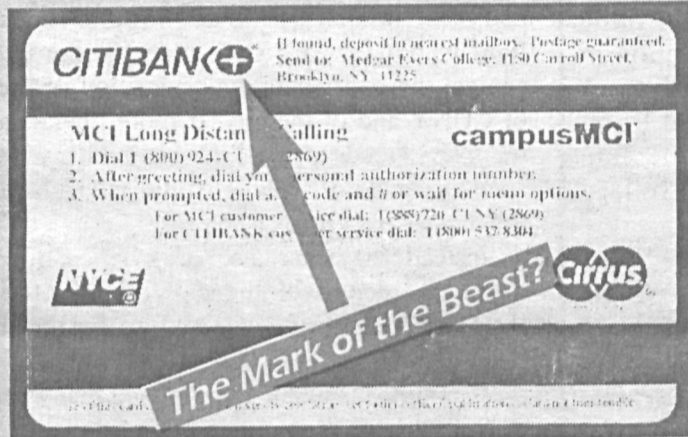
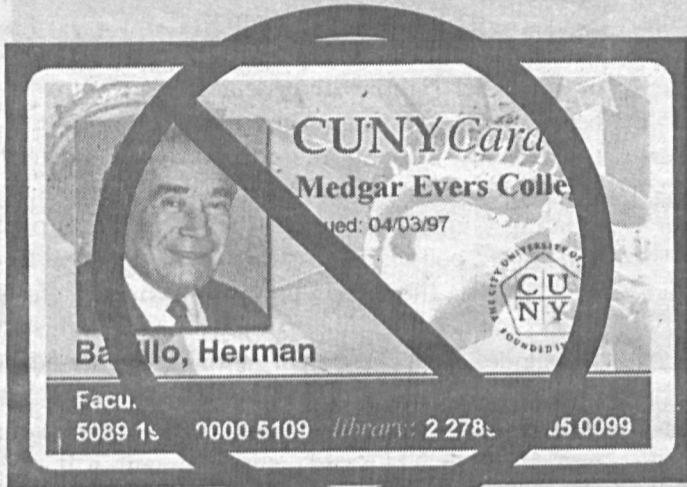




THE BATTLE IN SEATTLE AGAINST THE WTO ★ THE MISRULE OF EX-PRES MOSES, PART 2 ★ INTERVIEW WITH CCNY INTERIM PRES ROMAN ★ REBELLION IN VIEQUES

THE MESSENGER

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



CUNYCard Quashed

Implementation blocked again. President Roman smacks down cheeky VP Dickmeyer. Studies show Citibank still racist. Will it be City College or Citibank College?

by Rob Wallace

SOMETIME IN MID-NOVEMBER CCNY President Stanford Roman quashed a second attempt to implement CUNYCard at City College.

Students were to receive notices from the College during the Thanksgiving break that they were to hand in their current ID cards in favor of CUNYCard when they returned in December. All students, faculty, and

staff would have been required to obtain the high-tech, Citibank-sponsored ID card. CUNYCard implementation at City College was being handled by an administrator-dominated committee headed by Vice President for Finance and Management Nathan Dickmeyer.

The card was originally slated to be implemented at City College in late 1997, but was blocked after students, faculty, and staff CUNY-wide, as well as at CCNY, mounted a campaign

against the card. Objections to the card surrounded Citibank's race record, the commercialization of a public university, and privacy concerns.

In October 1997, CUNY Central instituted a moratorium on CUNYCard implementation CUNY-wide while it investigated charges of bank loan redlining on the part of Citibank, including having the highest rejection rate for Black New Yorkers seeking mortgages. Clearly CUNY officials understood they would have caught

political hell from students and faculty for helping promote a bank that discriminates against CUNY students and their parents off-campus, a situation that still holds today.

Several questions remain unanswered about this second attempt to implement CUNYCard at City College. First, did City College act unilaterally in making this attempt to implementing the card? CUNY Central has told Undergraduate Student Government (USG) officials that the College acted on its own, without impetus from 80th Street.

Second, if it acted unilaterally, on what basis did City College consider Citibank's race record clean? A study by the community group ACORN released this past September showed Citibank discrimination continues (see sidebar on page 4).

Lastly, a question about internal administration politics: Why did President Roman learn so late about the card implementation, perhaps only days before the letter to the students was to be sent?

This aborted round of CUNYCard illustrates the perils a new college president faces, particularly as he inherits the vice presidents of the pre-

continued on page 4

Regents Block Access to CUNY's Senior Colleges

by Bill Crain

ON NOVEMBER 22, in a 9 to 6 vote, the New York State Board of Regents approved CUNY's plan to phase out remedial classes in CUNY's 11 senior colleges. This January (2000), students whose placement tests scores indicate any need for remediation will be barred from the bachelor's degree programs at Hunter, Queens, Brooklyn, and Baruch colleges. City College and Lehman College had been scheduled to join the phase-out in September, 2000, but the Regents voted to delay their starting dates to September, 20001. All four people of color voted "No" on the remediation ban.

In three months of testimony and letters, dozens of students and faculty had tried to tell the Regents that CUNY's plan is racially discriminatory. Students of color will be disproportionately excluded from the 4-year colleges. What's more, all SUNY 4-

year colleges offer remediation. Since SUNY primarily serves white, middle class students, and CUNY primarily serves people of color and working class students, the civil rights implications are profound. Many of us told the Regents that they had an obligation to prevent these inequities, but the Regents' majority didn't take our points seriously.

An audience of well over 100 listened to the Regents as they prepared to vote. Many City College students and faculty were present, some holding signs such as, "Stop Racism, Vote NO," and "SUNY Offers Remedial Help. CUNY Cannot?" The audience often shouted in anger when Regents made critical remarks about CUNY and its students and the value of a CUNY degree. Many tears were shed when the vote was cast, as some of us tried to sing "We Shall Overcome."

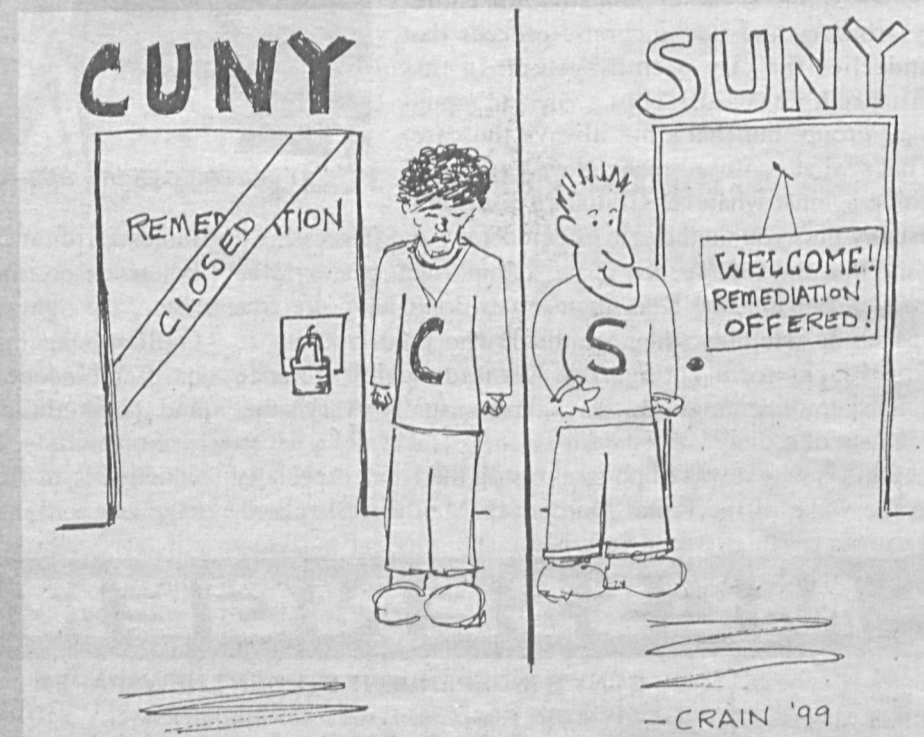
The CUNY plan exempts SEEK students, but how they will get the remediation they need is unclear. The plan also exempts students who

received a secondary education abroad and pass the math placement test.

The Regents modified CUNY's plan a bit. The "compromises," heralded by some Regents, will permit some students who barely miss passing a placement test to enroll in senior college courses on a provisional basis.

All in all, CUNY's new policy will close doors on thousands of students, and it's difficult to avoid the conclusion that social justice has suffered a terrible blow. Will we be able to rise up and challenge this discriminatory policy?

Bill Crain is a Professor of Psychology at City College.



Regents Obediently Fall into Line

THE NOVEMBER 22 DECISION by the New York State Board of Regents to uphold, with minor concessions, the Board of Trustees' decision to kill remedial education in the Senior Colleges brings us even closer to the end of the era of open admissions in CUNY. In doing so, the Regents displayed all the

servility that their masters, Pataki and Giuliani, expect of them.

Individual Regents tried to portray the "compromises" that were made to the plan as significant improvements that would greatly reduce its negative impact. Others made the excuse that it would have passed anyway in its original version, and better to have an "improved" version go through than to approve the original plan.

These excuses are all a load of crap. This type of cowardly behavior by the so-called "liberals" on the Boards of Trustees and Regents, college presidents, and other officials, is what allows devils like Giuliani to put forward such plans in the first place against the overwhelming opposition of the people of CUNY and of the city. If more liberals and centrists had stood up from the beginning and called a spade a spade, the plans would never have gotten this far.

Instead, they vacillate, speak delicately, and ultimately go along with the show in order to preserve their power and privilege. And we get the shaft as a result.

In contrast, student activists and many supporters of CUNY in the community demanded and continue to demand the preservation of open admissions. These groups weren't broad and well-organized enough to win on their own at this point, but the powers that be will never protect open admissions

Remedial Classes Untouched in SUNY

Every school in SUNY has a variety of remedial classes. Following are a few examples.

Binghamton: Basic Writing I and II, Basic Mathematics, Basic Algebra, Introduction to Functions

Buffalo: College Reading II: Critical Reading, Vocabulary Development and Flexible Reading, Critical Reading Seminar, College Writing I and II, Introductory Algebra

New Paltz: College Learning Techniques, Critical Thinking ESL, Comp. I Supp. Writing Workshop, Prep Writing II, Practical Grammar, Intro to Basic Algebra, Basic Algebra

In this and other respects such as disparate funding levels, CUNY students are consistently treated as second-class citizens. Could this have anything to do with the differing racial compositions of the two systems?

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or any other rights without constant pressure from below. The organizing must go on.

Presently, the only thing that might stand in the way of the outright end of open admissions is a pending civil rights lawsuit based on the broadly anticipated consequences which will disproportionately impact thousands upon thousands of young Black, Latinos, and other people of color in this city and hinder their chances of getting a higher education.

It shows what a reactionary state mainstream politics is in when over and over again it takes judges, many of them appointed by Republicans, to stop the depredations of the tyrant Giuliani and his house servant Herman Badillo, while the centrist politicians go along to get along. **M**

Why It Was Important to Stop the Klan

NEARLY 8,000 NEW YORKERS participated in the recent protest against the Ku Klux Klan's rally in Manhattan and sent a strong message that the KKK is not welcome here.

The high turnout came amid confusion over whether or not the Klan would even receive a permit to march. Support came from such unlikely corners as Rev. Al Sharpton and the Black-owned *Amsterdam News*, although they made it clear that their position was not an endorsement of the Klan, but to support free speech. Also confusing the issue was the refusal of Mayor Giuliani to grant a permit to the Klan.

The whole situation points out the entirely arbitrary and undemocratic process that underlies the city permit system. In this instance it was used against a vile and repugnant group, but that's not always the case. That's what confused many New Yorkers, as going against whatever Giuliani's position is usually puts you on the side of democracy and fairness.

While the free speech issue is important, it should be pointed out that the Klan themselves don't advocate free speech or assembly: they are thugs who used lynching to stop Blacks from voting. The Klan advocates violence against Jews, immigrants, Gays, and virtually every other segment of society.

This is why it was important to stop the Klan, especially in the wake of the brutal murders of Matthew Shepherd,



CUNY students at the anti-Klan demonstration.

James Byrd, and Billy Jack Gaither. Shepherd and Byrd's killers are on trial right now, and the Klan knows this. The rise of the right wing in this country and attacks like Mayor Giuliani's against the working class and people of color have emboldened the more radical elements like the Klan and the Skinheads to step up their efforts of terror.

Fortunately, New Yorkers realize this and no matter which side of the free speech issue you support, the message was sent that the Klan's ideas won't be tolerated here.

Protestors exercised their right of free speech to make sure the Klan would not march unopposed. Not doing so would have been a serious mistake.

The response also sends the message that New Yorkers are starting to tire of the thinly veiled bigotry and repressive tactics of the Giuliani administration and are ready to start fighting for an end to the onerous schemes we've been subjected to these past few years.

Kicking the Klan out of the city was an important step in a larger struggle that's sure to continue. **M**

letters

US's Colombian Paramilitaries

EXCELLENT ARTICLE, congratulations! It can help many people to understand Colombia and the US role in its bloody confrontation ["US Steps Up Intervention in Colombia," Nov. 99].

Since you seem worried about that country's future, as a journalist, may I suggest you to follow up and write about one more of the causes of today's Colombia war (or struggle of social classes): there are some US allies that have been sending mercenaries to develop paramilitary right wing groups.

Recently one of those involved in such terrorist actions was captured in Sierra Leone (Africa) while training and advising mercenaries: Lt. Colonel Yahir Klain (or Klein). This guy was famous for his direct participation in training Pablo Escobar's Sicarios bands (paramilitary type of hit men)... so, please: it would be great to see one of your contributions to clarify who's behind this mercenary.

—Rachel Rocela
via e-mail

THE MESSENGER

CCNY'S INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER

c/o CCNY SLAM!, Finley Center, 138th St. & Convent Ave., NY, NY 10031
ccnymessenger@yahoo.com ★ <http://www.geocities.com/cunyslaml/>

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.

Publishing Date—December 5, 1999 Press Run—5,000

EDITORS
Hank Williams
Shumon Alam
STAFF
Bill Crain
Anne Naughton
Marcela Putnam
Rob Wallace
Liz Wallenstein
LAYOUT ARTIST
John Olafson
DISTRIBUTION
Felipe Pichardo
FACULTY ADVISOR
Prof. Larry Hanley

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The Messenger Interviews Interim CCNY President Stanford Roman

DR. STANFORD ROMAN HAS BEEN pretty busy lately: getting up to speed as the interim president of the college while keeping his old position as head of the Sophie Davis Biomedical Program. The Messenger's Rob Wallace caught up to Dr. Roman to ask him what his plans are and see how he is settling in to his new position.

The Messenger: How did you become interim president?

Stanford Roman: Well, I certainly can't say as far as what process they used, but I was not seeking it; it was a total surprise for me. I've been at the college for nine years as dean of the Sophie Davis (biomedical) program, and as you might know, that program related directly to (the CUNY Central office on) 80th Street because it's a separate budget from City College. City College has been part of my whole life, as my father went here back in the '30's and I care about it, but this was not on my radar screen. So I can't speculate as to what the reasons are except that, you know, I've had a lot of years of academic administrative experience and, certainly, health care administrative experience.

TM: So, when you say "they," you mean the Board of Trustees?

SR: Well, Chancellor Goldstein gave me a call . . .

TM: Are you interested in becoming City College's permanent president?

SR: I haven't considered that. At this point my major goals are really to try to move the institution forward. I think it's got a lot of strengths and I think there are areas that need attention and I want to make as much of a contribution as I can over the next two years, and I haven't considered that one way or the other.

TM: If I recall correctly, there's something in the City College governance charter, basically saying that City College students and faculty are to be involved selecting a new president. Do you know if that's occurring?

SR: There is no search underway at this point.

TM: There is no search underway at this point? Ok, but am I correct in saying that students and faculty would be involved in that search?

SR: I would assume that a search would be just as it's slated to be, but there isn't a search process ongoing at this point because there are a number of issues that I want to look at, in the sense of getting City College in a [better] position . . . I think it's important to be able to attract a good leader to the college for the future.

TM: The next question, I'm sure, is going to be quite difficult for you, but I was asked that I do ask you this: it's regarding comments that the Board of Trustees chair Herman Badillo said concerning Mexicans and Dominicans. What do you think about those comments?

SR: I think they were unfortunate and he has subsequently tried to apologize: I know he's reached out to stu-

dents and others in an attempt. As you might know, City College is certainly one of the colleges of choice among the Dominican community and we have many Latino students on campus: it's about 30% of the enrollment, so clearly it's . . . as far as my interest and observation, they are among our student body and many are very outstanding young people.

TM: Do you think that he should resign, as some students and faculty have called for?

SR: I don't get into that dialogue . . . I think that he made an unfortunate



Interim President Roman speaking at the October 28 ceremony at City College celebrating 30 years of open admissions.

statement, but I think that he's apologized about it, and I'd frankly leave it at that at this point.

TM: Speaking in terms of City College's future, the Board of Trustees is voting in terms of ending remediation: what do you think about that?

SR: At this point I'm assuming that it is policy if approved by the state (Board of) Regents. That being the case, I think that we have to make all efforts to ensure that we can continue to provide access to students who have potential who can benefit from City College: and by that I mean a whole range of efforts that include high school outreach and enrichment to summer programs to even some

creative use of courses, at least on campus but I think you have to, under the circumstances, look at the goal. I feel that in some ways the issues of preparedness for college have been lost and there is an issue that students may not all be prepared as well as they should. I don't blame the victim, however: I think the issue is that even among some talented students there is some inequity of resources available among schools. As one who has been relating to students who have had a science education, there is marked variation in the facilities, the teaching



in science among high schools in the city, and even though students may have performed very well to outstandingly, what they have been exposed to may be relatively limited when you compare it to the universe of what's good high school level science as preparation for college. So I think the buzzword has come in but I think the issue is much deeper than that.

TM: So, that said, do you think that CUNY is putting the cart before the horse despite the problems at the high school level they're cutting off students coming to college?

SR: I think that the university has been really progressively moving in this direction for several years, you

know the college preparatory initiative was one step that attempted to improve at least making sure that students who finished high school had a certain amount of English, math, etc. I think that was a first step: I think that ultimately it would have gotten to a point where mechanisms other than the senior colleges would be used as far as strengthening students' preparation. Whether now is the best time or two years or three years from now—I think that's a debatable issue.

TM: You've spoken about disparities of high schools; do you think there are disparities in terms of the funding to the various campuses within CUNY?

SR: Well, there are certainly differences among the colleges, but I think that much of it is based on a formula and the colleges have differences in, let's say, their "academic menus" so that the funding formula has different impacts in different colleges, so yeah, there are differences.

TM: I bring it up for two reasons: one, City College has certainly been hit the hardest in terms of budget cuts and drop in amount of students attending, where before we had 15,000, now we have 10,000 that's a third of the student body, which is really quite extraordinary—in the awful sense of the word—and the other reason is because the faculty have been very worried that the college is going to be converted from a liberal arts college into a science school with a corresponding decrease in the student body and also in their eyes ruin the idea of a liberal arts education.

SR: First, personally and intellectually, I think the liberal arts are exceedingly important, even if someone should decide to pursue the sciences—at least to my last recollection the liberal arts include the sciences! I

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Student Concern over Parking Lot Safety Lingers

By Hank Williams

ON THE AFTERNOON OF TUESDAY, November 2nd, Sabrina Gerold and Claude Lopez returned to their cars in the South Parking Lot to find a rude surprise: their cars and 4-6 others parked in the vicinity had been vandalized.

Window glass was broken on all the cars and the thieves, unable to steal Ms. Gerold's car phone, smashed it. Both students report repair costs of over \$200 for glass alone and paid for the repairs themselves, citing high deductibles that made insurance claims unrealistic.

They are also angry at what they see as a lack of security in the lot, noting unstaffed security booths and emergency phones that did not work.

The college appears to have taken some steps to improve the situation: a

recent visit by Messenger staff confirmed that the emergency telephone in the most desolate area is now working and observed regular security patrols. A check of the telephone brought a rapid response from security. Fencing around the perimeter of the parking lot also appeared to be intact.

Timing may have been a factor in the robberies: it was raining heavily on the day of the incident and guards on bike patrol were reassigned to positions inside buildings as a result. Officer Bell, who was on duty November 2nd and normally patrols the area, noted that "we're back here [patrolling the lot] all the time," adding that they will patrol in all but the heaviest rain, as was the case at the time of the robberies. He reported that a security car will patrol remote areas when the bike patrols are not out, but the car may have other priorities—an emergency or escorting students—that take it

away from patrol duties.

The bigger problems are the sprawling layout and isolation of the lot, which makes security difficult. The south parking lot extends from the back of the "Y" Building, snaking around the athletic field and past the crumbling remains of (abandoned) Eisner Hall, which is the worst area, according to students. Two security booths sit unstaffed.

Students still do not seem to feel safe, however. Gerold and Lopez will no longer park their cars at the back and are either asking for security escorts or walking with friends to go to the lot. Other students questioned had similar feelings of unease.

"I don't think I would feel safe back there," stated Ms. Gerold. Asked about what she plans to do for parking from now on, she replied, "I don't know. I planned on making a big stink about this." M

CUNYCard continued from page 1

vious administration. Whom can he trust? In this case, President Roman was confronted with Vice President Dickmeyer who, for years hell-bent on implementing CUNYCard at CCNY, apparently kept Roman in the dark about the card's implementation.

What Is CUNYCard?

CUNYCard is a controversial ID card already implemented at several CUNY campuses. As well as a library card, the card can act as a Citibank debit card and an MCI calling card. The card can also be programmed as a xerox card, a vending machine card, and an access card for restricted parts of campus.

However neat the card sounds in the abstract, the card and Citibank are accompanied by a retinue of racial and anti-student problems (see the sidebar). The debit card function would be available to students who receive financial aid from the state. CUNY renegotiated the original fee structure with Citibank after protests from students and faculty. An originally slated \$3-a-month maintenance fee has been canceled. Eight free ATM transactions have apparently been added.

Still, fees remain, including \$2.50 for dormant accounts, \$1 ATM fees after the first 8 transactions, and an 80-cent fee for funds transferred into the accounts. After all, Citibank is sponsoring the card because it aims to make money off students.

"Citibank and MCI don't care about the condition of City College or

the quality of the education offered. All they are about is making a buck," Professor Larry Hanley of the English Department told the *Messenger*. (For the record, Professor Hanley is the *Messenger's* faculty advisor.)

With CUNY students receiving a *Messenger*-estimated \$300 million in financial aid annually, Citibank stands to make a pretty bundle in fees, as minor as the fees may seem to some. Moreover, money in a bank account doesn't just sit there, it's invested by the bank to make more money. In other words, Citibank, one of the largest banks in the world, could receive an annual interest-free multi-million dollar loan from CUNY students, some of the poorest students in the country.

Why any company should make money off CUNY student financial aid is a wonder as until only a couple years ago City College had a Chemical Bank branch in the basement of Shepard Hall where students had their checks cashed for free. The state paid for the service.

But the consumer issues may distract from the real meat of the matter. What is CUNY doing acting as a junior partner for Citibank? Why is the College using hundreds of administrator hours promoting dubious Citibank services, instead of addressing the problems the college faces?

"The basic objection to the card is that it asks the College to treat students as consumers rather than as students," Professor Hanley noted. "The College is selling the students to Citibank like television networks sell viewers to advertisers."

USG President Rafael Dominguez



Dickmeyer keeps City in the dark.

voiced similar objections. "We're in favor of a new ID card without students' Social Security numbers on it. But the corporate sponsorship is completely unnecessary and inappropriate for a college ID," he said.

The Stealth Government

"One of the most surprising things about CUNYCard is the stealth nature of the implementation," said Professor Hanley. "The college community was not informed about the card or its implementation. There was no chance for discussion or debate about whether we wanted the card in the first place. Someone might infer the lack of discussion was deliberate."

Hanley was asked by the administration to serve on the CUNYCard implementation committee in October along with USG President Rafael Dominguez. Hanley did not know how long the committee had been meeting before he was asked to serve. Vice President Dickmeyer refused to answer how long the committee had been meeting when asked by the *Messenger*.

It was apparently this stealth nature of CUNYCard implementation that

upset the President enough to cancel this round of implementation. Through his spokesman Charles DeCicco of Public Relations, President Roman stated, "There are no plans to introduce CUNYCard at this time. The College is continuing to examine the various options and issues concerning the CUNYCard."

But there were plans. When asked by the *Messenger* about the letters that were to be sent imminently by the implementation committee to students advising them that in December they would have to pick up a CUNYCard, DeCicco responded that at City College's Policy Advisory Committee meeting, a meeting of all the administration heads as well as student government officials, the President called the implementation "an unfortunate miscommunication in that process."

USG President Rafael Dominguez, who attended the Policy Advisory meeting, told the *Messenger*, "The President was completely supportive that the College should decide collectively" about CUNYCard.

Cristina Cocheo, USG Vice President for Community Affairs, told the *Messenger*, "It's very responsible that they tabled CUNYCard. President Roman has stepped up to the plate and acted responsibly, allowing the opportunity to hear from all sides." She also saw it as "a good message to [the Office of] Finance and Management," about respecting democratic process.

"It was the right thing to do," says Hanley of the Roman's decision, "I was impressed."

Dickmeyer's Play

Why Dickmeyer felt he could push CUNYCard without involving the President perplexed another observer, "He never told Roman about it. Perhaps he thought he was finishing up unfinished business from [former President] Moses." During the Moses era, Dickmeyer basically ran the College while Moses spent a good portion of her time and energy off-campus on non-College activities.

But for Dickmeyer CUNYCard was not a matter of tying off loose ends. He knows how controversial the Card is, including the verbal and heartfelt protest that arose last time the implementation was made imminent at City. Perhaps Dickmeyer felt under the new president, especially an interim president, he would continue to have free reign in deciding and enacting campus policy. But his actions were an apparent affront to the new president's authority.

In answer to a *Messenger* e-mail of questions about CUNYCard, Vice President Dickmeyer issued a one-sentence reply, "I do not want to say anything more than President Roman has said." It seems whatever beating Dickmeyer may have taken behind closed doors at the administration building sank in. For now.

Still, his contrition may be too late. "[Dickmeyer] kind of kept the President out of the loop," said another observer to the *Messenger*. "That's not protocol. A lot of people said he fucked up, that the President was pissed. They went over [Roman's] head." **M**

Citibank: Your Friendly Racist, Anti-student Bank

CITIBANK'S RECORD IS CHARACTERIZED by anti-student policies, racism and union-busting.

In October 1995, the Campaign for an America that Works awarded Citibank its "Hog of the Month" award for the bank's lobbying efforts to kill direct student lending—the federal program that allows the government to directly issue student loans without exorbitant fees or interest. Citibank lobbied against these loans because it wishes to force students to receive loans through commercial banks. That would allow the banks to gouge students with fees.

In 1989, Citibank tightened credit for students seeking to obtain US-guaranteed loans through the bank. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Citibank drafted guidelines to deny loans to students at schools whose default rates topped 25%: "[The policy] would potentially hit hundreds of . . . colleges that cater to low-income students and minorities. Federal surveys have shown that several branches of the City University of New York . . . have default rates above 25%." In other words, Citibank created a policy that discriminated against CUNY students.

But Citibank may now be looking to CUNY as a cash cow. Citibank, both directly and through its subsidiaries, is attempting to break into

the poor-people market. Sixty million Americans are shut out of conventional banking venues. Those Americans must engage the services of pawn shops, check-cashing outlets, rent-to-own stores, and high-interest mortgage lenders. While credit card holders pay 6–20% annual interest, poor Americans can pony up to 240% for pawnbroker loans, 300% for finance company loan, or even 2000% for a quickie loan from a check-cashing place.

Citibank wants to tap into this \$300 billion fringe economy, especially as more Americans are driven into bankruptcy or must rely on credit to remain afloat. According to CCNY's Office of Institutional Research, as of 1995–96 70 percent of CCNY undergraduates received financial aid at an average of \$4,559 per student.

Citibank's Race Record

A federal report published in October 1997 showed Citibank three times more likely to reject Black loan applicants than white. Citibank has essentially argued back that Blacks for the most part are poorer than whites and that accounts for the difference. But the federal report also showed a 19% gap in rejection rates between Blacks and whites making over \$54,960.

A study released just this Septem-

ber by ACORN, a community activist group, shows Citibank rejected Blacks at a rate twice the national average for Blacks in 1998. Citibank rejected Latinos a third more than the national Latino average.

In a May 1996 report, NYC Public Advocate Mark Green showed Citibank had closed a slew of branches in low-income neighborhoods, many of them in New York's Black and Latino communities, including one right off City College's campus on 145th St. Green accused Citibank of "financial segregation." One Bronx councilwoman accused Citibank of "total insensitivity" to the neighborhood she represents.

Discrimination also characterizes the bank's union-busting. In 1994, Citibank hired a new cleaning and maintenance firm. The new employer refused to rehire the janitors, many of them minority, who had previously cleaned Citibank branches. These workers, members of Local 32B-32J, earned \$13.10 an hour with good benefits. Instead, the new firm hired non-union workers for \$7 per hour. Citibank supported the arrangement, calling the halved wages "moderately less rich." The union has accused Citibank of "destroy[ing] the living standards of minority workers" and "pitt[ing] two groups of minority workers against each other."

'Shit In, Shit Out'

Queens College President Trashes Remedial Students

by Liz Wallenstein
Queens College Quad

"SHIT IN, SHIT OUT. If you take in shit and turn out shit, that is slightly more literate, you're still left with shit."

Queens College President Allen Lee Sessoms was quoted by the Association of the Bar of the City of New York (ABCNY) as using these words to describe incoming remedial students, in their recent Report of the Commission on the Future of CUNY. According to the report, Sessoms made the controversial remarks in an interview on September 21 regarding the new remediation policy.

Sessoms' alleged remarks may have very well exposed the unspoken reasoning behind a proposed amendment approved by the CUNY Board of Trustees in January to phase out remediation. His approval of this amendment cuts to the heart of Queens College's mission, its place within CUNY, as well as Sessoms' place within Queens College. According to the ABCNY report, Sessoms' rationalization for his radical view is that he sees Queens as more of a SUNY college, a "regional" university, rather than a CUNY school, which is geared towards the middle class.

According to the report, Sessoms' goal is to build a strong connection with the middle class in an attempt to increase funding, a political base. The report quotes him as saying, "The only people who benefit from open admissions are poor people and poor people don't vote."

In an interview with *The Quad*, Sessoms vehemently denied ever making any of the statements, saying, "They took things out of context."

"I did not say anything which they attributed to me. Their statement, as constructed, was totally false. Everyone in the meeting [from QC] will tell you that." He described the ABCNY interview as having been supposed to be informal but having turned into "political guerrilla warfare" because he claimed that ABCNY had a political agenda. Sessoms said that the ABCNY are the same people who pushed for open admissions in the '70s and they see his desire to raise Queens' standards as a threat. "I'm disappointed that they were so duplicitous," said Sessoms.

He called for them to acknowledge and retract their error immediately and has since mailed a memo to the members of the Commission on the Future of CUNY, the specific group within the ABCNY responsible for publishing the report in question.

The ABCNY have so far not responded to allegations of misquoting.

Sessoms also said that even though ABCNY is an organization of lawyers, who would normally steer clear of publishing libelous material, he feels

that they were not apprehensive about publishing the report because he is a public official and public officials don't have as strong a case in libel suits. In addition, as there were no tape recorders running during the course of the interview, Sessoms feels that they have no proof to back up their claims that he made the comments.

ABCNY admits to not having recorded the meeting, but said that Thurston Domina, the Research Associate to the Commission Staff and one of the two members present took notes. Also present was the Chair, Stanley Grossman, Esq.

Krista Brenner, President of the Student Association, spoke with Domina shortly after the incident became widely known. According to Brenner, Domina was reportedly so shocked by Sessoms' comments that there is no possibility for mistake. Upon inquiry if there was a slight chance that Domina could have erred in the note taking, the response was a simple but assertive "No."

In a letter to ABCNY, pointing out the inconsistencies of their report, Assistant Vice President and Special Counsel to the President Jane Denkensohn, who was present at the meeting, does not deny Sessoms' quotes but writes his views were substantially distorted and misinterpreted by the commission. The letter states that when the President said, "The only



Someone turn off that man's mic.

people who benefit from open admissions are poor people and poor people don't vote," he was explaining the views of the members of the politically motivated Board of Trustees and was not representing his own views. The letter also says that when he made the "Shit in, shit out..." comment, he was using a somewhat "salty" term as a synonym for "academically unprepared" while discussing academic excellence as an absolute standard.

The letter sent to ABCNY requests that the commission publish and distribute a retraction and a revised report in the same manner as the publication and distribution of the report itself.

Dr. David Speidel, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs for QC was also present at the meeting and said he stands by what was written in Denkensohn's letter. He said, "Those of us who were present at

the meeting think that the President was wronged."

Dr. Burton Backner, Dean of Students, who was not present at the meeting, defended the ideas behind Sessoms' alleged comments before learning that Sessoms claimed to have not made them. He said that he did not regard the statements as malicious. In regard to the statement about the poor not mattering, Backner said, "[It] sounds more like apolitical statement. It seems he is just making an assessment of the situation. He's saying that the poor ones are the ones that benefit from this, and by not voting they are hurting their cause." He also explained Sessoms colorful choice of words to describe Sessoms knack for getting people's attention and that he was exaggerating to make his point. "It's certainly provocative," said Backner.

The reactions of the student body to Sessoms' alleged comments were bitter. Derek Iannucci found the choice of words to be in poor taste and insulting. He felt that CUNY was losing its goal of "providing the poor and immigrant an education." Senior Helen Zumaeta called Sessoms "the worst thing that happened to Queens College."

Student Adina Shapiro said, "The president preaches about wanting to upgrade the school and to be stricter about accepting students with little intellectual capabilities, yet he couldn't complete an entire sentence without saying profanities."

Sessoms is waiting for a response from ABCNY before considering any further legal action. **M**

Reprinted from the Queens College Quad.

Supreme Court Debates Student Activities Fees

by Shuman Alam

THE U.S. SUPREME COURT BEGAN debating on November 9th whether students at public universities should pay fees to fund campus groups that advocate political or ideological views with which they disagree.

A small group of students sued the University of Wisconsin-Madison under the banner of the Christian Coalition, arguing that students should have the right to choose not to pay student activity fees if they find certain groups' ideological and political views objectionable.

The Coalition, describing themselves as opponents of abortion rights and homosexual rights, challenged allocation of the fees. Amnesty International, the Madison AIDS Support Network, International Socialist Organization, and Students for National Organization of Women are some of the groups the university funds that the Christian Coalition finds objectionable.

Students at the University of Wisconsin paid \$331.50 for activity fees for the 1995-96 school year.

Some justices in the court were concerned about students' money being funneled to groups that have def-

inite political objectives. Justice Steven Breyer expressed concerns that liberal organizations get more funding.

These Justices failed to realize that the Christian Coalition traditionally has one political objective—to destroy the democratic tradition the universities upheld for practicing the First Amendment rights and freedom of speech.

Wisconsin Assistant Attorney General Susan Ullman, defending the University, pointed out that activity fees contribute to a public forum on campus. Justice Anthony Kennedy argued that universities have historically provided a forum for political, ideological and social debates since "ancient times."

The justices of the court and the attorney general's office did not point out that student activities are not always separate from educational activities. Many people feel that student activities enrich the educational understanding of students and need to be seen as part of university's responsibilities.

The attitude of many conservatives came out clearly in the comments of Justice David Souter, who thinks that student groups should finance themselves from membership dues or other fundraising activities.

Justice Souter did not mention that the fundraising capacity of public school students is limited. Groups like the Christian Coalition can often obtain money from well-funded conservative foundations but the organizations targeted by them usually can't. They are often victims of class, race, gender or sexual biases.

The University urged the court to expand on a 1995 decision when it ruled that universities should set up general policy for distributing funds for all student groups. A ruling in this case is expected to be announced in spring 2000. Although this case ruling will only be applied at the University of Wisconsin, the ruling could change the environment of public colleges all around the country.

Most deeply affected could be universities such as CUNY that serve primarily working class and poor students. Student activities mainly depend on school funding, and the democratic environment could be deeply jeopardized.

On the heels of the attacks on CUNY, an attack on activity fees could be used as a weapon against certain groups or activists, and the struggle for such things as saving open admissions and remediation could be deeply hampered. **M**

President Moses's

When students did what President Moses refused to do—fight back against attacks on City College—Moses had the

by Rob Wallace

TIME AND AGAIN DURING her tenure, recently departed CCNY President Yolanda Moses bowed to political pressure and chopped her charge, City College, to pieces, closing a \$14 million budget gap by shutting down numerous departments and firing faculty. She refused to fight back against “her friend” CUNY Chancellor Ann Reynolds, Governor Pataki and Mayor Giuliani. Meanwhile, City College students did Moses’s job—without her \$100,000+ salary, her limo, and her College-provided duplex on West 87th Street—and fought back against the cuts.

The following are some more not-quite-chronological snapshots from the Moses era. These show Moses in the fatigues and mirrored sunglasses of a dictatorship’s commandant.

Throw 'Em All in Jail!

A semester-long campaign against the 1995 round of cuts culminated on March 23, 1995 when CCNY students joined 20,000 CUNY and high school students and faculty who rallied at City Hall in protest against Governor Pataki’s budget proposal to cut TAP and raise CUNY tuition \$1000. Weeks after the rally, protest continued at the City College campus in the form of a student hunger strike conducted in the NAC Rotunda near the Cohen Library against the proposed cuts.

On April 11, 1995, the SAFE Team—CUNY Central’s political police—and the New York Police Department arrested 47 CUNY hunger strikers and their supporters. They were thrown in jail downtown for the night. President Moses and Security Director Timothy Hubbard called in



A City College hunger striker being arrested.

the SAFE Team without consulting the student government, which CUNY Board of Trustees policy requires. Administrators claimed the hunger strikers were arrested because they were in NAC after building hours. But even as the strikers were arrested, other students moved about the Rotunda, in and out of the Cohen Library, without harassment, much less arrest.

Riveting video of the arrests taken by CCNY’s SAME-TV shows about a hundred NYPD in full riot gear. The video also shows a cowardly Moses scuttling away toward her limo on Convent Avenue as the police moved in on the NAC Building. The student holding the SAME-TV camera, obviously angry, demanded Moses why she had the students arrested. A visibly shaken Moses, seeming on the verge of tears, refused to reply.

SAFE Team logs brought out in subsequent court cases against CUNY Central showed a well-choreographed ballet among the CCNY administration, the SAFE Team, and the NYPD: “When proper notification and warnings were given by President Moses to the students and supporters and were not adhered to, the arrest process began. SAFE Team and NYPD conducted same.”

Two days later the log reads, “Paperwork related to the duties was conducted along with a constant observance of movements of ‘Key’ players involved in the hunger strike.” So even with the hunger strike over, Security continued to spy on student activists at City College, a practice that would continue for years afterwards with Moses’s evident approval.

Summer of Spying

In the early summer of 1998, a CCNY staff member alerted student activists that CUNY Security had hidden a surveillance camera in a fake fire detector outside a student activist office (NAC 3/201). The activists subsequently discovered video surveillance taping equipment in the room next door to the activists’ office. The students filed a lawsuit against the College for violating their constitutional rights to free assembly, sparking national media coverage.

The lawsuit would motivate Moses and administrators like Vice President Thomas Morales and Dean Paul Bobb to void the recent Graduate Student Council elections wherein an activist slate, including those very students who filed the lawsuit, had won. The suit would also inspire the administrators

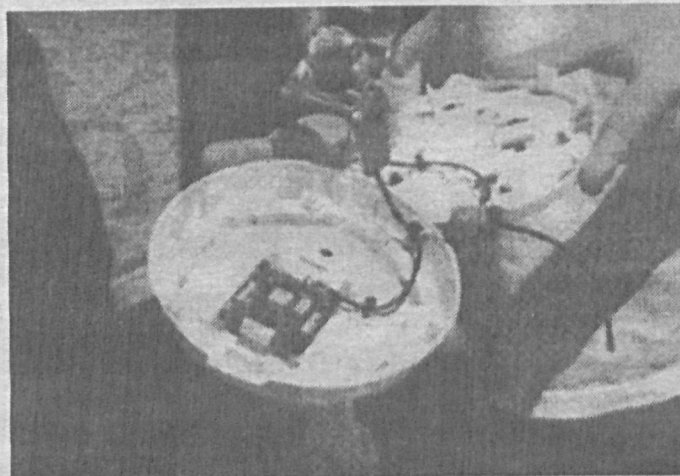


City College and other CUNY students march against the cuts in the spring of 1996.

to silence one of Moses’s most piquant critics, the *Graduate Student Messenger*, a forerunner of the *Messenger* that had been funded by the Graduate Student Council. The administration then put into the chair of the GSC Martha Flores, a hack who lost the overturned election and later testified in support of the administration during the surveillance lawsuit. Quid pro quo: signed, sealed and delivered. (For a full recap, check out the *Messenger* website at <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/6353/democ.html>.)

Earlier this year Moses visited the University of New Mexico to interview for the presidency there, a job she did not get because UNM was informed of Moses’s record. While there, the UNM student newspaper asked her about the hidden camera. Moses responded, “The cameras were placed there to guard against theft. A lot of computers were being stolen, so it was only for the students’ protection.” Moses gave the same type of explanation for arresting the hunger strikers in 1995: It was for their students’ “safety.” In other words, throwing you in jail and spying on you is for your own good.

Moses’s explanation for the spying falls apart when one considers that no computer had ever been stolen out of 3/201, which at that time had only three computers. Meanwhile, down



The spy camera hidden inside a fake smoke detector outside NAC 3/201.

the hall from 3/201, a computer lab with 50 computers never had a hidden camera on it. Finally, Security Director Hubbard admitted in an affidavit submitted in the students’ lawsuit that the camera was placed there because of Hubbard had been informed by CCNY PR spokesman Charles DeCicco, erroneously at that, that student activists were planning on taking over the NAC Building on graduation day in response to the CUNY Board of Trustees’ vote to end remediation at senior colleges.

Target: Dissidents

In 1996, Moses and her administrators were confronted by more protest from students and faculty for her threats to scuttle the ethnic studies departments. Rather than throwing the whole lot in jail like she did in 1995, a tactic that landed Moses a shit pie of bad publicity in her face, Moses tried a different approach. Now she, along with the “little men” administrators around her, as Professor Leonard Jeffries has called them, would target key student organizers.

The case of David Suker shows just how dysfunctional Moses’s administration became as it became obsessed with destroying a student who added so much to CCNY life and, in turn, made administrators’ jobs easier (though they would likely never admit it).

Suker was in many ways more CCNY’s president than Moses could ever be. Besides a continual presence at the Graduate Student Council, serving as its chair in 1996, Suker was a key part of the fabric of student life at City College for almost five years. So much so that the busy Suker often slept in various niches on campus at night.

Suker had a prominent role in resuscitating the Graduate Student Council, which had been little else but a patronage farm (and is once again under the current reign of Martha Flores). He helped numerous students maneuver through the Finley Center

Banana Republic

ed, suspended, spied on, their elections rigged, and their newspapers shut down. Part 2 of 2 on the Moses era.

bureaucracy, form cultural clubs, and receive funding. He was a key organizer of events including the incredibly popular Talent and Fashion Show.

Moreover, he was a major organizer in every CUNY-wide political event since 1995. Suker was a founder of the CCNY Coalition to Stop the Cuts in 1995, the backbone of hunger strikers against the budget cuts that were jailed. He was a founding member of the CUNY-wide SLAM! network that began in 1996. He took a key role in a group called Students for a New USS (SNUSS) that attempted to bring new blood into the usually and still corrupt and ineffective CUNY-wide government. Suker also hit the streets, attending just about every demonstration on- and off-campus against Moses, Giuliani, Pataki, the Board of Trustees and all their plans to wreck CUNY with budget cuts, tuition hikes, departmental closures, guns on campus, CUNY Cards, etc.

Suker was also involved in two lawsuits against CUNY. He was a plaintiff in the lawsuit brought against CCNY for spying on activists with a hidden surveillance camera. He was also a plaintiff along with Professor William Crain that temporarily blocked CUNY's attempt to end remedial classes in the senior colleges.

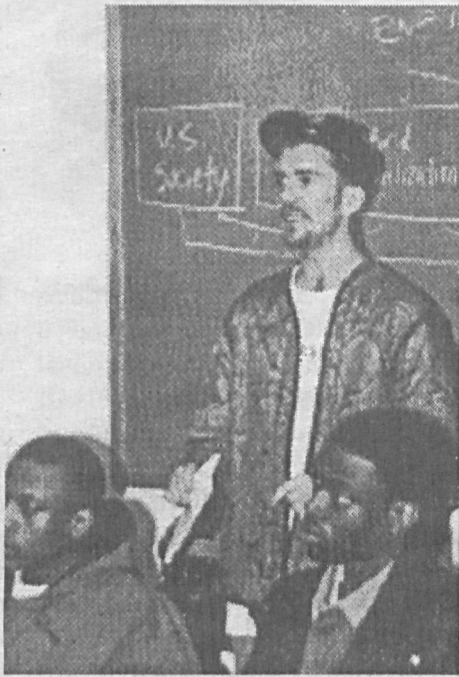
Clearly, Suker was a royal pain in the ass to the CCNY administration. And Moses and Student Affairs Vice President Morales went after him with a vengeance. Suker's personality—at times rancorous and petulant—fueled the personal nature of the administrators' attacks on him. This was especially the case for the touchy Moses who often felt humiliated by Suker and the example he set, a standard she could not meet. It was also the case for Vice President Morales whose pomposity and self-importance made him envision Suker's actions as personal insults.

In 1996, Morales convened a disciplinary panel at City College—stocked with personal appointments—that suspended Suker for *an entire academic year*. Suker's crimes? At the administration building he loudly demanded to see President Moses. He got some paint on the NAC Rotunda floor when making banners against the budget cuts. He demanded to be allowed onto a CCNY bus going to Albany to lobby legislators. He interrupted Carl McCall's budget-cut apology when the State Comptroller spoke at CCNY. The panel's penalty was so egregiously political that a CUNY Central appeal committee reduced the suspension to one semester—still an absurdity.

In 1998, Morales again went after Suker. His crime this time? During the summer of 1998, soon after Suker and other activists leveled a lawsuit against the College for the surveillance camera, Suker, a GSC member,

attempted to bring his then-two year old daughter Serenity with him on the annual student government retreat to Pennsylvania. Only after Suker had boarded the bus with his daughter did administrators inform him that his daughter wasn't allowed to go. This, despite the fact that students and administrators in years past had brought their children including, ironically enough, Morales himself. Suker never raised his voice or even refused to leave the bus. He only demanded the incident be documented by a security guard.

Nevertheless, for this heinous crime another disciplinary panel convened by Morales punished Suker with a *five-semester* prohibition from student life activities, including participation on-the GSC, a clear violation of his right to participate in government and a punishment clearly tai-



David Suker, targeted by the Moses administration for his activism.

lored to end his activism.

During this second "trial", all testimony about the pattern of administration harassment against him was ruled out of order, while Morales was allowed to give the panel's members copies of Suker's disciplinary record and to verbally malign Suker's character.

Human Rights Watch, the human rights organization, selected Moses earlier this year as a member of its board of directors. That's absurd. That she was then named chair of its committee on academic freedom is mind-boggling. CCNY during Moses's reign was a banana republic of rigged and stolen student elections, shut-down newspapers, backroom deals, as well as jail, harassment, suspension and surveillance of dissidents.

The Pentagon on the Hill

The expansion of Security during the very years that CCNY suffered its worst budget cuts in history showed CUNY more interested in social control than in education. CUNY Cen-

tral's security budget jumped from \$21.8 million to over \$40 million in 1995 on salary and benefits alone, never mind expenses and equipment. CCNY Security took in \$3.27 million in salaries alone that year, 5% of the College's total budget. While CUNY fired over 160 professors, it hired 161 new security officers. CCNY, which suffered the worst of the professorial firings, received the largest compliment of new guards.

The increase in Security presence on the campus led to a proliferation of security brutality and harassment incidents. Security guards sexually harassed female students. Male students were jumped and pepper-sprayed for such dangerous crimes as not showing their CCNY ID's fast enough or talking back to a disrespectful guard. One 1997 incident saw guards run wild at a student-run talent show in the Aranow Theater, verbally abusing performers and their parents and other audience members, and pushing one 14-year-old girl.

In 1996 the Pentagon on the Hill attempted to expand its armory. During the annual summer retreat with CCNY student government officials, Moses declared in a response to a question that she had heard nothing of rumors about arming campus security guards. Symbolic of how fucked-up and off-message the Moses administration was, the next day CCNY Security Director Timothy Hubbard told student government officials he was proposing arming campus security.

Student activists and the student government, a good progressive bunch that year, began a preemptive campaign against arming security. The campaign—with flyers, forums, and tabling—culminated in a raucous October 24, 1996 Town Hall meeting in the Aranow Theater where about 300 students and faculty denounced Hubbard's proposal.

To her credit, Moses rejected Hubbard's proposal several days after the Town Hall meeting, though several hundred people chanting "No guns!" at her in Aranow made that decision easy to make. Although a promised new bus, to transport students directly to nearby subway stations, never materialized, the decision to keep guards from being armed was Moses's finest moment at City.

The Arming Security forum marked the last time Moses would make a campus-wide appearance for the rest of her tenure outside of Freshman Convocations (for freshman who had yet to learn of her). In March 1998 students had to crash a faculty-only meeting Moses had set up so the students could speak with their own campus president. Moses for the most part spent the rest of her tenure holed up in her office or, more often, off-campus. She would make speeches on campuses across the country on her

idealized vision of multicultural education, while ignoring the gritty, nuts-and-bolts problems at multiracial City College.

A Missed Opportunity

In the *Buena Vista Social Club* movie, so moved by the Cuban music he was helping record, the musician Ry Cooder tells his son, and I'm paraphrasing here, "I have this feeling that everything I've done and been, all the training I've undergone, has come down to this moment."

The CCNY presidency was Moses's moment. At no time in her life will she ever get the chance to act on what she thought she trained herself for and experienced. It was a perfect opportunity. As a Black woman versed in the arguments of race and multicultural pedagogy, at a college in the middle of Harlem and Washington Heights, at a time when an unrepentant racist ascended to the mayoralty and began to launch vicious attacks on CUNY and especially City College, the moment could have been hers.

Moses could have launched an uncompromising defense of the College, a defense that would likely have rallied support of the campus and the nearby communities. Had she been subsequently fired, well, it would have been no big deal personally. With her credentials she could land another job. But defending students who need a college education to avoid (at best) McDonald's jobs is well worth any repercussion which the Chancellor and Board of Trustees might level at her. Moses chose instead to cower behind her office and cultivate the *image* of an activist president, touring the country *speaking* against racism and for multiculturalism, but at home aiding the racists in their efforts to gut CUNY with budget cuts and so-called standards. And she still got canned for her obsequiousness! Now she's holed up alone in an office at the Graduate Center where she retains an appointment in the Anthropology Department, her reputation permanently in tatters.

But others would argue that Moses's record was in the crapper from her Cal-State days. Or that a landlord with \$3 million in holdings in California, as she and her husband have, would hardly understand the plight of City's working class students. Or that she wouldn't have been recruited into the CCNY presidency in the first place if Chancellor Reynolds didn't understand that Moses would be amenable to instituting draconian cuts and policies. Or that Moses wasn't really much of an administrator to begin with: year-in and year-out registration was a mess, courses were canceled without notice, bathrooms closed, etc. In the words of one student, "Nothing really works here."

Either way, it's bye-bye, bumbler. **M**

Vieques: The Puerto Rican People Say '¡Ya Basta!'

by Hank Williams

THE SMALL PUERTO RICAN ISLAND of Vieques has been at the heart of heated debate recently, and become the symbol for a larger Puerto Rican resistance movement pushing for independence.

Debate over the island centers on the U.S. Navy's continued use of the island, which is still home to about 9,400 people, for military training exercises using live ammunition.

The Navy claims that the island is the only location within the United States that allows battle ships to launch attacks from the sea, Marines to stage amphibious landings, and jets to bomb from the air all at once.

The Navy argues that argues that Vieques is vital to US defense. In a recent statement to British Broadcasting (BBC) News, Navy spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Bob Garcia said: "Without the experience of live firing exercises, our troops would not be able to do their jobs as well on real battle fields, and that means more casualties, more of our people would become prisoners, and we would be faced with longer conflicts." Garcia concludes "this [training] keeps people from getting hurt unnecessarily."

Killing Sparks Uprising

This claim runs contrary to some of the facts, as a civilian security guard, David Sanes Rodríguez, was killed on April 19th, 1999 by a bomb that missed its target by almost two miles and hit his observation post. This resulted in outcry by residents and a protest held last July 4th drew 50,000 people to the island to march on the base demanding its permanent closure. The Navy's investigation found that a plane that had strayed from its proper course and sighted the wrong target caused the accident.

The problems and opposition go deeper than that last incident, however. The Navy has had a base on Vieques since 1938 and took over a majority of the island's territory in 1941. Residents were forced to accept the price for expropriated land set by the Navy. Two choices were offered: leave or prepare to be evicted—by force, if necessary.

Now the Navy occupies over 75 per cent of the island, including the most arable land, leaving the population clustered on a small strip in the

center. The effect has been the destruction of large-scale agriculture. Constant traffic by Navy ships disrupts fishing, which is the biggest industry left on the island. General Electric was one of the few large manufacturing operations, but that plant closed this year. Vieques has a staggering unemployment rate of nearly 50%, compared to 14% for the rest of Puerto Rico.

Radioactive Pollution

According to BBC News, the Navy used napalm during training exercises and has admitted that it had wrongly fired 267 radioactive shells at the island in February. Napalm was a defoliant used on a massive scale during the Vietnam War that has been linked to high cancer levels and other medical problems in veterans, due partially to the chemical Dioxin, a known carcinogen. Depleted Uranium ammunition was used extensively during the Gulf War and is suspected to be one of the culprits behind both the high level of birth defects and cancer in Iraqi children since the war ended and Gulf War Syndrome—the sickness that has infected many Persian Gulf veterans.

A 1988 article by engineer and environmental consultant Rafael Cruz-Pérez identified three main ways the military's bombings pollute the environment in Vieques: chemicals released from the missiles' explosive payloads, dust and rock particles released into the air as from impacts and explosions, and metallic residue left by detonated missiles.

To make matters worse, the Navy doesn't remove junk used for target practice from the island, so metals decompose from additional explosions and leach into the soil where the chemicals contaminate both the soil and drinking water. Tanks, artillery and aircraft lie rusting across the sand dunes, shredded by thousands of bullets and rockets and the ground is strewn with empty shell-casings,

dummy bombs, and mortars.

Protesters had scientists test the soil and they found dangerously high levels of toxic metals such as lead, mercury and cadmium. The Navy contradicts those claims, insisting its tests prove the levels are within acceptable limits.

It may depend which study the Navy is talking about, however, as Cruz-Pérez referred to a scientific study done by the Navy in his article, which found the sources of drinking water in Vieques' Isabel Segunda village and Barrio Esperanza polluted with toxic chemicals like TNT, tetra-



Police arrest a protestor.

and RDX. In the '70s, the US Environmental Protection Agency sampled Vieques' air and soil and determined that the air has unhealthy levels of particulate matter and the ground has iron levels above normal.

Studies carried out by the Puerto Rico Department of Health have shown that from 1985 to 1989 the rate of cancer in Vieques was 26 percent higher than the rest of Puerto Rico. Rafael Rivera-Castaño, a retired professor from the University of Puerto Rico's Medical Sciences Campus, has documented an increase in both rare diseases and rather mundane ones, like asthma, which is significantly affecting Vieques' children. "How can the children of Vieques get asthma if this is such a small island," Rivera-Castaño asks. "The winds that blow in from the ocean are rich in iodine, which prevents asthma. The only possible cause is air pollution. We don't have factories here, the only source of air pollution here is the Navy."

Forcing the Navy Out

The Navy may be seeing the writing on the wall: a Pentagon panel recommended in October that the Navy shut down the Vieques range after five years, while cutting the use of live ammunition in half in the interim. President Clinton has personally tried to intervene and broker a deal, but no compromise is likely to be acceptable to Puerto Ricans, who have united on the issue. Pro-statehood Governor Pedro Rosello and Puerto Rican politicians on the mainland, including Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer are also firmly opposed to any further use by the military.

More importantly, citizens and protestors are seeing their efforts start to pay off and now believe that they can win. Vieques' fishermen are extremely courageous, having confronted naval warships at sea several times. In 1978, fishermen were informed that they would not be allowed to fish for 3 weeks due to intensive military maneuvers by NATO countries along Vieques' entire coastline. As a result, the fishermen, fed-up with the Navy's arrogance, took a desperate gamble on February 6 and forty fishing boats "invaded" waters where target practice with live ammunition was about to begin. They were successful delaying the maneuvers and awakening support of the entire Puerto Rican nation.

Ruben Berrios, leader of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, has camped on the Navy's land ever since Sanes' death and says he will stay at his camp until he's dragged off or the navy leave. He is part of a wide coalition of Puerto Rican politicians, church groups and civil organizations who are all demanding that Navy abandon Vieques.

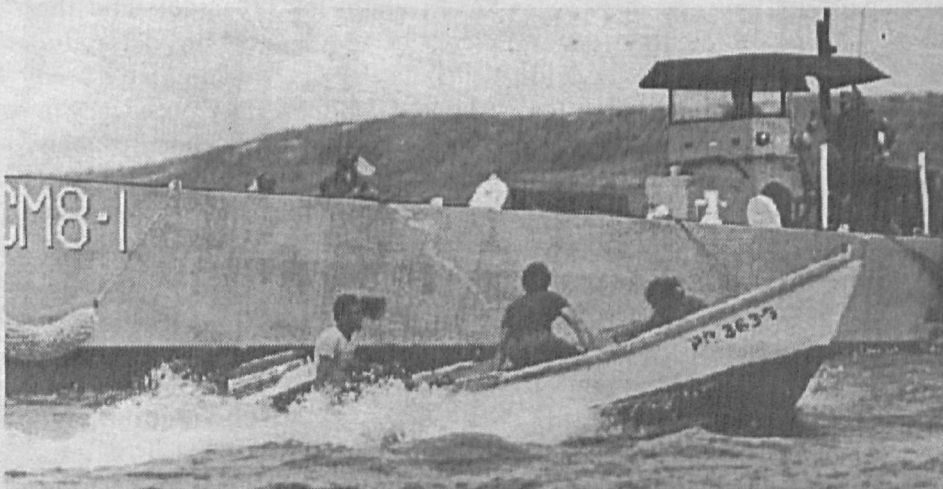
"This whole side of the island is an ecological abomination and it does not look good for the most powerful nation in the world to deny the human rights of a civil population," said Berrios in a BBC interview.

Puerto Rico the Colony

Berrios and others see Vieques as part of a larger struggle and the situation as a microcosm of Puerto Rico's relationship to the rest of the United States. Puerto Rico became a possession of the United States as a direct result of the Spanish-American War of 1898 after 400 years of Spanish colonial rule. After the invasion the US established a military government, which lasted up to 1900, when the Foraker Act authorized the President of the United States to appoint a civilian governor. In 1917 the Jones Act granted US citizenship to all island residents. In 1948 Puerto Ricans were finally allowed to elect their own governor, but still have no representation in Congress.

Today, after 101 years of direct economic, political and military rule, Puerto Rico continues to be a US colony. Given its geographical position, Puerto Rico has always played a key strategic military role for the United States. The Central Intelligence Agency Factbook notes Puerto Rico's "important location along the Mona Passage—a key shipping lane to the Panama Canal; San Juan is one of the biggest and best natural harbors in the Caribbean."

Despite the odds, the protestors persevere. "I know that there is a great danger," said Pablo Connelly, one of the civilians protesting at Mount David. He adds: "I know that the risks are great, but all the risks are worth it. I do this for my children and for the children of all Viequesenses and I know that during the time that I remain here there is not going to fall a single bomb in Vieques." M



Fishermen confront U.S. Navy forces.



Victoria Mendez on the right, with roommates.

by Anne I. Naughton

CASTLE: Shared bedroom in Centro Maria, a boarding house for young women run by Sisters of the "Religious of Mary Immaculate." 54th St. between 10th and 11th Ave. in Manhattan.

WHO: Victoria Mendez, of Monterrey, Mexico, Graduate Student in Applied Anthropology and babysitter and her roommate, a fashion student at Parsons.

COMMUTE: 1/9 train to Columbus Circle then walk or take the bus to its final stop right outside Centro Maria. The hallways are institution-green, the dining room is about 108 degrees, and the dishes and cups are the same plastic-blue green as the walls. The halls are lined with empty reading chairs, Virgin Mary statuettes and pictures of cats; we just passed an unplugged video game and an abandoned gift shop display case. Nothing looks like it has been used in a long time.

Centro Maria looks like an armory from the street, but inside it's like a nursing home-youth hostel hybrid. What's the story? (Victoria) Well, it was once a hospital. Now there are more than 70 people living here. Most are girls from 16 to 25 years old; most are from Spanish-speaking countries, but some are from the Midwest. There are about 10 nuns, most are from Mexico. I found out about this place from a City College housing guide.

Since no visitors are allowed upstairs, you'll have to describe your room to us. (Victoria) Three windows. It could fit eight people standing. But you have to turn sideways to walk between the beds. To use the sink means my bed is going to get wet.

What about bathrooms? And phones? (Victoria) There are two bathrooms on each floor, and we only have two phone lines.

Meals are included in the weekly rent: that must be nice. (Victoria) It sucks. Breakfast is cornflakes, coffee, milk and bread, and the bread is really old. We had Easter sweet breads a week past Easter. The nuns cook. Friday is the worst: mystery salad.

I'm enjoying this conversation in the lounge; "Friends" is on the TV and there's this wall-sized map of

the world, with yellow flags marking all the Centro Maria houses. They have a lot in Africa. (Victoria) Not really. Somebody moved the flags out of Spain and into Africa. Also someone put an earring on a portrait of the founder.

This portrait of the founder as a 12-year-old with her quote: "We must conform ourselves to the will of God" is pretty severe. I hope she didn't write that when she was 12. (Victoria) The nuns are really nice, but they're scared because they just don't go out. Once we found a really nice sofa on the street and (the nuns) said, "No, take it out, it might have AIDS."

You've been served an eviction notice. This made me a little nervous: my Catholic school days were generally bucolic, but did include being punched on the chin by Sister Eusibio in second-grade. The sister at the door seemed extremely pleasant, although she did warn us to stay on the ground floor; what put you on the outs? (Victoria) It's not so much the rules; the main thing is that I have a group (of friends) and we talk and we hang out. They always kick groups out. Some of the nuns are really nice, but there's one who's really strict.

What would ideal Centro Maria "girls" be like? (Victoria) Nice and quiet girls who don't go out. They enjoy the parties that they make here without alcohol and boys. There was a celebration for the new vending machine: a nun broke a bottle of wine on the machine. I couldn't believe it.

What are the other tenants like? (Victoria) The other girls are really nice; a lot of artists. Lots of dancers, too.

How long do people usually stay? (Victoria) Most of the people stay one month, then go. Some stay longer, but they're strange. One woman is in her 80s and I heard she's been here 20 years.

With all of these new movies about St. Joan of Arc there could be a boom of young women wanting to lead a more spiritual life. What advice would you give the nuns to cash in and hold onto their tenants? (Victoria) The order does great things in places like Mexico City. Small-town girls come to the city and get taken advantage of. We speak English and men can't take advantage of us so easily. **M**

What Is the WTO and Why Do People Hate It So Much?

Excerpted from "A Citizen's Guide to the World Trade Organization," published by Public Citizen.

WHAT DO THE U.S. CATTLEMEN'S Association, Chiquita Banana and the Venezuelan oil industry have in common? These big business interests were able to defeat hard-won national laws ensuring food safety, strengthening local economies and protecting the environment by convincing governments to challenge the laws at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Established in 1995, the WTO is a powerful new global commerce agency, which transformed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) into an enforceable global commercial code. The WTO is one of the main mechanisms of corporate globalization. While its proponents say it is based on "free trade," in fact, the WTO's 700-plus pages of rules set out a comprehensive system of corporate-managed trade. Indeed, the WTO has little to do with the 18th Century free trade philosophy developed by David Ricardo or Adam Smith, who assumed neither labor nor capital crossed national borders.

Under the WTO's system of corporate-managed trade, economic efficiency, reflected in short-run corporate profits, dominates other values. Decisions affecting the economy are to be confined to the private sector, while social and environmental costs are borne by the public.

Sometimes called the "neoliberal" model, this system sidelines environmental rules, health safeguards and labor standards to provide transnational corporations (TNCs) with a cheap supply of labor and natural resources. The WTO also guarantees corporate access to foreign markets without requiring that TNCs respect countries' domestic priorities.

The myth that every nation can grow by exporting more than they import is central to the neoliberal ideology. Its proponents seem to forget that in order for one country to export an automobile, some other country has to import it.

Now the world's transnational companies want more — a new "Millennium Round" of further WTO negotiations which would accelerate the economic race to the bottom by expanding the WTO's powers.

But this concept's failure goes beyond this inherent sham: the loose nature of export-led growth was exposed in the aftermath of the East Asian financial crisis of 1998. When the IMF compelled Asian countries to try to export their way out of their crises, the U.S. became the importer of last resort. U.S. steelworkers lost

jobs to a flood of steel imports, while workers in Asia remained mired in a terrible depression.

The neoliberal ideological underpinning of corporate-managed trade is presented as TINA — "There Is No Alternative" — an inevitable outcome rather than the culmination of a long-term effort to write and put into place rules designed to benefit corporations and investors, rather than communities, workers and the environment.

How the WTO Tramples Democracy

The WTO is the international organization charged with enforcing a set of trade rules including the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Trade Related Intellectual Property Measures (TRIPS), General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), among others. WTO was established in 1995 in the "Uruguay Round" of GATT negotiations.

Prior to the Uruguay Round, GATT rules focused primarily on tariffs and quotas. Consensus of GATT members was required to enforce the rules. The Uruguay Round expanded GATT rules to cover what is known in trade jargon as "non-tariff barriers to trade." These

A global system of enforceable rules is being created where corporations have all the rights, governments have all the obligations, and democracy is left behind in the dust.

are food safety laws, product standards, rules on use of tax dollars, investment policy and other domestic laws that impact trade. The WTO's rules limit what non-tariff policies countries can implement or maintain.

Currently there are 134 member countries in the

WTO and 33 nations with observer status. Officially, decisions in the WTO are made by voting or consensus. However, developed countries, especially the so-called QUAD countries (U.S., Canada, Japan and the European Union), repeatedly have made key decisions in closed meetings, excluding other WTO nations.

The WTO's lack of democratic process or accountable decision-making is epitomized by the WTO Dispute Settlement Process. The WTO allows countries to challenge each others' laws and regulations as violations of WTO rules. Cases are decided by a panel of three trade bureaucrats. There are no conflict of interest rules and the panelists often have little appreciation of domestic law or of government responsibility to protect workers, the environment or human rights. Thus, it is not surprising that every single environmental or public health law challenged at WTO has been ruled illegal.

WTO tribunals operate in secret. Documents, hearings and briefs are

continued on page 11

La Ciudad: Tales of a City of Immigrants

by Hank Williams

LA CIUDAD IS A FEATURE LENGTH film made up of a series of vignettes chronicling life in the city (presumably New York) for immigrants. Writer/director David Riker traveled an unusual path in the making of his feature-length film debut. Riker, a photojournalist, felt a need to delve more deeply into his subjects and let them tell their own stories. The result of that decision was his enrollment in New York University's Graduate Film School.

"The Puppeteer" was the genesis of *La Ciudad*. It began life as a 15-minute student film in 1992, and won awards, including the Student Film Award from the Director's Guild of America. Riker shot the film, a story of a homeless puppeteer dreaming of a better life for his daughter, in just six days. The helplessness of the puppeteer, who is unable to register his daughter in school because he has no proof of residence, is a theme that pervades the movie. The warmth of the puppeteer to his daughter is in sharp contrast to the authorities he encounters. The school secretary, who is unable to sign the little girl up for school, and the city parks worker, who comments that "someone who loves his daughter that much would not let her go around with such a dirty face," personify the coldness and indifference of the system.

Riker filmed *La Ciudad* between 1992 and 1997, using non-professional actors whenever possible. Riker explains simply: "I knew that no one could tell their stories better than they could." Riker's sensitivity to the subject and his actors is impressive: "My job as a director was to create a space that was safe for my actors. The non-professionals are primarily undocumented and their experience in New York has been hostile."

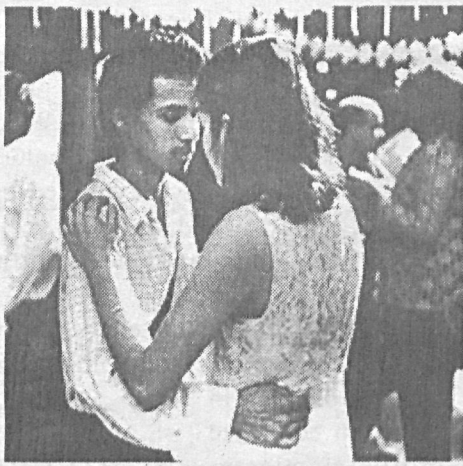
Riker's vision was also that of film as a force for change, by way of telling stories that might not get told. "Bricks," the first vignette shown in the movie, and one of the most powerful, is one of those stories. He says, "In 'Bricks' it was difficult because I was dealing with men that had no continuity on the street corner. They were there for a couple of months and then they disappeared for good."

"Bricks" documents the plight of the day laborer: hundreds of men line street corners in the early morning hoping to get picked up by someone needing workers. The workers swarm around every truck or van that pulls up to the curb, hoping to be chosen. The boss who picks the particular group shown in the movie transports them to a desolate area in New Jersey then changes the rules of the arrangement: instead of the \$50 per day promised, he offers 15 cents for every brick they clean and stack. The workers try to organize, but the effort is thwarted by

the desperation of some, who are unable to resist the temptation. The workers band together in the end after tragedy strikes the work crew, but their efforts are too little and too late.

The loneliness and exclusion felt by immigrants is a constant presence in *La Ciudad*. Riker uses the plot device of reading letters from home to convey the loneliness of loved ones for those who have left home to illustrate the point. The film was shot in black and white, and the images are of a city that is always overcast and dreary.

"Home" was a direct product of Riker's attention to the community and grew from his observation of the



rapidly increasing Mexican population, which made him decide that he needed to make a Mexican story. The story is one of an immigrant who has just arrived in the city and searching in vain for the apartment of his uncle. He stumbles into a sweet-15 birthday party and falls in love with a girl he meets there. Ironically, he loses his way after leaving the girl's apartment and ends up not only lost but heartbroken as well.

The last story in the movie is "Seamstress," about a group of sweatshop workers who are abused and owed back pay by the sweatshop bosses. Riker's "casting call" followed a similar pattern: leafleting on an Eighth Avenue street corner during shift change. The process revealed Silvia Goiz, the lead woman in "Seamstress," who really is a seamstress from Mexico.

David Riker wanted the final story in the film to answer the questions raised in "Bricks," which he decided would be the opening story. "Seamstress" tackles how workers can come



together to fight for a change in their circumstances, and the outcome is different from that of "Bricks."

La Ciudad shows a city that most of us only see a part of, but the stories shown are ultimately the same as ours. The emotions are the same that we all have in trying to find our way in this world: complicated in this case, for people who find themselves in a strange land and often under hostile circumstances. Riker's work also serves as an important lesson to us: you can try to understand people or react from hatred based in fear and ignorance. *La Ciudad* makes a strong case for understanding and knowledge. **M**

La Ciudad, 88 minutes, playing at the Quad Cinema, 34 West 13th Street.

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December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
05	06 Art & Spirituality: Discussion on the meaning of spirituality led by Choreographer/Director Bill T. Jones, Aaron Davis Hall, 7pm. 212-650-6900, \$10. Pop Vocal Workshop, featuring Daryl Kojak, director. Call for location, 4pm, 212/650-5411; Free.	07 Chamber Music Marathon: The City College Chamber Ensemble and The City College Vocal Ensemble. Shepard Hall Room 95, 1:30pm, 212/650-5411; Free. Men's Basketball: CCNY vs. Mount St. Mary; Nat Holman Gym, 7:00pm, 212/650-8228.	08 Women's Basketball: New York City Technical College vs. CCNY (Varsity), at New York City Tech, 6:00pm, 718/260-5102 for location Pre-Kwanzaa Celebration: 6pm to 10pm in the NAC Ballroom. Food will also be served.	09 Annual Christmas Carol Sing-Along with the City College Vocal Ensemble. Shepard Hall Room 250, 12:30pm, 212/650-5411; Free. Readings of compositions by students of Distinguished Professor David Del Tredici featuring Musicians' Accord. Shepard Hall Room 95, 11am, 212/650-5411.	10 New York City Board of Education Recruiters question and answer session, hosted by CCNY School of Education. 3:30 to 5pm, R5/111. Refreshments will be served. 650-6241.	11 Classes end. Mumia Abu-Jamal Protest: Philadelphia., (212) 633-6646; www.mumia.org
12	13 CPTV (Colored People Television) Staged reading. Dixon Place, 309 E 26th St., 212/532-1546 \$10.	14 PHAT TUESDAY The Perfect Performance Party. Dixon Place, 309 E 26th St., 212/532-1546.	15 CPTV (Colored People Television) See Dec 13 Heretics Within Communism: The Lost History of the Socialist and Communist Movements. Brecht Forum, 122 W. 27th St., 10th Fl. 7:30 pm (212) 242-4201.	16 HOMOTEXT: new lesbian and gay literature. Dixon Place, 309 E 26th St., 212/532-1546, \$5.	17	18 Schomburg Center Holiday Open House: music, readings and celebratory activities 1:00-6:00 p.m. 515 Malcolm X Blvd, (212) 491-2200.
19 THE WORDS & THE MOTION: New dance series focusing on movement & the spoken word. Dixon Place, 309 East 26th Street, 212/532-1546 \$10.	20 Schomburg Center Holiday Open House: music, readings and celebratory activities 1:00-6:00 p.m. 515 Malcolm X Blvd, (212) 491-2200.	21 Registration for January Intersession. NAC 1-211, 10am to 12pm and 4pm to 6pm. For more info visit Admin Bldg Rm 206.	22 Registration for January Intersession. NAC 1-211, 11am to 1pm. For more info visit Admin Bldg Rm 206.	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day

Roman continued from page 3

do think that they are important and we do have some strong programs, certainly in the humanities and certain social sciences. The issue of size of the school—there was a time when I think there may have been 22- or 28,000—one of the things that often gets forgotten today is that the demands and needs and expectations of students who are going into higher education are far different than they were back in the 1950's, and 1960's, and even 1970's.

TM: In what way?

SR: A number of things: students are much more uncertain about their futures. They don't look at they're going to get a job and stay there for the rest of their career. The options and the types of things there are available out there are usually far greater than any one school could possibly educate them for. So, there is often a need to build in from the academic point of view—and this is where the liberal arts become exceedingly important—an ability to transfer knowledge from different fields. Secondly, students have much more com-

plex lives and are juggling multiple demands and then the whole issue of counseling, academic counseling, and sometimes even personal counseling in the context of education is much more important now and it's not just at City, but you'll see in even some of the finest private institutions. Thirty, forty, fifty years ago, the level of need in that area didn't surface or the expectations that it should be there weren't there among students. Then you get to the issues of facilities and equipment: the computer, technology, both from an instructional point of view as well as a tool to facilitate learning. All of these things are expensive, and to talk about providing all of that appropriately for 28,000 students. I question the sanity of that.

TM: As I understand, you've done some research concerning the disparity of health care services—would you continue along the same line and make the same argument that given the amount of money that goes into the community hospital health care, we should, therefore, reduce the amount of health care or benefits provided to certain groups of people?

SR: No, the assumption there also, and I think one of the issues that's also

related to some of the decrease in volume, is that when City was at its largest, some of the other senior colleges and other options for education didn't even exist and there's much more of a competitive environment in general for any school. There have been some programs that have been closed at City in recent years that also contributed significantly to student vol-

ume, so, its not an issue of shrinking. I'm not proposing that, but I'm saying that one has to also be very thoughtful to make sure that you really give a good education whatever the size.

TM: Is there any way students can contact you: by e-mail, perhaps?

SR: They can contact me through the office if they have to. I don't usually open e-mail. **M**

WTO continued from page 9

confidential. Only national governments are allowed to participate, even if a state law is being challenged. There are no outside appeals.

Once a final WTO ruling is issued, losing countries have a set time to implement one of only three choices: change their law to conform to the WTO requirements, pay permanent compensation to the winning country, or face non-negotiated trade sanctions. The U.S. official position is that ultimately, laws must be changed to be consistent with WTO policy.

When the WTO was created, concerned citizens and public interest organizations warned that the combination of the WTO's pro-industry rules and powerful enforcement would pose a threat to laws designed to protect consumers, workers, and the environment. Almost five years later, there is a clear record: the cases settled under WTO rules show the WTO's bias against the public interest. **M**

See the back page for a photo essay on the Battle of Seattle against the WTO.

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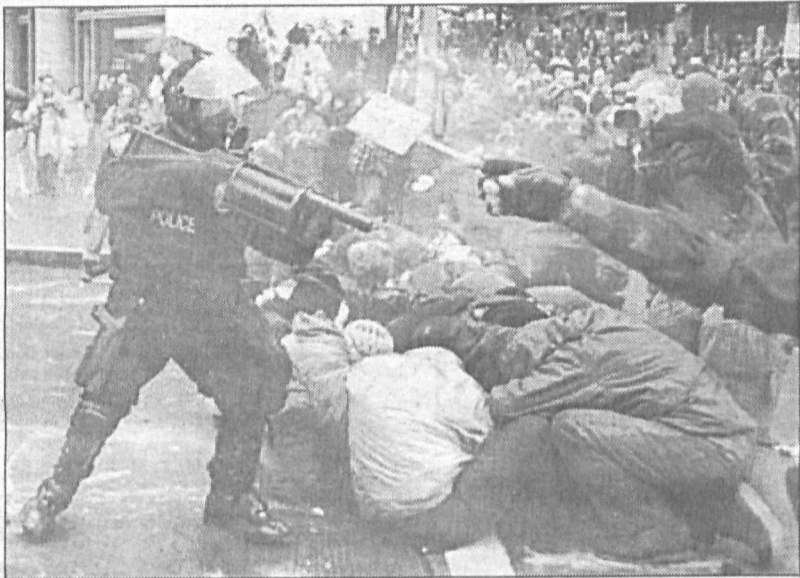
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Brunch 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm • info: 212-862-8142

Tens of Thousands Demonstrate in Seattle against the World Trade Organization

Talks Fall Apart, Activists Declare Victory for Now

See page 9 for the full story on the WTO

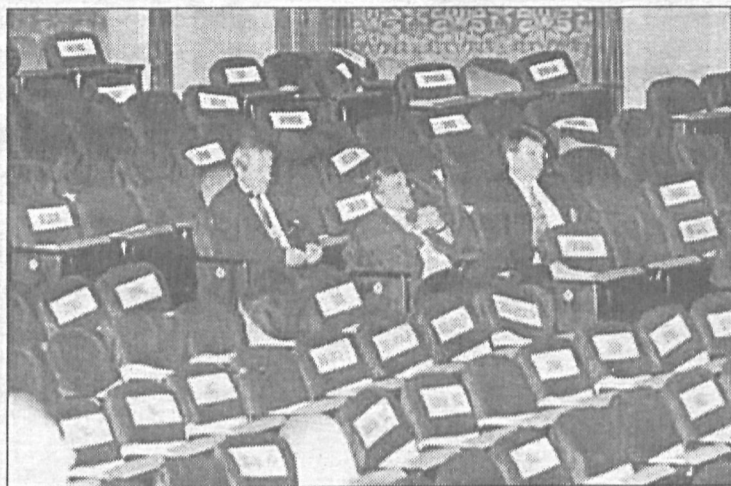
Tuesday



A Seattle police officer fires a rubber-bullet gun point blank at a group of nonviolent anti-WTO protesters who were attempting to block access to the Washington State Convention and Trade Center. (Paul Joseph Brown/Seattle Post-Intelligencer)



Protesters prevent a delegate's access to the organization's inaugural session. (Mike Urban/Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

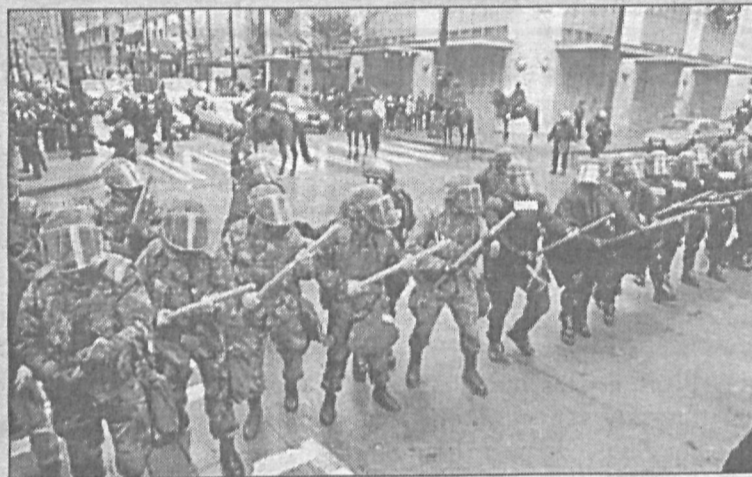


A sparse audience of delegates listens while WTO director-general Mike Moore announces the cancellation of the inaugural session. Demonstrators and police cut off most access to the site of the opening ceremonies. (Grant M. Haller/Seattle Post-Intelligencer)



A demonstrator atop a dumpster on fire. (Paul Joseph Brown/Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

Wednesday



National Guard troops and Seattle police join together to keep order on the streets of downtown Seattle. On Tuesday night marshal law was declared, freedom of speech and assembly were suspended downtown, and over 500 people were arrested in a massive crackdown. (AP)

Thursday



Demonstrators flood Victor Steinbreuck Park at midday after a march from Capitol Hill. Amidst international scrutiny, the police eased up somewhat on Thursday, but much of downtown remained under the "state of emergency." (Mike Urban/Seattle Post-Intelligencer)



Protesters run for cover from tear gas. (Dan DeLong/Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

Friday



Charlene Barshefsky, the U.S. trade representative, joins WTO Director-General Michael Moore, left, late Friday night to announce the suspension of the Seattle round of talks. (Grant M. Haller/Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

Bound by a wheelchair protester Jane Jackson of Oakland, Calif., takes her place among the protesters choosing to be arrested during asit-in at the door of the King County Jail. Thousands gathered in front of the jail demanding the release of the hundreds of arrestees. (Mike Urban/Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

