

Carnegie Mellon University
Colby College
“We have no comment at this time.”

Colgate University
“Yes, the notion of revoking Bill Cosby’s honorary degree is under discussion, and I expect there to be a decision to share soon.”

Cooper Union
“We have no comment at this time.”

Delaware State University
“The issue of Bill Cosby’s 2003 honorary doctorate he received from Delaware State University has not been an agenda item of any of our four Board of Trustees meetings that have been held this year, and as such has not been discussed by the board publicly. I should note that there are relatively few people currently at DSU that were a part of the university in 2001. Most, if not all, of the current DSU leadership didn’t even know that an honorary doctorate had been awarded to him at DSU until it became a media subject over the last few weeks.”

Drew University
“Drew will examine the Cosby honorary degree (granted in 2001) soon, and a decision will be made and shared in the next few weeks.”

Drexel University
“We have not taken any action at this time.”

Fashion Institute of Technology
“Bill Cosby received an honorary degree at the Fashion Institute of Technology’s commencement exercises in 2000. As a college of the State University of New York (SUNY), FIT submits honorary degree nominations to SUNY, which then reviews, approves, and confers the degree. In light of current events, FIT will review the decision to award the honorary degree to Mr. Cosby. Any recommendation to change the status of the award would be submitted to the State University of New York for its consideration. In any event, we do not comment on ongoing internal discussions.”

George Washington University
“While we are shocked and disturbed by the allegations against Mr. Cosby, honorary degrees are conferred at a moment in time, based on what the university knows about the honoree at that time. It has never been the university’s practice to rescind an honorary degree.”

Haverford College
“We have never rescinded an honorary degree. Haverford’s Board of Managers is considering input from students, faculty, staff, and alumni about the full range of issues attendant to this situation, beginning with the process itself: How and why are degrees awarded, and how and why could they, or should they, be rescinded?”

John Jay College of Criminal Justice (from President Jeremy Travis)
“It’s being recommended to me, and then ultimately to the board that [the degree] be rescinded. The conversations started between me and the leadership of the faculty senate at the beginning of the academic year, so that means late August, something like that. The faculty senate put it on their agenda for discussion through their governance process on October 14. They voted overwhelmingly, 47 affirmative and 1 negative and no extensions, so that’s a pretty powerful vote for a resolution, recommending that the degree be rescinded. That has been forwarded to me, and I have forwarded it to the chancellor of the university with endorsing their recommendation wholeheartedly that the honorary degree be rescinded. Then the process goes to the Board of Trustees of the university, which authorized John Jay—this is before my time—but authorized John Jay to award the degree, and we’re now recommending that the degree be rescinded in light of what we now know about Mr. Cosby’s actions.”

Johns Hopkins University
“At this point, we do not have anything to say.”

New York University
North Carolina A&T State University
“North Carolina A&T State University grants honorary degrees following a vetting process based on a person’s contributions and merit that we know of at the time. We have been in conversations regarding the awarding of Bill Cosby’s honorary degree, and a decision will also go through a similar vetting process.”

Oberlin College
“The matter is under consideration.”

Ohio State University
“Like many of our peer institutions, Ohio State is very concerned by the reports regarding Bill Cosby, and the honorary degree he received in 2001 is under review.”

Old Dominion University
“The Board of Visitors (BOV), the governing body for Old Dominion University, awards honorary degrees. Any decision on rescinding Bill Cosby’s honorary degree would need to be approved by the BOV during one of their scheduled meetings. The next BOV meeting will take place in December.”

Pepperdine University
“Pepperdine has no provision to rescind honorary degrees, and we do not plan to create a new policy for Mr. Cosby. The university is deeply troubled by the recent allegations which have come to light. We have not had any contact with Mr. Cosby since 1998, and we do not anticipate reestablishing a relationship with him in the future.”

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
“We have no plans to rescind Mr. Cosby’s honorary degree at this time.”

Rust College
“At the present time, we have no plans to make any changes to Dr. Cosby’s honorary degree.”

Sisseton Wahpeton College (from President Harvey DuMarce)
“We are a small American Indian tribal college way out in South Dakota. A majority of our students are tribal members. Their age range varies between nontraditional and traditional-aged students. However, a majority of our students are female, single parents of at least two children. I am not a spokesman for the students; they can speak for themselves. At this time, Bill Cosby’s honorary degree with the Sisseton Wahpeton College has not been rescinded. While his alleged sexual improprieties are in the national headlines and we see those same headlines, too, his predicament, real or not, is not of any interest to our people way out here in South Dakota. Bill Cosby is a national figure that was once seen on television in the 1980s, but he is not of importance in our lives. Our younger students will likely say, ‘Who is Bill Cosby?’ He may be a big fish in the larger mainstream American society for public consumption, but out here he is of no consequence because he does not touch the lives of people out here. At the same time, many of our students will probably believe all those stories about him because they are being discussed and reported in the media. Our Board of Trustees will have to initiate formal action to rescind his honorary degree, but thus far they have expressed no opinion on his alleged crimes. If necessary, I can submit a formal request to them at the November 2015 regular board meeting.”

Swarthmore College
“The college has not taken any action to date.”

Talladega College
“At this time we have no additional comments to the statement we gave and which was published by the New York Times [which were ‘We give out honorary degrees based on what we know at the time and at the time he was everybody’s favorite dad’].”

Temple University
“There has been no conversation about making a change.”

The College of William & Mary
“William & Mary bestows honorary degrees based on information known at the time when they are conferred, and these awards do not constitute a standing endorsement.”
University of Cincinnati

"I have no information for you at this time. Events involving our campus this summer continue to be the current focus of our efforts and attention at this time."

University of Connecticut

"We're having thoughtful discussions at UConn about the issue, but no decisions have been made so far."

University of Notre Dame

"As it does with all candidates for honorary degrees, Notre Dame weighed carefully the information in the public record on Bill Cosby before he was accorded the honor 25 years ago. Had the kind of deeply disturbing allegations surfaced then that have been made since, Notre Dame wouldn't have considered awarding the degree. However, it is not the practice of the university to rescind an honorary degree previously awarded to individuals for achievements recognized at those times and, in the absence of criteria applicable retroactively to all, we have no plans to do so now in his case alone. However, the question spotlights the insidiousness of sexual assault and the pervasive silence that has often allowed offenders to escape responsibility, and we recommit ourselves to doing all we can to prevent sexual assault. We encourage and support our students and others to report sexual assault and remind them that a person incapacitated—whether by alcohol, drugs, or otherwise—is incapable of giving consent to sexual activity."

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

"The university has been in the process of considering whether to rescind the degree for several weeks."

University of Pennsylvania

"I'm afraid I have nothing new to report. Sorry."

University of Pittsburgh

"The university committee that reviews and recommends candidates for honorary degrees will be reviewing the honorary doctor of humane letters degree awarded to Bill Cosby. The degree was originally awarded to Mr. Cosby in 2002 at the commencement ceremony on our Johnstown campus. The committee will meet sometime this semester and make a recommendation to the administration. A date for the meeting has not been set, but a decision on the matter will be made before the end of the current semester."

Virginia Commonwealth University

"Bill Cosby received an honorary degree from VCU in 2008 based on what was known at the time of his professional accomplishments. Because VCU honorary degrees carry no special rights or privileges there is no precedent or policy for revoking them. The behavior detailed in the allegations against Cosby is despicable and anathema to VCU's values as an institution. VCU has taken definitive actions and made significant investments in student and employee education, counselors, investigators, police, and safety programs to protect and support our community against sexual violence. There is no tolerance for sexual violence at VCU."

Wesleyan University

"Wesleyan's position on rescinding honorary degrees has not changed."

Yale University

"The university has never rescinded an honorary degree and has not rescinded his."

We also reached out to Bryant University, Hampton University, Howard University, University of South Carolina, University of Southern California, and West Chester University, but received no response. Paine College and University of Maryland responded that they have no comment.

These comments have been edited for clarity and grammar.

See also: A Timeline of Abuse Charges Against Bill Cosby
Gov. chief ed adviser’s firm major supplier to state ed

By: Claude Solnik   October 27, 2015   0

One of the governor’s chief education advisers is employed by a firm that does millions of dollars of business with the state’s schools, although that has not been disclosed to the public.

Richard Parsons, the leader of an earlier state education commission that recommended heavy investment in technology and head of a new education task force, works for a company whose principal holdings include an education technology firm that does a substantial business with the state.

Parsons, the former chairman of Citigroup and CEO and chairman of Time Warner, was recently named the head of Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s task force on the Common Core.

Since 2009 he has been a senior adviser at Providence Equity Partners – whose principal holdings include numerous education technology firms. The state disclosed his position there, but did not indicate that Providence had any involvement in education technology firms.

"That definitely should have been disclosed," said one education official who asked not to be identified. "I knew him from Time Warner."

The state in its brief biography of Parsons describes Providence as "a leading private equity investment firm specializing in media, communications and information companies."

It pointedly omits education, even though Providence on its website clearly lists education (in particular, high-tech education) along with those three other sweet spots.

Providence owns Blackboard, a high-tech education firms whose roots go back to a consulting firm founded in 1997
to work with non-profit IMS Global Learning Consortium and merged with CourseInfo the following year.

Venture capital firms and venture capital arms of companies such as Pearson, Dell, AOL, The Carlyle Group and Novak Biddle Venture Partners all took stakes in Blackboard, which went public in 2004.

Investors led by Providence Equity Partners later bought Blackboard for $1.64 billion, taking the firm private. Blackboard remains one of Providence’s key holdings with contracts around the country, including New York State.

Blackboard in December of 2011 obtained a $6.8 million contract for the State University of New York system, according to state records. In 2012 obtained another $1 million contract and in 2014 obtained a $7.5 million contract.

The company also obtained a $5.9 million contract with the City University of New York in 2012, followed by an additional $1 million contract over the next two years.

Blackboard has been building its New York business, even as Parsons has risen to a high rank among the state’s education advisers.

Allison Briedbart White, a critic of the Common Core and of the task force Gov. Andrew Cuomo created, said there is "no doubt, lots of conflict of interest on that panel, not just with Parsons."

He also served as the head of the governor’s 2012 committee to reform education that recommended heavily investing in technology.

The state indicates that the New York Education Reform Commission that Parsons led "played an instrumental role in developing a blueprint to improve the quality of education for all students through its final report in January 2014."

The New York Education Reform Commission under Parsons focused heavily on the benefits of and need to spend heavily on rolling out more technology.

"Simply put, technology can bring learning to students wherever they are... Digital learning has the potential to leverage technology to transform our educational system," according to the commission. "The commission therefore recommends that the governor and the Legislature invest in access to technology - from computers to high-speed broadband deployment."

While technology clearly provides benefits, balancing technology against teaching has become a hot button issue in recent years. Gov. Cuomo in 2014 proposed and New York State approved $2 billion to invest in school technology through the Smart Schools Bond Act.

Parsons studied at, but did not graduate from, the University of Hawaii before attending and graduating from the Union University of Albany Law School.

While many articles about Parsons attribute his poor performance at the University of Hawaii to time playing on the varsity team, he doesn’t appear to have played for that team.

Parsons in a 1990 article in The New York Times after he became CEO of Dime Savings Bank of New York: was incorrectly described “a varsity basketball jock” as well as “a social chairman of his fraternity” at the University of Hawaii, according to Deadspin.com.

Articles in The New York Times in 1993 and 2001 reiterated the claim that he played varsity basketball, according to Deadspin.com, which questioned Parsons’ basketball past after he took the helm at the Clippers.

“Something had to come up short,” he told PBS in a long interview after saying he did poorly in college, while playing on the basketball team.

“I didn’t make my mother proud, I’ll put it that way, in terms of the grades I got while I was out here,” Parsons told one interviewer, while telling another interviewer that his poor grades resulted in part from efforts to improve his bridge skills.

He said he started as a physics major, but “that required more time and attention than... all these other activities afforded me.”

Parsons apparently did nothing to correct numerous statements about his performance on the varsity basketball team, at least until it was publicly questioned.

Clippers spokesperson Seth Burton told Deadspin that Parsons “played one season on the JV team at Hawaii,” although Deadspin had a great deal of difficulty in substantiating that.
Parsons never graduated from the University of Hawaii, but took the LSATs and has said he was nonetheless accepted into law school, working in addition to attending class.

"I just knew the answers," he told PBS. "And so I did very well in law school, without having to work too, too hard."

Parsons soon became involved in government, working as of counsel for Nelson Rockefeller and then as a senior White House adviser to President Gerald Ford.

He later transitioned to a high ranking advisory position among Democrats when then President-elect Barack Obama appointed him to his Economic Transition Team in 2008.

Parsons earlier served as managing partner at Manhattan law firm Patterson, Belknap, Webb and Tyler, before serving as CEO of DirecTV, chairman of Citigroup and CEO and chairman of Time Warner.

He from May through September, 2014, served as the interim CEO of the Los Angeles Clippers, following a scandal involving one of its owners.

Parsons serves on the boards of the Estée Lauder Companies, Lazard Frères and Co. and Madison Square Garden Co. and is a director of the Commission on Presidential Debates.

Although he had not been heavily involved in traditional public education, he has been an outspoken advocate for charter schools, serving on the advisory board of Deborah Kenny's Charter network, Harlem Village Academies.
BMCC Receives More Than $182,000 in New STEM Funding

OCTOBER 27, 2015

The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) announced on October 26 that it will award $182,549 to Borough Manhattan Community College (BMCC/CUNY) in support of the college's science.
technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs.

BMCC is one of 13 minority institutions nationwide to receive part of the DOE's total $3 million in funds allocated through the Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program. (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/iduesmsi/index.html)

"Strengthening these institutions that serve large minority populations in STEM is vital to building a strong economy and competitive workforce, while helping ensure that all students have the opportunity to be successful in college, careers and life," U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said in a press release.

"We Are Experiencing Hyper-Gentrification": Gowanus Art Community Sizes Up Its Future

by Robin Grearson on October 27, 2015

A chalk mural on the exterior of 94 9th Street (all photos by Erika Sequeira for Hyperallergic)

As Arts Gowanus organized a rally for artists displaced from 94 9th Street and adjacent, connected buildings earlier this month, some 350 artists and local businesses were preparing for Gowanus Open Studios (GOS). Activists representing the Artist Studio Affordability Project (ASAP) and Take Back NYC as well as New York City Council Member Brad Lander, Arts Gowanus Director Abby Subak, and local neighbors and friends showed their support and circulated a petition addressed to 94 9th Street's new landlord, Eli Hamway, of Industrie Capital.

When the rally ended, a journalist was overheard saying that he had to run to cover the other story in Gowanus, Christopher Swain. His priorities point to the unfortunate truth that artist displacement is nothing new. Besides, it's not every day that someone swims the Gowanus Canal.

Few of the artists whose studios I visited for GOS had attended the rally. Some were preoccupied with their impending moves, a few were still hoping to secure lease extensions; many had been focused on preparing their studios for what was likely to be their final time participating in GOS. Artists were angry and frustrated about canceled leases and confusing communication — including legal
notices marked "Hand Delivered" that have been posted in building hallways — but they were mostly resigned to the fact that even with leases, they have little hope.

The overall mood was one of disappointment, with the evictions but also with the fact that what's happening all over the city happened so fast in Gowanus. This is the logic of New York art-making today: Gowanus is a neighborhood artists hoped was polluted and unloved enough to be "safe" (read: affordable) for just a little bit longer.

A "hand delivered" notice to tenants posted at 94 9th Street (click to enlarge)

* * *

Alex Nero, artist

Robin Grearson: What is going on with your space?

Alex Nero: I am located in the 112 2nd Avenue building. We were told by Edward [Colley, owner of Halyards Bar in Gowanus] that the lease on our side is good for another two years despite what's happening next-door.

At the time of lease signing, Edward assured me I can stay for three years. A few weeks ago, I saw Edward by the building and he again assured me that my lease is good. Two weeks ago, Edward told me that he will not renew my lease because his assistant is getting evicted and he will need to "take over" a few spaces on our floor.
I'm very bummed out by all of this. I invested a lot of money to build out my space. I have been here since January 1. I was assured I could stay for three years; this is a real heavy blow.

Visitors in Alex Nuñez's studio during Gowanus Open Studios 2015

Alex Nuñez, artist

RG: What's going on with your space?

Alex Nuñez: I am a painter, and I moved to 94 9th Street after my MFA program at Hunter College, around January 2013. I found out about the eviction on Facebook. I called the management for several days and they finally returned my calls, telling me that I had two to three months to find another studio. They have not formally notified me.

RG: Have you found another space?

AN: I do not know where I am going to move. I have seen several studios, the prices are incomparable to the amount of space and the quality of studio I currently have.

Krista Scenna, co-founder and co-director of Ground Floor Gallery

RG: What was your reaction to the loss of these workspaces?

Krista Scenna: My gallery partner and I found this recent episode with 9th Street and 2nd Avenue extremely disconcerting and devastating as we've worked with several artists in that building, included
it in last year's tour [during GOS], and recommend it to friends who were curious about the Gowanus art scene. I'm on the board of Arts Gowanus as well, and we often think about how to sustain the arts community in Gowanus. Now it feels like we're not tackling it fast enough!

**RG:** *How will the loss of these workspaces (and artists) impact Gowanus?*

**KS:** The eviction just makes us feel like we're all on borrowed time here. I didn't think it would happen so fast and I think that's why many people find it jarring. It also makes me wonder, we've worked so hard to bring attention to this community, are we also responsible for this in some way? That's the tricky part about gentrification, right?

**RG:** *Can we create change if we work together and if so, what are the obstacles?*

**KS:** Until artists and art advocates band together and start to OWN these spaces, I fear little can be done.

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Paintbrushes in a studio during Gowanus Open Studios 2015

**Cecilia Schmidt, artist**

**RG:** *What is going on with your space?*

**Cecilia Schmidt:** I moved to Gowanus from a studio in Dumbo about 10 years ago, when the same thing happened there as is going on with our building — gentrification. I found Gowanus and first moved into a studio on 7th Street near 3rd Avenue. This was before the Bell House, there was
nothing in the neighborhood. I spoke to a man walking around an industrial building that was being vacated, a developer who said he was buying and looking for artists, creative types of businesses, etc. (that is the temporary modus operandi). I looked at his plans in the street, agreed on a large space that he eventually built, and several artist friends and I moved in. This lasted for over 5 years, until the landlord decided we paid too little rent and overcharged us for a pass-through charge, turned off our electricity for no reason. We went to court, the judge saw the incongruities in their paperwork. At the next court date they sent a new lawyer who claimed he needed more time, and a new date was set. We didn’t have funds to fight, gave up, and two of us moved into 94 9th Street.

All was well until about 5 weeks ago, when we were told by our lovely landlord Edward Colley — who sublet a few floors of the building around 15 years ago, did a buildout, and sublet to us — that he had tried to negotiate better terms for us but couldn’t, that he has a provision in his lease that if the building was sold, he lost his lease.

RG: *Have you found another space?*

CS: I can’t find an affordable studio in Gowanus. It’s great what enterprising businesses, and people like the amazing Abby Subak are doing here, but I really wish it hadn’t become so hip and didn’t have the amenities, so that I could stay in this neighborhood to work, and go to another one to hang out, eat at great restaurants, hear music, etc.

*Abby Subak, artist and director of Arts Gowanus*

**RG:** *How has the neighborhood grown?*

Visitors looking at work in the Gowanus Print Lab during Gowanus Open Studios (click to enlarge)

*Abby Subak:* Only in the past five years have the restaurants started to appear. And of course Whole Foods in 2013. And now the number of galleries (art-exhibiting space is different from art-making
space) and exhibiting organizations continues to grow. These exhibition spaces have shifted Gowanus from a below-the-radar neighborhood focused on only the making of art to include a significant outward-facing exhibiting presence.

**RG:** How will the loss of these workspaces (and artists) impact Gowanus?

**AS:** Losing 300 to 400 artists in Gowanus is big. It is probably about 10% of the artists in Gowanus. And this was such a large, vibrant, and close community of artists who got to know each other and support each other and play roles in the Gowanus community. We are going to feel a big hole where there have been active, engaged, working artists.

**RG:** What do artists in Gowanus need right now?

**AS:** Artists in Gowanus need space to make their work. And space for artists is being reallocated for other, more profitable uses. Artists need the city and individual owners to recognize that there is a significant community value to creativity and art-making that could outweigh pure financial costs. Unfortunately, when a landlord is not part of the community, they think only in dollars and not in value added to a community. Artists need this particular landlord to do the right thing and keep as much of this building as possible for affordable art studios. Artists need protections and policies for zoning in Gowanus and affordability citywide to protect spaces where they can work.

**RG:** What is Small Business Jobs Survival Act and why is it important?

**AS:** I like SBJSB because it is an actual bill that artists can latch onto, and artists need to latch onto something right now. However, if I move beyond SBJSB as a proposal and work to imagine its implementation, I have significant reservations about the effectiveness of the bill. I am still working to understand it and what reality it could really create. Artists are light manufacturers. In Gowanus, the artists and manufacturers have a solid relationship. It is important for both artists and manufacturers to realize our interests are aligned and to work together to protect these spaces.
A visitor looking at work during Gowanus Open Studios

Tamara Zahaykevich, artist and Artist Studio Affordability Project activist

RG: Why is it important to keep art studio space affordable?

Tamara Zahaykevich: Art studios are barely affordable. It is important for anyone with a studio practice to have access to space for so many reasons … we need to have a place to conduct our business, many of us benefit from the community … the feedback from working around other artists, it’s a place to store your life’s work, it’s space where you can be noisy and dirty … which you can be in an industrial space. It’s a place of business … it is where we work.

RG: What do artists in Gowanus need right now?

TZ: We can only create change if we work together. We need numbers. The art community needs to step up and be a constituency that is taken seriously by elected officials. Many artists still need to come around and realize that they cannot afford to stay in a bubble.

Artists need to become aware of their living and working environments. We are experiencing hyper-gentrification. We can no longer ignore the impact gentrification has on long-term tenants in our neighborhoods. Most of us have been gentrifier and gentrified. We can only move forward if we acknowledge this and find ways to work together with our neighbors who most likely also are being devastated by high rents and are threatened by displacement.
RG: What is SBJSA and why is it important?

TZ: The SBJSA is a bill that is currently sitting in City Council. The passage of this bill would finally give commercial tenants the right to a 10-year minimum lease with equal negotiating power as the landlord. Right now, commercial tenants don't have rights, which is why the artists here in Gowanus are being displaced.

Note: Edward Colley did not respond to emails for this story.

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There were many flyers posted on building walls around Gowanus during GOS advertising studio spaces, most of them in New Jersey. I had conversations about shuttle bus routes, spaces in Paterson and Union City. Artists are weary of moving, and moving again, of losing proximity to neighbors and local resources. Yes, they will persevere, they will find and build new workspaces. But how many (more) of those spaces won't be in New York City?

Of Christopher Swain's swim up the Superfund waterway, the New York Times wrote: "Almost anybody who visits the Gowanus Canal imagines a little Venice someday in the heart of Brooklyn." Perhaps this is true, but it is hard to imagine Venice without artists.
MANHATTAN — A police officer put a Queens skateboarder into a headlock, tackled him to the ground and pepper-sprayed him for resisting arrest and violating a rule against skating in Columbus Circle, according to police and a video.

Yihan Mu, 22, said he spent the night in jail after the run-in on Sunday at about 5 p.m. that was caught on tape.

"I was just skating around, hitting some time. I saw this police officer approaching. I got off my board to ask him, 'If I could skate? And the first thing he did was reach for my board," he said, noting he didn't see any "No Skateboarding" signs in the area.

"My first reaction was, 'Whoa, what is he doing?'"

Mu said he held the board behind his back using one hand and held his other arm up to ward off the officer, who grabbed his arm with one hand and used his other to put him in a headlock.

"You're getting a summons," the officer told Mu, before flipping him to the ground, he said.

Mu asked what he had done wrong and refused to comply when asked to sit down, according to police.

He refused to listen to police commands when he was told about the violation and wouldn't put his hands behind his back, police said.

After a brief struggle, Mu was taken to the ground and pepper-sprayed, police confirmed.

He was charged with resisting arrest, disobeying park rules and defacing park property, according to court records.

Mu, a sophomore at Queens College, moved to New York City from China with his family when he was six and now lives in Middle Village. He's currently looking for a lawyer to represent him after Sunday's arrest, he said.

"I'm taking a lot of sociology classes and urban studies classes, and I'm learning how there's a lot of inequality in America," he said. "I'm thinking, 'This is it. This is how I become marginalized.'"

He's due back in court on Dec. 16.
Museums, Always Educational, Now Confer Degrees

By ROBIN POGREBIN OCT. 28, 2015

You don’t typically expect to go to a museum and come out with a degree in higher education.

But the American Museum of Natural History now offers a master of arts in teaching and a Ph.D. in comparative biology.

“Many of the most important issues of the day have science as a foundation,” said Ellen V. Futter, the museum’s director. “There’s a real need for a public understanding of these issues and, as a result, a stronger need for more scientists.”

The programs are part of a larger transformation in the role of museums around the country; education is not just about field trips anymore.

The Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago has a teacher development program. The Wildlife Conservation Society — the umbrella group of institutions that includes the Bronx Zoo and the New York Aquarium — offers a master of arts in teaching in the biological sciences and a master of arts in biology.

And last year Lincoln Center joined with Hunter College and the New York City Department of Education to train and certify arts teachers in city schools.
These programs, those involved say, are fueled by necessity — a scarcity of arts and science educators. “It’s a national problem,” said David R. Mosena, the Museum of Science and Industry’s president and chief executive. “There’s not enough kids going into these careers and a need for a science-literate work force.”

The museum teaches inquiry-based science to middle-school teachers who don’t have a background in science. Since starting its programs in 2006, the school has trained nearly 1,000 teachers. All the money to pay for it is raised privately — $3 million to $4 million a year.

The museum also offers an after-school science learning program in conjunction with 130 partners in Chicago’s poor neighborhoods. And a program for families gives 200 children in-depth science learning at the museum.

“Our ulterior motive is to expose them to science and the careers and get them excited about it and hopefully inspire them to go into those fields,” Mr. Mosena said.

“It makes the institution a proactive education that is not just a passive place people come to but goes out into the community,” he added. “It leverages the institution.”

The American Museum of Natural History’s degrees, authorized by the New York State Board of Regents, are administered by the Richard Gilder Graduate School, part of the museum. Both the Ph.D. in comparative biology and the master’s, which focuses on teaching earth science, are fully funded and offered at no charge to students. Both programs provide full scholarships and stipends to all who are admitted.

The teacher candidates in the master’s program are taught by educators and scientists tackling current research questions, drawing on the museum’s 33 million specimens and objects, as well as on its galleries. The program is meant to address the shortage of qualified teachers, particularly in underserved neighborhoods. “There is an acute need for better-trained science teachers,” Ms. Futter said, “especially in the earth sciences, where something like 40 percent of those teaching earth science in New York City have not been certified.”

During the Wildlife Conservation Society program’s first two years, 45 graduate
students have enrolled, including teachers, environmental educators and a number of the society's staff members.

Participants must attend courses on site at one of the Conservation Society's facilities, as well as take web-based courses through Miami University in Ohio. Tuition and fees are about $3,500 a year.

In 2007 the society created its Online Teacher Academy, workshops and graduate courses offered through its website that introduce educators to life science content, teaching methods, new technology and the use of science resources (zoos, aquariums, museums and the like). The academy has so far served nearly 3,000 teachers and supported about 87,000 students.

In October the Phillips Collection joined forces with the University of Maryland to expand its education programs, which will also allow the university to increase its arts programs. "Not only does it provide access to this priceless collection," said Wallace D. Loh, the university's president, in a statement announcing the partnership, "but it brings a new vigor to our arts education and to the entire campus. We are genuinely a Steam university — science, technology, engineering, arts, math."

Last year Lincoln Center and Hunter began preparing future arts teachers even as those teachers were still working in schools, gaining firsthand classroom experience. The program is part of Mayor Bill de Blasio's new commitment to arts-education funding.

The first class of so-called LC Scholars will graduate in May with master's of education degrees and be certified to teach in public schools. "Our goal is to put artists back in the schools," said Russell Granet, the executive director of Lincoln Center Education. "The arts are nonnegotiable, a core academic subject."

A version of this article appears in print on November 1, 2015, on page F34 of the National edition with the headline: Talk About an Artsy Campus.
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 will 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 students from low-income families, 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 after that time in New York City and then 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 that her organization had committed $1.5 million to subsidize student tickets and to develop educational materials that will help students contextualize the show.

“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," Ms. Rodin said. "Could there possibly be a better combination in terms of speaking to students?"

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

"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."

There are multiple other efforts to expose children and adolescents to Broadway with their families, arts programs and schools, but the "Hamilton" program is the largest for a single production and the first to so fully involve the school district. Charlotte St. Martin, the president of the Broadway League, called the plan "unprecedented," and Victoria Bailey, the executive director of the Theater Development Fund, said, "I can’t think of another Broadway production that has taken on an effort of this size and scale."

"It’s actually kind of imperative that this happen — that they figure out a way to get young people in — because it’s going to be a while before there would be access another way," Ms. Bailey said. Her own organization, a nonprofit that strives to encourage diverse audiences to see theater, brought 640 high school students to see the Off Broadway run of "Hamilton" at the Public Theater. Ms. Bailey said, "We had students who were in tears because they felt like they were American for the first time."

Mr. Seller, who announced the student program at a news conference on Tuesday, has agreed to sell the tickets for $70 each — about half the $139 current average ticket price for the show. The foundation will pay $60 toward each ticket, and students will be charged $10 — the denomination that bears Hamilton’s face — because school officials have advised that paying a nominal admission 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 and meetings with cast members at the theater. 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 generate a profit.

The musical's language and content will not be toned down or altered for a student audience, Mr. Seller said. 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 Farina, the New York City schools chancellor and a history buff who read “Alexander Hamilton,” the biography by Ron Chernow that inspired the musical, before she went to see it to assess whether it might work for students.

Although attendance will be optional for students, Ms. Farina 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 book and lyrics, and teaching materials about Hamilton and the founding fathers. Students will be invited to create and share their own artistic responses to Hamilton’s life.

“The first time I saw the show, I was lamenting that the audience was all your usual theatergoers,” said the institute’s executive director, Lesley S. 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.”
The 10 Stunning New York Interiors You’ve Probably Never Seen

New York is (arguably) more famous for its skyline than its interiors, but the publication of the book, Interior Landmarks: Treasures of New York, might begin to change this. Behind some of the most innocuous facades in some of the most anonymous sections of the city's five boroughs is a dazzling array of over-the-top, lavishly ornate interiors. The best news of all: Most of the interiors are public.

James Tarmy

Gould Memorial Library, Bronx

Designed by the famed architecture firm, McKim, Mead & White, Gould Memorial Library was donated by the daughter of railroad baron Jay Gould to become the centerpiece of New York University's Bronx campus. The years were not kind. In the 1960s the library was relocated, and the building fell into disuse. In 1969, a nearby explosion blew out the then-deserted building's Tiffany window. It wasn't until 2004 that the library, now owned by Bronx Community College, was restored.