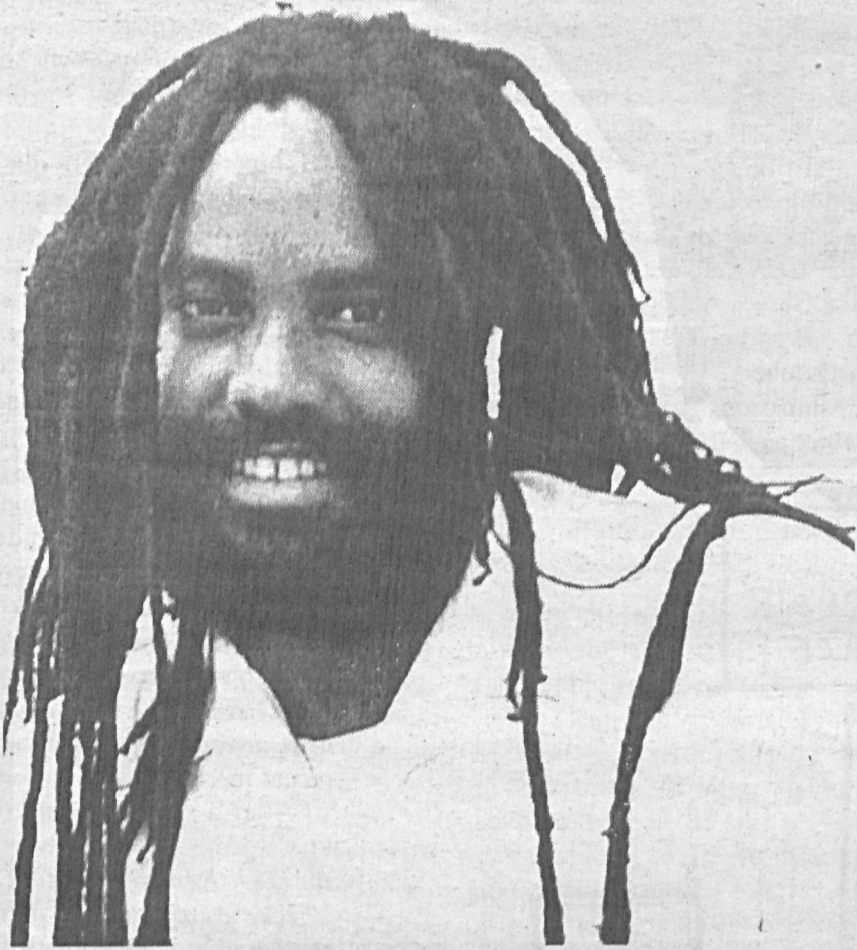




A LOOK BACK AT THE RULE OF EX-PRESIDENT MOSES
 ★ MILITARY AT CCNY ★ INTERVENTION IN COLOMBIA ★
 GIULIANI AS ART CRITIC ★ CASTLES ★ MOVIES ★ POETRY

THE MESSENGER

AN INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER VOL. 2 NO. 1 NOVEMBER 1999 UNIVERSITY OF HARLEM



Mumia in Final Round of Appeals

Governor Ridge signs death warrant. Federal judge grants stay. Thousands protest as execution looms.

by John Olafson

ON OCTOBER 13TH PENNSYLVANIA Governor Tom Ridge signed for the second time a death warrant against famed Black journalist and revolutionary Mumia Abu-Jamal. Governor Ridge did this in the full knowledge that Mumia and his lawyers have been preparing to file a habeas corpus appeal in federal district court. This is merely the latest in a years-long campaign by the powers that be to put this freedom fighter to death.

Who is Mumia Abu-Jamal?

Mumia has been active in promoting the interests of the Black community

and all oppressed people since his youth. In 1968 when he was 14, Mumia was, as he puts it, beaten straight into the Black Panther Party by the police when he protested an appearance in Philadelphia by white supremacist Alabama Governor George Wallace.

Mumia later became a freelance journalist and radio talk show host on Philadelphia's WUHY, covering particularly events in the Black community. It is during this period that he became known as the "Voice of the Voiceless."

Mumia was elected chair of the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists. He won a Peabody Award for

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hero

villain

Badillo Once Again Proves He's a Pig

CUNY Board of Trustees Chairman says Dominicans and Mexicans have no tradition of education & makes racist stereotypes about their physical characteristics. Outraged community organizations protest. CUNY students organize to call for Badillo's removal.

By Marcela Putnam

"THE PROBLEM IS THAT in Mexico and Central America, there has never been a tradition of education ... They're pure Indians: Incas and Mayans, who are about, you know, 5 feet tall, with straight hair. And when they speak about 'La Raza' they're not talking about the Spanish lan-

guage, they're talking about the original Indian language. And therefore it's a far more complicated problem than the problem that we're used to dealing with but nobody seems to want to face up to it."

This is an excerpt from a transcript of Herman Badillo's speech at a Center for Education Innovation luncheon on Sep-

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Badillo Must Go

HERMAN BADILLO'S RECENT STATEMENTS about Dominicans and Mexicans sound like something from different era, perhaps that of George ("Segregation Forever") Wallace in 1950's Alabama, or English Colonialists discussing India.

Unfortunately, this is 1999 and Badillo is head of CUNY, the largest public university system in the country which is made up of immigrants from all over; many of whom have dark skin and are not native English speakers. Badillo shows that ignorance has not gone out of style.

The Giuliani Administration's silence on the issue and the anemic attempts of both Badillo and CUNY to explain away what he said show that these are not the rantings of one backward bigot or a plot by a few hard-liners; it is an institutionalized position. Badillo was the hand picked choice of Mayor Giuliani and Governor Pataki as CUNY Board Chairman. The silence of the Mayor and Governor on the issue says all we need to know about their position. Badillo is obviously still acting with their approval.

It confirms what some people have been saying for a long time: that the talk about "raising standards" is simply code for turning back the clock and dismantling a system that has been largely successful at educating a generation of working class students of color.

The biggest mistake would be to simply think that this is only a race issue or a Latino issue. The so-called "reforms" of CUNY will hurt working class students of all backgrounds for years to come by gutting programs and permanently cutting enrollment rates. This is not fantasy: it has already happened right here at City College. We've lost several departments and thousands of students since the last round of budget cuts.

Herman Badillo must resign or be removed from the CUNY board immediately, but this will not solve the problem. The fate of CUNY and its students is still in the hands of a government that sees fit to spend more money on jails, police, and the military than to educate, house, and heal its people.

Another problem is the Board of Trustees itself: it is made up largely of executives and career politicians appointed by the Governor and Mayor who have no accountability to students or the public. All students should demand the removal of Herman Badillo, but for real change the protests must not stop there.

Props to Undergraduate Student Government

BEING A CCNY STUDENT isn't always easy, but it's even harder to be a student leader. So many people are making our lives difficult and attacking us that it's hard to know what to do or where to even begin. But *The Messenger* is pleasantly surprised to see that the 1999-2000 Undergraduate Student Government (USG) is stepping up and accepting the challenge.

The USG started the new semester by putting a permanent information table in the rotunda to keep students informed of what's going on. The table also has a comment box and responses by USG officials to student concerns. They organized a Town Hall meeting on October 12, to get student input and to educate the student body about what's going on with the end of remedial classes and open admissions. This was the first student government town hall meeting at CCNY since Fall 1996. Cristina Cocheo (Community Affairs VP), Noah Burg (Senator), and Jason Compton (Treasurer) particularly deserve props for their excellent preparation and presentation at the Town Hall meeting.

In addition, CCNY USG has played a leadership role CUNY-wide in responding to CUNY Chairman Herman Badillo's racist remarks against Dominicans and Mexicans. They have teamed up with other CUNY activists to form the *CUNY Action Network*, a new student group that is fighting to save remedial classes and open admissions and is demanding Badillo's removal from CUNY's Board of Trustees.

On October 28 the USG co-sponsored a historical commemoration of the Open Admissions struggle, which will bring Black and Latino student leaders from 1969 back to campus. Sabrina Lauriston (Academic Affairs VP) has organized free GRE preparation workshops for students and is working to get more student representatives in every department decision-making committee. There are many other things too, but even this short list is more than any student government has done in recent memory.

After a very close election last Spring, the members of the *Y2K Ready* and *Students Voice* slates are working together and getting things done. They are accepting the challenge of leadership in a difficult time at CCNY. But student government can't do it alone. Now it is up to the rest of us—clubs, newspapers, and regular students—to join them to save our education.



CCNY to Receive a Transfusion?

THE CUNY SYSTEM IN GENERAL and City College in particular are at a fairly important crossroads. The college has an interim president at a time when calls are being made for drastic changes that could profoundly affect the basic mission of the school.

A recent *New York Times* article reported that CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein was reluctant to even appoint a permanent CCNY president until a new mission statement had been drawn up for the school and went on to quote him as saying that "City College needs a transfusion, and it is going to get one."

Those are both bold statements signaling the type of administration he probably has in mind for our school. We want to know what kind of transfusion he has in mind. If it's one that commits the necessary resources to fixing the school's many maintenance problems and boosting the services we so desperately need to learn—increased library hours, computer access, course sections, and educational support services for those who need them—we welcome those plans.

Unfortunately, Chancellor Goldstein probably has other plans in mind. Former President Yolanda Moses lost her job and nobody really misses her. She didn't fight for the students or school and she didn't have the stomach or will to implement the agenda of the CUNY board quickly enough. She ended up without any friends and was expendable.

The Messenger has been highly critical of the Moses administration simply because it was never willing to fight for the rights of its own students, faculty, and staff. While there are a lot of parts to a college, students should always be the primary focus: without them, there are no classes, faculty, or administrators.

While calling for Herman Badillo's removal from the CUNY board, we extend a welcome and a challenge to Chancellor Goldstein and acting President Roman. The *Messenger* is on the side of City College and CUNY students and faculty. The long term health of the college depends on how well the faculty is able to do their job of educating us and how many future students will have access to that education.

Chancellor Goldstein is right about one thing, however: the college and CUNY need strong and effective leadership now more than ever, and that will mean taking sides. It will take courage to stand up for the students and the school, especially in today's political climate. We challenge the incoming administration to rise to the task.

THE MESSENGER

CCNY'S INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER

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The Messenger is an independent student newspaper at the City College of New York. It is produced periodically by an editorial collective. *The Messenger* aims to serve CCNY students, other CUNY students, and the Harlem community. We seek to do this by reporting on student activities for empowerment, enjoyment, and survival and by exposing the misdeeds of those in power. We seek to help build a powerful student movement at CUNY to win improvements in our lives and changes to societal injustices.

The articles in *The Messenger* do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors of *The Messenger* or anybody other than the individual writers.

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Badillo Boo Boo Puts Him in Deep Doo Doo

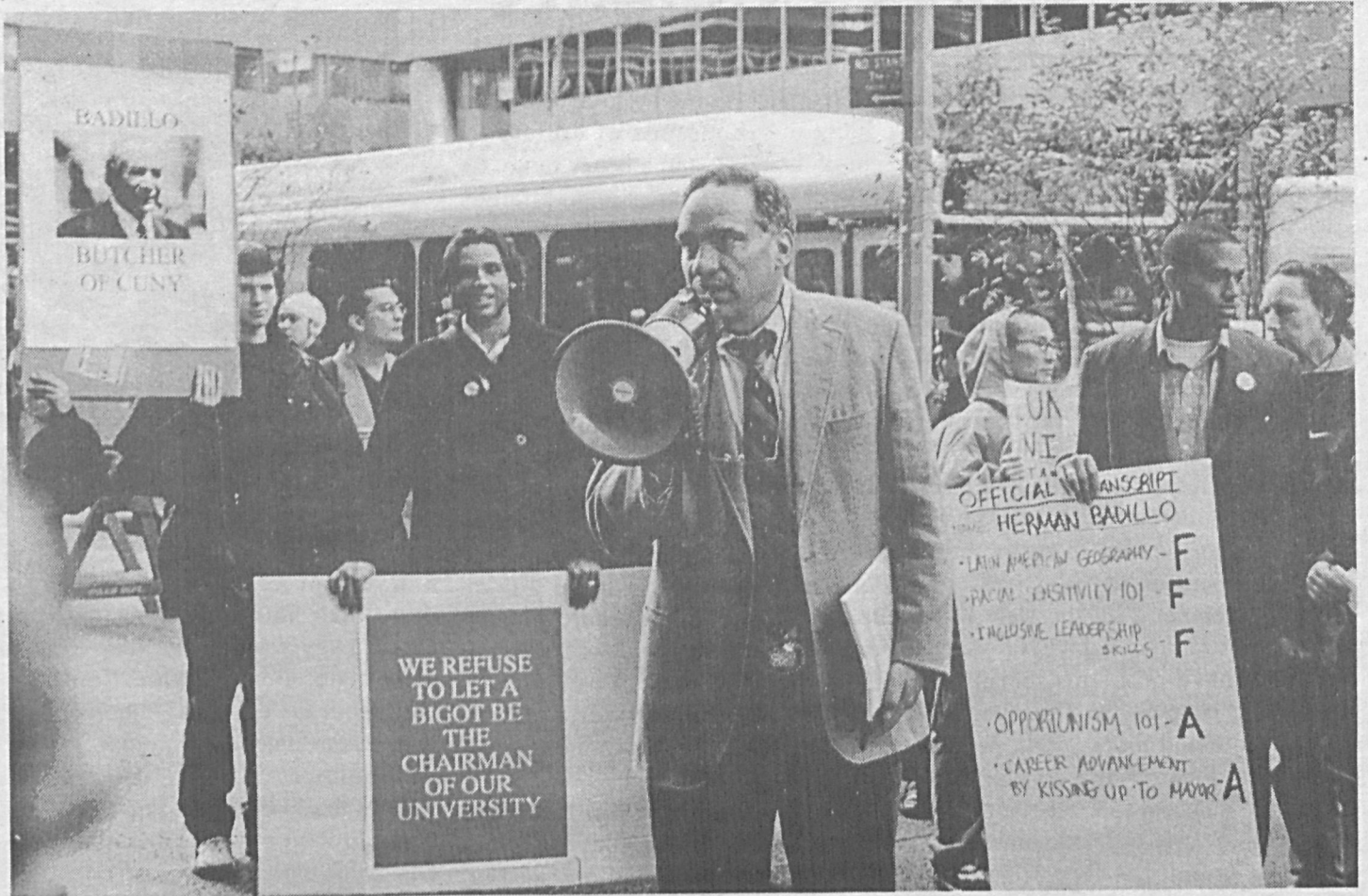
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tember 22, 1999.

Badillo goes on to complain about the growth of Mexican businesses in East Harlem, a neighborhood he claims is "supposed to be Puerto Rican." These ill remarks are not only offensive but also ignorant. New York has a long history of immigration from all over the world. This is one of the characteristics that make this city one of the most exciting in the world. Because it is a melting pot, the people of New York have the great advantage of learning about different cultures. Badillo has apparently not taken the time to do this, points out Esperanza Chacon Morales, a leader of *Asociacion Tepeyac*, a Mexican immigrant organization. She is quoted saying in *El Diaro* on September 24, "I would like to suggest to ignorant Badillo that he should study a little bit of history. Incas are basically from South America...Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and a little bit of Colombia and not from Mexico."

CUNY Board of Trustees Chairman Herman Badillo mentions in the same transcript of his own difficulties upon arriving in New York from Puerto Rico. "... I arrived here not speaking English and found the public schools unprepared to deal with my language barriers."

When Badillo attended City College it was still a free university. Although it was intended to serve the working class, very few minorities were actually accepted. It was predominantly white and this did not change until 1969, when



CCNY Professor Bill Crain tells it like it is. Close to 100 CUNY students and faculty and community members protest on October 28 outside Badillo's law office in midtown demanding his resignation.

students protested that the school was not serving all of the working class but an elite group.

As Chairman of the CUNY Board of Trustees, Badillo is in the position to be a strong and influential voice for students. Instead, he uses his power to support and advocate educational apartheid. Badillo has repeatedly referred to the University as an "educational disaster" where "phony degrees" are given away because students "just can't cut it."

Although Badillo dabbled in political movements in the early 60's and played a role in creating Hostos Community College, he has always aligned himself with the conservative mainstream. When he entered the political scene in 1961 on the reform wing of the Democratic Party, their emphasis was not on the issues of housing, jobs, health care, or education. During Badillo's stint as Deputy

Commissioner of New York's Department of Housing (1962- 1965) he played a major role in the displacement of the Puerto Rican and Black communities throughout New York City in projects called Urban Renewal. "Because he looked and spoke like them, because he was Latino, the community believed he was one of them and would fight for their issues," said Mark Torres, a community activist who was a leader of the CCNY student protests and building takeovers from 1989-91. Instead, Badillo has become one of CUNY's worst enemies.

The bottom line is that Badillo needs to resign, which will require political pressure from students and faculty. Although actions have been taken against Badillo, we still have a long way to go to be successful in his resignation. The Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund quickly organized a September 29th rally at the New School University that drew 150-200 people. Ramiro Campos, a Hunter student at the rally, described Badillo as "very shaken."

Approximately thirty concerned students showed up to a CUNY meeting at Hunter College on October 13. Representatives from Baruch, Brooklyn, City, Hunter, and Queens Colleges attended. Queens College activists handed out quarters to students along with Giuliani's phone number and urged them to call on the spot, resulting in the flooding of Badillo's voice mail.

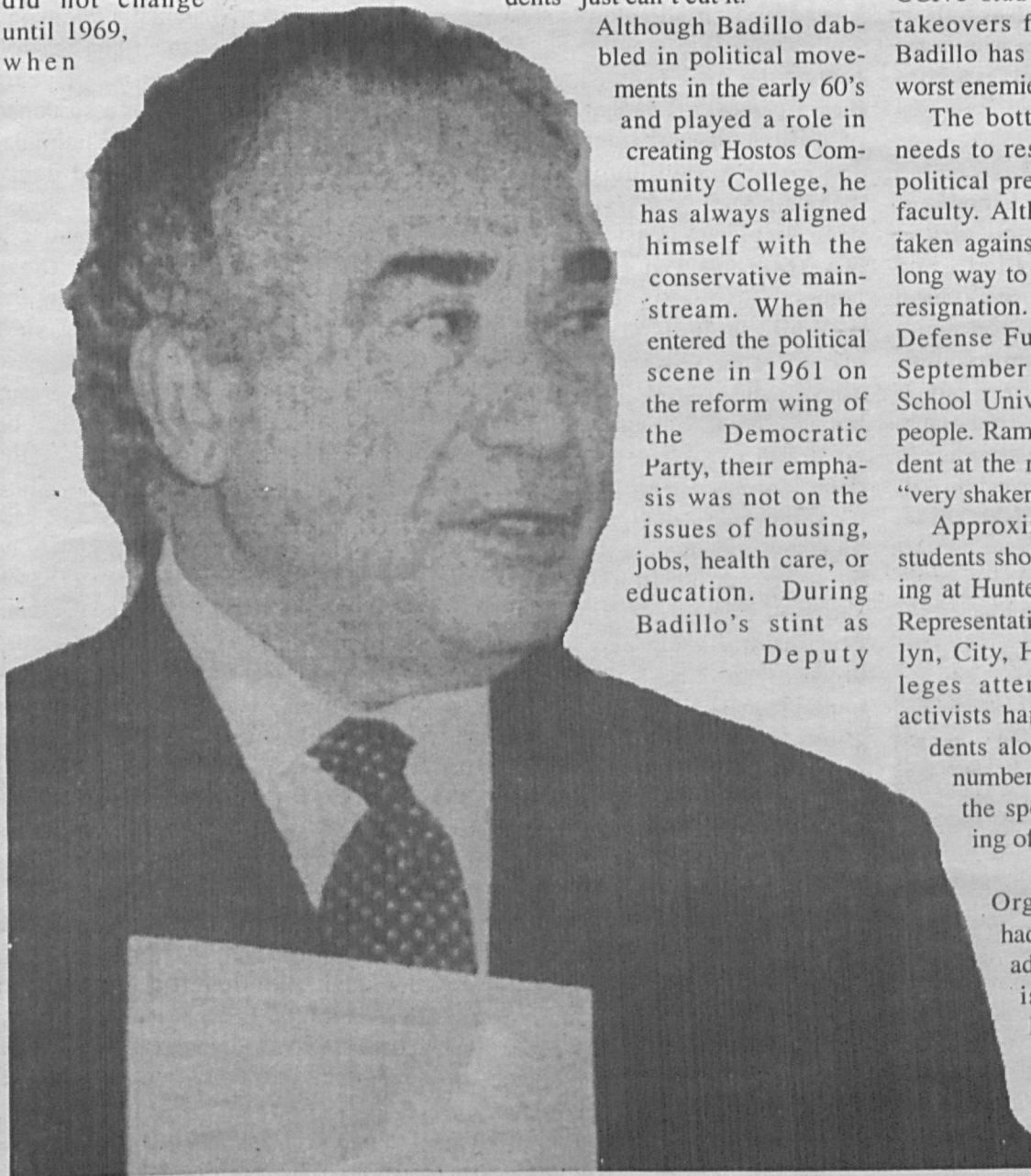
The (Hunter) High School Organizing Committee has had a campaign around open admissions since spring, and is working on educating high school students and the community about the slashing of open admissions and remedial education. Future tactics

were also discussed. On the top of the list was organizing students, and pressuring our individual college presidents, as most are denying any knowledge of Badillo's racial slurs. Students are also hoping to draw the connections between Badillo's racist remarks and his attacks on open admission and remedial education at CUNY.

The more media coverage there is, the more power we have. While the Spanish-language newspapers have showed their support by covering Badillo's remarks and protests, most mainstream media has not given it the attention it needs.

CUNY Faculty Union Calls for Badillo's Resignation

CALLING HIS STATEMENTS about Dominicans and Mexicans "derogatory and racist," the Delegate Assembly of the Professional Staff Caucus (PSC) has condemned CUNY Board Chairman Herman Badillo and has called on Governor George Pataki to seek Mr. Badillo's resignation. In a resolution adopted overwhelmingly at their October 21st meeting, delegates charged that Mr. Badillo's statements about the groups' physical traits and his dismissal of their cultures as having no "history of education" raise questions about his credibility, commitment to the university's mission and continuance in office. Such statements are "not in accordance with the commitment to equal opportunity and respect of all ethnic and racial groups that is expected of the Chairman of the City University of New York," the resolution said.



Military Recruiters Target CCNY Students

by Shumon Alam

A FEW DAYS AGO I WAS GOING to my class and one table inside the North Academic Center (NAC) caught my sight. A few men were standing by the table wearing nicely pressed uniforms with many brass pins and nicely shined shoes. They were United States Army recruiters. Suddenly I realized that recruiters of different armed forces are visiting our campus frequently. The reason is that U.S. armed forces fail to recruit the targeted number of young people to meet their shortage of personnel.

On September 27th the *New York Times* reported that Army, Navy and Air force have problems recruiting new young people. The *Times* reported that more and more young people are looking forward to a college education and a decent job. The Pentagon saw this as a "crisis of national security." As a result, the Department of Defense has launched a multi-million dollar advertisement campaign in

newspapers and television across the country, announcing up to \$50,000 for education, thousands of dollars in sign-on bonuses, and a better future to prevent the "crisis." Slogans range from "Be all you can be" to "Aim high." Words such as *honor* and *pride* are often used in the advertisements.

Now that the propaganda part is done successfully, recruiters have hit the streets of the poorest neighborhoods and educational institutions to exploit the desperate conditions faced by millions of young people in this country. For thousands of poor young people, especially Blacks and Latinos, joining the armed forces is the way to escape poverty, get a secure job, or pursue higher education. As the economy booms, instead of raising the standard of living, government is spending more and more money for military expenses.

For the past several years the safety nets for poor people such as Medicare and welfare have been cut. Rising tuition fees and expenses and cuts in education have made higher education



a daydream. Over the past ten years more than \$600 million have been taken away from New York State's higher educational system. Now after closing all the doors for minority poor people, the state wants to make us the foot soldiers for their dirty work. Thanks to the Pentagon and the ruling class, poor people will only get a chance at higher education is if they are ready to kill or be killed.

The exploitation of poor young

people is obvious, because it is hard to find these recruiters in rich neighborhoods or private schools. Columbia University is a private college only a few blocks from CCNY, but recruiters never show up in that university to stop the crisis of national security. Apparently the rich are exempt from the burden of national security. Our government tends to think that if you can pay for your college, you can also buy honor and pride.

Where the Military Recruiters Might Send You: US Steps Up Intervention in Colombia

By Brad Sigal

THE US GOVERNMENT IS IN A PANIC about Colombia. On July 26, US General Barry McCaffrey (the US's "drug czar") rushed to Colombia to assess the situation and made a call for \$1.5 billion in mainly military aid to the Colombian government—on top of the \$300 million it received this year. This was two days after a US military plane carrying five US soldiers was found shot down in the dense jungles of Colombia, supposedly on a "routine counter-drug mission." It was also after a massive July military offensive by the Colombian leftist guerrillas, the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army), that brought them within 25 miles of Bogotá, Colombia's capital.

US Special Forces are already on the ground training counterinsurgency

battalions. White House diplomats are preparing the grounds for a "regional intervention force" by calling on neighboring countries of Peru and Ecuador to move large numbers of troops to their borders with Colombia. There has also been real talk of a direct US invasion. What exactly is going on in Colombia and why is the US ruling class suddenly so concerned?

Some Background

With 39 million people, Colombia is the third most populous country in Latin America behind Brazil and Mexico. It occupies a key geopolitical location, with two coastlines and a proximity to the Panama Canal. Colombia is a large and very mountainous country, making rural transportation difficult. It is a nation rich in natural resources, with petroleum, natural gas, coal, iron ore, nickel, gold,

copper, and emeralds. The state-controlled petroleum industry is huge.

Despite all of Colombia's rich natural resources, about half of Colombia's population of 33 million people live below the poverty line. In the countryside, 48 percent of the land is owned by rich absentee landowners, while campesinos comprising 63 percent of the rural population own less than 5 percent of the land. As a result of military assaults and war, since 1985 over 1.5 million Colombians, including over 400,000 children, have been displaced. Last year a record 308,000 people were forced from their homes.

While large numbers of Colombians live in poverty, the Colombian government is itself in debt \$18 billion to foreign lending institutions and governments. Almost half the gross domestic product goes on paying off an unrepayable debt, while the Pastrana government is selling off most of the infrastructure, from telecommunications to the water supply, at well below its true value. The beneficiaries are, as ever, US and other western multinationals. Colombia continues to climb further in debt—in 1995 they received \$40.7 million in "aid." The creditors—the IMF and World Bank—require the government to implement policies of austerity and privatization that in turn increase poverty, land displacement, and other major social problems.

In order to maintain this highly exploitative social order, the government has to use serious repression. Not surprisingly, Colombia has one of the worst human rights records on the planet. In 1998 Amnesty International

Secretary-General Pierre Sané wrote a scathing statement to Colombia's then-President Ernesto Samper Pizano castigating the Colombian government for its human rights record. It noted that "Human rights defenders have been subjected to what increasingly appears to be a systematic campaign designed to silence them and destroy their work. Over a period of years they have been victims of a sustained campaign of harassment and intimidation ranging from repeated death threats to arbitrary detention, 'disappearance,' and cold-blooded murder."

The government blames these attacks on "dark forces," meaning the right-wing paramilitary groups, such as the Colombian United Self-Defense Groups (AUC) led by the notorious Carlos Castaño. They claim to be independent but basically carry out the dirty work of the military of killing anyone who attempts to organize. The paramilitaries have clear connections with top ranking military generals; for example, in April President Pastrana was forced by international pressure from human rights groups to retire two senior Army generals for their role in forming and supporting paramilitaries.

There are also numerous examples of the right wing paramilitaries working with and protecting drug production and distribution. AUC Paramilitary leader Carlos Castaño's older brother was a right-hand man to Pablo Escobar, the Medellín Cartel chief killed in 1993. This year a massive cocaine-processing lab capable of producing eight tons of cocaine a month



Colombia's President Pastrana and a military leader dress up like indigenous people. The real indigenous person looks on in disbelief.

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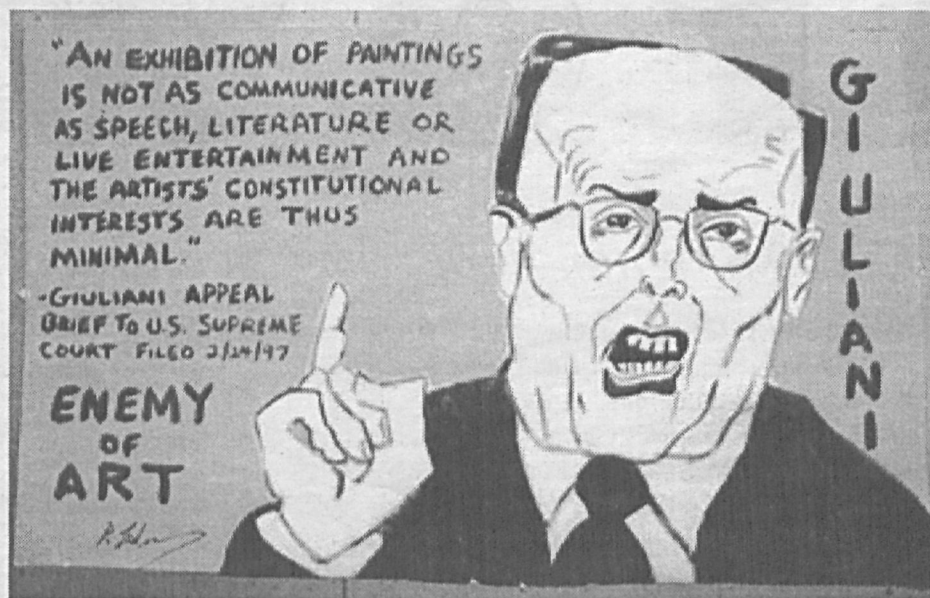
Rudy Giuliani: Artificial Art Official

by Shumon Alam

NEW YORK CITY'S MUCH HATED mayor, Rudy Giuliani, has now expanded his mayoral duties to art criticism. He called the art show *Sensation*, a collection of work by young British artists at the Brooklyn Museum, "sick stuff." The Mayor thought that all the art in the exhibition is offensive, but singled out The Holy Virgin Mary as most offensive to Catholic beliefs and values.

The Holy Virgin Mary, a collage by Nigerian born artist Chris Ofili, features a female figure made of elephant dung and cut outs from pornographic pictures. Mayor Giuliani didn't just stop at commenting, but also threatened to withhold the city's subsidy to the Museum. The Brooklyn Museum gets almost \$7 million every year from the city; almost one third of its \$23 million budget. He also threatened to withhold another \$20 million that the museum is supposed to get this year from the city for renovations. Mayor Giuliani also condemned the museum for violating their lease, because the museum is asking for \$9.75 to enter the show and requiring an adult companion for viewers 17 and younger.

The Mayor's justification of his comments and action is that "You don't have a right to government subsidy for desecrating somebody else's religion, and therefore we will do



everything that we can to remove funding for time until the director comes to his senses." He demanded immediate cancellation of the show.

Mayor Giuliani is entitled to criticize any art according to his personal tastes and desires, but when his comments are followed by dictatorial and undemocratic action, he is violating the law. The Mayor's threats of withholding funds to the museum because of what he perceives as hateful to his beliefs and values is a direct violation of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. The First Amendment does not permit government officials to prosecute any individuals or organizations because of their beliefs or views on any subject. Art is not only an expression of an individual's experience, but it is also subject to

individual interpretation. Individuals and groups can interpret art as offensive or degrading although the artist might not intend it to be so. That's why the First Amendment gives special protection to artistic expression.

In 1998, when two artists were denied funding from the National Endowment of Art, the Supreme Court suggested that "a penalty on disapproved viewpoint" would violate the First Amendment. Legal experts suggested that if the city really withheld the funds from the museum, it would be a clearer case because the funds were already given to the museum.

Many also point out that art has to be patronized by the government. Artistic patronage is dependent on business, individual, or government contributions. In this day and age of commercialism, only popular and profitable art will get funding from business, and individual contributions have never been enough to support artistic expression. Also, businesses and individuals always have agendas that may go against artist values. An artist will not get funding if he or she challenges the goals or the values of particular businesses and individuals. Only government funding through a legitimate authority can make sure that every idea and expression gets fair and equal opportunity.

The Brooklyn museum is a legitimate organization and has been exhibiting art works from many countries for many years. It—not the mayor—has the authority and expertise needed to organize an art show.

This is not the first time Mayor Giuliani has violated the First Amendment. A few years ago he closed down city hall steps to protesters. After the killing of Amadou Diallo by four city cops, mass demonstration and civil disobedience forced the city hall to open its steps to the public. Now the mayor has

again closed the city hall steps to public demonstrations. This year he tried to deny a permit for the Million Youth March because he thought the organizers of the march incite violence and racial hatred. When the court ruled in favor of the March organizers he ordered hundreds of police to patrol the march.

Many suggested that the Mayor's recent comments on the exhibition were not motivated by his religious faith, but were a political stunt to pull votes for the year 2000 Senate election. He is trying to get the Republican Party nomination for the 2000 Senate race. Unfortunately for Mayor Giuliani, the Republican Party is still reluctant to announce him as their nominee because in the past few years he has become less popular in the city because of his total disregard for stopping police violence and failure to improve life for city residents.

The Mayor and his advisers understand that their new constituency for the Senate race is not the voters from New York City but from upstate. Realizing that his new constituency is 44% Catholic, he thought the denouncement of the show and threat to postpone their funding may give him sizeable support. Unfortunately, his action did not help him that much. A recent *Daily News* Poll shows that 70% of

New Yorkers disapprove of the mayor's action.

All museums in the city and many cultural and political organizations condemned the Mayor's decision and hundreds of people demonstrated against him at the opening day of the Exhibition. Despite all the threats from city hall, the show opened as planned

and the Brooklyn Museum reported that they are having record numbers of viewers each day. This despite subway service that was interrupted near the museum on opening day due to track-work the Transit Authority claimed needed to be done.

The whole debate will now be decided in the courts. The Museum sued the city and the Mayor for violating the First Amendment. Whether the court decides against City Hall or not, this incident has a real life impact. Artists, who once thought they had a right to free expression, now will be more cautious in picking their subjects. The threat of government prosecution might restrain artists from choosing a controversial form or content.

The 1950s anti-Communist witch-hunts led by Senator Joe McCarthy ensured self-censorship of Hollywood for many years. This incident may similarly ignite self-censorship by artists and museums for many years to come.



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Farewell

Thousands fewer CCNY students, departments and staff slashed, demoralized

By Rob Wallace

This is part one of a two-part series summing up the past six years at CCNY under ex-President Yolanda Moses.

ON JULY 1 CITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT Yolanda T. Moses resigned. Stanford Roman has been named interim president in her stead (see sidebar).

Moses ended her six-year tenure as City's president, according to her resignation letter, for "academic and personal reasons." But her resignation was clearly forced by CUNY's Board of Trustees and its new chair Herman Badillo who has often openly criticized Moses.

Many may consider antipathy from the racist Badillo a badge of honor, but the record shows Moses was truly a terrible president.

High Hopes

High hopes were had by many when Yolanda T. Moses was named City College's ninth president in 1993. Brought to CCNY by her friend from California Chancellor Ann Reynolds, Moses's resume sparkled—just the list of awards she's received run three pages.

Moses also seemed to have the activist credentials. In the late 1960s, she helped organize and run a Black Studies program in the Watts area of Los Angeles. She also organized a volunteer tutorial program for Los Angeles County inmates. Moses also served on a "Free Angela Davis" committee after the communist black activist was falsely jailed in the early 1970s. Later, as an Anthropology professor, Moses helped found a Department of Ethnic and Women's Studies at Cal State in the face of a backlash from "old-boy" anthropologists.

Moses appeared a great match for City College. But the realities of day-to-day management of a college comprised primarily of working class Black, Latino, and immigrant students and, therefore, perpetually attacked by City and State power structures, proved Moses's cultivated image as a good liberal false.

Instead of defending City and CUNY from general budget cuts from the State, or specified cuts demanded by "her good friend" Chancellor Reynolds, or verbal and fiscal attacks from Mayor Giuliani and his bureaucratic goons, Moses helped institute the cuts and detrimental policies, even to the point of having her own students arrested, over 50 faculty fired, whole departments jettisoned, student government elections rigged, newspapers shut down, and activists spied on.

The early days never hinted at what followed. Moses began her tenure full of vim and vigor. A September 1993 *New York Times* article characterizes Moses: "She is at once passionate and affable, irrepressible and combative. She makes her points patiently, as if she knows already that her vision departs from the traditional vision in higher education, and that it is going to take some explaining."

But the ceaseless, and often deservedly vitriolic, protest of her administrative and political decisions turned Moses bitter, impatient and isolated. One CCNY undergrad reminisced with *the Messenger* that protest by students, faculty and community members denouncing Moses's attacks on the Black Studies Department, including picketing at her college-provided duplex on West 87th Street, had "Moses tearing her own hair out." Remembered the student, "She had bags under her eyes."

One got the sense she came to resent a City College that popped her self-image as a conscientious liberal, as she would stay away from campus for weeks on end. It got so bad that at the end Moses was holding more open meetings with students, faculty, and staff at the University of New Mexico (UNM), where she was applying for the presidency, than she had at City College the last two and a half years of her tenure.

We follow here with some of *the Messenger's* most memorable Moses moments.



A spring 1996 rally at CCNY marches to Administration Building to take it over to save Ethnic Studies departments and protest retrenchment.

Nursing Cuts

In the Spring of 1995, with a \$6 million budget deficit, Moses closed the School of Nursing that 300 full-time students attended, where 500 more students took pre-nursing classes, and which had a three-year waiting list for admission. Many of the school's alumni serve in traditionally poor and underserved areas of New York City. She also closed the theater, dance, and physical education departments. Moses let go 45 faculty that year. In comparison, Brooklyn College lost 2 faculty.

While applying for the presidency at UNM earlier this year, Moses told their school's newspaper that "I made those cuts with school-wide input. I spoke with faculty members who told me, 'We don't want to do this at all, but if we have to, here are the things we think you should cut.'"

Former CCNY faculty member Joan Johnston, who served on the retrenchment committee, posted a response on CUNYTALK—a CUNY-oriented email list. She wrote that Moses was reluctant to speak with either faculty or students during the retrenchment process. Moreover, she continued, "As a result of the closure of nursing, phys ed and theater, enrollment at City dropped about 10%, with the result that funding further decreased, offsetting some of the savings."

Indeed, Moses would continue this vicious cycle year-in and year-out without comment. She wielded the budget-cut ax as a political weapon, hacking the ethnic studies departments the next year (see below).

City College has since seen one-third of its student body leave. From a high of about 15,000 in 1994, the CCNY campus is now

home to about 10,000 students. With fewer students, CUNY Central continues to chop away at City's budget. Just this past spring, City saw another cut of \$750,000 when it lost 6.1% more its student body. Future drops will likely be much worse if the Board of Trustees' decision to destroy remediation at senior colleges passes judicial muster come 2000.

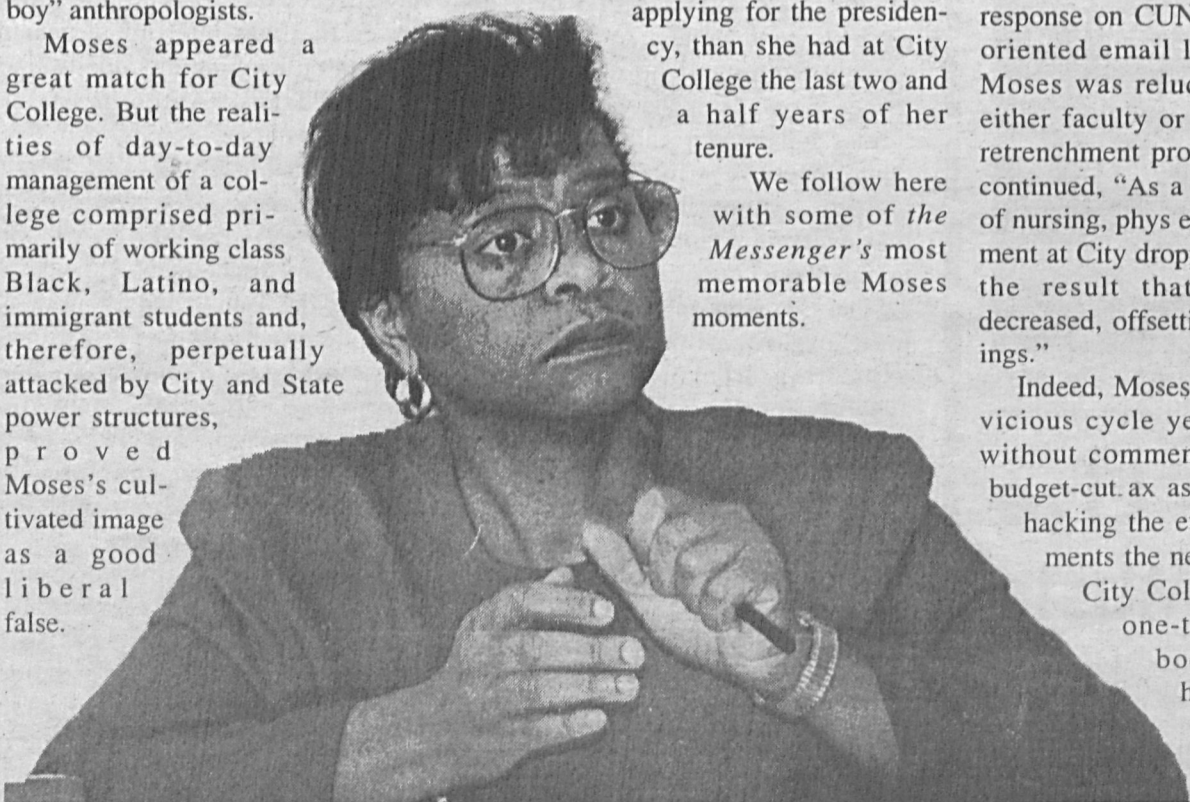
Black Eye for Black Studies

When Moses arrived, Professor Leonard Jeffries of City College's Black Studies Department was in the midst of controversy. Since 1991 the professor had gotten into verbal fisticuffs with various New York politicians for his declarations that Jews played a major role in the slave trade and for his taxonomy of blacks and whites as "sun and ice people."

But Jeffries' take on the attacks on City College and Open Admissions were astute and deadly accurate as at various "Defend Open Admissions" forums the last few years, where Jeffries would skewer Moses, and "the little men" administrators who surround her, for implementing devastating budget cuts at CUNY's flagship campus.

Moses spent the earlier part of her tenure "de-Jeffriesizing" the campus. Jeffries' power extended beyond the classroom and into Finley Student Center. The administration took over the Finley Center. By Spring of 1995 Jeffries was forced from his position as chair of the Black Studies Department. Jeffries was replaced with John Amóda, who had very close ties with the Nigerian military dictatorship and proposed City College sponsor a "peace school" for some Nigerian generals.

In the Spring of 1996, City College faced another huge budget deficit of \$8 million. Instead of defending her college and fighting back against



M O S E S

Faculty, student rights trampled: Yolanda Moses's era of error ends. Thank God.

CUNY Central and the Governor Pataki, she implemented more cuts. In March 1996, Moses announced plans to close the Departments of Black Studies, Latino-Caribbean Studies, Jewish Studies, and Asian Studies, and downgrade them to "programs."

In response, a coalition of students and faculty produced a pamphlet denouncing her "lies and distortions." Moses declared the "restructuring" of ethnic studies would result in "more students" taking "more ethnic and area studies with more full-time faculty." But, the student-faculty pamphlet stated, permitting outside faculty to teach ethnic studies courses didn't require giving the ethnic studies departments the death penalty.

Moses claimed that the variety and "number of available courses" in ethnic studies "will actually increase" "because over three times as many faculty will join in teaching ethnic and area studies courses under the new structure." The students and faculty called this "patently false." Qualified full-time faculty from other departments already had full course loads with huge class sizes and couldn't take on bigger loads or else they were already teaching ethnic studies courses.

Moses declared her decision to "convert" the ethnic studies departments was based on "one of the recommendations of the College-Wide Retrenchment Committee, composed of 37 faculty, staff and students." But that committee didn't have any representatives from these ethnic studies departments to offer accurate assessments of ethnic studies' function at CCNY. Moreover, the committee's recommendations were vague, presenting Moses three options including maintaining the departments as is. Ultimately, Moses's attempts to pawn off blame onto a committee she convened and served on failed, as she made the final decision to snuff ethnic studies.

A Revealing Conference

A few days after her announcement, a group of forty students angry at Moses's plans to trash the ethnic studies departments bum-rushed one of Moses's monthly press conferences in the administration building.

Her interaction with the students at the press conference was emblematic of her tenure: distortions and bombast. After declaring the new programs would be "cost-effective" offering students "more choices," she stated no faculty would be cut. The gutted departments' faculty would be moved to remaining departments. The departments receiving the shipwrecked professors would expand their curricula

to incorporate ethnic courses, Moses continued.

When the floor was opened to questions, students challenged the underpinnings of her decision.

- A hard fought struggle was undertaken to found these departments. Surely, Moses, an anthropologist who founded her own ethnic studies department, would understand the necessity for minorities to be able to represent their histories on their own terms?

- The claim that no faculty would be cut was inaccurate at best, manipulative at worst. No full-time faculty would be fired. But a then-unspecified number of adjuncts would be let go. Adjuncts teach more than half of CUNY's courses. Full-time faculty would be transferred to new departments where they would lose seniority and be open to losing their jobs during any subsequent retrenchments.

- "Cost-effectiveness" isn't intrinsically good. The most "cost-effective" structuring would be a faculty of one. Let the poor prof teach every single course at City. Cost-effective indeed, but education-ineffective.

One student pointed out the impropriety of spending \$100,000 on new fences to separate the campus from the community while trashing whole departments. Moses replied the money for the gates was already allocated years ago from the a different fund. Hers was a wonk's argument. The absurd bungling of priorities remains: City College put up shining gates around a disappearing university.

In response to students Moses spoke of the "reality" of the state's financial situation foreclosed anything less than implementing the budget cuts. But if reality dictates that education must be cut at CUNY, why did CUNY Security's budget almost dou-

ble on salaries and equipment alone about that time? Why did CUNY spend hundreds of millions on construction?

Although she tried to push off all blame onto Governor Pataki, students pointed out that Moses is part of a state hierarchy aiming to gut public education. CUNY college presidents are the Governor's shock troops micromanaging budget-cut implementation. Pataki doesn't go from campus to campus doing austerity's dirty work.

To that argument she replied, "Yes, I am a part of it! Yes, I am a part of it!" It was finally something accurate. And that was the problem.

NEXT ISSUE: Part 2 of the series on President Moses' era: How Moses responded when City College students did what she refused to do—fight back against the cuts.

The Pinch-Hitter President: Dr. Stanford A. Roman, Jr.

WITH THE RESIGNATION/DISMISSAL of Yolanda Moses as president July 1, City College needed an interim president and fast for the upcoming academic year. The CUNY's Board of Trustees asked Dr. Stanford A. Roman, Jr. to shepherd City while the Board convened a search committee for a new CCNY president.

Roman has been Dean of the CUNY Medical School and the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education at CCNY since 1990. As interim president he will retain his medical school positions. That calls for long days for Roman if he does it right.

According to CCNY's Office of Public Relations, Dr. Roman is a native Harlemiter, raised not far from the City College campus. Roman attended Dartmouth for college, majoring in psychology. Back in New York, Roman obtained his medical degree at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. As a medical student he documented the inadequacies of Harlem school health requirements. He continued research on the disparities of health care during his residency at Harlem Hospital Center.

Thereafter followed a long and impressive list of appointments including Associate Director of Ambulatory Care at Harlem Hospital, Director of Ambulatory Care at Boston City Hospital, Medical Director at DC General Hospital, Assistant Dean of the Boston Uni-

versity School of Medicine, Deputy Dean of Dartmouth Medical School and Dean and Vice President of the Morehouse School of Medicine. His stints included concomitant appointments to the schools' faculties.

In 1989, Dr. Roman returned to New York as Senior Vice President for Medical and Professional Affairs in New York City's Health and Human Corporation. Roman currently serves on a laundry list of panels and committees. If you're interested, check out the CCNY website at

www.ccny.cuny.edu/pr.

In 1990 Roman took the Sophie Davis and CUNY Medical School positions. Underfunded and underserved, the Medical School hasn't been able to receive full accreditation. Still, it serves as an important gateway for minority students into full medical schools. About 40% of Sophie Davis students are black or Latino, an unheard of proportion. Medical school students attend Sophie Davis for two years. Thereafter they are enrolled in one of six medical schools in New York. Part of the students' requirements involves serving in underserved inner-city neighborhoods.

The Messenger attempted to interview President Roman, but was told by Charles DeCicco of Public Relations that Roman's schedule was too tight for an interview at such short notice. The Messenger is scheduled to interview Roman November 1. We will ask why he was chosen as Interim President, whether he wishes to be CCNY's permanent president, whether, as CCNY's governance charter indicates, students and faculty will have a hand in choosing the next president, about his thoughts on the Moses era, and the political and fiscal attacks on City College.

If you have any questions you wish us to ask Roman, e-mail them to *the Messenger* at ccnymessenger@yahoo.com

—ROB WALLACE



These poems were written by Man Olivera while he was in Chiapas, Mexico. Chiapas is home to the Zapatistas—an indigenous-based rebel movement that had an armed uprising in 1994 and still battles the Mexican government to this day.

**Silvio
Chiapas, Mexico, 1998.**

Tamarindo hair,
Mountain trail eyes,
Rainy season smile: Silvio,
Running around a Spanish fountain
filled with albino goldfish,
perfumed with peaches, oranges, pruned roses.
Water lilies drift —unnoticed—
Towards pink, purple tulips.
Silvio chases morning.

Innocence is rain in July,
Brown doves with Terracotta eyes,
A child who learns to walk in
The sanctuary of a Spanish courtyard
“Silvio, be careful,”
there’s a revolution in the mountains
In San Cristobal de las Casas
And surrounding provinces
I’ve seen records of its victims,
And pictures posted of rebels wanted.
“Run, Silvio, Run,”
unlike gold fish swimming in circles,
life’s a revolution of morning:
each dawn awakening a child’s mind
to serve in a decorated army.



**Endangered Flames
Chiapas, Mexico, 1998.**

Flames are always fighting;
fighting to stay alive:
flaring-swelling-leaping-
jumping-rolling-running-
running from one log to another,
always struggling to stay alive;
like the indigenous of Mexico
and the rest of the Americas,
running from one mountain to another,
searching for a place to sustain life.
I wonder do they know
They are beautiful,
Having me hypnotized for hours,
Thinking of everything,
And thinking of nothing;
Nothing complicated,
Just the delicate beauty of a fire
flickering on the edge of extinction.
I think I’ll add another log
And keep the fire burning;
The flames flaring.



**Viva Trinidad
Chiapas, Mexico, 1998.**

Trinidad is dead;
At the end of a hard day’s work,
Coming from his milpa field,
A gang of Chinchulines ambushed him
On the road leading to the river.
He never made it to the water;
His ankles never got wet
And on that fateful evening;
Neither did he throw cool
River water on his face,
As field laborers are known to do,
Washing of the day’s milpa dust
And jungle sweat with their paliacate.

Trinidad is dead;
And the Chinchulines pulled him from a few-
Amount and faces known,
Trinidad being their neighbor.
There were a few words, pushes, and shoves,
And then swung machetes found his bones.
Up and down mountains
And into the valley
Trinidad’s blood soaked the crooked road;
Across a guarded river
And all the way to his dirt floor home
Trinidad’s blood flowed.

Trinidad is dead.
Danella, his daughter,
Was the first to know.
Rosa, her mother,
Working in her thatched roof kitchen
Flattening tortillas and green plantains,
Ran and held her daughter.
Still, the child cannot speak,
And neither do their neighbors.
Trinidad is dead,
Murdered by a gang of Chinchulines
Hired as henchmen.
None of them man enough
To carry Trinidad’s load,
Or work his milpa field.

Trinidad-dedicated husband to Rosa,
Proud father of Danella,
Older brother of Miguel,
A neighbor and friend
To the people of Territorio Rebelde-
Dead.

Viva la Revolution!
Viva el Territorio Rebelde!
Viva Trinidad!

dience in support of a political prisoner in U.S. history. An even bigger one is being planned for January in front of the Supreme Court.

On October 25th, after almost two weeks of agonizing waiting, a federal judge finally got around to issuing a stay of execution allowing Mumia to work through his final round of appeals in federal court. Mumia has exhausted all his state appeals (most of them directly involving the same judge Sabo, who came back out of retirement to handle the appeals). He now faces the federal appeals process.

The upcoming months are the final phase in the battle to save Mumia’s life and win him a new trial. During this time we will likely see the largest demonstrations yet across the U.S. and around the world in his support. Over about the next six months and we will find out whether Mumia is granted a new trial. Now is the time to get involved, before it is too late!

Mumia Abu-Jamal

continued from page 1

outstanding journalism. In 1981 the Philadelphia Inquirer profiled him as “Jamal: An eloquent activist not afraid to raise his voice.”

And Mumia became more and more hated by Philly’s notoriously racist, brutal, and powerful police establishment.

The incident

In the early hours of December 8, 1981, Mumia was driving a cab in downtown Philadelphia, to supplement his income as a journalist. The bars were just letting out and the streets were full of people. Suddenly Mumia spotted a police officer beating a young Black man spread-eagled against his car. When he went to investigate, he discovered that it was his own younger brother, Bill Cook, who was being beaten.

The subsequent events are under dispute, but within minutes Mumia was sitting slumped on the curbstone, critically injured by a gunshot. The police officer, Daniel Faulkner, lay dead. Other police arrived and waited 45 minutes to take Mumia to the hospital. Mumia was charged with murder.

Justice denied

Mumia was railroaded to a murder conviction in a trial which has been condemned around the world as being utterly unfair. Amongst the many outrages:

- Mumia was tried before Judge Albert Sabo, who has handed down 31 death sentences—more than any other judge in the country. All but two have been people of color.
- Eleven qualified African-American

prospective jurors were removed by peremptory challenge, leaving only two on the jury in a city which is 40% Black. A recent scandal revealed that the practice of deliberately removing qualified Blacks from jury pools was taught to Philadelphia prosecutors through a special video training tape!

- Judge Sabo approved only a few hundred dollars for the defense. The defense investigator quit the case before the trial began because the meager funds were exhausted.
- A medical examiner’s written findings reported that officer Faulkner was shot by a .44 caliber bullet; Mumia carried a licensed .38 caliber handgun. Mumia’s lawyer (who was subsequently disbarred) said he didn’t see that portion of the report, so he never raised it.
- The police never tested Mumia’s gun to determine if it had recently been fired, never tested his hands to see if he had fired a gun, and “lost” a bullet fragment removed by the medical examiner.
- Witnesses gave contradictory accounts of the incident; several reported seeing the shooter flee. Yet there was no investigation into these statements, and the jury didn’t hear these accounts.
- A number of prosecution witnesses have subsequently come forward and admitted that their testimony at the trial was false, including the key prosecution witness Veronica Jones. In 1996 she went to court to admit that she had given false testimony because she herself had been in serious trouble with the police at the time and was threatened by them with ten years in prison unless she cooperated. As soon as she was sworn in to recant her testimony by Judge Sabo, he threatened her with seven years in prison for perjury. When she finished testifying, she was immediately arrested for violating a two-year-old bench warrant listed under someone else’s name.
- A police officer, Gary Wakshul, who was guarding Mumia in the emergency room noted in his report, “The Negro male made no statement.” Two months later officers suddenly claimed that they heard Mumia brag in the emergency room about shooting Faulkner.
- The list goes on; there are far more injustices and violations of Mumia’s rights around his case than there is space here to list out.

The movement grows

Thousands of activists have been working for years to save Mumia. Now as his case winds to its conclusion and the struggle comes to a head, Mumia’s case is finally creeping into the country’s corporate media. Millions of people are now beginning to become familiar with the case.

Even more important, many tens of thousands are willing to step out and take a stand. On April 24th of this year the largest demonstration yet in support of Mumia took place in Philadelphia. More than 15,000, probably half from the Black community, marched down the street to demand a new trial.

Then on July 3rd almost 100 activists were arrested at the Liberty Bell in the largest single civil disobe-

by Anne I. Naughton

CASTLE: One-and-a-half-bedroom, railroad-style, third floor-walk-up apartment in Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

WHO: Amy Barker, Graduate student in Applied Anthropology, Information Specialist for City College, Avon Lady, Contributing editor for "Face Online" web-site, Mother, Babysitter, Graduate Assistant for Anthropology Department, Misha Barker, 4 year old at City College Day Care and Daisy at St. Anthony's Church, Mitten, small black cat and Val, gray fat cat.

COMMUTE: AM: G from Greenpoint Ave. to court square for the E/F to midtown for the A/D to 125th to shoe-leather express or random bus to campus. PM: Walk down St. Nicholas to Day Care, walk to 125th for the A/C or take a random bus down 125th to the 2/3 or across to the 4/5/6. At midtown, switch for the 7 to Court Square and wait for the bus to Greenpoint or hoof it over the Polaski Bridge.

Your commute is a bit arduous, do you really hoof it over the bridge? (Amy) It's always at least one bus and two trains. It's usually faster to walk the bridge then wait for the bus. And it's a great view.

Your bathroom is tiny, but it's teeming with sample-size beauty products. (Amy) That's what you get for being an Avon Lady and working for a web site! The Polish pharmacies here have super-duper beauty products. It'd be even better if I could read the labels.

When I arrived, I was presented with two soaps, one for peace and one for energy; do all your guests walk away with samples? (Amy) Pretty much. Yeah, maybe people will start visiting me now. I get press kits constantly.

I have to comment on the giant, four-legged bathtub in your kitchen/dining room area. (Amy) Best thing about the apartment! When I get tons and tons of dishes I just do them in there. And it's so deep that the water goes right up to Misha's nose, right Misha? (Misha) The water goes up to my nose.

On my walk up from the train, I passed a Kilbasi shop, two Polish bakers, a "European Specialties" grocery, a Polish run health food supermarket, three 25-cent kiddy rides, and a Thai restaurant. I want to describe it as gentrified with an old-world twist. By the time I make it the seven blocks to your street the area is a bit warehouse-y. How did you make it from the woods of Maine here to Northwesternmost Brooklyn? When I was 18 I moved to NY to go to art school at The School of Visual Arts and I lived at The Grey-stone Motel at 91st and Broadway; a crazy residential hotel that was student housing. Then I moved to 4th St between 1st and 2nd Ave. I dropped out and went to California for a few months. Then I came back and squatted in a place in Northhampton (Massachusetts). Then I went to London and squatted there and came back for good



Amy Barker in her Greenpoint kitchen.

in '94 when I was pregnant. But when I was in London some friends and I drove through Europe and I ended up on a kibbutz in Israel for a few months.

Your stories are not linear; dare I ask how you ended up at City College? I know, I just don't think like that. OK: last September, Labor Day weekend, I drove down to NY for the first time in two years and my car broke down in Connecticut. (Sobbing sounds) I had to get it towed to my friend's in Hoboken (NJ). Miserable scene. My car didn't get fixed so I took a bus home. The whole time I was here everyone I met, including random strangers, kept saying to me "It's a sign, you should move back to NY". I was ready to leave Maine, trying to decide what to do with my life. I went home and my car didn't get fixed so I said, "OK, I'll go to grad school." Internet search: graduate school, anthropology, NYC and that's it. Its cheap enough, the day care's good: OK. I packed up my apartment, my kid, my cats, quit my job and moved in with my sister (in Williamsburg, Brooklyn), found this place in 10 days, moved in on January 15th and started school two days later.

Despite less than a mile of water separating it from midtown Manhattan, Greenpoint retains a near villagesque charm. This supposedly owes to two of the area's mixed blessings. For one thing, the only train is the G: considerably slower and much less reliable than the Bronx Zoo Air Tram. Then there is the matter of the legendary Greenpoint smell. Ahhh, yes. That's what my realtor didn't tell me about. Forgot to mention the garbage and sewer treatment plants. Did you know that 50% of NYC's garbage comes through Greenpoint!

This Polish enclave has a bit of a reputation for quirkiness. (Amy) Ahh, here's something my grandmother told me about today (I've been here nine months and she's been here two days and she tells me this): from the top of Greenpoint the streets that run off of Manhattan Ave.

are in alphabetical order. Isn't that neat?

Lest we confuse this alphabetizing with orderliness, let me tell you something my father told me: Greenpoint is the most dangerous place in NYC to be either a pedestrian or a driver. Thanks to insistent Jaywalkers and renegade drivers, as a pedestrian you are more likely to be hit by a car and as a driver you are more likely to be walked into by a pedestrian, bike or car than in any other area in NYC. I believe it. On Sunday's, the streets are just packed. I finally figured out that it's everyone heading to mass. I swear all of Greenpoint pours into this one Catholic

Church every Sunday. The streets are mobbed with ultra-fancy Polish women.

What are some of your favorite questions students ask at the "i" (Information Desk on the first floor in NAC)? Well, I really like questions where I get to gesture, like for directions. I have stylized hand gestures for giving directions to the library. I also like to do detective work and be able to get students answers.

As an "i" woman you have a particular vantage point to view the workings/non-workings of the CCNY "system."

As an anthropologist-in-the-works, what would you say about the value of and access to information here? Before I started working here, getting an answer from anyone meant running around to 40 different offices. The offices really don't know what the other offices are doing a lot of the time. Aside from the "i", it's really difficult. The big run-around can be really frustrating. **What's the cause of all this lack of access to information, who benefits from it?** I don't know, all I can say is that going to City College would be a lot easier if everything wasn't such a fight; things would run a lot smoother.

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American Beauty and Three Kings:

by Yechiel Hoffman

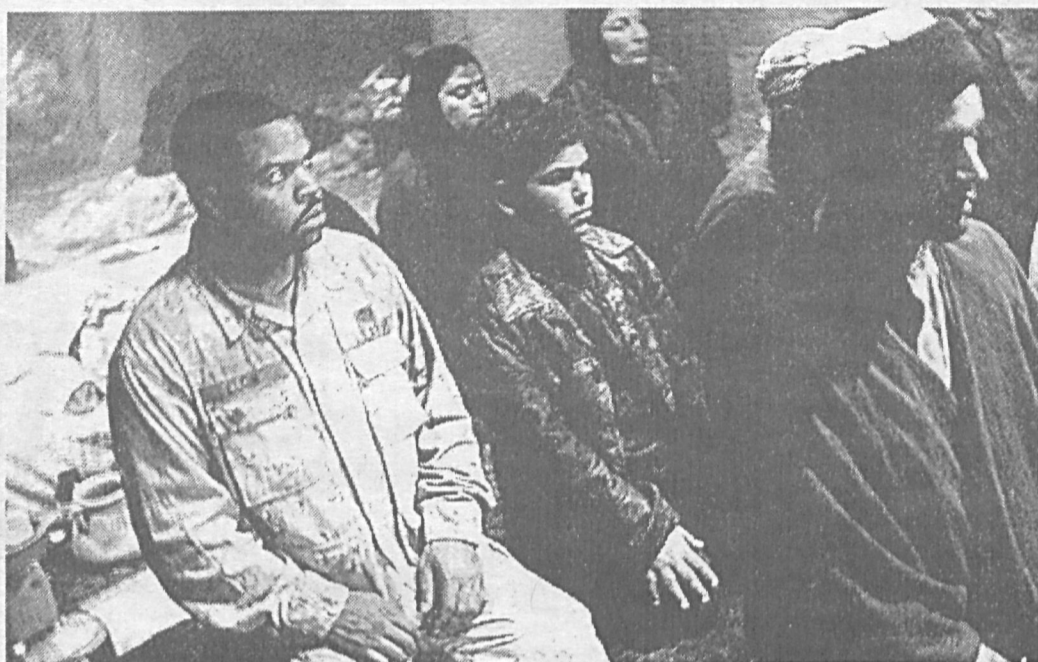
OCTOBER YIELDED TWO FILMS hot with the critics and warming with the public. Both *American Beauty* and *Three Kings* swept in from nowhere to take over the scene and bring back the faith that Hollywood can produce great films again.

Dreamworks and Warner Brothers, well known for their dumbed down action and romance flicks, took great risks on these indie-feel, genre-bending pics. What they got were masterpieces. *American Beauty's* strong word of mouth created a phenomenon that has already raked in 31 million dollars for the studio. With these films, a new age dawns on the studios, as they start to take more risks by releasing fewer mainstream-style flicks for the public. Good things started with the inspiring and chilling *The Sixth Sense* and as the fall got going it only got better. With studio flicks like *Fight Club*, *The Ninth Gate*, *Being John Malkovich*, *Bringing Out the Dead*, and quite a few others being released in the near future, the studios are giving the independents a run for their money. But what is it about these flicks, specifically *American Beauty* and *Three Kings* that just brings the audiences running and keeps the filmmakers inspired enough to get through the crap called executives to get these movies made?

Three Kings and *American Beauty* both share the distinction of questioning the American way of life: the former on the war front and the latter on the home front. Trying to explain these two films in just a few sentences is an injustice to the films, the filmmakers and your reception of these movies, but I will do my best. *Three Kings* portrays four American Persian Gulf soldiers' quest to find Kuwaiti gold bullion stolen by Iraq. The movie might be marketed as a run of the mill

action-adventure-war flick with a heavy MTV soundtrack and a distinct MTV style, but don't let the trailer or poster fool you. *Three Kings* does what most films of late have been afraid to do. It attacks head on many serious issues, such as: American foreign policy, American consumerism, military angst, compassion in war, and other compounding issues that face the film's heroes.

While tackling these weighty issues, the director, Charles O. Russell (of *Flirting with Disaster* and *Spanking the Monkey* fame) doesn't sell himself short. Working with a story from John Ridley, he infuses a delicate array of humor and sophistication that allows the audience to embrace the film and root for the heroes. Patriotic fervor, however, is left at the backdoor. The director evokes the necessary ambivalence to American policy in its political dealings with its soldiers, the media and the Iraqi people. As the heroes start to waver from their original goal of



Ice Cube praying with the Iraqi Kurds who saved him and his buddies.

becoming rich (the supposed American Dream), they assist a band of Iraqi rebels in escaping from Saddam's grasp by sneaking them to the Iranian border. Although the Iraqis present an obstacle for the heroes, it is ultimately the American troops who prove the biggest road block in relaying these people to freedom. The rebels are affluent, middle class businessmen,

and their biggest crime is wanting to live the American Dream in their own country. The movie claims that America cares nothing for the capitalists that fall outside its border. Russell, in his first big Hollywood film, brings an independent sensibility and style to an of late unoriginal genre and twists it on its head with his distinct brand of humor, camera style and penchant to

movie review

Buena Vista Social Club Spotlights

by Hank Williams

THERE IS NO SUCH THING as a victimless war and the Cold War was no exception. Aside from the various "Hot Wars" (Vietnam, Korea) that flared up as a result, there are a lot of left over details that haven't been ironed out.

Cuba and US policy toward it is one of those details. After the fall of the Soviet Union it is pretty hard to consider Cuba a threat to US security or policy in any serious way, but old habits die hard. After decades of painting Cuba and Fidel Castro as the local bogeyman, how can you turn around and admit that it wasn't really all that much of a threat after all?

That's only one of many flaws in the blockade and foreign policy in general, but the human side of the issue and the one that (as always) is forgotten is the plight of the Cuban people. They've managed to survive being a pawn of the superpowers and have a vibrant and beautiful culture, which, ultimately, is what *Buena Vista Social*

Club is all about.

Ry Cooder and Director Wim Wenders use music as a guise to take the audience on a breathtaking and warm look into Cuban culture. The pictures fill in details of the story that the music leaves out. Wenders pointed out that he, "[couldn't] separate their lives and their history from the music itself. That music is so emotional and rich and so full of their life stories that you just can't divide it up."

Cuba is a funky place: half of it is relatively modern utilitarian prefab concrete housing and the other half are old pre-revolution buildings in various states of decay or renovation. Make no mistake, though: times are hard for most Cubans. Food and medicine are in short supply, electricity is spotty in many parts of the island, and an underground dollar economy and black market are getting stronger.

Cubans tend to be extremely resourceful: they have to be. Stroll down any street in Havana and you'll see big clunky American cars from the '50s mixed with newer Eastern European rolling stock from the '70s. In some ways the older cars are still better: the Ladas and Fiats weren't much to begin with. The common thread is that everything is held together with an amazing combination of homemade parts, duct tape, and whatever else the owners can scrounge.

That's an apt metaphor for the



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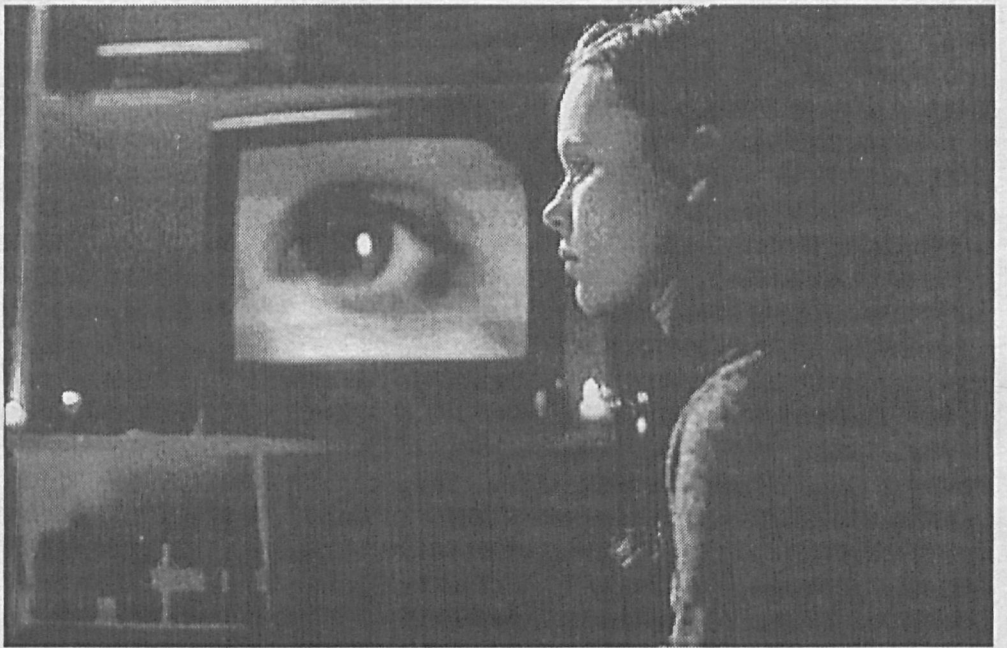
Looking at the Underbelly of America

analyze American way of life from the outside and in.

American Beauty also tackles issues of American life, but from the inner depths of suburban hell. Sam Mendes' (the fabulous theatre director of *The Blue Room* and *Cabaret*) film debut, scripted by Alan Ball, startles us with his poignant and dark view of suburban disaster and tragedy. From its opening narrative, delivered from the grave by the film's protagonist, played to perfection by Kevin Spacey, we know that this film will break all normal Hollywood conventions. In this twisted tale of a family's descent, Mendes depicts the downfall of a man obsessed with youth and power, a woman's consumerist tendency, and a child's need for understanding and respect. While the film centers on the focal family, the side characters contrast their feuding and supply some of the most spectacular points of interest. Specifically lauded should be Wes Bentley's portrayal of the compulsive video-maker / drug dealer / next door neighbor and Thora Birch as the daughter, lost in her world of dreariness. The film attacks American selfishness and superficiality and urges us

to look through the style and guise. This film, although highly stylized with various film techniques, motifs and symbols, is much more than a stylistic piece of work. The director makes the brave move in allowing his distinct style to comment on the substance that at once frightens and awakens the viewer to the urgent tragedy lurking in American Suburbia.

Both of these films brazenly take on the American "need to be rich" mentality. *Three Kings*, set in a specific time and place, and *American Beauty*, set in a nameless suburbia in a nameless time, both resonate as current and timeless pieces. Even more so now the inherent danger portrayed in *American Beauty* in the after math of Littleton and *Three Kings* after the war in Eastern Europe makes the viewer much more aware and critical of the surrounding world. The energy and excitement that these films bring to their viewing experience allow our subconscious to embrace the questions they pose. They both rock as entertaining pieces, but also as urgent con-



Desire caught on tape: documenting the dark side of suburbia.

versation pieces and philosophical ponderances. In no more of a way could I more strongly recommend these two masterworks. At this point I look forward to future rewarding pieces from the once dormant Hollywood executive minds.

Look forward to: *Fight Club*, another take on American male aggression in reaction to high Yuppie

consumer conformity; from the camera of David Fincher, of *Seven*, *Alien3* and *The Game* fame, starring the brilliant performers Ed Norton, Brad Pitt and Helena Bonham Carter. Plus my take on the ass kissing, self-congratulating Academy Awards. And remember: forget the force, there's no way I'm dishing out ten bucks to see a ten-year-old's wet dream.

Vibrant Cuban Culture

musicians and the music they produce. The songs tell a story and could be described as Cuban Blues. The rich texture of the island and the Cuban people are clear as you listen to guitarist Eliades Ochoa's song "El Carretero." It could double as a music video, as Eliades is filmed strolling through a rusting Cuban rail yard, his cowboy hat providing the only relief from the brutal tropical sun as he strums the guitar. It could very easily be Garth Brooks or Randy Travis with a different soundtrack.

The film grew out of the 1996 Grammy Award-winning album of the same name. Cooder returned to Havana in 1998 to record Ibrahim Ferrer's (recently released) solo album and Wenders tagged along, cameras in tow. The Cooder-Wenders team did not happen by accident, however: Cooder has composed musical scores for several Wenders films, most notably *Paris, Texas*.

The real triumph of *Buena Vista* is the feel one gets of Cuba while watching and listening to the music. The film is tinged with the irony that envelopes Cuba as you hear Ibrahim Ferrer (described as a Cuban Nat King Cole) admit that he had pretty much given up singing before Ry Cooder and the *Buena Vista* project came about. The 72-year-old singer with the incredible voice was shining shoes when Cooder caught up with him.

Similar stories apply to 92-year-old singer/guitarist Compay Segundo and 82-year-old piano virtuoso Rubén González. Segundo was working in a cigar factory and González didn't own a piano anymore and hadn't played in years. Considering all of this the results are amazing. The music is beautiful and the Cubans have a natural playfulness and ease in front of the camera. The strength of a good documentary is that real stories are often better than anything you could make up, and that's the case here.

Particularly touching is the juxtaposition of footage from Havana and the (ubiquitous) billboard-size murals glorifying Che Guevara and the revolution with footage shot in New York and the Technicolor advertisements of Times Square. Ferrer confides that it was always a dream of his to be on stage in Carnegie Hall, which finally came true in 1996.

While the Cuban revolution has never lived up to its potential, the contrast forces confrontation of the alternative when one looks past the bright lights of Broadway at the homeless, disenfranchised, and exploited here at home that the system has no solution for. *Buena Vista Social Club* is a look into a Cuba that is still largely devoid of commercialization. *Buena Vista* gives us a snapshot of a country whose days in the current state are probably numbered. Don't miss it.

OPEN ADMISSIONS 30TH ANNIVERSARY



Veterans of the 1969 open admissions strike at CCNY gather on October 28 at the unveiling of a new plaque commemorating the 30th anniversary of open admissions in CUNY. The strike led directly to the transformation of City College from an overwhelmingly white school to the composition it has today.

US Intervention in Colombia grows

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was discovered in an area protected by the AUC. Colombian National Police Chief Rosso Jose Serrano said the lab was run by paramilitaries working with remnants of the dismantled Cali and Medellin cartels.

Cocaine is far and away the dominant factor in the Colombian economy. According to the FARC, "Intimately linked to the phenomenon of narcotrafficking is the concentration of thousands of hectares of land that is passing to the new rich; in Colombia 70% of the known cultivatable land is now in the hands of the narcotraffickers and their front men, as a product of their business. . . Colombia is now the premier producer of coca, because the peasants displaced by this agrarian counter-reform, are directed to the zones of colonization to farm the only thing that allows them to subsist: coca, amapola and marijuana."

Current US Intervention

Listening to Colombia's president Andres Pastrana, one would get the idea that Colombia is a country where the US has no economic control or direct military presence. In July, Pastrana said that he would "never accept nor permit the intervention of other countries in the internal problems of our nation." But while trying to strike a popular nationalist chord with such statements, Pastrana simultaneously begs the US for increased military aid and already hosts a large US military presence inside his nation.

The US already has at least 200 US soldiers—Army Green Berets, soldiers from the Naval Special Warfare Unit, and other elite troops—stationed in Colombia. There are also Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) operatives there. In addition, this year the US has given the Colombian military six newly refurbished Vietnam-era UH-1H helicopter gunships; while four "Super-Huey" helicopters will be sent at a cost of \$1.4 million each and three more sophisticated Blackhawk helicopters are slated to be delivered later this year. This is on top of the tripling of US military aid to almost \$300 million in 1998.

The official reason given by the US government for the dramatic aid increase is still that they are there to fight the "war on drugs." But after 15 years and \$30 billion invested by the US government in international drug control efforts, cocaine and heroin are purer, cheaper, and more readily available than before.

The real reason for the state of alarm in Washington and the big bucks going to Colombia is the very real possibility that the socialist forces in Colombia will win their struggle for national liberation in the near future.

Drug Czar McCaffrey's call for \$1.5 billion in aid to Colombia's government came immediately after the FARC launched their nationwide military offensive.

Since the "war on drugs" was officially declared in the late 1980s, the US has repeatedly insisted that its only reason for being in Colombia (and neighboring countries) is to fight drugs, not to take sides in political conflicts. But over the past few years as the FARC has gained strength, US politicians and military officers have increasingly been saying that the problem of drugs and leftist guerrillas are intertwined so much as to be the same problem. They have popularized the term "narcoguerrillas" in order to create the intellectual pretext for legitimizing US efforts to fight the national liberation organizations under the guise of fighting drugs.

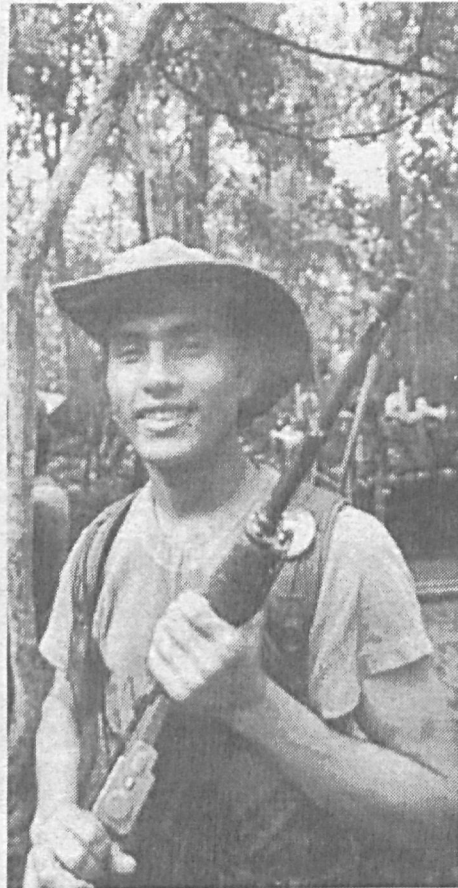
To anyone who cares to investigate in any real way, the FARC are clearly not "narcoguerrillas" or the source of the drug problem. The cocaine economy in Colombia is a result of the fact that its economy has been controlled and stunted by imperialism. The drug lords themselves are part of the ruling class of Colombia, many developing out of rural landowners and domestic businessmen. The narcotics trade is in fact central to the Colombian economy, as drug money keeps the Colombian ruling classes afloat. Government corruption and complicity in the drug trade is pervasive. Huge profits from

"We must repeat that the FARC-EP does not share anything with, does not negotiate with, and has no relations with narcotraffickers. We refuse to do this based on principle and ethics, because it is incompatible with democracy and social harmony; because it generates corruption, impunity, criminality, social decomposition."

—FARC-EP

the drug trade have gone into investments in cattle ranching, real estate and the tourist economy. And the drug money also flows to the U.S. where it is laundered through major banks and "legitimate" investments.

The FARC in fact has the most progressive, sensible and effective position in the country on how to deal with the drug problem. They put out a detailed document in July 1997 explaining their position. In this document, the FARC makes it clear that they do not collaborate with narcotraffickers: "We must repeat that the FARC-EP does not share anything with, does not negotiate with, and has no relations with narcotraffickers. We refuse to do this based on principle



A member of the FARC.

and ethics, because it is incompatible with democracy and social harmony; because it generates corruption, impunity, criminality, social decomposition, among other things that especially affect the world's young people."

The problem for the Colombian government is that the FARC refuses to attack the peasants who are forced to grow cocoa (from which cocaine is made) to survive, and they refuse to support a military solution to the drug problem, which is a social and political problem. "What is inconvenient for [the government] is that we don't serve as rural police for their false and hypocritical anti-drug policy and that we don't run over the farmers who cultivate illegal products to destroy the little that they have. We don't play their double game: under the pretext of an anti-drug struggle they punish the popular sectors, criminalizing their protest while simultaneously enriching themselves with the immense profits of this business, financing their electoral campaigns and promoting their industries and financial centers."

The National Liberation Movement Grows

In Colombia, the movement fighting for national liberation and socialism is very strong. While the FARC has certainly made mistakes, they are not terrorists or "narcoguerrillas." They are a formidable and well-organized group with a long history and deep support among many Colombians. They are the de facto government in much of the countryside. The FARC is strongly supportive of the popular movements for justice in Colombia such as labor unions, women's movements, environmental movements, and indigenous movements, often coordinating their armed actions to coincide with the demands of urban-based mass protests.

For example, in late August and early September there was a general strike of unions, along with peasant,

community, and student organizations, to demand an end to President Pastrana's economic policies of austerity and privatization. On August 31, the FARC took control of the Empresa de Energia del Pacifico (EPSA) hydroelectric plant in the southwestern town of Anchicaya demanding that the plant reduce electricity tariffs 30% and carry out social development projects in the area.

This is what scares the US: the prospect of a popular and legitimate socialist-led national liberation movement taking power and cutting Colombia out of the World Bank and IMF-imposed neo-liberal economy. An independent, socialist Colombia—a country with vast material resources including oil that could not only develop successfully but could also aid and inspire other revolutionaries around the world—would be a huge disaster for the ruling class in the US and their cronies who run Latin American countries on the IMF/World Bank-imposed model that guarantees increased poverty and misery.

The Possibility of Peace

President Pastrana was elected on a platform of negotiating an end to the war with the FARC and a smaller group, the National Liberation Army (ELN). He has tried to do that in a superficial way, but does not want to talk about the economic and political causes of the war. Both the FARC and the ELN have started negotiations, but neither group is willing to give up their arms unless it's part of an overall dramatic transformation of the entire society, including the military and paramilitaries.

The left has very legitimate reasons to refuse to give up their guns. In May 1984 the FARC signed a "peace" agreement, gave up their arms and became a legal political party, the Patriotic Union (UP). Soon after, hundreds of their members were assassinated, including their presidential candidate Jaime Pardo Leal. The FARC was forced to return to the armed struggle to avoid being defenseless in the face of an extermination campaign.

There may be different opinions within the FARC about the current peace process. Some forces are clearly more supportive of the peace process than others. The same is true for the government. But the process is moving forward. Where it will end up is unclear.

Here in the United States, our greatest responsibility is to build a movement against the current US intervention in Colombia. In particular, we must build opposition to the US government's plan to dramatically increase aid to the bloody Colombian military. We should support the popular movements fighting for justice in Colombia—the unions, students, women, indigenous people, teachers, etc. Additionally, we should support the national liberation movement fighting for the only real solution to Colombia's problems—an end to capitalism and a socialist Colombia.