

# THE PAPER

MEDIUM FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

*So We Stand Here On The Edge Of Hell In Harlem And Look Out On The World And Wonder What We're Gonna Do In The Face Of What We Remember" - Langston Hughes*

MAY 2012

Volume 132 - Issue 4

## Honoring Louis Reyes Rivera—The People's Poet

Louis Reyes Rivera—poet laureate and people's historian of the CUNY movement—passed away in the early hours of March 3, 2012, leaving behind a legacy as vibrant as the Africana, Latin@merican, and Caribbean communities for whom he dedicated his life to document and praise. As evident in the dozens of public remembrances that have already surfaced since his death, Rivera will be celebrated as a tirelessly principled elder and radical artist par excellence to a huge extended family in the social justice, performance, and writing scenes in CUNY and around NYC. Rivera is survived by his wife, Barbara Killens Rivera; two daughters, Abiba Deceus and Kutisha Booker; son Barra Wyn; and four grandchildren, James Booker, Akalia Booker, Quamey Venable, and Jean-Oliver Deceus.

Many of us revere Rivera as an active participant and chronicler of the 1969 City College of New York Strike for Open Admissions and the formation of an Ethnic Studies department, during which Black and Latino students occupied campus buildings as part of a massive city-wide student and community rebellion linking social movements to higher education. With his classmate and fellow poet Sekou Sundiata, Rivera co-founded *The Paper*, the first CUNY student newspaper under the control of Black and Puerto Rican students that still operates today as a leading political and artistic forum for students of color at City College. His name and tremendous inspiration continues to resound in staff discussions of *The Paper's* past, present, and future mission.

Rivera never ceased to engage with his political action roots at CUNY. I first had the honor to meet him at City College during a March 4, 2010 student walkout as part of a national education day of action. I had anticipated this opportunity ever since beginning my studies there in 2006 and hearing stories about him within our school's richly subversive history. On that cold and wet day in March, Rivera came to speak with the few hundred-wide student cipher gathered outside the North Academic Center, laughing and chanting with critical purpose despite the rain that dampened our posters

and banners. At a stature of less than 5 feet, Rivera literally embodied with his loud, steady, luminous flow of prose-poetry that we, history's little folks, could galvanize and transform any space we occupied.

More recently, in 2011, Rivera joined two panels that spoke to students and faculty about these histories. At a February 22 event on "CUNY Student Strikes," hosted by Students United for a Free CUNY, Rivera stated, "You have to be willing to challenge everything, even the assumption that you have to go to school and pay for it. Students leave either through the front door with a degree in one hand and a debt in the other or the leave through the backdoor with no degree but a debt. That makes you an indentured

servant." For many student activists in the room, these prescient remarks would bridge the over three decades-long struggle for CUNY tuition to be free again with the Occupy Student Debt campaign and debt statement-burnings at protests that arose in the fall of 2011.

At a November 2011 event on "Black Student Radicalism: Past, Present, and Future," co-hosted by the Africana Studies Group and the Adjunct Project at the CUNY Graduate Center, Rivera recounted the conditions for why students of color have rebelled, noting that only 10% of all CUNY students were from non-European American backgrounds in 1968. He shared how

the CCNY campus had become an extraordinary political realm for discussion and debate. H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael spoke to packed rooms, films like *Battle of Algiers* were screened in the wake of anti-colonial revolutions in Africa. Future leaders of the Young Lords Party and the Puerto Rican Student Union engaged with Black students in the Onyx Society, as well as committed anti-racist white students, to form an alliance that led them to take over buildings upon coming to the conclusion that, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., the administration's call to "wait almost always means never."

Rivera's contribution electrified the room at a time when many of us in the CUNY community had become actively involved in the Occupy

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*Louis Reyes Rivera bottom right corner during his tenure as editor of The Paper.*

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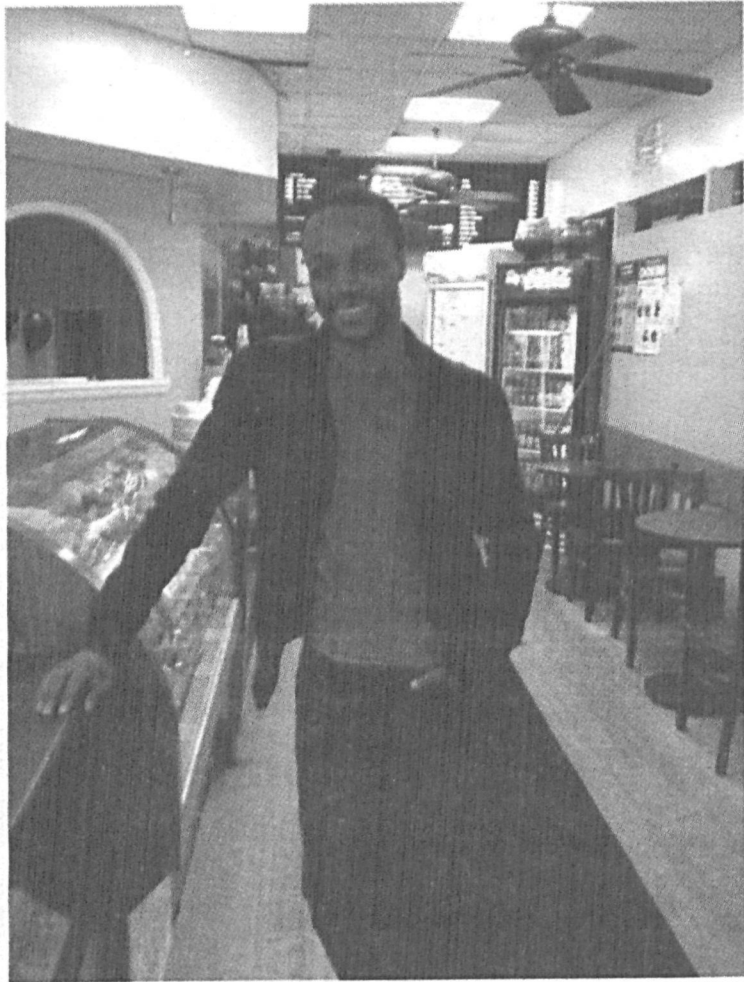
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the  
City College  
of New York



# Editor's Letter



This month we honor our great hero Louis Reyes Rivera, the poet laureate of the CUNY movement, in life and in spirit. Louis was a veteran of the 1969 City College Student Strike and a co-creator and founder, *The Paper* dedicated to being the voice of descendants of the African diaspora at CUNY will remain his home here on earth. I am so glad I had the opportunity to hear his poetry and meet him before his passing. Louis believed in the power of student change in our communities and encouraged us to continue the struggle in the name of freedom. We miss him tremendously.

For the past two years, I have had the pleasure and honor to serve as managing editor and then executive editor for *The Paper*. Now, I bid you all a fond farewell as your editor.

To the commenters, our wonderful staff, community members, university leaders, advisers, mentors, and the thousands of readers who we consider our family – thank you for supporting us! I will miss all of you as I embark on the next chapter in my academic career.

As I reflect on my tenure, I can't help but feel proud of all the hard work our TINY staff committed to our publication. Everyone at CCNY has been truly kind to me. A special place will forever be reserved in my heart for my CCNY family.

By Oronde Tennant

# Letter to the Editors

Re "Protecting Face-to-Face Protest," by Ronald J. Krotoszynski Jr. (Op-Ed, April 9):

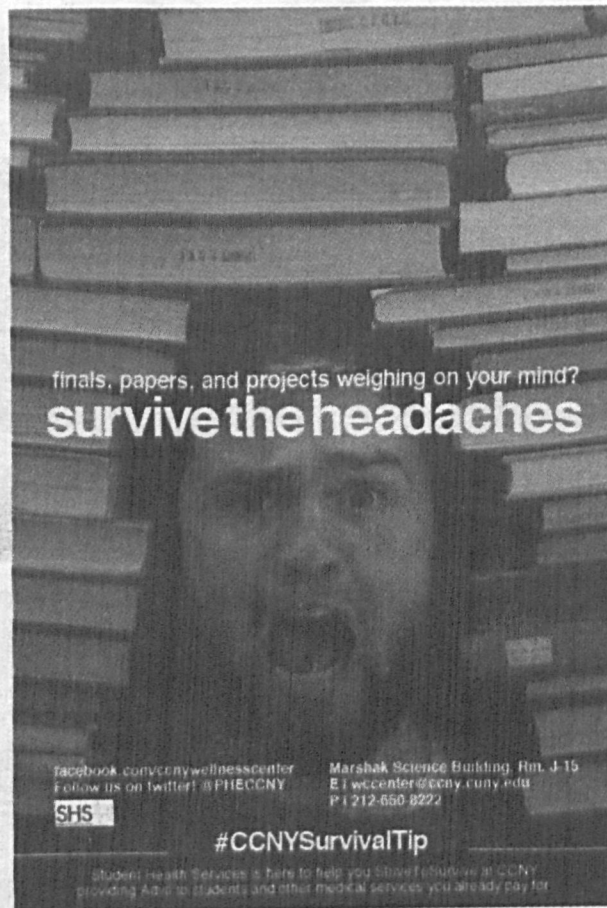
To those of us who cherish the First Amendment, it's very distressing that local governments so readily restrict protest from the places where protesters want to be seen and heard.

During the black bear hunt last December in New Jersey, I was arrested when I refused to leave an area where I thought protesters should be able to stand.

As with so many citizens, the First Amendment is a major source of my pride in my country and is a core principle in my personal value system. I worry that citizens would lose their sense that they can make a difference if it is compromised.

WILLIAM CRAIN

Poughquag, N.Y., April 9, 2012



# The Paper

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## OUR MISSION

In 1969 two student leaders, including Louis Reyes Rivera, founded *The Paper* as a radical social voice for people of African descent. We stand on the shoulders of journalistic giants! our mission is to carry on this legacy. As an organization, we encourage and develop socially progressive student activists. *The Paper* will continue to serve CCNY and the surrounding Harlem community.

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# The Flash Black

Because we strive to connect past lessons with today's struggles, we are thrilled to present this feature in our publications—the FLASHBLACK! For each issue, we will reprint articles and photographs from the Tech News and *The Paper* archives which are housed in our own cohen library. We encourage our readers to respond to these blasts from the past, build on their legacies, and spread the word about our college's amazing political history

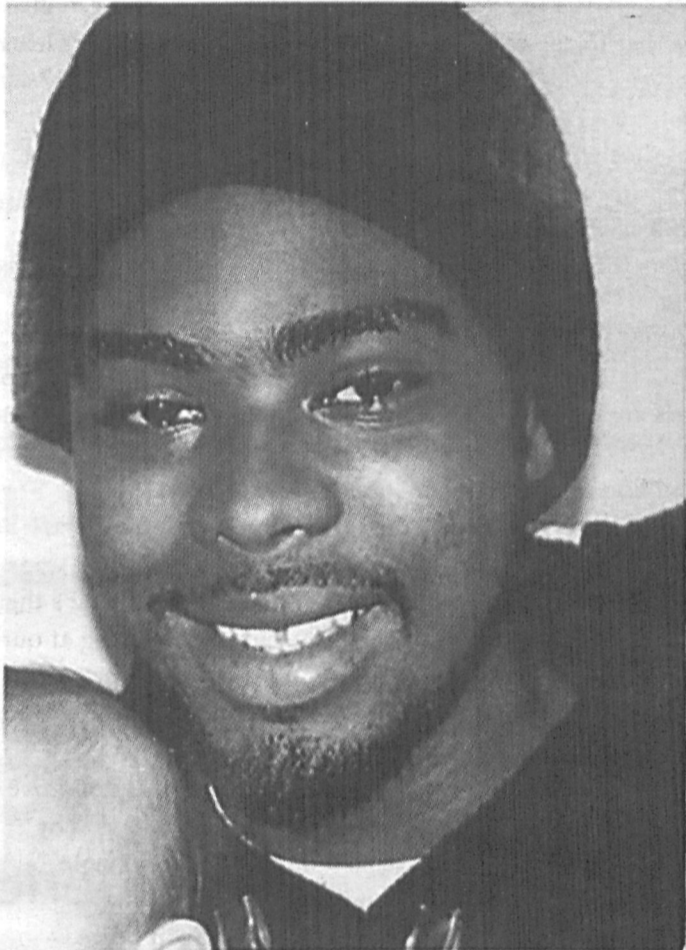
*Of What We Remember" - Langston Hughes*

SEPTEMBER 2010

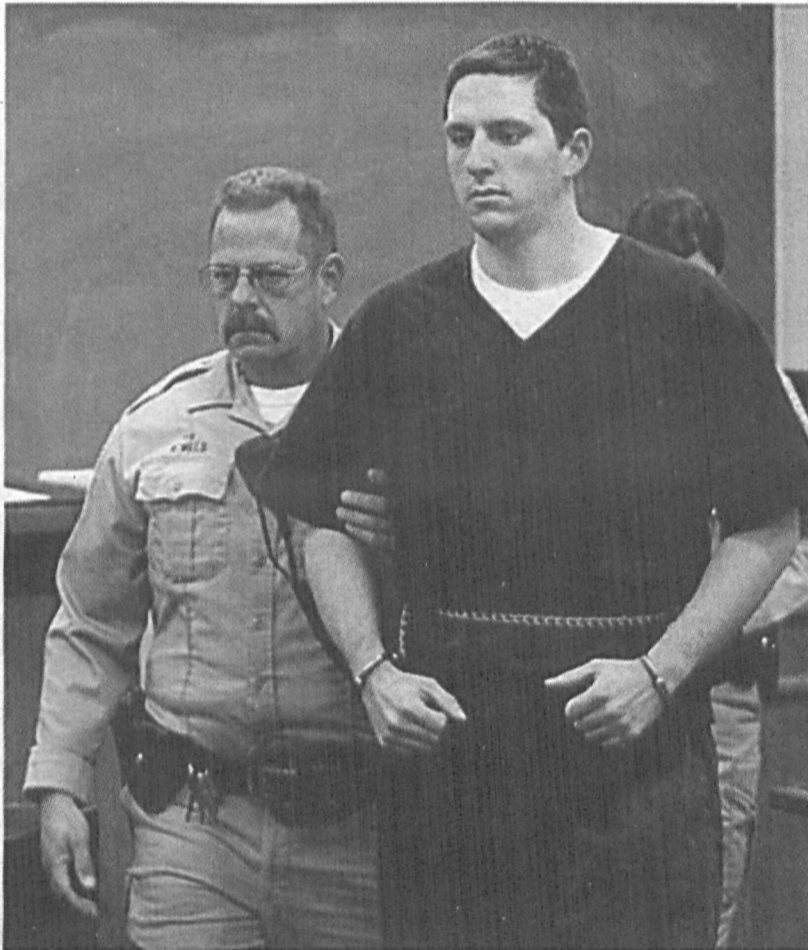
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## WE ARE ALL OSCAR GRANT!

October 22nd is the National Day of Protest to Stop Police Brutality, and the Criminalization of a Generation! WEAR BLACK! FIGHT BACK! Join the October 22nd Movement at Union Square South in Manhattan 3pm.



Courtesy of Johnson Family



Cathleen Allison / AP

Oscar Julius Grant III February 27, 1986- January 1, 2009  
Shot by BART police officer. Video by Guerilla Media!

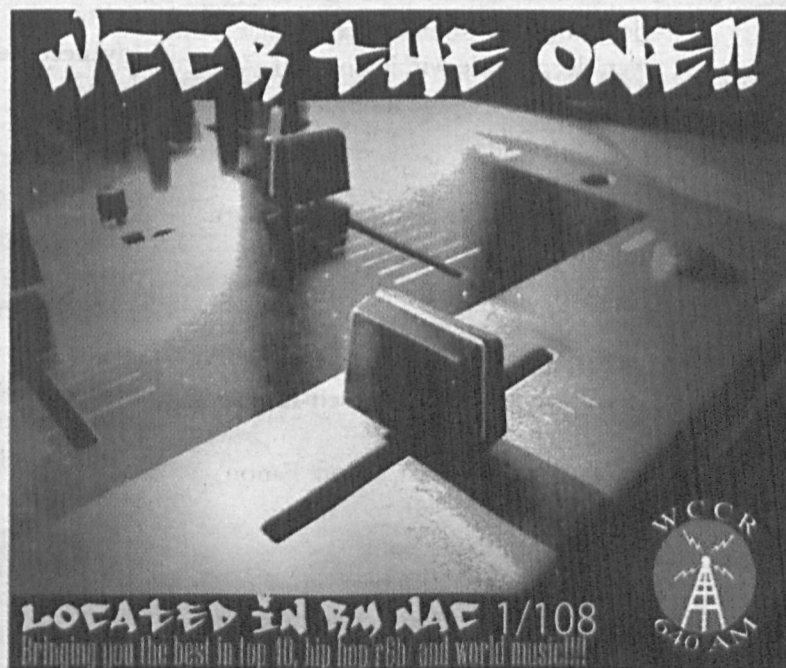
Johannes Mehserle convicted of Involuntary Manslaughter.  
Sentencing November 5, 2010 Update in Next Issue!

### URGENT:

Students And Faculty Of City College:

We have been appealing to those with writing ability or desire to join us. But we've received minimal response. If we die, a part of you also dies. You'll lose a voice on this campus. Check us out! Make time to contribute! We need every type of skill and talent we know you have to offer! The City College of New York, the surrounding Harlem Community, along with the world is still in need of conscious raising. In an era of intense racism and conflict at large, your contributions would be especially appreciated!

This is a paraphrase of a message printed on November 17, 1977 and again on December 12, 1991!



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## Testament

That all they have  
are rocks to throw  
at high towered snipers' nests  
hidden behind rifle fire flames  
helicopter rocket launched grenades  
falling like a deluge of bullets

and still they come  
with rocks in hand  
raucous crowds of disaffected sneers  
slinging stones against disgusted  
justice  
smirking soldiers  
shooting grinning  
lascivious laughter  
bullets hitting  
babies falling right beside their moms

and still they come  
with screams and shouts  
armed with nothing but a thought  
as soldiers trained to mow them down  
spray with flames civilian populations  
dressed in self-determination  
grumbling like the rubbed chips they  
throw

all of which speaks to the testament  
of massive anger rising to its feet  
marching clamor slogans hurled  
at crime and massacre  
where right & joy  
like peace & liberation  
push straight through the opened  
thighs  
of street spilled blood  
as parents wail with falling tears  
as still-born twins cut from wombs  
spill upon a nation's blight  
as once again state precedes the  
citizen.

[Editor's Note: the following poem is  
an excerpt from a recently completed  
epic poem, *Jazz in Jail*, written by  
former editor and co-founder of *The  
Paper*, Louis Reyes Rivera. All rights  
reserved.]

By Louis Reyes Rivera

into jails & jobs that force you into  
no where

"but, just like Malcolm,  
you too are Russwurm's not-so-  
distant cousin  
not just pleading, but insisting  
like his sibling, David Walker,  
how self-defense is just as sane as  
drinking water

"& just like Lola & Lolita, Albizu y  
Betances,  
urging us to keep machetes sharply  
honed  
to free the minds of captives bound  
& dedicate themselves & you, just like  
Malcolm,  
to expose those lies that foster doubt

"no more cane crop here  
no more working in those bauxite  
mines  
no more selling sandwiches on trains  
no more washing pots for one night's  
pay  
unless, of course, those fields &  
mines  
those trains & diners are owned by  
you  
& shared by every sibling just like you  
who feed & free their own

"& just like Malcolm,  
you give shape to another form of  
Kwame's O.A.U.  
& like today you're now a part of  
Africa's Region Six  
where the rest of us reside  
as targets on the desk of BOSS  
paying zealots sent amid the people  
you inspire  
— their guns now silencing your voice

"Imagine then — that just like Martin  
you were born a preacher's son, a  
precocious child  
raised amid a Middle Caste as prodigy  
to hope  
advanced degrees beneath your belt  
you learned to read & reinterpret  
the nature of this constant war  
'tween access & privilege  
'tween sovereignty & subjugation  
'tween common work & private  
profits  
measuring the worth of human flesh

"& just like Martin Luther King  
you discover you too came from the  
womb of Ida  
working hard to shape your mind  
raising siblings needing strength  
& standing firm against another  
lynching  
leading Freedom in her flight  
from Memphis bound to black towns  
build

"the strategies that you pursue  
to blast those walls of segregation  
to guard against the massacres of  
sacred flesh  
guided into picket lines singing songs  
to Freedom  
a march in front some courthouse  
steps  
refusing to submit,  
just like Ida Wells, Rosa Parks,  
never giving up the seat your own  
sweat paid for

"& having won concessions here &  
there,  
like Martin King & Ida Wells,  
you too continue to expand  
beyond the limits you've been given  
from Civil Rights to Human Thrust  
challenging contentions  
rooted in the seeds of greed  
that had given shape unto the poor

"& just like Martin  
you learn to see how every war is thus  
connected  
just like access versus privilege  
a burning bush with flames of hope  
demanding that we redistribute land  
& wealth

"the poverty we suffer here  
workers striking for a decent wage  
while Viet Cong defend what's theirs  
a world of change knocking at our  
door  
that beckons you to live the sermons  
that you preach  
& just like with that King of Love  
demanding Now & stating Why  
we cannot wait another single  
moment longer  
even with the risk you bear  
being murdered by the FBI

"Imagine this as well  
— that much in the manner of Maurice  
Bishop  
you trace your blood line back to  
Nanny  
& like Maurice & Malcolm too  
you hunger for that sovereign home

"& just like Nanny on the Leeward  
side  
you too hail from the grasslands of  
Asante  
from the hills of Cameroon  
from the hinterland embedded in  
Nigeria  
a kidnapped clan transplanted to  
those islands  
picking cotton like they do in  
Alabama  
cutting cane along the shores of  
bayou streams  
escaping into mountains scorned

## Imagine... Freedom Now

(with Medgar, Malcolm,  
Martin & Maurice)

"Imagine this —  
that, just like Medgar Wiley Evers,  
you too descended from  
the womb of Mrs. Truth  
a progeny of Sojourner  
a sawmill worker farmer's son  
a sibling child of hope & struggle  
growing up & grappling with the need  
for self  
refusing to submit & never even  
thinking to accept  
the sound of hate & have-not-known  
pressing on through roads & woods  
across the tracks of rural Mississippi

"a secretary in the field  
leading boycotts, urging folks  
to stand up straight  
& register the fact  
that each & every ballot cast  
can open up another door

"& just like Medgar, you too  
keep on urging mass & might  
talking 'bout how every tallied vote  
also means to legislate new law  
the kind that guides & clearly states  
the way we must conduct our  
business

"& though you'll bear the brunt of fire  
bombs  
exploding in your home  
you'll never waver from the fight  
but risk, instead, a bullet in your back

"Imagine too that, just like Malcolm,  
you were birthed as seventh son  
directly from the line  
of both Toussaint & Harriet too  
learning how to hustle hard  
yet, deep inside within yourself,  
craving for a whole lot more

"despite that spit from cops & courts  
of racist dogma clouding up your  
mind  
you keep searching for that greater  
good  
rooted in your sense of self-respect

"& just like Malcolm, Frantz Fanon  
you submit yourself to learning  
poring over every book  
that opens up a different set of pages  
from those loose leaf sheets that had  
shaped us into slaves  
into cycles of self-hatred



## Can CUNY Be Free Again?

We hate paying tuition. City College students think tuition is too high, and we're mad that it's going up again. We don't like having to worry about getting the money in on time in order to register for classes, and we don't like having to arm ourselves with a zero-balance bill to do battle with a bureaucracy that spans many floors of the NAC, Wille, and Wingate.

Most people know at some level that tuition was once free, and some have heard their fellow students at protests demanding that it be free again. Despite this, there's a nagging question in most students' minds—how could CUNY be free? Tuition (and all the extra fees) are such a big part of our experience now, it's hard to imagine school without them. Plus, if we weren't paying tuition where would the money come from? How would the school pay for things?

These are valid questions, and they deserve a clear answer. Here it is: CUNY can be free again, and be a better-funded school than it is now, because there's actually plenty of money in New York that could be used to fully fund the university. However, it will never be free unless students fight specifically for free tuition.

Let's break that down. How can there be "plenty of money in New York"? It seems like the State and City are broke; they are cutting budgets all over the place, from the subway to the schools to practically everything else. Even so, New York State came up \$8.5 billion short in 2011.

What is often overlooked is that this is a state with more than 60 people who make over a billion dollars each, seven of whom make over ten billion. They all received a tax cut last year; none

of them are paying close to as much as they could afford. If instead the state made a choice to raise billionaires' taxes and cut poor students' tuition we could easily have a free university, brand new buildings, more janitors, and all without a budget deficit—easy.

That's the real solution, but short of that, there's a lot of money inside CUNY that's not going to students. Chancellor Goldstein made more than \$600,000 last year, and he gets a free car and chauffeur! Most of the college presidents made more than \$300,000. There are dozens of officials getting rich off your tuition money, and they aren't the people who teach you, fix the buildings, or prepare your food—they're administrators.

The best evidence that a free CUNY would work may be the fact that it already did for 128 years—from its founding in 1847 until students of

color became the majority of the student body in 1975. Ask a neighbor or a professor or a parent—they can likely remember that CUNY ran fine without students paying a cent.

Clearly, a free CUNY is realistic financially. Is it realistic politically? Can we convince Governor Cuomo, who cut taxes on rich folks by two billion dollars last year, and wanted to cut them by four billion, to actually raise taxes to a fair level? Can we get the Board of Trustees to stop giving Goldstein a chauffeur and giving us the bill?

The short answer: Yes, but it won't be easy. However, we know we can do it, because CUNY students in the past have won against tougher odds. In 1934, during the depths of the Great Depression, City College students stopped the university from establishing tuition, and instead convinced the university to expand.

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Photos courtesy of Google

## Should You Take a Summer Course?

The summer is fast approaching, and summer courses are probably not part of your summer plans. You may think summer classes are no way to spend your summer, but there are those who have considered it and with good reason. Some advantages of taking summer courses include:

- Receiving credits faster and graduating earlier
- Being more focused on one or two courses compared a full semester of five classes
- A chance to make-up a failed or dropped class
- Smaller class sizes
- Graduating sooner can mean earning a living sooner
- You may find some courses to be interesting which can give you a great learning experience

Some people consider taking a summer class because they want to graduate faster. If your major requires you to complete many classes, it may be in your interest to spend your summers taking those courses so that you graduate on time or

even earlier. Hence, if you graduate earlier you will pursue the workforce sooner. Also, if by any chance you dropped or failed a previous course that you found to be difficult, by taking that course during the summer you are increasing your chances of passing with a good grade. Classes tend to be smaller allowing the professor to be available to individual students and their needs.

Although there are several advantages of taking a summer course, there are also some disadvantages:

- Summer jobs, internships, and vacations might not be a reality
- Summer activities are limited
- Homework load is condensed
- Tough and fast paced
- More work required
- Increased class length

Poor economic state, and family responsibilities factor in the decision to take summer courses. Some may feel that obtaining a job, an internship,

or going on a vacation is more important and taking a summer course would limit these opportunities. Another drawback of summer classes is that they are fast paced. Courses are about six weeks long, which means that there is a lot of material to be covered in a short period of time. The condensed homework load can become stressful. Also, the class length may range from three to four hours which can cause the body to become tired and the mind to become less attentive after a couple of hours.

Truthfully, not everyone is comfortable learning under the circumstances of a summer class; but some are. So you may want to think about what conditions you are more comfortable learning in. Some students concur that taking summer courses is beneficial. Juan C. Hernandez, an upper freshman at CCNY states, "I believe that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages...If you think about it in the long run, it is worth it to go and take a summer class. Sure you may miss out on spending time on vacation or hanging out with your friends, but in the end you will earn your

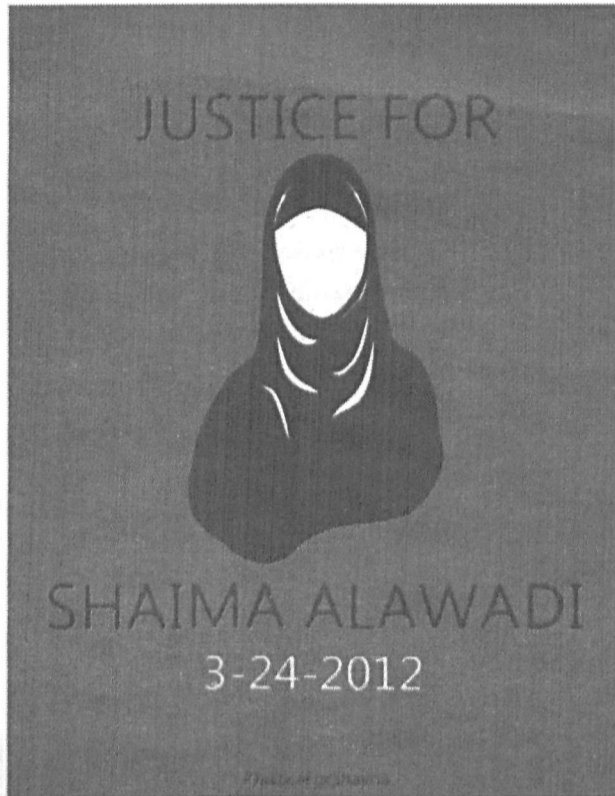
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## An Iraqi Women Beaten For Wearing Hijab!

Just weeks after the Trayvon Martin murder came another hate crime. Tragically on Saturday, March 24th 2012 Shaima Alawadi—an innocent Iraqi-Muslim Woman and a mother of five, was confirmed dead after found beaten in her home in South California next to a note that read “Go back to your own country. You’re a terrorist.” This hate crime has caused sorrow, frustration, and fear for Muslims across the nation. Shaima Alawdi’s case is representative of the brutal and harsh effects of Islamophobia in Western societies. The 32-year-old Iraqi immigrant was found beaten into unconsciousness in her home in El Cajon with a note near her body warning her to go back to Iraq; officials said Shaima Alawadi was found unconscious in the dining room of the home. The note was nearby, police said. Alawadi was beaten to death with a tire iron inside her home in El Cajon (home to 40,000 Iraqis). The family previously reported of a similarly threatening note days earlier, police said. Alawadi was taken to a local hospital but was quickly determined to be brain dead. She was taken off life support Saturday afternoon. Police have not yet labeled the attack a hate crime, but they believe the beating to be “an isolated incident,” not part of a pattern of attacks.

Photos courtesy of Google



The suburbs east of San Diego have been a popular destination for Iraqi immigrants, particularly Iraqi Christians. Alawadi, a mother of five, had moved to the area just weeks ago from Michigan. The daughter of 32-year-old victim Shaima Alawadi told reporters after the March 21 attack that she

found a note near her mother that told the family to go back where they came from. Her comments sparked international outrage and speculation the attack was motivated by hatred. In the *Time* Magazine reported that “Coming on the heels of the Trayvon Martin killing in Florida, there would seem to be many parallels between the two crimes—the hate speech, the prejudice, the innocence of the victims. A One Million Hijabs for Shaima Al Awadi page has even been launched on Facebook, but it’s doubtful that the movement will really catch on because Iraqis are still considered dangerous infiltrators in the eyes of Americans.” The hijab is not the hoodie—yet. Police do not profile muslim women as they most certainly do black men. But only when we see people for their humanity and not their clothes or religious beliefs are we living up to the principles on which this country was founded and should now be evoking. (Taken from *Time* magazine).

First it was a Hoodie, now a Hijab, next will be unknown, when will hatred crime be stopped!!!

By Mai Sabour

## The Healthcare Debate

Recently the news was dominated by a very serious battle, one that could potentially set the fight in this country for healthcare for all back by several decades. In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt used his State of the Union address to propose a Second Bill of Rights designed to codify protections for the Four Freedoms- freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear- into federal law. Chief among these was the right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health. Seven decades passed before any leaders of this great nation were able to successfully pass healthcare reform legislation. Today, 26 states are litigating in the highest court in the land against the first bill to answer FDR’s call to reform the more serious abuses in America’s healthcare system, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) — commonly referred to as Obamacare by its conservative detractors.

When issues of discord arise between how the people and their legislatures interpret the Constitution, it is left to the justices of the Supreme Court to discern whether lesser laws are in harmony with the supreme law of the land. The justices do not risk reelection. Once appointed a justice serves until they die, resign, or are impeached. They are mostly free to judge cases based on their own merits, free of external influences. Thus it is the strength of each side’s arguments and their presentations that should hold

the greatest weight in this arena.

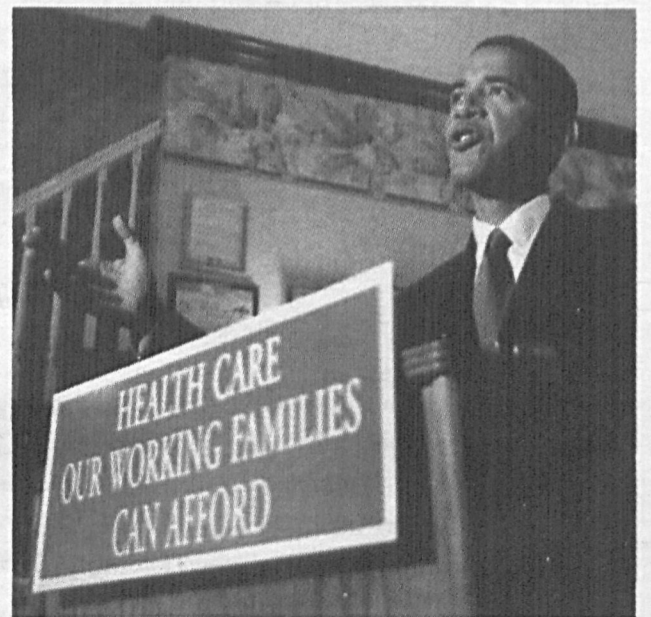
The coalition of 26 states selected Paul Clement, a former US Solicitor General from President George W. Bush’s administration, to represent their case. The federal government is using the current US Solicitor General, Donald Verrilli Jr. to defend the bill. Paul Clement’s skills in the courtroom are on the same level as those of LeBron James on the court. One of his appeals in addition to his mastery of the English language is his extensive courtroom experience. In his career Mr. Clement has argued over 50 cases before the US Supreme Court. One of Paul Clement’s arguments was that the clause in the health care bill requiring that all citizens purchase health insurance or pay a fine is unconstitutional. Clement was able to put his familiarity with the Court to use in skillfully presenting his case while poking holes in his opponent’s arguments.

Paul Clement is the microphone for the energy and attitude in this country that threatens to repeal one of the most significant pieces of legislation passed to impact how the citizenry receives health care. Because of the lack of what is known as a severability clause in the PPACA, it is unclear if any part of the Act can stand if the individual mandate clause is deemed unconstitutional. Every American regardless of age, sex, income level and creed should have access to healthcare. In the system preceding the PPACA, the one that was constitutional and acceptable to

Paul Clement and his 26 States, 30 million people were uninsured- not because they wanted to be, but because they couldn’t afford coverage. This is in stark contrast to all other western nations. Even Cuba, a nation crippled with economic sanctions, provides free and universal health care to its citizens.

The Supreme Court is expected to issue its ruling on this case in June.

By Temitope Ayeni

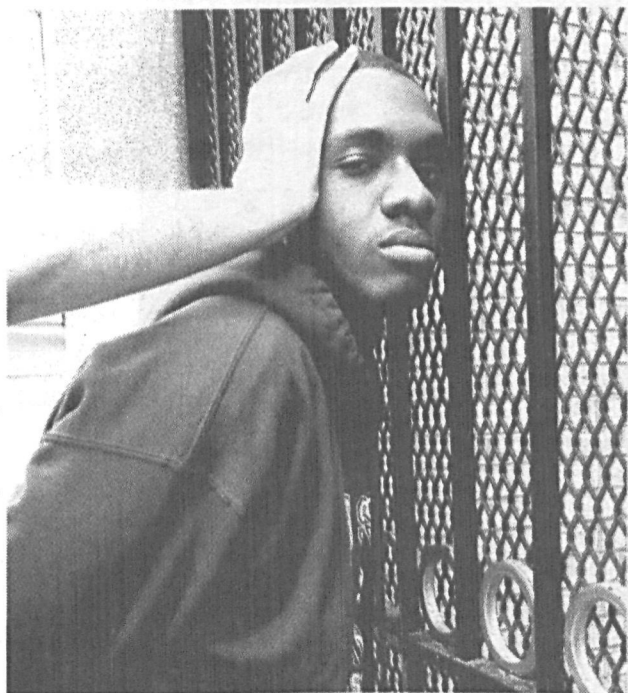


Photos courtesy of Google



## Up Against the Wall

Photo was taken by Tiffany Valentín



Last year, 684,330 New Yorkers, were stopped and frisked by New York's finest. The vast majority are men of color who've done nothing wrong.

On a recent Friday night I became one of them. Again.

I'd just left the Kew Gardens-Union Turnpike train station on Queens Boulevard, around 10:30. One

block from home, I noticed a Lincoln Town Car pulling up beside me. The driver rolled down his window. He was wearing a grey sweater and Giants cap. I assumed the guy was lost. A dude looking for the closest dive bar? Needing directions to get back to Jersey? But instead of asking for directions to the BQE, he had something else in mind.

"Get your hands up!"

Before I knew it, the car's inside was flashing blue and red. The driver got out and asked me something that blew my mind. "Why were you running 10 minutes ago?"

Flabbergasted, I managed to pull myself together to tell him I hadn't been running at all during that time.

The man then turned to his two undercover cronies riding in the passenger and back seats. One of them was wearing a New York Rangers Jersey and cap; the other I didn't get a good look at.

"How tall was the guy? 5'10?"

Through their conversation, I figured out what was going on. Apparently, someone—another young

black male--had been running around Hillside Avenue in nearby Jamaica with a knife. The station I was coming from--along with my home--is completely west of that area.

Somehow, I have become the NYPD's generic criminal. I am a college student, and last weekend I made the CCNY's Dean's List. I've never committed a crime. I don't carry a gun, knife, box cutter or broken bottle. I'm not that guy slanging crack rock on the corner at 3 AM. I do my homework, hang out with friends, live with my mother. Regardless, I still fit these guys' preconceptions about African-American men.

Immediately after his inquiries came the standard frisk: a rummaging through my pockets and pat down to see if the phantom knife was near my crotch area.

Once he was done, he kept one of his hands on my bookbag. I became so angry I told him to get off me. He then said he could touch me any way he wanted, pushed me away and called me a "f\*\*\*in a\*\*hole" under his breath before returning to the car where his pals were waiting.

continued on pg 11

## Black Food and Health Justice

**The State of Black Food and Health Justice and Black Food Sovereignty**  
*1st of a 3 part Essay*

"The key to understanding and eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities is to acknowledge that they are not the result of individual behaviors. Instead, poorer health outcomes and ethnic and racial disparities in health are the result of social determinants of health care status. Therefore, the elimination of health care disparities requires solutions based on social justice.

Social justice is the fair distribution of society's benefits, responsibilities and their consequences. It focuses on the relative position of one social group in relationship to other social groups in society, as well as on the root causes of disparities and what can be done to eliminate them. Thus, eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities may necessitate altering social policies, social systems and social institutions in order to remove unequal treatment and outcomes in the United States' health care system."<sup>1</sup>

Hunger is the world's number one health risk. (Hunger Stats, United Nations World Food Programme, www.wfp.org) Hunger kills more

people than AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Combined every year. (Id.) Poverty and hunger are closely linked with poverty being the greatest indicator of hunger. (Resources/fact sheets/bread.org/African American poverty.pdf) Education is the greatest indicator of poverty. (Id.)



Miss Lucy/Elder Herbalis © Asantewaa Harris

One in four African-Americans live below the poverty level compared to about 1 in 8 of all Americans. (Id.) Similarly, one in four African-American households are malnourished compared to about 1 in seven of all American households. Black children suffer hunger at higher rates than do adults. One in three of all African-American children are hungry. (Id.)

As well, poverty is the main indicator of poor health and quality of health care. (National

Health Care Disparities Report (2005), Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, US Department of Health and Human Services pp. 131-132.) Consequently, Black Americans, who experience poverty at greater rates than the overall US population, suffer from diseases at greater rates than that of the overall US population, and are less likely to receive adequate health care. (Id.)

Black Americans suffer high blood pressure, a major risk for coronary heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and heart failure, at a rate of 40% greater than that suffered by white Americans. ("A Strategic Framework for Improving Racial/Ethnic Minority Health and Eliminating Racial/Ethnic Health Disparities," US Department of Health and Human Services, Rockville, MD: Office of Minority Health, January 2008.) Black Americans are twice as likely to die from strokes as white Americans. (Id.) Black Americans are also 2.1 times as likely as whites to suffer from diabetes and much more likely than whites to experience complications from diabetes, such as amputation of lower extremities. (Id.)

Black Americans are more likely to die from cancer than any other racial and ethnic group in the US. (American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts and Figures for African Americans, 2007-8) Black American men are 50% more likely to

continued on pg 11



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## Louis Reyes Rivera *cont.*

movement, and desired to learn how immense concrete victories had been won in the past. Kristin Moriah, Africana Studies Group Co-chair, offers these words of remembrance about the event: “We wanted to assemble a group of people who could speak to the diverse forms of activism at CUNY that often gets obscured. The word “activist” tends to conjure a certain sort of white male image that doesn’t necessarily hold true at CUNY. Holding the panel was a way of refuting that and emphasizing the importance of cross-racial solidarity in student activism.

“Luis Reyes Rivera had an incredible presence; he was a small powerhouse. With his flowing beard and yellow dashiki he was striking. It was impossible not to be struck by his wit, wry humor and passion for activism. He captivated everyone in the audience during his last talk at the Graduate Center. He was able to crystallize so many of the issues that concern us, especially the importance of access to a liberal arts education and the development of critical thinking skills. He wanted us to know our own history. He loved the people of New York and he believed that CUNY was worth fighting for because of these people. He was so generous with his wisdom. It was a tough act to follow.

“I think that he really came to speak to us at the right time. In so many ways, that panel was a gift. Watching the reaction of the crowd reemphasized how important it is that that link to our activist past be maintained and that the contributions of black and Latino student not be erased from our institutional history. We have a lot of incredibly talented and committed young activists at CUNY. We’re doing a lot of amazing work right now, but we didn’t invent the wheel. It’s important for us to remember that we are part of a long tradition, even though the battles we’re facing now might seem uphill, we faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles before AND won. There’s a great comfort in that. For me, Louis Reyes Rivera’s passing really means losing an important link to CUNY history. It’s so important that Louis and his work not be forgotten.”

Rivera’s involvement in the CUNY movement represented only one of a spectacular array of his projects that could easily fill several lifetimes. Many respected, worked alongside, and learned from Rivera as an esteemed poet and performer. CCNY professor Herb Boyd writes, “At the National Writers Union, a steering committee in which Rivera was a key component called an emergency meeting and set in motion a number of ways to remember their tireless member. ‘He was intricately involved in so many activities that it will probably take a team of us to fulfill just half of what he was doing and what was on his agenda,’ said Loretta Campbell.”

In a stunning display of persistence to share knowledge for all, Rivera helped publish over 200 books, including John Oliver Killens’ Great

Black Russian, Adal Maldonado’s Portraits of the Puerto Rican Experience, and Sekou Sundiata’s Free! He also co-edited Bum Rush the Page: A Def Poetry Jam with Tony Medina, and Bandana Republic: A Literary Anthology by Gang Members and Their Affiliates with Bruce George. Rivera’s publishing company Shamal Books regularly released collections from some of the city’s finest poets. During this time, Rivera published four books of his own work: Who Pays The Cost (1978), This One For You (1983), In Control of English (1988 and 1992), and Scattered Scripture (1996).

Sandra Maria Estevez writes of Rivera’s own award-winning collection Scattered Scripture, “A volume of highly crafted poems of militant and radical perspective, it is a literary masterpiece that



attempts to translate history into poetry, covering the chapters missing from official renditions of history. This collection took twenty years of research to create. The first poem completed for the book, ‘(what are they doing),’ was written in 1974, and the last poem, ‘(like toussaint, so marti)’ was written in 1995. In between came all the other works as responses to his research. Scattered Scripture contains forty-one pages of notes that provide the sources and historical context for the poems, making the book complete as a poetic song, a historical document, and an instructional device.”

Before his death, Rivera had just finalized for publication a 150-page epic poem Jazz in Jail. In a Spring 2009 interview with Eric Serrano, Rivera explained its purpose: “This project began roughly seven years ago. What happens if Jazz (personified) gets busted and put in jail? For what? For trying to stand against the exploitation of music by the music industry... For trying to bring together all of the music that comes out of the Diaspora—Reggae, Samba, Mambo, Calypso, Merengue, Hard bop, Cool bop, Be bop, the Blues, Mother Blues (the mother of Jazz), Grandpa Dirge, Grandma Praise Song, Work Song, Birth Song, the Chant—into one

huge convention of the music, a family reunion – Let’s discuss our condition... So I had an opportunity to pay homage to poetry and music, to show you the conditions inside a prison and inside the court room, and I could even trace the history of it.”

Rivera’s dedication to changing—as well as documenting and performing—people’s histories was infused in the ongoing community literacy and orality programs he led at Sistas’ Place in what he liked to call the “People’s Independent Republic of Brooklyn.” For many years he ran a four-hour writing workshop on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays, as well as “Jazzoetry” and open mic sessions on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Moreover, for several years River hosted the WBAI radio show “Perspective,” a dynamic forum on all matters political and cultural for the people of New York. One of his students, Rich Villar, reminisced after Rivera’s death:

“Documentation is a behavior I learned from him. Archive is a survival instinct he tried to teach us all.”

Indeed, Rivera was precisely the kind of representative educator who CUNY students have continually fought to include in our schools: “I come from a peasant background (i.e., Puerto Rico), from the lumpen proletariat (i.e., urban ghetto), and from the dispossessed (i.e., of African and Amerindian descent), and I choose deliberately not to forget or forsake that there is beauty and relevance in that lineage. No shame. But no arrogance either.” He repeatedly said that he wished to be remembered “as a bridge between the various currents of the underclass.” Rivera also once clarified, “If I am an academic, it’s by default. I never looked at it as teaching as much as sharing with others. Information is supposed to be part of our natural inheritance, just by virtue of our birth. What we call education is really more like being tricked and trained to meet the demands of labor.”

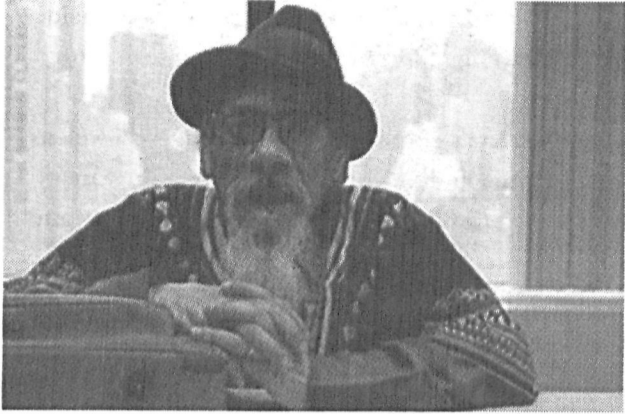
One part bell hooks, one part Howard Zinn, Rivera “distinguished himself as a professor of creative writing, Pan-African literature, African-American culture and history, Caribbean history, Puerto Rican history, and Nuyorican literature at such institutions as State University of New York-Stony Brook, Hunter College, College of New Rochelle, LaGuardia College, Pratt Institute, and Boricua College,” writes National Writers Union member Barry Hock. Throughout his life, Rivera was honored with numerous awards, including a lifetime achievement award from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (1995), a Special Congressional Recognition award (1988), and City College of New York’s 125th Anniversary Medal (1973).

Because of these myriad achievements, Rivera’s legacy must be both honored and extended for more people to learn. Hank Williams, another panelist in the “Black Student Radicalism” event, argues, “Louis Reyes Rivera, known as “the janitor of history,” is the type of person who we often allow to fall through the cracks of recorded “official” history, but whose memory is passed on through the African oral tradition. In some ways,

continued on pg 10



## Louis Reyes Rivera *cont.*



Courtesy of Tony Mitchelson

that's fitting, because that's how he often operated himself. Anyone who's seen or heard his incredibly gripping poem on being in the room during Malcolm X's assassination ["Bullet Cry"] can attest to the power of the spoken word when used by him. In 2011, he was honored at the Harlem Book Fair and said that he understood that his mastery of words and as a storyteller came with a great responsibility: that of telling the truth. This is what he did. It will get you in trouble if your concern is mainstream acclaim, but his concern was more for those who, like him, were on the underside of history. He repped us proudly and well."

In the essay "Inside the River of Poetry," Rivera asserted the profound stakes that guided this quality of fiercely conscientious and loving interaction with our communities. "Always there is need for song... And every human has a poem to write, a compulsion to contemplate out loud, an urge to dig out that ore of confusion locked up inside. But with the contradictions of privilege and caste, of class and gender distinctions regulating access, of those ever present distortions in textbooks with their one-sided measure of human worth, and with the culture of white man still serving as ultimate yardstick to what is acceptable as matter, not everyone is permitted to learn to read, much less to study poetry or hone the art and take the risk of putting one's self on paper." May we all contribute to Louis Reyes Rivera's memory by endeavoring to create a society that one day welcomes poetry from everyone.

By Conor Tomás Reed

## Imagine... Freedom *cont.*

"you take these models, like Maurice who studied Malcolm, Martin too and hone them like you would a mound of diamonds rough turning movements into jewels

"a bloodless coup while Gairy's gone you liberate Grenada align yourself beside Fidel assisting you to break new ground while western forces plow & plant those counterseeds to Freedom's scent causing havoc deep within the very form you'd giving shape to

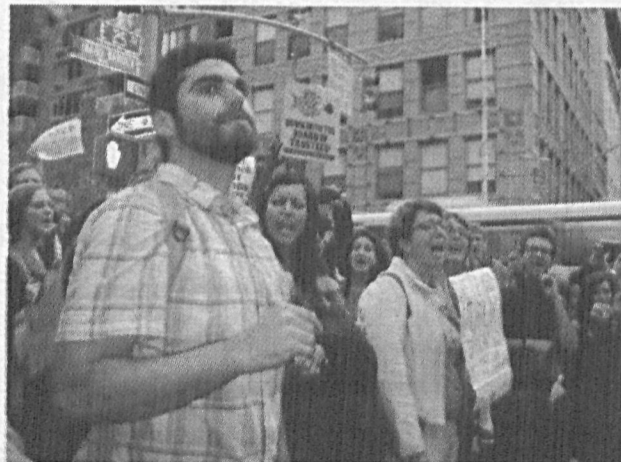
"the vindictive bent of former owners the jealousy that rears among your own when what you knew as revolution turns against itself propping up what used to be to now return

"place you under house arrest despite the love your siblings felt & like Maurice & Nanny too you risk the wrath of being killed with Black Shots paid by C.I.A. or Belgians buying the murdered flesh of people like Lumumba boiled in a vat of acid or like Maurice they shoot you first then hide your flesh no grave in sight no body found the memory of which still lingers now before us

"Imagine too the lessons we can learn from all these siblings we comprise passing torches, moving on cultivating children yet unborn teaching each we so embrace how, just like you & i, they too are from the seeds of Medgar & of Martin of Malcolm & Maurice of Truth & Tubman Ida B., Lola & Bracetti, from Queen Nzinga, Nana too like them sibs who once belonged to SNCC & RAM, the BPP & YLO those Brown Berets & BLA's Weathermen & women reared by clearly sought ideals strident strength so fully striving to continue what we know remains so incomplete."

By Louis Reyes Rivera

## Can CUNY Be Free Again? *cont.*



Photos courtesy of Google

In 1969, when CUNY was overwhelmingly white and the state was telling CUNY that it would have to start shrinking due to budget problems, students took over the South Campus of CCNY

and occupied it. After weeks of struggle, the state agreed to integrate the school, and over the following years, instead of shrinking, CUNY grew.

Although a free CUNY is possible, getting there would be hard. Rich and powerful New Yorkers are very committed to the idea that the state is broke, that they need tax cuts, and that we need tuition increases. They can buy newspapers and senators and ads on TV to make their argument for them.

On the other hand, there's a lot more of us, and we're right. The facts are on our side. Numbers are on our side. What's more, history is on our side. Look at Wisconsin, look at Egypt, look at Occupy Wall St—around the world, people are standing up, and rich, powerful people are scared of that.

How do we win? It starts by talking about it, thinking about it, and recognizing that free tuition is definitely possible. It'll be a tough fight, but when you have a big paper to write, it doesn't make sense to ignore it and do something else—even though sometimes we want to. It makes sense to start as soon as possible, and not be scared of how big it is. This project will get done: it'll just take time and hard work.

By Russell Weiss-Irwin

## Black Food, *cont.*

have prostate cancer and are more likely than any other racial group (The Commonwealth Fund, "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Healthcare: A Chartbook," 2008.) 15% of Black Americans suffer from adult onset diabetes compared to 8% of the white population. (Id.) Because of reduced access to health care, treatment for these diseases is significantly lower among black than white people. (Id.)

Globally, black people experience poverty and hunger at higher rates than whites as well. In 2000, 50% of the world's impoverished were Africans. (The Challenge for Africa, Wangari Maathai, p. 10) 28% of the world's hungry or 238 million people live in Sub Saharan Africa. (Poverty Facts and Statistics, www.globalissues.org) The only larger number of the world's hungry live in South Asia. (Id.)

More than 80% of diabetes deaths in the world occur in low and middle income countries which includes all of Sub-Saharan Africa. (WHO. int/Diabetes) Around 27-28% of all children in poor countries are underweight or stunted of which Sub Saharan African and South Asia account for the bulk of the deficit. (Poverty Facts and Stats, Id.) If current trends continue, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals for Africa will be missed by 30 million children, largely because of slow progress in Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. (Maathai at 6.) In Sub-Saharan Africa, one in 6 children dies before his fifth birthday comprising half of the world's child deaths largely due to conditions largely associated with hunger.



(Maathai at 6.)

Racial disparities have resulted in denied access to farm land. European Colonial governments forcibly removed and displace African people from arable land to make way for colonial settlers, which parallels what has been done to the natives of North America. Let it be known that the crimes committed against the natives have not been rectified to this day. Should we let this trend continue?

Europeans and their descendants own nearly all the land in the Americas, almost all the good land in Australia, New Zealand, and Tasmania, and most of the best land in many African countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Kenya. [raceandhistory.com](http://raceandhistory.com) While in 1920, over 14% of U.S. farmers were African-American as of 2007 less than 2% of U.S. farmers were Afro-descendants. (National Black Farmers and Urban

Gardner's Conference) In Kenya, 10 percent of the population, both black and white farmers, owns 73 percent of all arable land. In South Africa, 16 percent of the population, made up of whites, owns 87 percent of all arable land. In Zimbabwe, 4,500 white farmers - or a mere .03 percent of a population of 13 million Africans - own 73 percent of all arable land. [raceandhistory.com](http://raceandhistory.com). In Namibia, another country in South West Africa, whites who make up about 6 % of the population own about 50% of arable land. (Maathai at 227.)

**Maria Whittaker** Mwakili wa Kimataifa Kwa Ajili ya Uhuru Defensores Mundial para la Justicia

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(Endnotes)

1 (<http://www.medicareadvocacy.org/medicare-info/health-care-disparities>)

By Maria Whittaker

## Summer Courses, *cont.*

credits a lot faster, which means you end up getting off school a lot faster. Sometimes you have to sacrifice fun for education." Another CCNY student, Gabriel Tiu agrees that "when it comes to making a final decision, advantages definitely outweigh disadvantages." He conceives that "taking a summer class gives one the chance to...get ahead of time for an early graduation; thus, starting their desired career earlier."

For some, summer classes are advantageous and for others they are not. But it seems that nothing bad comes from taking a

summer course. By doing so, you are getting ahead of your schedule and also expanding your mind and learning experience. In the end, even with its speedy pace and challenges, summer school can be worth the effort. According to CourseAdvisor, "summer is an excellent time to pursue your college degree, professional training for a new career, or a class in a subject you love but never have time for."

By Zerline Alvarez



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## Up Against the Wall, *cont.*

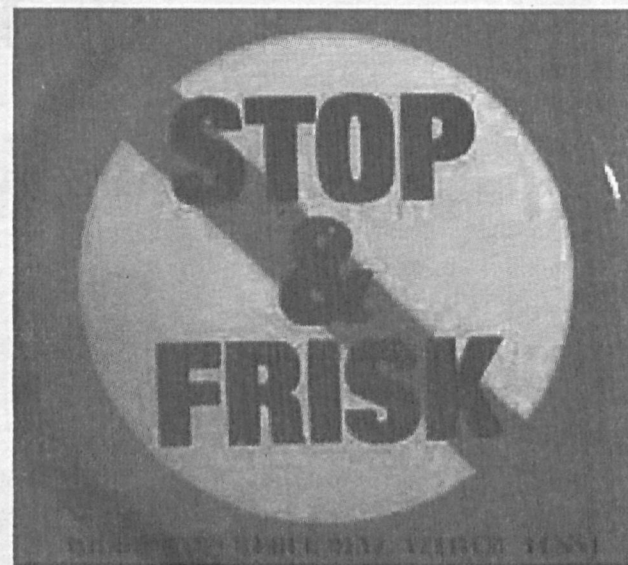
With anger to burn, I yelled, "You f\*\*\*in cops!" loud enough for them to hear. Just before they pulled off, the driver left me with one last stinging response.

"Don't call us when your family gets robbed."

As soon as I entered my apartment, I threw my keys down and told my mom what had happened. Having been in a drowsy state minutes before, she became alert as my tirade continued. Finally, exhausted, I went to my room for a healing night of Daft Punk. My

Looking back, perhaps it would've been wiser to have stayed quiet while the cops were doing their thing. I know these undercover cops could've blown my brains out over the sidewalk, left the smoking evidence in my jacket, say I lunged at them and gotten away with it.

But there comes a point where you decide to throw the "Respect Cops" card out the window. It wasn't my first run-in with the police. As it is for many



Photos courtesy of Google

other black men, stop and frisk is a fact of life for me.

When I was 17, officers handcuffed and searched me for marijuana I didn't have, snickering in my face the entire 10 minutes. Last year two officers arresting a suspect stopped me as I walked by and asked if my sweater zipper was a knife. A summer 2003 incident saw another cop threaten me with a baton because he thought I'd jumped a subway turnstile when I'd paid my fare. I get it, Ray Kelly. I'm the type of guy you always need to send your boys after.

Days after the incident, I found myself conflicted. Part of me is considering leaving New York City for good. If the same city I was born and raised in can't afford me the same respect it grants white New Yorkers, I see little reason to stay here. On the other hand, I want to believe there are decent cops who live up to the "Courtesy, Professionalism, Respect" mantra printed across every NYPD patrol car.

But until they prove me otherwise, I'm going to look over my shoulder for any unmarked cars every time I come home late.

By Hannington Dia



# Syria's Disparities

The United Nations has officially accused Syria of repeated human rights infractions over the past few months. Syrian armed forces are guilty of being unreasonably forceful and indiscriminately violent against political officials that are in disagreement with the incumbent regime.

The UN Security Council met on Saturday, February 4th, with the aim of ending the violence and starting reconciliation talks, but the proposal was vetoed by Russia and China. They feared that the proposal may lead to outside military intervention and an overthrow of the government.

The level of violence has caused Syria to lose international allies in the process. So when a General Assembly was held specifically to address the Syrian crisis, its few allies, namely Iran and North Korea, had little effect. Navi Pillay, the high commissioner for human rights, expressed outrage over the level of violence being allowed to continue, but also towards the Arab League. The Arab League, a regional organization of 22 Arab state based in Cairo, expressed disapproval for the blatant violations of human rights, but have not been able to influence Syria's government in the way that it still has yet to resolve the year old crisis.

Syria's President Bashar al-Assad contends that the violence is against a foreign-backed terrorist

from the General Assembly, at least 5,400 people have been killed over the past year, including civilians and military personnel. Political protests

Photos courtesy of Google



in Damascus incited so much violence that the US considered closing the embassy there. This past Saturday, Syria's military general, Dr. Issa al-Khouli was shot down by 3 gunmen on a residential street in Damascus. Even though Damascus is largely suburbs, it is strategically located for political protests.

Even though Syrian officials continue to assert that the violence is against a foreign terrorist movement, the government is rejecting any foreign intervention. The EU and the UN's disapproval of Mr. Assad's regime is viewed with skepticism, their involvement seen as a way to remove Mr. Assad from his

Mr. Assad took over the position over when his father, Hafez al-Assad, died in 2000. They, along with many of the nation's

civilians videos and testimonies suggest otherwise. Along with the 5,400 death toll, 15,000 people have been arrested at the political protests.

Police violence in Damascus and Homs recorded and posted on several websites, suggesting otherwise. Mr. Assad resists international interference, comparing the protests to those of Occupy Wall Street. While there have been deaths in other countries during rallies inspired by New York's Occupy

elites, belong to the Alawite sect, a minority Shiite Muslim faction in a largely Sunni population. He contends that most of the people being hurt and killed have been supporters of the government, but

movement, and police violence in New York, no death toll has been reported.

By Neelima.



Photos courtesy of Google

group and not just against political opponents. Over the past 10 days alone, 300 people have been killed. According to the official statement

presidency. The Arab League already asked Mr. Assad to step down earlier on in late January. The Free Syrian Army has asked UN for support, but

**"Better than a thousand hollow words,  
is one word that brings peace."  
-- Buddah**

**SAY SOMETHING  
IF NOT NOW, THEN WHEN?**

**THE PAPER**  
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