

THE MESSENGER

SCARY NEWSPAPER VOL. 3 NO. 1 OCTOBER 2000 UNIVERSITY OF HARLEM
 2000 WINNER, BEST CAMPUS ALTERNATIVE PUBLICATION, CAJP AWARDS

A pistol in the park

NYPD officer pulls gun on CCNY grad student in St. Nicholas Park

By Rob Wallace

IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS of July 8, the life of a Biology graduate student was threatened by a New York police officer in nearby St. Nicholas Park. The incident began what was to become a twenty three-hour nightmare for the student who was jailed and later sentenced to a day of community service on what appears to be false testimony by the officer.

Richard Sorrentino, 33, is a doctoral student in biology at City College. He is a graduate of New York University. He spent six years in the US Army Reserve, serving during the Persian Gulf War. He subsequently returned to New York and, after a few years, earned a Master's degree in biology here at CCNY. Thereafter he became a doctoral student at the CUNY Graduate School, and is still based at City College.

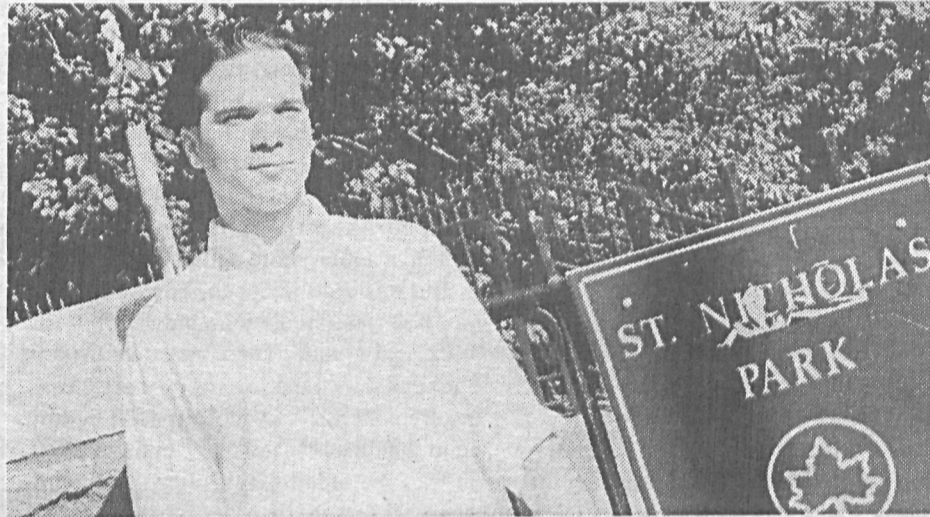
Sorrentino told *The Messenger* he regularly puts in 10 to 12-hour days in his lab at CCNY, working on his dissertation on the genetics of tumor growth in fruit flies. He usually leaves the campus for home anytime between 11 pm and 1 am out the back exit of the Science Building. He crosses St. Nicholas Park down the steep main pathway of the park to the 135th Street subway station on St. Nicholas Avenue where he catches the C train home.

Confrontation

On July 8, Sorrentino left the campus later than usual, at 3:30 am. At the first landing of the main stairs of the park, a NYPD patrol car passed him on the park's roadway. The officers in the car did not stop him, although, he was later to find out, the park was now considered "closed." As Sorrentino made his way down the stairs he saw two officers get out of their patrol car and start walking around the park. "They said nothing to me," Sorrentino told *The Messenger*.

Sorrentino, forgetting the officers, continued along the well-lit pathway of the park toward the subway. At the last landing before St. Nicholas Avenue Sorrentino told *The Messenger* he heard a voice call out from the dark to his right. Sorrentino characterized the voice as "rude and high-and-mighty."

The voice informed him the park closes at 10 pm. When Sorrentino looked toward the direction of the voice, he saw only a dimly lit face above a flashlight. Sorrentino told *The Messenger* he responded "That's the first I



Richard Sorrentino at the west entrance to St. Nicholas Park. Contrary to Officer Hook's sworn deposition, no sign declaring the park closed at 10pm is visible.

heard of it!" and continued walking.

According to Sorrentino he later found a sign with the park's closing time on the St. Nicholas Avenue side of the park. The official complaint against Sorrentino declared that the park "has signs posted at every entrance that the park closes at 10pm." But *The Messenger* found no such sign at the CCNY entrance Sorrentino used.

The voice again ordered Sorrentino to stop. "I responded something to the effect that whoever he was he was being rude and I bewailed the lack of manners today. And I continued walking," Sorrentino recounted.

The voice again ordered him to stop. At this point Sorrentino stopped and a uniformed police officer about 20-25 years old emerged from the dark onto the lighted pathway. According to Sorrentino, at no time during this initial exchange did the officer verbally identify himself.

Escalation

In what has become an urban ritual directed against young men, Officer Donald Hook of the 26th Precinct demanded Sorrentino his name, ID, where he was going and what he was doing in the park. Hook ordered Sorrentino to show his hands, which he did palms

up. The verbal exchange continued.

Then, the confrontation escalated. Hook took out his gun, pointed it Sorrentino's head, and demanded he get down on the ground. "The pistol was about a foot away from my face," said Sorrentino.

Sorrentino made no response, verbal or physical. "I simply stood there," said Sorrentino.

Hook ordered him on the ground two more times, and Sorrentino again did nothing. "I refused because I do not like taking orders at the end of a gun," Sorrentino said.

Hook's partner, an Officer Guidice, appeared and Hook reholstered his gun. Sorrentino was handcuffed and arrested for trespassing. According to Sorrentino, in the car Hook declared he took his gun out because he was "afraid for his life."

Sorrentino was brought to the 26th Precinct on 126th Street and, after making a call to his father, was placed into a holding cell. When Sorrentino's father arrived at the precinct he was not allowed to see Sorrentino. Sorrentino was moved to the 28th Precinct and later downtown to another jail, the infamous "Tombs" near Manhattan Criminal Court.

It wasn't until 2 am the next day, July 9, that Sorrentino's case was brought before a judge. Sorrentino's Legal Aid

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CUNY's Master Plan fails minimum standards

By Hank Williams

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATTHEW GOLDSTEIN visited City College on September 19 to explain CUNY's Master Plan. The New York State Board of Regents has approved the plan, clearing the way for full implementation of the 100-plus page proposal by the CUNY Board of Trustees.

The Master Plan, required by state law, is a four-year blueprint for the direction of the CUNY system and highlights a variety of areas. The focus is on the creation of what CUNY executives call a "flagship environment." This would involve the creation of a university-wide honors college, hiring faculty in specific areas, and increasing

reliance on standardized testing to evaluate student progress. Testing would be mostly contracted to outside corporations.

The plan also calls for improved teacher education programs, increased ties with high schools, improved technology in classrooms, and closer ties to the business community. This last point is what many critics of the plan say is the real motivation behind the plan's adoption.

CUNY, Incorporated?

Indeed, the plan calls for "a strong Chancellor," and claims that the reorganization of CUNY executive officers "is derived from a corporate model where the Chancellor is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Vice

Chancellors are corporate officers."

So when did we become CUNY, Inc.? Lorraine Cohen of LaGuardia Community College pointed out in her testimony before the Regents that the Master Plan "reflects the priorities of a corporate educational agenda. It prioritizes program development in fields that will expand links to new areas of corporate investment; it centralizes power in the hands of the CEO, the Chancellor [who is] answerable to a highly politicized Board of Trustees."

As more evidence of the new corporate model, the plan calls for a "performance-driven executive compensation plan." That part of the Master Plan will probably succeed: last year the

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CUNY's Trickle-down Economics

WE THOUGHT THE THEORY of trickle-down economics that purported to jump-start the economy had been discredited with Ronald Reagan's departure from the White House a decade ago, but it's back.

The theory, derided by many and discredited, actually worked spectacularly well. The trouble is, it didn't work the way they said it would. It was supposed to jump-start the economy by cutting taxes and increasing profits for the wealthy. That would entice big business to hire more employees and invest in more machinery for production, resulting in an economic boom.

Big business and the ruling class got their tax breaks while public programs were gutted. Meanwhile, CEO salaries, stock dividends, and corporate profits went through the roof. Military suppliers earned exponentially more.

The catch was, instead of reinvesting, hiring more employees, and raising the standard of living for the workers that created all the profit in the first place, CEOs and stockholders pocketed the money. So the rich got richer and the poor either stayed poor or got poorer. This includes all the middle class folks that got squeezed by spiraling health care costs and pinched by corporate cutbacks (remember the AT&T and IBM layoffs?), all in the name of "global competitiveness," the latest catch phrase.

The current dot-com frenzy, stock boom, and record government surpluses are the same scam. The Internet, for example, was a Defense Department project, financed by billions of taxpayer dollars. The cost was socialized, but as soon as it showed some profit potential, it was

handed over to private industry. Now AOL is big enough to swallow a media conglomerate like Time-Warner.

The current prison-building and law enforcement boom was financed by pay freezes for government employees, and deep cuts to budgets for education, health services, and entitlement programs. That's why there are too few classes, the libraries are a wreck, and faculty have been cut.

Of course, we're now doing so well that the CUNY execs saw fit to give themselves and college presidents pay raises. Again, the rationale is that we need top-notch executives to make strategic decisions, think up ways to boost enrollment, and make students learn.

We propose a different solution. Spend money on what the colleges need. Hire more full-time faculty (and start with the underpaid and overworked adjuncts), give us better libraries, pay faculty and support staff better wages, and add more class sections. Cut tuition, too. Maybe even clean the bathrooms. That will do more to make students want to come here and excel than slick promotional campaigns or long range plans with high-sounding ideals.

CUNY could build itself from the bottom up, rather than the top down. Give students and staff what they all need to get the job done. Of course, that would be real democracy, and might actually change things, which is not usually what the ruling class wants. So, instead of a student-centered university, we get stuck with CUNY's warped version of trickle-down economics. Just like Wall Street, the executives make a killing, while those on the bottom get the shaft.

Shocking! The Messenger Compliments the Administration!

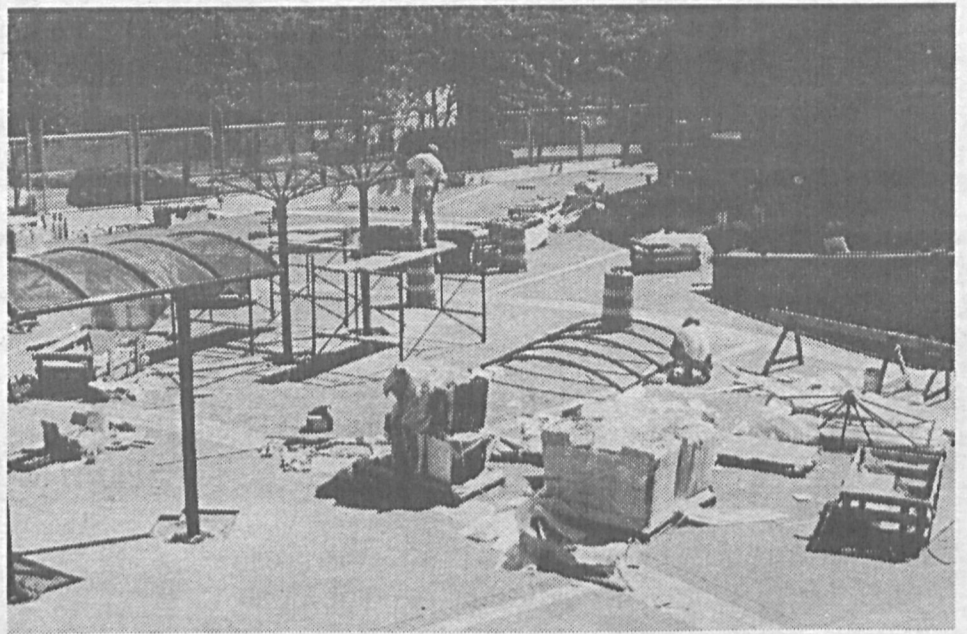
SOMETHING STRANGE HAPPENED to many CCNY students during fall registration. Registration was quick and easy. The new telephone system brought CCNY closer to the modern age and made up for last spring's registration fiasco where chaos and frustration were the rule.

For so long students actually interested in attending CCNY enough to come up to the campus and try to register ran away screaming because of the Kafkaesque bureaucracy. Obvious things, so lacking in the Moses era, were finally implemented this fall. For example, placards identifying each campus building were placed around campus to help incoming students get their bearings. There are still some bugs that need to be worked out, but it's a

change for the better. We need more of those types of changes around here, but this is a step in the right direction.

The Messenger would also like to give props to the USG and Finley Student Center for hosting a very successful club fair September 28. It featured great music and was well attended (see photos page 4). Students and clubs actually got a chance to talk to each other and network. Students were even inspired to hold a procession through the fair calling for more support for the Black Studies Program. It's great to see the administration supporting life on campus rather than trying to suppress it.

The lesson here: when the administration heeds its students' needs and wishes, the whole campus benefits.



Concrete City

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW NAC PLAZA is finally nearing completion. For a few days last spring, when the machinery revealed soil beneath the old layer of concrete, some entertained the possibility that there would be grass and vegetation. City College, they thought, would finally acquire a softer, more natural ambiance.

But this didn't happen. The old surface has been replaced with new concrete, brick, and granite. There are some trees in buckets, but hard, artificial surfaces—mostly concrete and asphalt—will continue to dominate the college campus.

Was the broad City College community involved in this decision? I don't believe so. A small group of architecture students may have contributed to the design, but the decision to keep the area

artificial seems to have been made by the physical plant and the New York State government.

The issue goes beyond aesthetics. There is a growing awareness of the need for a new respect for nature. Throughout the city, local residents are desperately trying to save community gardens from real estate development. Human societies have paved over enough of the earth. It is important for colleges, as enlightened centers of learning, to take a leadership role on environmental issues, and the best place to start is with their own environments.

Any new construction should replace substantial portions of concrete with natural earth and vegetation.

—Bill Crain

letters

Alternative Alternative?

I think the paper should have a dissident voice. One that doesn't exactly agree with everything that is said in the paper every edition. A devil's advocate, if you will.

For instance, in your May 2000 issue I felt the article by Hank Williams on the last page regarding the City student who was arrested for fare evasion was silly. He was caught and he got what he deserved. He wasn't beaten. He was treated like any other criminal, which is what he was.

And as far as the lead story about CTN's invasion of City airwaves, you kept saying "commercial-laced broadcasting" like it was a bad thing.

Like it was something that we're not used to.

That's basically what I'm saying. You guys should feature someone with an opinion outside of the general belief of the paper. One that makes the periodical less homogenous and whiny and more diverse and open to students with more conservative views.

Just a suggestion. Keep up the good work.

—Lamont Smith
Sophomore, Film and Video

Update: Vicious turnstile-jumper Simen Saetre has paid his debt to society and done his day of community service—he cleaned a subway station. He has also spent more time in jail than the killers of

Amadou Diallo, Patrick Dorismond, Malcolm Ferguson, and Gidone Busch combined. Justice served?

As far as the political slant of the paper goes, we're up front about our politics, which is more than one can say about the New York Times, for example. There are also two other newspapers on campus, both of which tend to be more mainstream than we are. You're looking for an alternative voice in The Messenger, but we produce the newspaper as an alternative voice in and of itself. We certainly don't expect everyone to agree with all of our views, but if you want to read or write different viewpoints than appear here, we would suggest checking out the other newspapers on campus. CCNY's publications all need support.

—Editors

THE MESSENGER

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

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

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MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

Write in to the Messenger's Letters section:
ccnymessenger@yahoo.com

Sign your letter, tell us your major, and give contact info.

Master Plan continued from page 1

Trustees approved a new, tiered pay scale for college presidents and a raise for Goldstein to \$250,000 per year.

An August *Crain's New York Business* article offers a more accurate assessment of the plan. Goldstein told *Crain's*: "We are breaking the boundaries between what separates people on a campus from the business community."

The Plan, however, makes no budgetary provision for collective bargaining: a curious omission considering that the contract with the Professional Staff Congress (PSC: professors and staff union) is up for renewal this year. Talks between union representatives and CUNY began this summer.

The answer may lie in the document itself, as it cites a need to "achieve productivity and program savings." PSC president Barbara Bowen's testimony before the Regents offers a translation: "This bland language conceals the intention to raise [faculty] workloads that are already double those of comparable institutions and to cut academic programs and jobs from our already bare-bones curriculum." That means larger class sizes and fewer courses.

Anne Friedman, PSC Community College VP, asked a good question in her testimony before the Regents: "why does this document glorify the need to 'achieve productivity and program savings' and 'to identify external funding sources' rather than asserting the responsibility of the public to fund public higher education and the obligation of CUNY's trustees to ensure that we have adequate funds in a state and city economy that is flush with dollars?"

Smoke and Mirrors

The Master Plan evades the issue of CUNY's economic starvation over the last 20 years by the state and city. PSC VP Steve London testified before the Regents that state and city cuts to CUNY's budget totaled nearly \$375 million over the last decade.

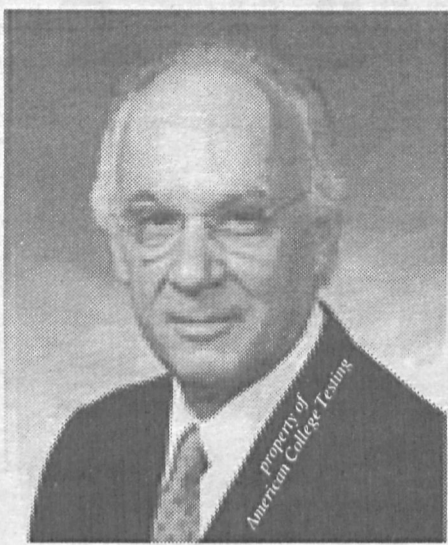
The Master Plan only calls for an additional \$141.7 million over the next four years. London points out that "to rehire the roughly 1,500 lost faculty and restore CUNY's ability to serve the population of New York City will require an investment of \$112 million."

That doesn't leave much left over for the extra support staff necessary and the cost for the other initiatives in the Master Plan. A position paper from the advocacy group Friends of CUNY concludes that "The modest price tag attached to the Master Plan is largely illusory."

The lack of detail in the plan troubles many critics. "Creating a Flagship Environment' raises many more questions than it answers," says CCNY engineering Professor and PSC chapter chair Gary Benenson. "To begin with, what exactly is a 'flagship environment'? How is it different from a 'nationally recognized research program'? If there is no difference, we already have many 'flagship environments' in CUNY."

One example of lack of detail is the plan for "cluster hiring" of faculty in "programmatic areas of importance." While the areas of importance are not specified, one might assume that this will be in the sciences, as the plan calls for concentration on the areas of photonics, teacher education, new media and computer science, and foreign languages over the next four years.

Actually, the only plans sketched out in any detail are for the photonics and structural biology flagship programs, despite the



Matthew Goldstein, CUNY® CEO.

assertion that "The largest proportion of new programs under development within the university is in the liberal arts and sciences."

Friends of CUNY's reply asserts that "The university's need for new faculty is great in all areas but it is greatest in core liberal arts and sciences disciplines such as English, social sciences, and mathematics, where the vast majority of undergraduate courses are taught by adjuncts. A faculty hiring initiative targeted at flagship programs such as photonics and structural biology would do little to diminish reliance on adjunct faculty in the university as a whole."

What the Photonics Center would do is provide valuable research and development for private corporations, such as Lucent Technologies, NEC, Corning, and Lockheed Martin; who have already been invited by CUNY to develop plans for the center.

The Bright Side

To be fair, the Master Plan includes many worthy goals, including recognition of the need to upgrade facilities and replace full-time faculty lost by budget cuts. The plan to more closely integrate CUNY with high schools is a good one and long overdue.

Also proposed is seamless transfer between community and senior colleges, more aggressive recruiting of students, renovation of campus facilities, and enhancement of student life.

Funding for renovation would probably depend heavily on the State Dormitory Authority, which provides funds for most

major college construction projects.

The student life provision is what CUNY has in mind when plans to make the university more "student-centered" are discussed. Specifically stated in the plan are increased library hours, better registration, and cleaner campus facilities.

Some of these improvements have already occurred: telephone registration was introduced at City this summer (although years behind Baruch and Hunter) and worked well for many. Library hours at Cohen were expanded last year from a woefully inadequate previous schedule.

This is Only a Test...

A key part of the plan is reliance on standardized testing, both as an entrance requirement and to track student progress within the university. Aside from the Skills Assessment Tests (soon to become entrance exams), there will be exit exams for community college students and a new test for senior college students that will have to be passed at the 60-credit mark (regardless of grade point average), and new tests for English as a Second Language students.

American College Testing has been chosen to provide exams to CUNY. The concern many have with standardized tests is the traditional bias they have against minority and poor students. The Master Plan embraces the protocol recommended by the Schmidt Commission Report. This should not be surprising, as commission head (and CUNY Board vice-chair) Benno Schmidt is on the board of directors of the Edison Project, a for-profit corporation specializing in operating public schools. Although Edison currently only operates elementary schools, the conflict of interest is staggering. Not surprisingly, last spring the CUNY Board decided to allow outside contractors to bid for the opportunity to supply remedial education to CUNY students.

What We Say Goes

Despite claims that the Master Plan is a work in progress and the claims that the CUNY board is seeking input, it reflects an authoritarian management philosophy. At the September 19 presentation, Chancellor Goldstein sidestepped questions from both *The Messenger* and faculty about the lack of real input or democracy

in implementation of the plan.

In fact, in a memo (posted on CUNY's website) sent by Goldstein to board Chairman Herman Badillo, he states that "It is clearly the prerogative of the Board to establish policies relating to the University's educational offerings." Stated simply, what the Board says goes.

CCNY Black Studies student Kenneth Williams questioned Goldstein about the future of the Black Studies program and liberal arts, but was less than pleased with the answers. "I thought [Goldstein] was very much dodging the questions being asked," Williams told *The Messenger*.

Williams is organizing resistance to the Master Plan. He feels that CCNY has been hit harder by budget cuts partly because of its activist history, pointing to the 1969 student takeover of South Campus that won open admissions and opened the doors of CUNY to a generation of students of color. "CCNY students have always been at the forefront of social change," he added.

In the City College town hall meeting, Chancellor Goldstein also stated that it was the job of liberal arts faculty to "sell" their programs to lower level students in their classes. If they can boost enrollment in their majors, they might qualify to receive more financial support. CCNY English Professor (and *Messenger* advisor) Larry Hanley was unimpressed: "The idea that professors are to intentionally 'sell' their subjects/disciplines to students was pretty silly. . . and crystallizes the 'market'-speak that dominates policy these days."

The circular logic here is ridiculous. The real problem is that too many programs receive too little support already. The lack of a real commitment to giving students the resources needed to learn and that faculty needs to teach them is a glaring omission. The big failure of the Master Plan and society in general now is the failure to realize that education is a right, not a privilege. Educating people is not a profit-making proposition, but it is necessary in a democracy.

The solutions to CUNY's problems defy quick-fix (and get-rich-quick) schemes and rhetoric, which is what the Master Plan appears to be. The Master Plan itself, Professor Benenson points out, does not meet minimum standards. **M**

BadilloWatch

Standards, But Not For Me

CUNY BOARD OF TRUSTEES CHAIR Herman Badillo is running for mayor of New York. You forgot that didn't you? Looks like Badillo did too. In late September *Newsday* reported that Badillo, running as a Republican, lost out on more than \$80,000 in public campaign funds because he forgot to do the necessary paperwork.

The Campaign Finance Board monitors the finances of electoral campaigns run in New York City. The Finance Board also awards public financing to candidates who register with it. For every \$1 raised the Board gives candidates \$4, as long as individual contributions to the candidates do not exceed a \$1000 limit.

Because Badillo did not get the proper documentation to the Finance Board in time, Badillo lost over \$80,000 in Board matching funds. The required documentation included copies of contributor checks and money orders. "The filing was four days late, and I find [the Board's action] a Draconian penalty," Badillo said. "There are always the courts. This is a matter for negotiation."

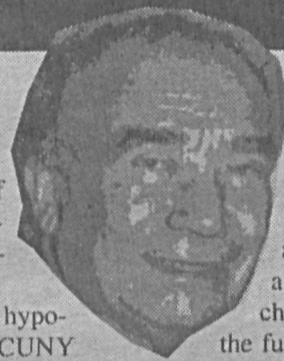
But Frank Berry, the Finance Board's

spokesman, told *Newsday* that Badillo's campaign had plenty of time to file the needed documentation and that the Board's decision was final.

BadilloWatch thinks it a mite hypocritical of Badillo to denounce CUNY and its students for supposed lax standards while he cannot satisfy what's asked of him. How embarrassing that Badillo somehow concludes he's the only one who deserves second chances.

A *Newsday* review of Badillo's campaign financing showed him dependent on contributions from his own law firm, Fischbein, Badillo, Wagner, Harding. The law firm contributed two checks of \$2,064 and \$42,012 in January. But corporate contributions can not be matched with Finance Board funds.

In his recent biography of Rudy Giuliani, Wayne Barrett writes that Badillo's law firm became a political powerhouse with Giuliani's election. Companies who wanted business from the City during the Giuliani years hired Badillo's law firm to lobby the City because of the firm's



political connections.

Badillo ran as a Democrat on a "fusion" ticket with Republican Giuliani in 1993 and acted as his education advisor thereafter. Fischbein helped put together the fusion ticket. Ray Harding is the boss of the Liberal Party, which endorsed Giuliani in the 1993 and 1997 mayoral elections.

Harding, at that time broke, joined the firm after the 1993 election and was soon charging clients \$375 an hour.

According to Barrett, a couple months into Giuliani's first year as mayor, Fischbein & Badillo's list of clients jumped from three to seventy-two, twenty more than any other law firm. When the sleazy nature of the Fischbein & Badillo lobbying was revealed in 1997, the law firm redefined what it meant by "lobbying" and adjusted its disclosure filings with the city in a way that hid clients that had business with the city.

The only standard Badillo and friends care about is how much they can get away with.

—ROB WALLACE

Open Admissions: Why All the Controversy?

By William Crain

WHEN PEOPLE TALK ABOUT CUNY, it's not long before someone uses the term "open admissions." I would like to explain what the term means and why we are currently facing an open admissions crisis of historic proportions.

A Brief History

Open admissions began in 1969, the result of student protests at City College. Until then, the college's (and all of CUNY's) student population was overwhelmingly white. Students of color wanted to give their people a chance for a college education. Coming at a time of national civil rights progress, the protests succeeded.

The open admissions policy guaranteed every high school graduate at least a place in a community college. But the policy was also oriented toward the senior colleges. People of color didn't want to be stopped short of the bachelor's degree. So the open admissions policy guaranteed every high school graduate who had an 80 average, or who was in the top half of his or her class, admission to a senior college. The policy also tried to provide for a smooth transition from the community colleges to the senior colleges.

From the beginning, open admissions came under political attack. President Nixon's Vice-President, Spiro Agnew, said open admissions would mean "200,000 worthless degrees." New York politicians weakened open admissions opportunities by imposing tuition for the first time in 1976. Since then, tuition has continued to rise. In addition, some senior colleges began raising their admissions requirements.

Open admissions presented new educational challenges. Many students, coming

from under-funded, overcrowded public schools, required more remediation than the students had needed in the past. But faculty developed impressive remedial courses, and CUNY soon gained national prominence as the leader in remedial education. A 1998 Board of Trustees report, "The Remediation/ESL Backgrounder," observed that students who complete remediation graduate at about the same rates as those who didn't need it.

Other data indicate that CUNY colleges have thrived since open admissions began. For example, the graduates of Hunter, City, and Brooklyn Colleges go on to earn Ph.D. degrees in higher percentages than do the graduates of almost all other colleges in the New York City area. Other colleges have made their own marks. Baruch has achieved national prominence in business education, John Jay in criminal justice, and so on. The data overwhelmingly indicate that since CUNY opened its doors to students of color, the overall impact has been quite positive. The students have worked hard and have succeeded.

Closing the Door

Nevertheless, in 1998, the enemies of open admissions delivered their severest blow. Led by Mayor Giuliani and Governor Pataki, the CUNY trustees voted to ban remedial coursework in the bachelor's degree programs. Any student whose placement test scores suggest any need for remediation would have to find a spot in a community college. There were two exceptions—for SEEK students and for students who received part of their high school education abroad. But these exceptions only total about 20% of new freshmen.

People often ask, "What's wrong with beginning at a community college?" The answer is that students who begin at community colleges have a lower chance of



Two students from the open admissions strike in 1969 escort City College's President Gallagher to a meeting with the striking students.

ever attaining the bachelor's degree. This is true both at CUNY and around the nation, even when we consider students with identical high school records and personal goals.

Civil Rights Catastrophe

The board's new admissions policy is an enormous civil rights setback. If the new policy had been in place in the fall of 1998, only 18% of white students would have been excluded from the bachelor's degree programs because of it—compared to 38% of Latino students, 34% of African-American students, and 27% of Asian students.

The new policy is also discriminatory in the larger context. All the SUNY senior colleges, which primarily serve white, middle class students, offer remediation. Nationwide, 81% of all public senior colleges offer remediation, and these colleges also primarily serve white, middle class

students. To take remediation away from CUNY's students, who are predominantly working class, poor, and people of color, is a moral outrage.

Nevertheless, in November 1999, the State Board of Regents approved CUNY's remediation ban. Because of this, some people believe open admissions is dead. It is not. The Regents also decided to review the new policy at the end of 2002, looking to see if it has been discriminatory.

In the meantime, CUNY has begun excluding students. What's more, it knows it is excluding them on the basis of invalid placement tests. The tests are poor indicators of college success. CUNY's leaders have hired the ACT testing firm to develop better tests, but shouldn't CUNY wait and see what the ACT can do? Instead, CUNY has decided that community college students, too, will have to pass the new ACT tests before they can exit from remediation and begin college-level work. Will the new ACT tests simply be artificial barriers preventing thousands of students from developing their minds and pursuing their dreams?

Reversing the New Policy

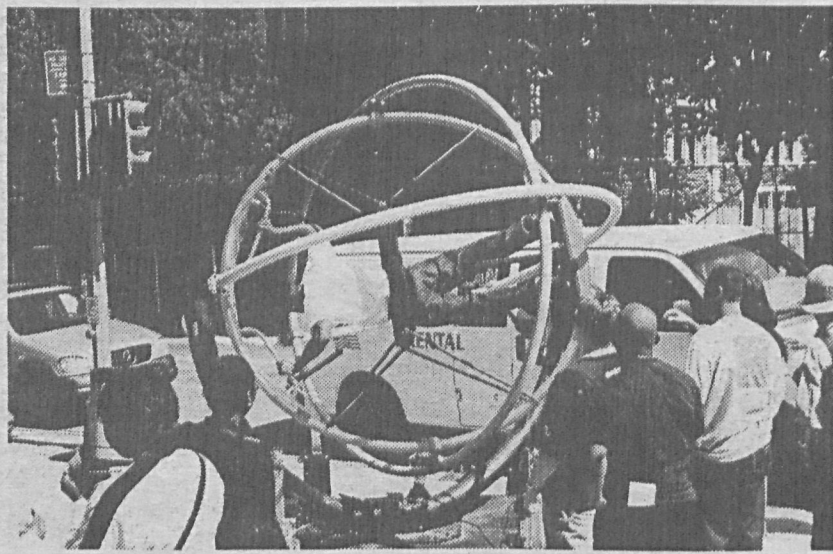
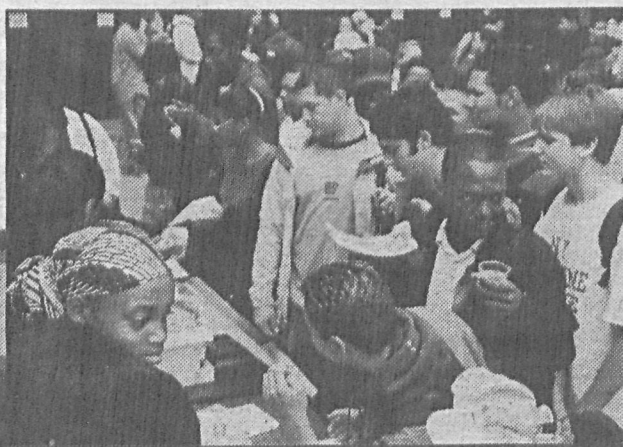
Last year, several of us filed a complaint with the U.S. Office for Civil Rights, charging that the new senior college policy was likely to discriminate against students of color and do so on the basis of invalid tests. In May 2000, the Office for Civil Rights agreed to extensively monitor the new policy's racial impact.

But even if, as I predict, the data reveal a discriminatory effect, we must be committed to doing something about it. We must let people know what is happening at CUNY and get the new admissions policies reversed.

William Crain is a professor of psychology at City College.

Scenes from the Club Fair

On Thursday, September 28 the CCNY Undergraduate Student Government and the Finley Student Center sponsored a fair to promote the activities of student clubs on campus. Weather was great and attendance was high.



CUNY Students' Attorneys Charged With Misconduct by Federal Judge

By Messenger Staff

Civil rights attorneys Ronald McGuire and Nicholas Penkovsky have been ordered to answer charges of professional misconduct made by federal Magistrate Judge Cheryl Pollak. McGuire and Penkovsky could be fined and the case against McGuire referred to a state disciplinary panel for additional sanctions including reprimand, censure, suspension or disbarment.

Since 1991 Ron McGuire has represented hundreds of CUNY students without charge in criminal cases and disciplinary proceedings arising from student protest activity. Mr. McGuire, who is presently the legal director of the CUNY Emergency Legal Defense Project, has also represented CUNY students as plaintiffs in many lawsuits in state and federal court. Mr. Penkovsky has acted as Mr. McGuire's co-counsel in many of these cases.

The public hearing before Magistrate Pollak will be at 9:30am on Monday, November 13 at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn at 225 Cadman Plaza East. An emergency meeting for supporters of Ron McGuire and Nicholas Penkovsky will be held on Tuesday, October 17 at 6:30pm at the offices of the Community Service Society at 105 East 22nd Street in Conference Room 4A.

Judge Pollak accused McGuire of lying to her in an unrecorded statements McGuire allegedly made in 1998 when McGuire and two College of Staten Island students sued for a preliminary injunction after CUNY officials refused to authorize contracts for McGuire to be paid fees to deliver lectures at CSI and Hunter College. Judge Pollak claims that McGuire reneged on a promise that he would deliver the lecture at CSI even if the court did not issue an injunction. She has accused Penkovsky of collaborating with McGuire in "a deliberate and willful strategy to mislead this Court and the defendants." McGuire and Penkovsky and their clients submitted sworn statements denying that McGuire ever made such a promise and maintain that the record of the court proceedings unequivocally supports their contention.

Supporters of McGuire and Penkovsky are disturbed that the hearing is being held before Judge Pollak after she already concluded that McGuire and Penkovsky were guilty of misconduct. Especially important in this case, where the charges are based on alleged, unrecorded statements that Judge Pollak claims Mr. McGuire made to her and where McGuire and Mr. Penkovsky deny having made such statements, is that Judge Pollak is actually the only witness against them, as well the presiding judge in the case. **M**

Philly Cracks Down on Republican Convention Demonstrators

City Judicial System Now Clogged with Cases

By John Olafson

BACK ON AUGUST 1, thousands, including many CUNY student activists, gathered in Philadelphia in the middle of the Republican Convention to take a stand against the Criminal Injustice System. In a coordinated nonviolent disruption of business as usual, groups people sat down in intersections, blockaded streets, locked themselves together, and did whatever else they could to clog up downtown area and make a strong statement about the Prison-Industrial Complex.

Protestors demanded freedom for Mumia and all political prisoners, abolition of the Prison-Industrial Complex and the death penalty, an end to police violence, power to our communities, and an end to the corporate war on the poor. The action was organized by a coalition which included CUNY's Student Liberation Action Movement, the Civil Disobedience Committee of the Free Mumia Coalition, and the NY Direct Action Network.

In a stark example of exactly what the demonstration was opposing, the Philadelphia police, with the support of the mayor, the DA, and the FBI, orchestrated a massive crackdown on nonviolent activists. Hundreds were arrested before, during,

and after the action. The following day, police hunted down and arrested perceived leaders and community activists. People were brutally attacked by police and guards in the jails, and many have been charged with 6-10 charges, including felonies like aggravated assault on police officers. Well over 300 in all were arrested, with more than 30 facing serious felony charges. People had bail set at anywhere from a few thousand dollars to almost half a million.

Arrestees now face a massive, expensive, and lengthy court battle. Fortunately, they are organized. While in jail many engaged in "jail solidarity," negotiating collectively with the authorities to get bail reduced and jail conditions improved and to prevent anyone from being singled out and targeted for extra abuse.

Likewise most arrestees are now engaging in court solidarity. They are attempting to negotiate as a group with Lynne Abraham, the Philly DA, to come to a collective deal that would include everyone. Specifically, arrestees are proposing that they as a group give 10,000 hours of community service to improve the situation of Philadelphians in a poor neighborhood of the city, in return for the city dropping all charges against the defendants. The locations and projects involved would be decided by local grassroots community organizations.

As one defendant read in a statement to the court, "The vast majority of RNC defendants are refusing ARD, and demand our rights to a full trial because good faith negotiations have not

continued on page 9



WINNER

2000 CAMPUS ALTERNATIVE JOURNALISM AWARDS

THE MESSENGER *BEST PUBLICATION*

(CATEGORY B)

HONORABLE MENTION FOR REPORTING

CAMPUS ALTERNATIVE JOURNALISM PROJECT/CENTER FOR CAMPUS ORGANIZING

2000 Judges: John Anner, Independent Press Association; Jeff Chang, ColorLines magazine and 360HipHop.com; Sonya Huber, former director, Campus Alternative Journalism Project; Cathy Madison, Utne Reader; Abby Scher, Dollars and Sense

Pistol

continued from page 1

attorney requested an ACD for Sorrentino for which his record would be sealed after six months without a subsequent arrest. The prosecutor convinced the judge to tack on a day of community service because Officer Hook claimed Sorrentino told him "Fuck you."

"At no time during the incident had I uttered a profanity," Sorrentino told *The Messenger*. *Messenger* calls to the 26th Precinct were unreturned.

Sorrentino spent the following Saturday helping clean up a subway station to satisfy the community service punishment. "I got to wear the little orange vest and my dad came down and took action photos," Sorrentino cracked. "But cleaning a whole station's no joke. It's a lot of work. They got free labor out of me," he continued.

Not in Central Park

Sorrentino admits that technically he was trespassing. But he also said he had gone through the park after 10 pm for four years without incident. He often saw at least one other person in the park. No one ever bothered him. On rare occasions Sorrentino would see NYPD vehicles in the park, and, as he stuck to the lighted path, they presumably saw him too. But these police had never accosted or challenged him before.

According to Timothy Hubbard, CCNY's Security Director, under former president Yolanda Moses CCNY worked with the NYPD and the Hamilton Heights Homeowners Association, among other groups, to "clean up" the park. This included instituting a closing time for the park in 1998. Hubbard called the closing time an attempt to make it "not comfortable for criminal elements."

When informed of what happened to Sorrentino, Hubbard called what the officer did "not righteous" as the "whole purpose of the park closing time is to capture wrongdoers." Hubbard said it seemed a case of egos.

Hubbard said that if students find themselves in such a situation with a police officer they should "hold their temper and complain at a time more to their advantage." Presumably that would be before a judge, but that time didn't seem



Sorrentino at his community service assignment.

to be to Sorrentino's advantage either.

Sorrentino told *The Messenger* he was most worried about the extralegal aspects of the incident with Officer Hook. "On any given night, many New Yorkers 'trespass' in Central Park in full view of the NYPD," he said.

Sorrentino sees this as an example of selective enforcement. "St. Nicholas Park is in a neighborhood whose residents are predominantly African-American and who are not wealthy. Central Park is almost completely surrounded by neighborhoods that are predominantly white and well-to-do," he continued.

He also connected the incident to a larger geography of race in New York: that people are expected to stay in their "own" neighborhoods. "It seems Hook thought because I'm white and was in the park in this neighborhood at 3 am I was looking to score drugs," he told *The Messenger*.

For Sorrentino, anyone who violates the "own" neighborhood command risks the threat of institutionally protected violence. According to Sorrentino, since the shooting of Amadou Diallo police officers seem to think they can excuse whatever excessive force they commit "by uttering the verbal disclaimer of being afraid for their lives."

"But Hook's the one with the gun a foot from my face. Shouldn't I be the one afraid for my life?" asks Sorrentino. **M**

CUNY T Heads

UNLV hires CUNY Security Director bring spies, enemies lists, h

that all CUNY campus events that necessitate a metal detector must have an armed CUNY or NYPD officer present.

"A formidable deterrent"

So if the extra security personnel and their equipment weren't needed for crime, then what? The role of the Chancellor's special squad, the "SAFE Team," a name Orwell would love, was to act as the Chancellor's political hit squad and to assure that 1991's display of student power did not occur again. Five of the first six times the SAFE Team was deployed to CUNY campuses involved responding to student protests.

A 1995 memo from Captain Raymond McDermott of the New York Police Department's Disorder Control Unit to Elique confirmed the prime purpose of the SAFE Team was to squelch student activism. Elique had requested suggestions concerning situations, according to McDermott's memo, "that would necessitate the possible need of a substantial police response to a specific campus for a non-emergency event, student protest, etc."

McDermott's stunning memo summed up, "As a platoon of three squads, these... Teams become a formidable deterrent." The McDermott memo describes the training the Disorder Unit would provide the SAFE Team including "Conduct of Safety Personnel at a Student Protest, Sit In," "Use of Flex Cuffs," "Mass Arrest Procedures," and "Building Clearing Techniques."

The Team put its training to use. Court documents reveal it maintained an enemies list of CUNY student activists. The list included information on the students' racial and ethnic backgrounds, their birth dates, home addresses, Social Security numbers, enrollment statuses, and arrest records. The data were culled from NYPD records and students' personal CUNY files. The list was used by Security to bar these student activists from campus events. David Suker of City College was denied entry to the Hunter College campus for an April 1996 organizing event after Security checked a list and discovered his name.

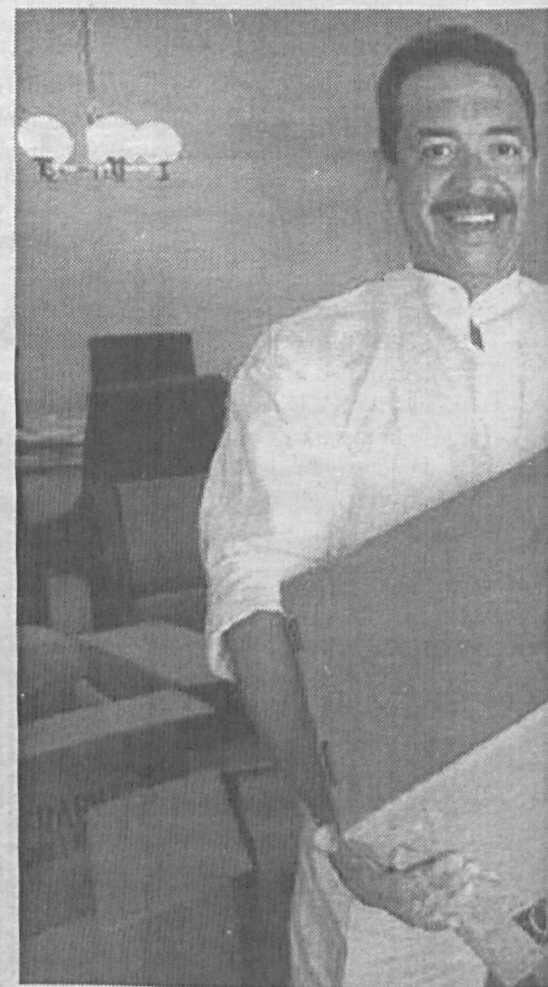
A memo from CUNY Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs Elsa Nunez-Wormack to the campus presidents warned, "We have learned that CUNY protest organizers are well organized and maintain tight control over the information to [sic] planned protest activities." The memo was dated a day after the Hunter organizing event Suker was denied entrance, indicating a Security mole had likely been placed in the meeting.

As described by Lee Wengraf in the *Graduate Center Advocate*, at a March 1995 City Hall rally at which 20,000 CUNY students and their supporters

According to College security director Jose Elique is "one morally bankrupt man who has met."

protested proposed budget cuts, though off-campus, SAFE Team members monitored students. Log entries made by SAFE Team members that day included, "Assigned to plainclothes to monitor demonstration at City Hall," and "On duty at City Hall monitoring demonstration."

In April 1995, columns of SAFE Team and NYPD officers in riot gear arrested 47 CUNY students hunger striking against budget cuts in the NAC Rotunda at City College. The students were kept over night in "the Tombs," notorious holding cells near Manhattan Criminal Court. SAFE Team logs, revealed in a discovery phase of a subsequent lawsuit students filed against CUNY, showed that two days after the CCNY arrests, student activists, doing nothing illegal, were still



Jose Elique packs up his Pandora's box of secrets to UNLV.

By Rob Wallace

JOSE ELIQUE, SECURITY DIRECTOR for all of CUNY, has left CUNY for a security job at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. Elique was hired at \$95,000 a year to quiet an explosive situation at the UNLV campus. But given his CUNY record his hiring may instead add fuel to the fire.

According to the May 3 edition of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, the security department at UNLV campus had been roiled by controversy. On June 1, Elique became the campus's fourth security director since last November. In October 1999, UNLV students held a protest against campus police after two high-profile incidents of security abuse.

As more complaints mounted after the protest, the incumbent UNLV director of security was relieved of his job. The director's successor was himself placed on paid leave after a state Peace Officers Council issued an unfavorable review of a March security drug raid on a dormitory. During the military-style raid, a campus housing coordinator was handcuffed and, with students, frisked. Four Ecstasy pills and 18 dangerous packets of perfumed talcum powder were seized in the raid. Another director served in the interim until Elique's hire.

According to the *Review-Journal*, a March report prepared by security administrators from outside Nevada blasted UNLV officers as "arrogant," as displaying animosity toward the university and dormitory staff, and "not above using intimidation to keep other members of the department in line with their thinking."

After filtering a pool of 50 applicants from around the country, UNLV hired Elique. About Elique, Bob Ackerman, UNLV vice president for student services who has since resigned, said, "He understands our situation very well. He wants to involve police much more in the community and do more outreach to students."

Upon his arrival at UNLV, Elique said he left 700 "clones" at CUNY. These "clones" are the officers of CUNY Security who, Elique told the *Review-Journal* on June 3, "perfectly espouse his philosophy of friendly university community policing."

"I established my legacy [at CUNY]," Elique told the *Review-Journal*.

Many familiar with Elique's CUNY record would agree he did indeed establish his legacy here, but in ways completely contrary to the image he has used to seduce UNLV. If UNLV students thought their previous security directors were brutal, they haven't seen anything yet.

Who is Jose Elique?

In 1992 Jose Elique was hired by CUNY as Director of Public Safety. Elique served in the Navy during the Vietnam War. From 1970 to 1991 he had held various positions with the Port Authority Police of New York and New Jersey. Some of that time at the Port Authority was spent as a counter-terrorism expert. And it is likely that such experience is what attracted then-CUNY Chancellor Ann Reynolds to Elique.

Upon assuming the chancellorship in 1991, Reynolds was greeted by student takeovers. In protest against yet another \$90 million cut in higher education pro-

posed by then-Governor Mario Cuomo, students at City College and other CUNY campuses occupied campus buildings for over two weeks.

Reynolds called on the campus presidents to discipline students. According to Ron McGuire, a student-rights attorney who defended many of the students at the disciplinary hearings that followed, not one student suffered expulsion and only one was suspended. Humiliated, Reynolds proposed to the state legislature that it fund a new security squad to operate directly under the Chancellor's control. The legislature rejected the proposal.

Despite massive cuts in CUNY's budget during Reynolds's first years, CUNY increased its annual funding for security from \$21.8 million to over \$40 million on salary and benefits alone. According to CUNY's own 1995-6 adopted budget, 160 new security positions were created by raiding Other Than Personnel Services, a CUNY funding line that, as its name implies, is stipulated for administrative expenses other than personnel salaries. In contrast, that year, 173 faculty CUNY-wide, 50 at City College, were fired because of budget cuts.

With the OTPS money, Reynolds had Elique establish the security squad she wanted. And she had it outfitted with military wares.

In fall 1998, Keith Higgenbotham of the *Hunter Envoy* reported that CUNY purchased in excess of 110,000 rounds of small arms ammunition worth more than \$30,000. That's about one bullet for every two CUNY students. The ammunition included what some might consider inappropriate firepower for typical campus security, including 9mm hollow point, .38 caliber Ny-Clad, and 12-gauge shotgun rounds. In addition to the ammunition, CUNY Security purchased seven Smith & Wesson .38 caliber pistols and eight Glock 9mm semi-automatic pistols. Seven of the Glocks were also fitted with "night sights," which allow targets to be seen in low-light conditions.

Over the three years of expense records Higgenbotham reviewed, other types of so-called "non-lethal" crowd and riot control equipment were also purchased. These included hundreds of ASP extending batons, over 400 mace/pepper spray dispensers, body armor, and federally approved riot helmets.

While CUNY officials told Higgenbotham that the equipment was necessary to maintain the peace, crime rates at CUNY campuses remained constant over the past decade, including for violent crimes. In 1998, there were only a dozen violent crimes on the 21 CUNY campuses around the city.

Of what use this arsenal would be is also a good question if only because only campus presidents can permit armed security on campus, something campus presidents have been reluctant to do. Only Lehman College has armed security. In 1996, then-City College president Yolanda Moses, no friend of students, rejected a proposal put forth by CCNY Security Director Timothy Hubbard to have campus security armed.

In 1997 Elique generated a rationale for the squad's already purchased arsenal. Elique manufactured a decree—without consent from the 21 campus presidents—

Top Cop West

Director Jose Elique. Will he follow-tip bullets with him?

former York ty director, of the most rupt persons I

being kept under surveillance. "Paperwork related to the duties conducted along with a constant observance of movements of 'Key' players involved in the hunger strike," the log read.

In May 1998, SAFE officers helped install a video camera in a fake smoke detector outside a student activist office (NAC 3/201) where Security thought students were planning takeovers in response to CUNY's plans to end remedial courses. When students discovered the camera—with a SAFE Team officer's name on it—they alerted the media and filed a still-pending lawsuit against CUNY for violating their constitutional right to free assembly. The camera proved a national embarrassment to the University.

We've reviewed only the most notori-

ous of the incidents. But throughout Elique's tenure SAFE officers would routinely brutalize student activists at protests—one Hunter student was illegally strip-searched—and disrupt their perfectly legal events. In February 1999, one SAFE officer started what became a police riot during a conference on Mumia Abu-Jamal held at City College.

"Evil and illegal actions"

We will describe one last incident that provides an inside look at Elique's CUNY operation.

On November 6, 1995 the SAFE Team was dispatched to the York College campus in Queens. There, the Team set up a phalanx at the campus entrance through which students wishing to enter their campus had to pass and show their IDs.

The reason? Nation of Islam speaker Khalid Muhammad was invited by students to speak for Black Solidarity Day. York administrators claimed the student group that invited the controversial Muhammad had not filled in the proper forms (Later, to administrator embarrassment, the students proved they in fact had.)

When Muhammad arrived, the SAFE Team barred his entrance. Muhammad and the students marched in protest around the perimeter of the campus until Acting York College President Thomas Minter relented and allowed the speech to take place.

In June 1996 York College's Director of Security Winston Burrows resigned. The following are excerpts from a memo attached to his letter of resignation from York. The memo is dated July 4 and was addressed to then-CUNY Chancellor Ann Reynolds.

After 17 1/2 years of service at York College I decided to resign... because I could not let myself become party to the illegal scheme put forth by City University Director of Public Safety Jose Elique and his Deputy Martin Rodini. At our November/95 security directors meeting they announced a plan designed to deny students and others their constitution [sic] right of free speech...

My reason for leaving is my dissatisfaction with the leadership of Jose Elique, your choice for CUNY Public Safety Director as well as his Deputy Martin Rodini. Since his arrival Jose Elique has never displayed qualities I felt necessary for such an important position. His dictatorial, abrasive, confrontational style, and use of profanity at directors meetings—where he often used f—k and f—king in the presence of females I found offensive and very unprofessional. It demonstrated a lack of moral and ethical character...

I decided to leave CUNY after attending the security directors meeting in November

'95. At that meeting Jose Elique and Martin Rodini—apparently still upset and smarting because Acting [York] President Thomas Minter had permitted Khalid Muhammad to speak at the college on November 6, 1995. They made the following proposal—which they indicated was intended to give you and them control of persons who would be permitted to speak on CUNY campuses. They were working on a proposal that would attach a fee between \$5,500.00 to \$7,500.00 whenever the SAFE Team was dispatched to a campus (in response to a request of a college President). That to me was censorship, a violation of the Constitution of the U.S., and ran contrary to everything I believe in—justice, honesty, and fairness. While at that meeting I came to the conclusion that although I may sometimes disagree with students I will never let myself be a part of any such evil and illegal action as was proposed by Jose Elique and Martin Rodini...

Burrows continued his memo by describing the events of November 6 at York, including the agreement York College made with the SAFE Team three days before. According to Burrows, Elique and Rodini, whom Burrows calls "two of the most morally bankrupt persons I have met," violated that agreement:

"[Acting President] Minter informed both Jose Elique and Martin Rodini that he *did not* want any SAFE team members to bring their weapon onto the campus on Monday 11/06/95. As they were leaving the building, I heard Jose Elique comment to Martin Rodini that 'He is in for a surprise, and he better get used to guns on campus.' The rest is history, two SAFE team members did bring weapons with them on Monday, 11/06/95."

After describing the events of November 6, Burrows writes Elique and Rodini informed him he was fired from his position as Queens Borough Coordinator of CUNY Security:

"The reason they gave me for remov-

ing me had nothing to do with my performance as Borough Coordinator. Their statement to me was 'You are not a team member, and you did not get involved as Timothy Hubbard did.' His reference was to City College Security Director and Manhattan Borough Coordinator Timothy Hubbard who arrested a student who grabbed him by his collar during a demonstration that took place at City College. Apparently Jose Elique and Martin Rodini wanted a confrontation to take place [at York]..."

In his concluding salvo Burrows blasted Reynolds for CUNY Security's Pentagon spending habits, then at \$40 million a year, particularly obscene at a time of alleged fiscal austerity:

"[W]ith the fiscal problems facing the university resulting in reduction of student services, retrenchment, and loss of jobs by tenured faculty members you established the position of Lieutenant (REQUIRING ONLY A GENERAL EDUCATION DIPLOMA) with the top salary of \$82,000.00—more than a tenured professor with a Ph.D. earns." In 1998, Elique proposed making still another rank with pay of \$90,000, rivaling the salaries of college presidents.

Feeling lucky?

We at CUNY can only marvel at UNLV students who, after fighting so hard to dump abusive security directors, helped install one the country's vilest.

"If [Elique] can accomplish instituting a true community policing culture amongst this force, then that's going to be a great achievement," Joey Cohn, a founder of Students Against Police Misconduct and member of UNLV's Public Safety Advisory Board told the *Review-Journal*.

We wish Las Vegas good luck, as the campus may very well need it when Elique implements his brand of "friendly university community policing." **M**



stitutional violations for the big move out west

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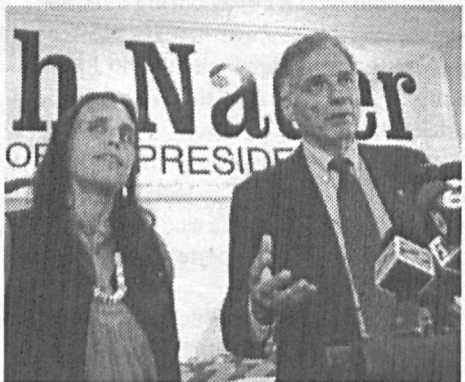
Contact **The Messenger** at (212) 699-3825x7582
or ccnymessenger@yahoo.com to find out about
the next club meeting.

The Messenger is committed to defending CUNY and all of its programs, and to supporting open access to CUNY for all of the people of New York City.



It's Not Easy Being Green...

Long-time consumer crusader, people's rights advocate, and now Green Party presidential candidate, Ralph Nader is fighting an uphill battle against the Democratic and Republican onslaught. He's waging a serious campaign, though, and makes some good points, as evidenced by this e-mail that came our way: "Students and young people are tired of the corporate domination of our political system.



Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader with running mate Winona LaDuke.

Together, we can build a truly progressive third party: the Green Party." Want to be a N2K Campus Coordinator? Then get yourself to the computer lab and e-mail Carolyn Danckaert at: carolyn@votenader.org. Remember what Uncle Ralph says: "There can be no daily democracy without daily citizenship."

American in Peru To Get New Trial

BBC news reports that Peru's top military court has overturned New York native Lori Berenson's life sentence on a terrorism charge. She now faces a civilian trial despite the court's admission that it had no evidence that Ms. Berenson is guilty.

The 30-year-old reporter was found guilty of terrorism and treason (even though she is not a Peruvian citizen) by a secret military court in 1996 for allegedly helping the Tupac Amaru



Lori Berenson.

Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) plan an attack on Peru's Congress that Peruvian authorities say they foiled. Ms. Berenson and human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch claim that she did not have a fair chance to defend herself.

Peruvian authorities describe Berenson as a radical who

came to foment a revolution. Supporters say she is a political activist and journalist who was framed. Berenson arrived in Peru in 1994 as a reporter for Third World Report and Modern Times and became outspoken critic of the poverty she witnessed.

Baruch College Professor Mark Berenson, Lori's father, told BBC



Peruvian Army guards keep watch over high-altitude Yanamayo Prison.

that: "Peru has now admitted that Lori Berenson was not a leader of the MRTA. It knows she was not even a member."

Berenson has spent the past four years in high security jails, including Yanamayo Prison, which is 12,700 ft. up in the Andes mountains. Yanamayo holds around 300 inmates from the Shining Path and MRTA revolutionary groups. Human rights groups and rebel spokesmen label Peru's jail system inhumane. They say inmates receive poor diets and spend about 23 hours a day in small, cold, dimly lit cells that typically have a hole in the concrete floor serving as a toilet.

Berenson was moved to lower altitude Socabaya prison when the Organization of American States began investigating her case last year, but still suffers health problems from the altitude and frigid conditions she endured at Yanamayo.

Although President Alberto Fujimori has stated several times that Berenson would serve her full term, there may be a window of opportunity now that Fujimori is resigning amid evidence of electoral fraud and increasing pressure to stop Peru's human rights violations.

Justice Texas style

Human rights organization Amnesty International has condemned the two executions carried out in Texas on August 10, calling the continued use of the death penalty in the United States "one of the world's human rights scandals," and placed the state of Texas at the center.

Texas accounts for 28 of the 58 executions carried out in the USA this year, and 227 of the 656 since the USA resumed judicial killing in 1977.

Brian Roberson and Oliver Cruz were killed by lethal injection within an hour of each other despite serious concerns relating to racial discrimination and mental impairment, two issues that mark many capital cases in the USA.

Roberson, Black, was executed for the 1986 killing of an elderly white couple in Dallas County. The prosecutor at his trial systematically removed African Americans from the jury pool, indicating that they were not educated enough to sit on a jury.

At the trial of Oliver Cruz, a Latino accused of the rape and murder of Kelly Donovan, white, the prosecutor argued for execution on the grounds that Cruz's learning disability made him more of a threat to society. International standards oppose the death penalty for the mentally impaired. Cruz's white co-defendant, charged with the same murder, received a prison term in exchange for testimony against Cruz.

Amnesty International also refutes Governor George W. Bush's contention that Texas does not execute the mentally retarded, citing the examples of Terry Washington and Charles Boyd—put to death in 1997 and 1999. The juries that sentenced them to death were never told of their mental impairment.

CUNY clipboard

Let the sun shine in

After a five-year legal struggle, a small group of professors and students has reached a settlement agreement with CUNY concerning the Board of Trustees' meetings and the state Open Meetings Law. The agreement specifies that the public is guaranteed a minimum of 60 seats or standing places in the meeting room. If 68 people testify at the public hearing the week prior to the board meeting, the meeting will be moved to a larger room.

The lawsuit was initiated in 1995, when the public found it difficult to get into the meetings dealing with faculty retrenchment and other vital matters. The Board's 1998 decision to end remediation at senior colleges was nullified after the court decided that CUNY held the meeting in a room it knew was too small to accommodate the expected audience and gave preferential seating to its own staff. The board re-voted eight months later in a much larger auditorium.

The plaintiffs were CCNY students David Suker, Vernon Ballard, and Joanna Sharf, and faculty members Jim Perlstein and *The Messenger's* own Bill Crain.

Democracy? We don't need no stinking democracy

CUNY faculty governance suffered a defeat in court when State Supreme Court Judge Bruce Allen ruled that the CUNY Board of Trustees could remove a course at the Borough of Manhattan Community College despite the decision of the college's faculty to temporarily retain the course.

The Professional Staff Congress (PSC: faculty union) had a hearing before Judge Allen to request a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) against BMCC president Antonio Perez to prevent him from substituting a non-credit workshop designed by the administration for a one-credit course in the Department of Student Life. A discussion of the course had been tabled by the BMCC Curriculum Committee until the fall, but the Administration's proposal was submitted to the Board of Trustees,

who approved it last June.

The PSC entered the case to protect the right of the faculty to develop and determine curriculum. This incident is just the latest skirmish in what has been a battle between faculty and administration for control over curriculum. Faculty have traditionally made decisions regarding curriculum, but college administrators and CUNY Central have been attempting to consolidate power and assert more control over these decisions.

Chairman Herman Badillo reappointed to CUNY BoT

The New York State Senate has unanimously approved Governor Pataki's reappointment of CUNY Board of Trustees Chairman (and CCNY alum) Herman Badillo to a new seven-year term.

Badillo has served as a Trustee for over a decade, including two years as Vice Chairman of the Board. On June 1, 1999 Gov. Pataki appointed him to the post of Chairman, and said: "Chairman Badillo shares my commitment to ensuring that CUNY students meet the highest standards."

Badillo drew criticism from all sectors last September for making disparaging remarks about Dominican and Mexican students and dodged calls for his removal from the Board from several student groups and the PSC. He also supported Giuliani's push to end remediation in CUNY's senior colleges, a policy he has called "social promotion."

The State Senate has also approved the appointment of Wellington Z. Chen, a Senior Vice President of the TDC Development Corporation, to serve on the Board of Trustees and fill the remaining three years of the term held by Anne Paolucci, who resigned last year. Chen, described as a "long-time community leader" by the CUNY press office, is also a CCNY Architecture alum.

Last, but not least, Dr. Russell K. Hotzler has been named Interim President of Queens College. Dr. Hotzler has been a senior CUNY administrator and educator for three decades.

But then we'd have to pay people to clean the parks

Governor Pataki, apparently busy raising academic standards in CUNY, still has not signed Assembly Bill A8475, which would allow college students receiving public assistance to satisfy a workfare requirement by performing work-study jobs and curriculum-based internships for the requisite number of hours. This measure would reduce the stress on students who are trying to improve themselves and their lives by going to college and allow them to take jobs that might actually teach them something.

Though it would be far better to end all workfare assignments for students, tell the gov. to do the right thing by emailing: gov.pataki@chamber.state.ny.us or send letters to: Governor George E. Pataki, Executive Chamber, State Capitol, Albany, NY 12224. You can fax a letter to 518-474-1513.

Teachers union backs open admissions

The New York State American Federation of Teachers (the parent union of the PSC) has adopted a resolution in support of open admissions. CCNY adjunct professor Susan DiRaimo initiated the resolution with help from PSC officials Cecelia McCall, Tony O'Brien, and Chris Cage.

The resolution points out that CUNY's mandate is "the education of the children of the whole people," according to CCNY's mission statement at its 1847 founding. The resolution asserts that implementing high standards does not need to mean excluding from the senior colleges students in need of some remedial help.

The resolution concludes: "The AFT strongly supports the right of all high school graduates to have an equal opportunity to obtain a college education at affordable tuition (with the progressive introduction of free college education), and therefore strongly supports the restoration of open access, developmental courses, and reduced tuition at the City University of New York."

Bush did not support 1999 bills to ban the execution of the mentally retarded and improve legal representation for poor defendants. Apparently even compassionate conservatism still means stacking the deck against the poor and vulnerable...

New York-Based Activist Murdered in Indonesia

Human Rights Watch reports that the body of missing human rights activist Jafar Siddiq Hamzah, who vanished on August 8 from the Indonesian city of Medan, has been located. Indonesian military or paramilitary groups are suspected to be responsible for his disappearance and murder, although the military maintains its innocence.

Jafar lived in Queens and was a student at the New School. In June he returned to the province of Aceh, where a pro-independence movement has been clashing with the Indonesian army for the last twenty-three years.

"Jafar came to New York because he knew he had more freedom to work on Aceh here than he had in Indonesia. He could draw on the city's resources to raise alarms about ongoing human rights violations in Aceh, and he chose New York because Queens has the largest community of Acehnese in the United States," said Sidney Jones, Asia director of Human Rights Watch.

Jafar had planned to spend the summer documenting human rights violations and working for a resolution to the political conflict. He decided to work out of Medan, which was believed to be less dangerous than Aceh, but he reportedly

are designated for California residents who attend public or private colleges in the state. Last year three out of five students were passed over when the money ran out. Under the expanded program all new high school graduates meeting eligibility standards will be funded. The bill is intended to extend financial assistance to thousands of poor and middle class students who in past years would have been turned away. Did we mention that CUNY was free in the good old days that some people like to crow about?

The rich get richer...

Chief executive officers at US companies are now entitled to pay packages 475 times those of their workers and 62 times that of the US President, according to a new study by the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), a Washington research group, and United for a Fair Economy, a non-partisan organization seeking to reduce US economic injustices.

CEO pay jumped 535 percent from 1990 to 2000, a decade in which the pay of average workers, unadjusted for inflation, rose a paltry 32 percent, according to the study. If the average annual pay for production workers had expanded at the same rate during the widely touted 1990s economic boom, the average worker would now earn \$25 per hour, the study—entitled Executive Excess 2000—found.

"The growing gap between CEOs and workers underscores the legacy of wage stagnation since the 1970s," according to the study. Despite repeated assertions by the Clinton administration that times have rarely been better for US workers, the median hourly wage in 1999, 11.88 dollars, was lower—adjusted for inflation—than it was in 1973, 12.05 dollars.

"While CEOs have seen their pay packages zoom into the stratosphere, the typical American worker has seen no improvement in real wages in over a generation," the report concluded.

Much of the surge in CEO pay, according to the study, can be

attributed to "The virtually instant riches" acquired by chief executives at Internet companies. While government officials have hailed Internet companies as creators of high-paying jobs, the number of workers employed directly by such firms is "miniscule" relative to the total workforce, according to the study.

USA: human rights rogue state

A new report released by Human Rights Watch claims that workers' basic rights are routinely violated in the United States because U.S. labor law is so feebly enforced and filled with loopholes.

In the report, titled: "Unfair Advantage: Workers' Freedom of Association in the United States under International Human Rights Standards," HRW charges that the United States itself violates freedom of association standards by failing to protect workers' rights to organize, even though the U.S. government has called for

"The U.S. government cannot effectively press another country to improve labor standards while violating them itself."

—Kenneth Roth, Human Rights Watch Exec. Dir.

"core labor standards," including workers' freedom of association, to be included in the rules of the World Trade Organization and the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas.

The report is based on field research in several states, including New York. HRW examined workers' rights to organize, bargain collectively, and strike under international norms, and found widespread labor rights violations across regions, industries and employment status.

"The cards are stacked against workers in the United States. The U.S. government cannot effectively press another country to improve labor standards while violating them itself. It should lead by example," says Kenneth Roth, HRW's Executive Director.

"The cards are stacked against workers in the United States," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. "The U.S. government cannot effectively press another country to improve labor standards while violating them itself. It should lead by example."

Each year thousands of workers in the United States are fired from their jobs or suffer other reprisals for trying to organize unions. Millions of workers—including farmworkers, domestic household workers, low-level supervisors, and "independent" contractors (who are really dependent on a single employer)—are deliberately excluded from labor law coverage for organizing and bargaining rights. They can be fired with impunity for trying to Employers resist union organizing by dragging out legal proceedings for years, the report said. Labor law is so weak that companies often treat the minor penalties as a routine cost of doing business, not a deterrent against violations. According to National

Labor Relations Board (NLRB) statistics, the problem is getting worse. In the 1950's, workers who suffered reprisals for exercising the right to organize numbered in the hundreds each year. By 1998, the

last year for which official figures are available, nearly 24,000 workers were victims of discrimination serious enough for the NLRB to issue a "back-pay" or other remedial order. The NLRB's budget and staff have not kept pace with this growth.

HRW called on the U.S. Congress to ensure rapid reinstatement and full back pay for workers fired for organizing and ensure that protection of the right to organize be extended to farmworkers, household domestic workers, and others not currently covered by federal labor laws. HRW also urges Congress to ratify International Labor Organization conventions on worker organizing and collective bargaining, and to strengthen U.S. laws protecting these rights.

Clinton's Colombia Waiver: 'Grave Mistake'

President Clinton's decision to waive human rights conditions on the \$1.3 billion military aid package to Colombia will encourage violent abuses, according to Human Rights Watch. On August 23, Clinton signed a waiver allowing the United States to ignore human rights conditions included in the military aid package. In granting the waiver, Clinton not only makes America complicit in ongoing abuses, but also risks

"This is the wrong policy and the wrong time," said José Miguel Vivanco, Executive Director of the Americas Divi-



An Indonesian soldier sits in an Armored Personnel Carrier. Human rights organizations believe either the Indonesian army or army-backed militias are to blame for the murder of Jafar Siddiq Hamzah.

was immediately aware that he was being followed and took precautions to assure his safety.

The current rebellion is due to resentment of Acehnese poverty despite the resources—including oil, natural gas, and gold—extracted from their land and the fact that most of the human rights violations against civilians committed in the name of counterinsurgency have gone unpunished.

Governor Pataki, are you reading this?

The San Jose Mercury News reports that California Gov. Gray Davis and legislative leaders have approved an initiative to give a transfusion to the state's chronically under-funded college aid program by virtually guaranteeing a scholarship to every new high school graduate who demonstrates financial need and earns at least a C grade average.

The grants do not have to be repaid and



Colombian activist protests Clinton's August 30 visit.

sion of HRW. "The message is that the bad apples with the armed forces shouldn't be worried. Ultimately, the waiver defeats the purpose of any policy meant to improve human rights."

HRW was among several leading human rights groups who took part in a two-day consultation with the State Department required by law before any certification. During those meetings, all of the human rights groups present, including HRW, unanimously opposed Colombia's certification to receive military aid and called on President Clinton not to issue a waiver. The U.S.-backed Colombian military and paramilitary groups supported by them have been implicated in the murder and terrorizing of citizens accused of sympathizing with Colombian rebel groups. **M**

Philly arrestees continued from page 5

been made for the reduction of charges of all RNC accused felons and high level misdemeanors."

The pressure is now on the city to strike a deal. Over 200 trials are pending amongst all the demonstrators; Philly normally only takes about 150 cases to trial in a whole year. (Most are settled by

plea bargain.) In addition, Philly public attention has been increasingly focused on the misbehavior of the police and courts, in these and other cases. The local Philadelphia media are giving the issue a great deal of attention.

The arrestees view this proposal as a winning scenario for activists, for community organizations, and for the people of the city as a whole. Hopefully the city will as well. **M**

New York Activists Unite at UN Millennium Summit

By Matthew Parham

OVER 100 ACTIVISTS MARCHED all over mid-town Manhattan on Friday, September 8, stopping to protest in front of four consulates before proceeding to a rally across the street from the United Nations. The day of actions was organized by the New York People's Assembly Against Imperialist Globalization (NYPAAIG), a new multi-tendency city-wide anti-imperialist coalition, and the occasion was the final day of the UN Millennium Summit.

NYPAAIG was initiated by Philippine Forum, a local progressive Filipino organization, and its allies in the Network in Solidarity with the People of the Philippines (NISPOP). It brings together such organizations as the Colombia Action Committee (CAC), International Action Center (IAC), Committee to Support the Revolution in Peru (CSR), Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), Forum of Indian Leftists, Direct Action Network and Student Liberation Action Movement.

The UN Millennium Summit was the largest gathering of heads of state in history. Dan Wilson of NISPOP discussed NYPAAIG's view of the UN: "While we believe that the UN has established some worthwhile guidelines for human rights, the rights of refugees and others, the fact is that it has no teeth to enforce these guidelines and never will while the US and its junior partners control the UN and puppet leaders like Estrada. The UN only shows its teeth when aiding a US-led mili-

tary invasion as in Korea, Somalia, or Iraq."

During the program at the Peruvian consulate, Manco Rojas of the CSR spoke, denouncing Peruvian President Fujimori as a fascist puppet of US imperialism, calling for the release of New Yorker and journalist Lori Berenson and all of the 5000 other political prisoners in Peru.

At the El Salvador consulate, Cherrere Horazuk of CISPES spoke about the resistance to imperialist globalization in El Salvador, where health care workers recently waged a successful strike to defend public health care against the threat of privatization. Another CISPES member spoke about the importance of solidarity activism, saying "People ask, 'Why should I care about El Salvador, what does El Salvador have to do with me?' But if you look at the tag on the shirt you're wearing, and it says 'Made in El Salvador' or 'Made in Taiwan', you are intimately connected to the person who made that shirt. We are connected to maquila workers and sweatshop workers, through the clothes that we wear, and through the products that we use."

Members of NISPOP and the MAK-ABAYAN Youth Collective spoke at the Philippine consulate about US military and economic intervention in the Philippines, and the growing "Oust Erap!" movement to oust the current Philippine president. Robert Roy of PhilForum discussed the reasons for protesting at the Philippine consulate: "After obtaining \$105 million in military hardware from



President Clinton last July to continue the all-out war policy in Mindanao, President Estrada is now back to meet with the foreign investors he missed in the last trip and to attend the UN Summit. The net effect of these foreign investments is increased unemployment through contractualization schemes, lower wages and benefits, further loss of land for the peasants and increased destruction of the environment of the Philippines."

The most distinguished guest on the tour was Dennis Brutus, professor at the University of Pittsburgh, former political prisoner in South Africa and leader of the movement to divest from Apartheid South Africa in the 1980s, currently with Jubilee 2000-Afrika and 50 Years is Enough. Brutus spoke about the need to globalize resistance to imperialism before leading chants of "Forward to a People's Millennium!"

The final stop on the tour was the Colombian consulate. Neala Bern of the CAC spoke about the \$1.3 billion in military aid granted to the death squad government in Colombia, saying "The Ameri-

can people don't want to get involved in this war; we need to oppose this aid." An environmental activist also spoke about the plight of the Uwa who have pledged to commit mass suicide if oil drilling proceeds in their traditional territory.

At the closing rally, Dan Wilson spoke for NYPAAIG, saying "One cannot help but see a pattern of US imperialism by looking at what is happening in these countries and many others. At each of the consulates we visited the issues were the same: US military bases and aid being used to enforce an economic regime favorable to US corporations. The UN is part of the picture too, and its role is not a positive one. The UN stands aside as the US violates its charter by acting as a self-appointed world policeman, even allowing the US to use it as a cover for unilateral interventions in the affairs of other countries." **M**

NYPAAIG can be contacted at peoplere-sist@aol.com or 212-741-6806; check out the NYPAAIG website at <http://www.nispop.org/nypaaig/>.

S26 in Prague: Stopping the IMF/World Bank Once Again

By John Olafson

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND and World Bank keep having trouble holding meetings. This time they met the week of September 26 in Prague, Czech Republic. Over 10,000 people from Prague and around the world turned out to greet them. Due to the blockades preventing delegates from crossing the Vyesrad Bridge to reach the conference center, just as in Seattle ten months ago they were forced to call a halt to their meetings a day early.

During and after the demonstrations massive police sweeps rounded up and jailed almost 900 people, most of them Czech citizens. Many prisoners were denied use of toilets, a telephone call, or a lawyer. Prisoners were left without jackets or blankets all night, some outside, others handcuffed to the bars for falling asleep. Some report being denied food or water.

Very severe beatings have been report-

ed by those released from jail, including reports of having faces repeatedly bashed against walls, being punched in the face and stomach, and being kicked and beaten while handcuffed on the floor. Some were beaten with truncheons and metal poles. Some beatings continued for more than half an hour at a time with other prisoners forced to watch or listen. In a number of cases fascist skinheads were brought into cells and allowed to beat the prisoners. There are many reports of broken bones; arms, fingers, noses and ribs; medical attention has been denied in many cases.

The mainstream press tend to report these major actions against corporate globalization as merely the irresponsible behavior of privileged First-World youth looking for something to rebel against. The fact is that massive demonstrations against the destructive policies of international financial institutions have been going on for years in the Third World and ignored by the corporate media. Now that



these movements have reached the developed countries, the media try to dismiss them. It's getting difficult to do so, however. Too many people around the world are speaking out. **M**



Clockwise from top right:

"Ya Basta" brigade confronting the riot police who blockaded passage over the Vyesrad Bridge. Waves of brigadistas hit the police time after time over several hours.

An activist with gas mask braves the clouds of tear gas the police let loose against the demonstrators.

Protestors clash with regular police at one of many barricades.

The elderly join the chorus at a legal action on Sunday.



I Survived Hollywood's Summer

By Yechiel Hoffman

IF YOU WERE ONE OF THOSE, like me, trying to avoid the heat and humidity of a New York summer with some decent, air-conditioned entertainment, there was no solace available in movie theaters this summer. As we sat stranded on our urban island, America tuned into 16 strangers doing their thing on the *Survivor* island. While *Survivor* was the big television story of the summer, averaging upwards of 20 million viewers a week, the biggest entertainment story was the lack of a decent story coming out of Hollywood.

So what were we left with? Formula popcorn flicks, gross-out comedies, and a lack of solid indie fare to placate that intelligent urge. Back in May hope was in the air as *Gladiator* extraordinaire Russell Crowe proved that yes, an engaging chameleon of a dramatic actor can become America's newest heartthrob and action star. Things were looking up until Hollywood unleashed hell on America in the form of *Battlefield Earth* and *MI-2*: two star-driven labors of love that previewed for the public the contrived, formulaic drivel that awaited hungry audiences in the coming months.

Oh, what hope the public had after last year's runaway successes like *Austin Powers*, *The Sixth Sense* and *The Blair Witch Project*; it really seemed that Hollywood was finally getting it, but no, it was just a joke. This year we were subjected to watching Nick Cage crash a car in 60 seconds, Mel Gibson patriotically murder the British, George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg sink a boat, and the *X-Men* prequel their coming sequels. Comedy premiered to us the ever-grossening humor of Eddie Murphy, the

Farrellys, Martin Lawrence, and *Scary Movie*. If you don't agree with me that the summer roster flopped, check out the numbers. Attendance was down fifteen percent from last year, down for the third year in a row. With ever-increasing ticket sales, only strong product can bring the people in, and this year's films failed to do so. Many executives commented that business was certainly soft because the picking was soft. So without movies to turn to, we turned to *Survivor*.

A dear friend commented to me that the reason reality shows were such a hit was because they gave the public real people to gossip about during the day and not feel bad about it when they go to sleep. *Survivor* hit upon a chord in American culture that movies have failed to hit for a long time. Even with a lousy narrator, shifty camera work and fat naked guys, we watched earnestly as 16 folks sabotaged each other for the sake of fame and one million dollars. In this most capitalistic of endeavors we watched as the snake ate the rat. The true moral of the story is not that greed and politicizing relationships pay off (Richard got lucky), but that the network for the aged, CBS, can bring viewers in with original programming, with fresh faces and with a plot that you have not seen before.

The fact is that Hollywood is all about the money. The service of entertainment is only the rainbow the executives take to the pot of gold. It's up to the public—people like you and me—to cry out for solid, quality entertainment, and while I'm wishing, why not some that delivers a concrete message with sensitivities to the audience at large. Here's hoping that the fall will bring us some decent entertainment: supposedly that's when Hollywood serves up its good films for Oscar season. (You've already heard my rant on that.) I don't want to spend my



"Survivor" winner Richard Hatch shows what it was all about.

entire fall wasting patriotic pride on American athletes, only to have to wait till the Super Bowl weekend for some real drama. No, I don't care to see a thousand dot.coms push their drug during breaks in the game; that's when *Survivor II: the Outback* premieres. So, brothers and sisters, get ready for another year of hearing Yak rant about the best and worst entertainment has to offer. Welcome back. **M**

film review

I'm the One That I Want: The All-American Girl Meets the Assmaster Fan Club

By Hank Williams

I REALIZED TWO THINGS while on the road this summer: one is why I don't watch too many blockbuster movies and the second is why I like New York. It wasn't too surprising that *X-Men* and *Nutty Professor 2* were as bad as they were, but it was unfortunate that that's all there was in Altoona, PA. Sure, they had all the other big summer movies there, but that's it.

You see, Altoona, much like the strip-malls-on-steroids suburbia that's infecting the nation faster than the West Nile Virus scare, is homogeneity at its worst. That's what happens when "diversity" simply means a Mexican or Japanese chain restaurant in the food court. This is the vision of prosperity that George Dubya, Al (Mr. Excitement) Gore, and their lackeys have for America, but that's a rant for a separate column. The point is that it sucks. One antidote for that is Margaret Cho, who has to be Bush and Gore's worst nightmare: a loud, funny, Korean-American lesbian. *I'm the One that I Want* is a documentary of one of her live performances last year.

Cho succeeds because she's funny and puts herself out there, laying bare her incredible pain. Cho had seemingly achieved the American dream, securing a network TV sitcom deal based on her stand up routine, making good money, and living in Hollywood, which was exactly the point that her life began to unravel.

The paradox is that human pain, as long as the audience can remain detached, is one of the traditional staples of comedy.

The Three Stooges slapping the bejeezus out of each other and all sorts of pratfalls involving human misfortune are all fun and games until somebody loses an eye. Cho's shtick recalls the ferocity and immediacy reminiscent of early Richard Pryor and Freddie Prinze as she publicly tries to come to grips with life in a Hollywood and a country that is still not comfortable with its multicultural or sexual reality.

Cho recalls the absurdity of receiving a telephone call explaining to her ABC TV's concern that her face was too fat (meaning too Korean-looking). Cho's response was a crash diet and exercise



Margaret Cho and Ralph.

program that shed 30 pounds from her frame and permanently damaged her kidneys. She paid a heavy price for racist network execs who decided that maybe it was a little *too* bold to actually have *real* Asian-Americans up there on the small screen.

Cho also recounts the network's decision that the show wasn't "Asian" enough (despite having a cast that was mostly Asian-American) and the hilarious result of their decision to hire an Asian consultant, who reminded her to use chopsticks and remove her shoes when entering the house.

The cancellation of Cho's TV series left her an emotional wreck and with the incendiary combination of having too much money coupled with too much time on her hands. Her catharsis came after an all night alcohol and drug binge with an equally intoxicated and high boyfriend and the decision that she didn't want to end up dead.

One indication that Cho is more at peace with herself comes in her reaction to her first lesbian sexual experience. "Once I had sex with a woman and I went through this whole thing, like, 'Am I gay? Am I straight?' And I realized, I'm just slutty. Where's my parade? What about slut pride?"

Much of Cho's routine is about her mother and her experience growing up with traditional (but liberal) Korean parents in San Francisco's Haight district (the hippie and gay Mecca), where they owned a bookstore. Cho's mom managed the porn section of the store. One of the more memorable sketches is Cho's imitation of mom's reaction to the gay sex book *Ass-*



master, where her mom decides that "too much ass is not a good thing," declaring that "ass in moderation" is much healthier.

Cho could mug for the camera a little less and she has a tendency to stretch her jokes out, which works sometimes, but her routine would flow better if she just kept things moving. These are small criticisms as Cho's material is fresh and funny and she does a good job carrying the show by herself.

Cho's plans for the future? "I just want to do [comedy] for a long time ... at least until the next Korean-American fag-hag, s**t-starter, girl comic, trash talker, comes up and takes my place." It might take a while. **M**

I'm the One That I Want, 88 minutes, playing at the Quad Cinema in Manhattan

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8 Poetry Slam, feature poet: Ken Cormier. Open mic/first semi-final slam-off. CBGB's downstairs lounge, 313 Bowery, 7pm, \$5 door.	9 College is closed. Forum: From the Streets: State Repression of Activism. 7:30pm, Brecht Forum, 122 W 27 10fl., \$6, 212-242-4201.	10 Latino Heritage Film Fest. NAC Student Lounge, 12-4	11 Lest We Forget Forum: The Debt with author Randall Robinson. 7:00pm, Schomburg Ctr, 515 Malcolm X Blvd, 212-491-2200. Salute to Latino CCNY Grads: Feat. Ernesto Quinones, Henry Arce. 5th Fl. Archives, Cohen Library, 4-6pm. Women's Tennis vs. Hunter. Goldman Sports Center, 2pm.	12 Assn. Hispanic Fac/Staff Awards banquet: scholarship awards. Faculty Dining Room, 12-2. Career Ctr. Recruitment Orientation. NAC 4/113, 1pm. Architecture Lecture: Practice & Theory. Great Hall, Shepard, 6:30-8:30pm. The Words & The Motion: dance and spoken word. Dixon Place, 309 E 26th, 8pm, \$12/\$8 st.	13 Using Standard and Assessments to Learn. Aronow Theater, NAC Building, 212-650-7262x5182. Women's Tennis vs. NYC Tech. Science Building, 3:30pm.	14 Celebrating Afro-PR traditional music and dance: film, workshop, and performance. Aaron Davis Hall, 11-4, \$15, 212-650-6900. Family College Day: Freshmen/Transfers. 9am, NAC 1/201. Men's Soccer vs. Centenary College. Goldman Sports Center, 12 noon.
15 Poetry Slam, feature poet: Sou Macmillan. Open mic/open slam. CBGB's downstairs lounge, 313 Bowery, 7pm, \$5 door.	16 Million Family March. Washington, D.C. 1-877-636-7995, www.millionfamily-march.com. English Proficiency Exam. 2:00-4:00pm and 5:30-7:30pm. Register at English Department, NAC 6/219.	17 Career Center Recruitment Orientation. NAC 4/113, 1pm.	18 Jews and the Slave Trade. Eli Faber. CUNY Grad Ctr., 365 5th Ave. Rm. 9207, 5:15-7:15.	19 Latin Jazz Ensemble. NAC Rotunda, 12-2. Career Center Recruitment Orientation. NAC 4/113, 12 noon. Class Politics vs. Identity Politics. CUNY Grad Ctr., 365 5th Ave. Rm. 9207, 5:15-7:15. Spoken Word/Music. Dixon Place, 309 E 26th, 8pm, \$12/\$8 st., 212-532-1546.	20	21
22	23	24 Career Center Recruitment Orientation. NAC 4/113, 12 noon. Breast Cancer Screening. 1-2PM, NAC 1/211.	25 Poetry: Frank Lima and Bill Kushner. St. Mark's Church, 131 E. 10th St., 8pm.	26 PSC Meeting, 7pm, CUNY Grad Ctr., 34th St. and 5th Ave. Career Center Recruitment Orientation. NAC 4/113, 12 noon. Philosophy Colloquium: Social Beliefs & Scientific Rationality. 12:15-1:15, NAC 5/144D. Election 2K: Scholarly Debate. CUNY Grad Ctr., 365 5th Ave. Suite C201, 5:15-7:15.	27 Education Works, Prisons Don't, A City-Wide Forum and Teach-In. Thurgood Marshall Academy, 135th and Edgecombe Ave. Poetry & Fiction. Dixon Place, 309 East 26th, 212-532-1546, 8pm, \$5.	28 Education Works, Prisons Don't, A City-Wide Forum and Teach-In. Thurgood Marshall Academy, 135th and Edgecombe Ave. Poetry: Nicholas Johnson & Elaine Schwager. St. Agnes Branch, 444 Amsterdam Ave., 2pm. MothSLAM: Competitive Storytelling Event. Dixon Place, 309 E 26th, 212-532-1546, 8pm, \$5.
29 Poetry Slam, feature poet: Shappy & Shane Koyczan. Open mic/open slam. CBGB's downstairs lounge, 313 Bowery, 7pm, \$5 door.	30	31 Career Center Recruitment Orientation. NAC 4/113, 1pm.	1	2 Career Center Recruitment Orientation. NAC 4/113, 12 noon. Forum: Dealing with Racism on the Left. Brecht Forum, 122 W 27, 10fl., 7:30pm, \$6, 212-242-4201.	3 Forum: The Gentrification of Harlem. Brecht Forum, 122 W 27, 10fl., 7:30pm, \$6, 212-242-4201.	4 Forum: Race, Class, and Culture, with Robin D.G. Kelley and Bhairavi Desai. Brecht Forum, 122 W 27, 10fl., 7:30pm, \$6, 212-242-4201.

Send announcements of your events to *The Messenger* at ccnymessenger@yahoo.com.

film review

Dark Days: Life Under The Streets of New York

By Hank Williams

THE NICE THING ABOUT FILMS like Marc Singer's *Dark Days* is that they come as a welcome change from this summer's films. It is truly thoughtful, funny, human, and interesting.

Dark Days documents life in a semi-abandoned Amtrak railroad tunnel under Manhattan's Upper West Side for a group of homeless people. The shelter provided by the tunnel allows them to create a shanty town of sorts, consisting of shacks built from scraps of wood and ingeniously fitted with electricity.

The result is a sense of community and a feeling of a home life with the relative comforts of refrigerators, lights, and the ability to cook. The residents are shown

caring for pets (dogs seem to be popular), and going to work in the morning, collecting cans, books, or any discarded odds and ends they can sell.

The problem is that the shacks are not homes. The tunnel dwellers endlessly battle rats and dirt while living in constant fear of fire or eviction by Amtrak. As bad as the tunnel is, the residents reveal that life on the street or in the city's horrid shelters is much worse.

Part of the adventure of *Dark Days* is the incredible luck Marc Singer had just getting the film finished. Singer knew nothing about filmmaking, but decided that he needed to do something to help the homeless. During the five years it took to make *Dark Days*, Singer lost everything he had and became homeless himself when all his money was gone and his credit cards were maxed out from the cost of trying to make the movie.

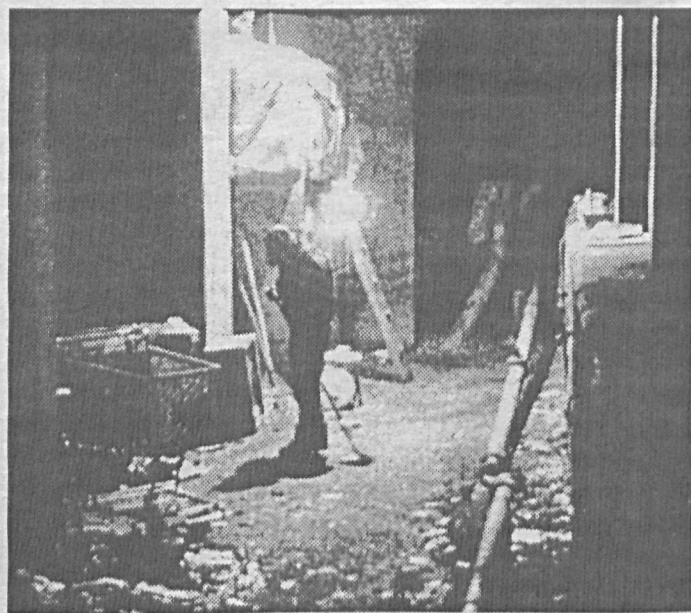
Dark Days is not a hard luck story, however. The tunnel residents became the film crew, rigging camera dollies by hand and patching into electrical lines to power the camera and lights. The film eventually became a tool for the tunnel residents to get

themselves out. The tunnel residents "weren't feeling sorry for themselves: they were trying to do the best that they could," says Singer.

Singer's intention became to use whatever money the film earned to help the tunnel dwellers move into decent housing.

Singer and his makeshift crew benefited from a healthy dose of luck, committing every possible mistake that could be made, but still getting usable film and sound. Help came from unlikely sources, like the camera shop that let Singer walk out of the door with thousands of dollars worth of equipment that he sometimes didn't even know how to properly operate; and Kodak, that donated the film to finish *Dark Days* when he was flat broke and out of film.

The triumph of *Dark Days* is that it humanizes its subjects. Homeless people are presented as *people*, not as a "problem" or "situation," which is the usual way they are dealt with in the media. The tunnel residents organize themselves to better their situation and when the final eviction really does come from Amtrak,



the event is triumphant, rather than pathetic.

The irony is that people lived for nearly 20 years, invisible to the public, under what has become one of the most affluent parts of Manhattan.

Dark Days was filmed in black-and-white, mostly because Singer thought it would be easier to deal with. The result, however, is a film that treats its subjects respectfully and has a timeless quality. It also shows what can be accomplished when ordinary people come together to fight for themselves. **M**

Dark Days, 84 minutes, Playing at Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th

