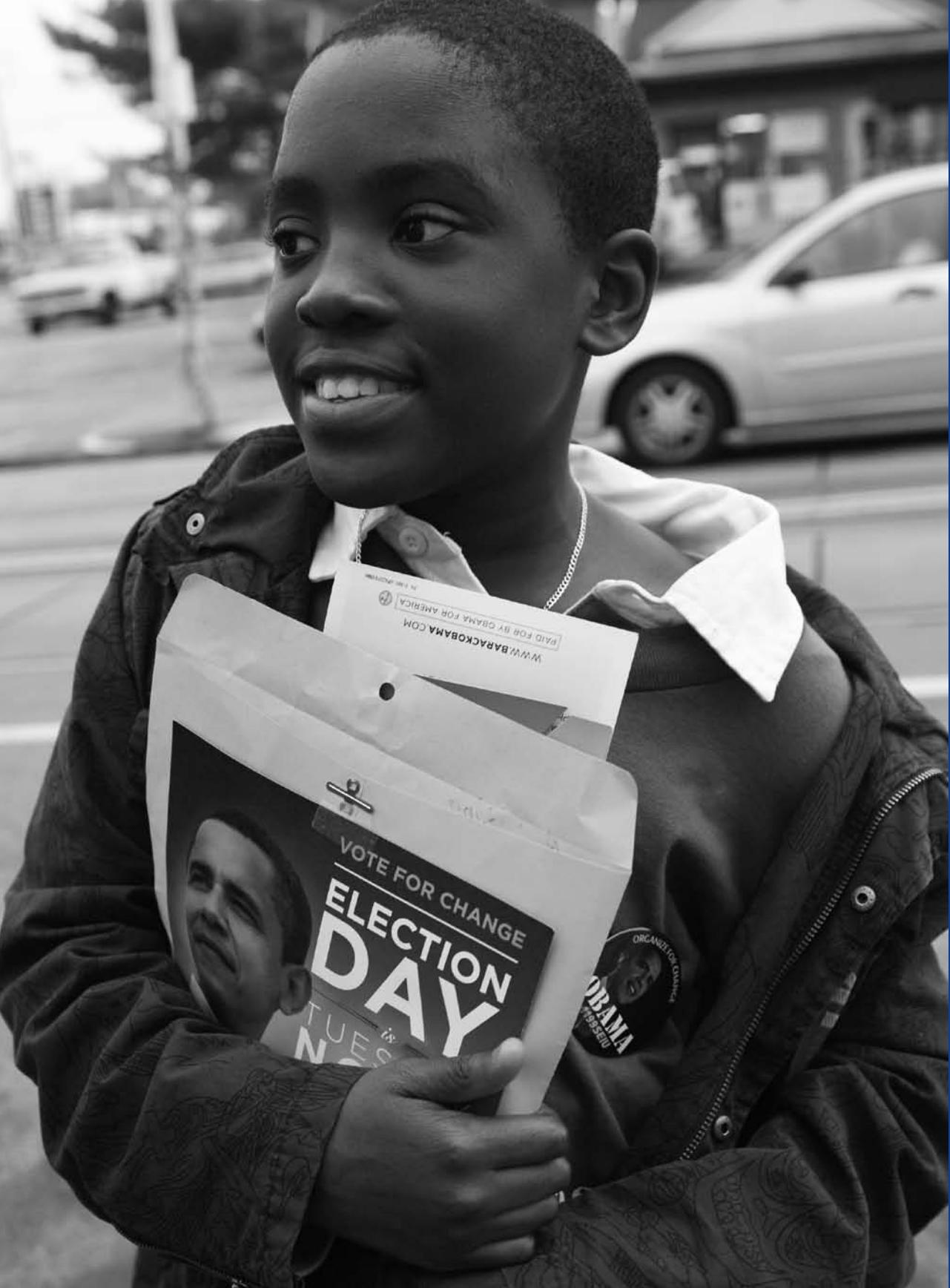


Journalism Awards



Metro New York Labor Communications Council



2008 Contest Winners

~ Best Photograph - *front cover* ~

Class C
Belinda Gallegos
Our Life and Times
1199SEIU

2008 Annual Contest

In this journal are winners in the Metro New York Labor Communications Council's annual contest. The entries, for work in 2008, were wide-ranging in subject matter, including political action, contract struggles, acts of heroism and solidarity by union members, organizing the unorganized, the cost of health care, the fight for equality, workers rights, security in retirement, and human rights.

We hope that showcasing our members' best work will encourage others to try new approaches and techniques. Our goal, is to promote the highest standards of labor journalism and media work. In this journal, we are proud to present some of the talented writers, editors, photographers, graphic artists, Web meisters, and radio producers who make labor's story come alive for millions of New York workers and retirees and their families.

2008 Winners

Matt Doherty/Gwen Wells – Excellence in Broadcast Media

Domestic Workers Uniting, Your Home, My Work
Ken Nash and Mimi Rosenberg
Building Bridges: Your Community and Labor Report

Mary Heaton Vorse Award

Ellie Spielberg: "Sister Act"
New York Teacher, City Edition, UFT

General Excellence

Class B:	1st Place:	<i>Clarion</i> , Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, AFT
	2nd Place:	<i>Allegro</i> , AFM Local 802
	3rd Place:	<i>CSA News</i> , CSA, AFL-CIO Local 1
Class C	1st Place:	<i>New York Teacher</i> , NYSUT
	2nd Place:	<i>Public Employee Press</i> DC 37, AFSCME
	3rd Place:	<i>TWU Express</i> , TWU

Best Reporting

Class B	1st Place:	<i>Clarion</i> , Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, AFT
	2nd Place:	<i>Allegro</i> , AFM, Local 802
	2nd Place:	<i>Communique</i> , CWA 1180
	3rd Place:	<i>The Union Mail</i> , NY Metro, APWU
Class C	1st Place:	<i>Public Employee Press</i> DC 37, AFSCME
	2nd Place:	<i>New York Teacher</i> , NYSUT
	3rd Place:	<i>New York Teacher, City Edition</i> , UFT

Best Writing

Class B	1st Place:	<i>Clarion</i> , Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, AFT
	2nd Place:	<i>Communique</i> , CWA 1180
	2nd Place:	<i>Allegro</i> , AFM, Local 802

3rd Place: *Retiree News and Views*
IBT Local 237

Honorable Mention: *CSA News*, CSA,
AFL-CIO Local 1

Class C	1st Place:	<i>New York Teacher, City Edition</i> , UFT
	2nd Place:	<i>New York Teacher</i> , NYSUT
	3rd Place:	<i>Public Employee Press</i> , DC 37, AFSCME

Honorable Mention: *TWU Express*, TWU

Editorial/Opinion

Class A		<i>The Eagle</i> , CWA Local 1103
Class B	1st Place:	<i>The Union Mail</i> , NY Metro, APWU
	2nd Place:	<i>Clarion</i> , Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, AFT
	3rd Place:	<i>Retiree News and Views</i> IBT Local 237
Class C	1st Place:	<i>TWU Express</i> , TWU
	2nd Place:	<i>New York Teacher, City Edition</i> , UFT
	3rd Place:	<i>New York Teacher</i> , NYSUT

Best Photograph

Class B	1st Place:	<i>Clarion</i> , Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, Dave Sanders, AFT
	2nd Place:	<i>Communique</i> , Gary Schochet CWA 1180
	3rd Place:	<i>Retiree News and Views</i> , Donna Ristorucci IBT Local 237
Class C	1st Place:	<i>Our Life and Times</i> , Belinda Gallegos 1199SEIU
	2nd Place:	<i>Public Employee Press</i> , Clarence Elie-Rivera DC 37, AFSCME
	3rd Place:	<i>New York Teacher</i> , Lauren Long, NYSUT

Best Graphic Design

Class B 1st Place:	<i>Commrique</i> , Warren Linn CWA 1180
2nd Place:	<i>Clarion</i> , Gregory Nemac Professional Staff Congress/ CUNY, AFT
Honorable mention: <i>The Union Mail</i> , Denise Shavers APWU, NY Metro	
Honorable mention:	<i>CSA News</i> , CSA Louis Silverstein AFL-CIO Local 1,
Class C 1st Place:	<i>New York Teacher</i> , NYSUT
2nd Place:	<i>Our Life and Times</i> , 1199SEIU
3rd Place:	<i>New York Teacher</i> , <i>City Edition</i> , UFT
Honorable mention: TWU Express, TWU	

Best Web Site

Class A 1st Place:	http://www.ml46.org/ Local 46 Metallic Lathers and Reinforcing Iron Workers
Class B 1st Place:	www.sseu371.org SSEU 371, DC 37, AFSCME
2nd Place:	www.local 237.org IBT Local 237
3rd Place:	www.psc-cuny.org Professional Staff Congress/ CUNY, AFT
Class C 1st Place:	www.nysut.org NYSUT
2nd Place:	www.dc37.net DC 37, AFSCME
Best New Media	
1st Place:	Ewize, UFT www.edwize.org/

2009 Contest Judges

Sally Alvarez is the Director of Labor Programs for the statewide Extension Division of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University. She works out of the New York City ILR office and has been a labor educator for 20 years, focusing on union leadership, ethics, and labor media.

Belinda Cooper is a Senior Fellow at the World Policy Institute and an adjunct professor at NYU's Global Affairs Program. She has written for a wide variety of publications, including *The New York Times*, *World Policy Journal*, and the *Huffington Post*.

Amy Manso was a graphic designer in the labor movement for over 15 years, having worked for District 65/UAW and the ILGWU (and later UNITE). She currently works at a community center in upstate New York and does her own art whenever possible.

Lallan Schoenstein is graphic designer who worked for UNITE HERE, UNITE and the ILGWU. She was an AFCSME DC 1707 shop steward and member of the contract negotiating team. She has retired from UNITE HERE and is working as a free-lance designer.

WEB SITE JUDGE

Steve Dondley is the owner of Prometheus Labor Communications, which specializes in building web sites for labor unions and labor-friendly organizations.

Steve kicked off a career working for unions in 1996 as a union organizer. He has also worked as an occupational health and safety educator and community organizer. He remains active in the labor movement, currently serving on the board of the Pioneer Valley AFL-CIO in Springfield, MA as the Recording Secretary.

Steve has taken his knowledge and passion for unions and poured it into helping them better communicate on the Internet. He has been building web sites for unions since 1999. His company has built over 130 web sites for unions.



To help girls like Tajhane envision and achieve a great future for themselves, Robin Williams (center) created YES — Young Elegant Sisters of Substance. With her are colleagues Laura Banks and Shonelle Holder at Brooklyn's PS 81.

'Sister' act

Teacher's innovative program miraculously raising girls' self-worth

By ELLIE SPIELBERG

"I'm fat."
"I'm ugly."
"The boys don't like me."
"My clothes are bad."
"My hair's too short."

The angst-ridden musings of a college student who's flipped through too many issues of *Vogue*?

No. They're the self-deprecating thoughts of little girls who come to PS 81 every day from neighborhood family shelters or the

Eleanor Roosevelt Houses right across the street.

Brooklyn's gentrification has not reached this part of Bedford-Stuyvesant, where nearby Broadway sprouts discount stores, auto parts suppliers and bodegas under the gloom of the elevated J/Z line.

According to teacher Robin Williams, by the time these girls are in 3rd grade their self-worth is below sea level and they're already envisioning a future of poverty, early pregnancy and being stuck in the projects forever and ever.



~ Mary Heaton Vorse Award ~

"Sister Act"
Ellie Spielberg
New York Teacher, UFT

"I'm so fat, I'm so big and fat," says pretty Tatiana, who then starts sobbing.

To the rescue come her little contemporaries in the YES —

Young Elegant Sisters of Substance, a group of quiet well-mannered girls who greet their elders in a melodic chorus. Now they are hugging Tatiana and telling her she's beautiful until she stops crying. Teacher Shonelle Holder asks Tatiana to look into the mirror and see just how beautiful she is, especially with the smile now spreading across her face.

"I'm ugly, my skin is too dark," says little Daja now, crying, one of many girls who think they have to be as light and golden as Tyra Banks in order for them to love themselves. Daja in fact is lovely, with stunning almond-shaped eyes.

"Don't you believe that dark-skinned stuff, not for a minute. My whole family is lighter than I am, I was always the darkest one, and everyone tried to plant that seed in my mind, too, when I was a little girl. Don't you dare believe it," an adult voice chimes in among the affirmative chatter of girls who are hugging Daja.

The speaker is Williams, the miracle worker who created and implemented the YES — program three years ago at the school, where she works as a literacy coach. Holder, who teaches 4th grade, joined as a facilitator this year, and science teacher Laura Banks has been Williams' co-facilitator since the beginning.

Now little Erica speaks up: "Some people don't like the way I look but I love the way I am. You are beautiful no matter what; you are not fat, you are who you are. Whether you are black or Puerto Rican or Dominican, you are as God made you."

Williams began creating YES — when she was a 4th-grade teacher and getting increasingly upset when former students came back to visit her. Many were on the fast track to failure and despair.

"I thought, 'Why? What happens to them in middle school?' We have to embrace our girls and let them know they're beautiful," she says.

She opened the program to 5th-graders but soon realized she had to start working

with girls long before they were about to leave for middle school. Now YES — includes 3rd- to 5th-grade girls ranging from 9 to 12 years old.

"I live in Bed-Stuy and I have a lot invested in it," Williams says. "I couldn't stand seeing what was happening to my girls when I'd see them a few years later on the street, half of them pregnant. I said to myself, 'This is not going to happen here, not in my neighborhood, not on this street, not with my girls.'"

YES — is about saying yes to yourself. The after-school and occasional weekend program is about self-esteem, good decision making, giving to others, becoming a young lady, venturing into the whole big world outside of the projects, and envisioning that you can live in that world when you grow up by mastering the behavior, language and etiquette that can take you there.

And it's fun. Spend some time with Williams, Holder, Banks and their young sisters of substance and you get the feeling there's nowhere else these girls would rather be.

Unlike similar but more regimented programs on self-esteem and etiquette for inner-city kids, YES — is holistic, with its group-therapy style of digging deep into self-defeating issues as well as giving room for children to play.

Take the table-manners segment of YES —, for one example. When Williams and her two colleagues preside over the table like the Three Graces during a pretend dinner with paper plates and plastic cutlery, they're as exacting about etiquette as matrons at a finishing school. But then the girls are asked to demonstrate what they are *not* supposed to do.

Now comes a giggling free-for-all of slurping, burping, elbow-jabbing, plate-licking and chucking back drinks and tapping the bottom of the cup to get every last drop as if it were the last inch of lemonade on earth. Not to mention licking your knife to get that last drop of imaginary butter, as some girls are doing. They are corrected by one of their peers.

"My grandfather said never to put your knife in your mouth before he died," she says.

"We're practicing to get ready for a Broadway show and dinner at a fancy-shmancy restaurant as soon as we raise the money," Williams says. Fund-raising on their own behalf and others is an important component of YES —, with the young sisters making and selling crafts such as earrings and YES — T-shirts and helping to organize dances and other events.

Recently they raised enough money to go see "Dance Africa" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

"At BAM they at least got a glimpse of a country like Ghana by seeing its dancers. I tell them the world goes beyond Bedford-Stuyvesant; that those buildings across the street and what goes on there is not your life. What happens in this room and beyond — that's your life," Williams says.

Playfulness comes to the fore again during role-playing scenarios such as Conceited vs. Confident and one on Attitude Adjustment. First they "present," acting out a negative scenario; then they "re-present," which means redoing the episode with smarter behavior and better outcomes.

When they present Conceited and later Bad Attitude, which consists of two girls fighting over a pen, you couldn't see a cast of nastier princessy snits on the Hollywood screen. Then they transform themselves into confident creatures resolving conflicts with class. Afterward, all the girls analyze what happened in each scenario.

They also learn "business-talk," another term in the YES — lexicon. What's that?

"When you talk socially and don't use

**EVERYDAY
HEROES**



By promoting etiquette, good decision making, positive thinking, speaking well and becoming a young lady, YESS is about saying yes to yourself.

street language," says Abiyon.

"When you are at the dinner table and talk appropriate," adds Erica, "and don't talk just how you want to talk but what everyone wants to talk about."

"We spend an hour and a half on each topic," Williams says. "We can spend all day on one emotion."

Those emotions, those voices of inner critics — ugly, fat, being made fun of — are written on paper and taped to the wall by Williams and her crew, where they are externalized and ripe for intervention.

Intervention comes in the form of affirmations, clarity and coaching. "I can't depend on someone else for my self-esteem," says Banks, when Abiyon expresses her self-consciousness about only having school clothes because

there's "not enough money for street clothes."

"We focus on books, not boys," Williams says, after Tajhane says some boys were making her feel bad.

Williams chooses the issues to be covered via the three-page application that parents or guardians must fill out to get their child into YESS. The application process includes listing topics they feel their child needs to work on.

"The biggest topic — I was amazed at how badly they all felt about themselves," Williams says.

So she and her colleagues set about doing whatever it took to transform that.

"The teachers give up their own free time to be with the sisters," says Chapter Leader Camille Eaddy, who accepted the UFT's Tra-



"We focus on books, not boys," Williams says as Keyshawn listens.

chtenberg Award on behalf of her chapter in 2007. "They spent Memorial Day weekend taking the sisters to BAM." Eaddy is proud of the quiet halls and the A that the once-floundering institution recently got on its school report card.

"We call our school 'the Oasis of Bed-Stuy' and the YESS program is part of our oasis philosophy," she says.

There are signs that the oasis of YESS is going to spread to other schools. One of its graduates assumed that the program was everywhere and asked her middle school teacher if they could have a YESS group. That teacher called Williams and asked for help in starting one.

She's happy to "to be able to travel with

the girls to their new grades," Williams says. And she's pleased now when her girls come back to visit her showing leadership skills and good report cards.

Newfound self-worth is already sprouting wings in Williams' current group.

Jahkia says sometimes people comment that she dresses "like I don't have a mom. "But," she adds, "I like the way I dress. My grandmother says I dress properly, not with such short skirts and little tops."

"I've seen the changes in these girls," Banks says.

Why wouldn't they blossom? They are, after all, in the strong, loving hands of Williams and her colleagues, three elegant educators of substance.



Banks, Holder, Williams and the Young Elegant Sisters of Substance. Williams created YESS after seeing many former students heading for trouble. "I said to myself, 'This is not going to happen here, not in my neighborhood, not on this street, not with my girls.'



WBAI RADIO'S BUILDING BRIDGES: YOUR COMMUNITY & LABOR REPORT

Produced & Hosted by Mimi Rosenberg & Ken Nash
Monday, March 10, 2008, 7 - 8 p.m. EST, over 99.5 FM
or streaming live at <http://www.wbai.org>

Special for Women's History Month – “Your Home, My Work”

BUILDING BRIDGES allows domestic workers to tell their stories—stories of their pains, their pride and their efforts to organize for labor rights. Since slavery, the domestic work force has been predominately women of color. With the abolition of slavery African-American women were still the predominate workers, as immigrant woman began to enter that workforce.

Today, women of color, from around the world work as domestic workers. Everyday, 200, 000

domestic workers (nannies, elderly companions, housekeepers) in New York make it possible for their employers to go to work. Most are employed without a living wage, healthcare, and basic labor protections. Domestic work is vital to the economy and the community, but domestic workers remain invisible, vulnerable, and undervalued. “Your Home, My Work” recognizes and values domestic laborers.

❖ Listen to Mimi Rosenberg Hosting Wednesday Wakeup Call from 6 – 9 am ❖

❖ Matt Doherty & Gwen Wells Award for Excellence in Broadcast Media & Communications ❖

“Domestic Workers Uniting, Your Home, My Work”

Ken Nash and Mimi Rosenberg
Building Bridges: Your Community and Labor Report

Special for Women's History Month

"Domestic Workers Uniting, Your Home, My Work"



Privatized parks

A non-profit group exploits a non-union workforce to maintain Central Park

BY GREGORY N. HEIRES

THE CENTRAL PARK CONSERVANCY is widely credited with reviving the crown jewel of the city's park system, once likened to a dust bowl and plagued by crime, poor maintenance and inadequate municipal funding since the mid-1970s fiscal crisis.

The public-private partnership has brought about the renaissance by exploiting a non-union workforce while the ranks of unionized municipal workers have all but disappeared.

"There is a basic question of equal rights here," said Henry Garrido, DC 37 assistant to the associate director.

"You have parallel workforces where one group is unionized and has good benefits while another group doesn't have union protection and is made up of employees who can be fired at the whim of their employer."

Today, the Dept. of Parks and Recreation has a skeletal field staff of less than 25 blue-collar workers and an additional staff of about 80 clerical and professional employees assigned to the park. "It breaks you down spiritually," said a DC 37 member whose job responsibilities have been eroded as the municipal workforce has dropped over the years.

About 250 to 300 year-round Conservancy workers maintain the park. As spring approaches each year, the Conservancy employs a similar number of seasonal employees to supplement its full-time workforce.

CITY WORKFORCE PLUMMETS

Years ago, hundreds of city Parks employees toiled at Central Park, the city veteran worker recalled. The decline in Central Park parallels a drop throughout the entire parks system, where the number of municipal workers has plummeted

from 7,500 in 1975 to just over 2,200 today. Fourteen DC 37 locals represent Parks workers.

The fiscal crisis of the 1970s opened the door for widespread attacks on public employee unions and efforts to "rethink" traditional government services. In New York City and elsewhere, politicians and public policy experts began promoting alternative ways of delivering public services, such as contracting out work and handing responsibilities to non-profit, public-private partnerships like the Central Park Conservancy.

Since its founding in 1980, the Central Park Conservancy has invested more than \$450 million to improve and maintain Central Park, assuming the traditional responsibility of the city Parks Dept. Today, spending by more than 50 park-specific non-profits, "friends of the parks" groups and conservancies, including the Prospect Park Alliance and Bryant Park Corp., amounts to about \$100 million a year, according to a 2007 report by the New Yorkers for Parks and the Citizens Budget Commission.

But the city has not used its savings to pour funds into the parks in needy communities. New Yorkers for Parks gives a failing grade to 20 percent of the neighborhood parks. The group's 2007 report with the Citizens Budget Commission found a "greater incidence of poorly maintained parks in poorer areas of the City."

Staten Island Parks workers vote in 1956 in the first representation election for city employees. They voted 4,907 to 173 for DC 37's Local 924. The city parks system is DC 37's birthplace.

Parks workers rally outside City Hall on Nov. 13, 1991, to protest pending layoffs and budget cuts. The Parks workforce has never recovered from its decimation that year, when hundreds were laid off.

"While in many instances these groups have improved the parks, their proliferation raises serious questions," said Edgar deJesús, interim director of the DC 37 Organizing Dept. "Are we moving toward a situation in which you have parks for the few?" "Public spaces are being converted into exclusive playgrounds for the rich while the city has abandoned its commitment to maintaining the parks system for everyone else. As a society, is that what we want," he asked.

But as policy makers, community groups and politicians debate the pros and cons of the public-private partnership

(Continued on page 9)

~ Best Reporting ~

Class C

Public Employee Press,
DC 37 AFSCME

(Continued from page 8)

model, the workers at the Central Park Conservancy confront concrete real-life issues: tough working conditions, favoritism, a limited benefits package, workplace safety concerns, on-the-job injuries, a climate of fear, several mean-spirited supervisors and a lack of job security.

In recent weeks, DC 37 staff organizers and volunteer member organizers have visited Conservancy workers in their homes as the union prepares to launch an organizing drive.

"Last week, when there was lightning and thunder and 50-to 60-mile-per-hour winds, we were still working out there," said one worker in an interview with PEP in January.

A longtime employee at the Conservancy, he said the workers are forced to remain outside during snowstorms, heavy rains and heat waves, and they get only one 15-minute break each day. By contrast, city workers are allowed periodic breaks and may go inside during bitter heat or cold.

Complaining about the lack of job protections, workers told PEP that when the Conservancy distributed a handbook last year, employees were required to sign a form acknowledging that they could be dismissed at any time.

ORGANIZING FOR A BETTER FUTURE

This fall, the Conservancy forced workers to use rakes rather than blowers to pick up leaves after wealthy residents

and environmentalists complained about the noise and fumes, according to Conservancy workers. Consequently, some workers suffer from aches and pains caused by the repetitive motion. "Putting aside the environmental questions about the blowers, the issue for the union is that management changed working conditions without consulting workers and addressing their concerns," deJesús said.

"It's tough work," said one employee, charging that picking up debris, using weed-whackers, installing and breaking down fences, removing trees and raking takes a heavy human toll. One worker lost his thumb and another was impaled by a piece of wood that went through his leg, the worker said.

The employee complained about favoritism and inequities. Last year, the Conservancy gave 4 percent raises to their favorites and 2 percent or nothing at all to the rest. "We aren't keeping up with the cost of living," the male worker said.

"If this whole thing goes down," the worker said of the organizing drive, "I am going to be so happy. I'm doing this not just for myself. I'm doing it for the future of the people coming in."

At CUNY, adjunct health care is broken

Inequality hurts full-timers, too

BY DANIA RAJENDRA

WHEN “MELISSA KLEIN” (not her real name) needed a kidney transplant, she lucked out — her sister was a perfect match. Klein teaches in the English department at a CUNY community college, and her doctors forbade her from returning to the classroom for three months. Because she’s on huge doses of immuno-suppressive drugs, she explained, “if someone is sick, I’ll get it very quickly and have nothing to fight it off.”

But for health insurance, Klein was out of luck. As a CUNY adjunct, not teaching meant that she lost both her health coverage and her income, right in the middle of a medical crisis.

“I was forced to borrow money to pay for COBRA,” the federally mandated unemployed workers’ option to continue their health coverage, she told *Clarion*. “There is no money coming in. Honestly, I don’t know how I’m going to manage on my husband’s paycheck alone.”

NO BANK

Adjuncts have only limited leave for illness or emergency — generally a maximum of one or two days per semester. They cannot accumulate leave from one semester to the next — no matter how many years they have worked for CUNY. If they are dropped from the payroll, they can pay to maintain their health coverage under COBRA, but it is expensive — about \$500 to \$700 a month for an individual, \$1,200 to \$1,800 for a family. An underpaid adjunct who suddenly has no paycheck may find that she or he can’t afford it.

Klein has taught at CUNY — at the same college — for five years. She loves helping her students learn to read, she told *Clarion*. “I like turning around students who have had difficulty their whole lives with reading and writing. I love to make an unsuccessful student into a success.” She hopes to return to

her students in the Fall and is counting on her good rapport with her department to have her courses assigned to her again, she said.

“I’ve worked so hard and given so much to the system, but financially I’m receiving nothing back,” she said.

BROKEN LEG

Janet Gonzalez tells a similar story. Last January, Gonzalez broke her leg. An adjunct lecturer, she has usually taught two chemistry courses at Lehman and one at BCC, ever since 2001 when she began her PhD at the Graduate Center. Because she was injured during intercession, she told *Clarion*, she was able to alert her department chairs in time for a replacement to be found. Since Gonzalez was still on the payroll when she fell, her health insurance covered the initial doctor’s visit — and the cast that extended from her toe to her knee. But by the date of her follow-up appointment, her insurance had been cancelled.

Suddenly without an income, Gonzalez had only her student loan and money borrowed from family and friends. COBRA was unaffordable, so she paid her regular visits to the doctor out of pocket, at \$175 each, and hoped that she wouldn’t develop complications. By the end of the semester, she was deep in debt.

DEBT

“I’m still paying back people,” she told *Clarion*. “But, I’m born and raised here and I have family here. Imagine if I were an immigrant — who would lend me \$3,000 then?”

After Gonzalez’s cast came off in April, she recalled, “I still couldn’t walk.” Her doctor prescribed physical therapy, which she couldn’t afford. With no PT, she tried to fill the gap by doing exercises that her doctor had described. In July, still frail, she went back to teach her classes at Lehman. “I had a cane, and I was walking really slowly,” she said. “I would get up really early so I could get on the train really early, so I could get a seat and no one would step on my foot.” By the time she requalified for health insurance, “It was too late for physical therapy,” she said. “My leg didn’t start feeling well until November or December. Sometimes I still limp.” When Walter Dufresne broke his arm in November, he had already taken his one day of leave for illness that semester — the first time he had used that benefit in 19 years of teaching photography at City Tech. “I broke my arm on a Friday, taught my Monday class and turned around and got my surgery Wednesday,” he recalled. He was afraid to miss even one class.

(Continued on page 11)

~ Best Reporting ~

Class B

Clarion, Professional Staff Congress/
CUNY, AFT

(Continued from page 10)

"I was worried that my coverage would be discontinued if I stopped teaching," he told *Clarion*. Calling in sick for half a semester "would have left my department in a very tough position. That's impolitic for somebody who doesn't have job security."

"I have 10 years full-time service equivalence over the last 19 years, and I've got no banked sick time at all," said Dufresne, an adjunct assistant professor. "I feel like a character in a Dickens novel."

Dufresne guessed he'd be on the upswing once his arm was in a cast — but he was wrong. "The worst of it was all the immobility after the bone surgery," he said. "I tend to use my body a lot in teaching — I teach a four-contact-hour course, with one hour of lecture and three hours of laboratory, recital and studio." E-mail contact between classes was also difficult. "Typing one-handed was ridiculous," explained Dufresne. Usually he's as voluble online as he is in person — but with a broken arm, students got less feedback. "In talking with students via e-mail," he said, "all my loquaciousness went away."

He said he's recovering some mobility now, but progress is slow. "I would have loved to have taken the time off, to work even harder on my recovery," he said.

So would "Annie Post" (who asked that *Clarion* not use her real name). An adjunct who has taught at two CUNY campuses since 1982, Post is in her 60s and has chronic hepatitis C, a potentially life-threatening condition that can cause cirrhosis and liver cancer.

For most of her decades at CUNY, Post has taught two courses at one CUNY campus and one at another. In 2003, she needed chemotherapy, and as a concession to the punishing regimen she gave up one class. She needed to teach at least six credit hours a semester to continue her eligibility for health insurance (non-teaching adjuncts must work 10 hours to qualify).

"I was terrified that I wouldn't be able to work, and that I would lose my health insurance," she said. "Treatment cost \$700 a week." So she kept on working. Post remembered that during her treatments, "I was so tired, I used to fall against the desk."

In 2005, Post repeated the whole process and again had to drop her third class. For the other two, to cover the days she couldn't make it into the classroom, she lined up substitutes for herself — and paid them out of her own pocket.

Today she's doing better but is still not well, and her doctors have made it clear she'd do better with more rest. But she has to keep teaching, she told *Clarion*: "I wish right now

I could take off to get better, but then I would have to pay for COBRA, and I can't afford it. I'm 60, and I'm not even talking about retirement. I can't retire."

Unlike full-time faculty and staff, when adjuncts retire they take no health insurance with them — their CUNY coverage simply ends. For those 65 or older, Medicare can serve as a safety net, but it's a costly option just as their income drops: the added expenses for prescription drugs, hospitalization deductibles, or the Medicare Part B premium can add up to thousands of dollars. Eligible retired full-timers have these expenses covered through their City health coverage; retired part-timers do not.

"You can't afford to retire," explained Linda Caspe, an adjunct at BMCC who has taught at CUNY for 34 years. "You're retiring on very little money — \$4,000, maybe \$10,000 a year. I'm going to work forever." Part-timers come up short on family health insurance coverage as well. While full-timers get it at no extra charge, part-timers must pay \$700 to \$1,000 per month for family coverage.

NOT ON CITY PLAN

Unlike full-time faculty and staff — and unlike almost all other part-time City employees — CUNY adjuncts are not given health coverage under the New York City Health Benefits Program. Other part-time City workers are entitled to insurance under the City health plan if they work at least half of their agency's regular work week, whether that is 20 hours or 171/2. "It would be easy to make a similar determination for our adjuncts, for whom six credits a semester represents half of the average course load," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "And CUNY employs one of the largest numbers of part-time workers among public employers in New York City."

Faced with the lack of health insurance for CUNY's growing army of adjuncts, the PSC and CUNY agreed in the late 1980s to provide health insurance through the Welfare Fund for adjuncts who work half-time or more and negotiated a lump-sum contribution from CUNY to cover the cost. Since then CUNY has greatly increased the number of adjuncts and the cost of health insurance has skyrocketed. While the PSC has won increases to the employer contribution in recent contracts, the contribution has not kept pace with increased costs to the Welfare Fund.

Along with increased salaries for all, the PSC has identified inclusion of CUNY adjuncts in the City health plan as a priority in the current round of collective bargaining. "When we think about the national scandal of 45 million Americans uninsured, how many of us realize that some of those

(Continued on page 12)

At CUNY, adjunct health care is broken

(Continued from page 11)

uninsured are teaching in CUNY classrooms?" asked Bowen. "It makes no sense pedagogically — let alone ethically — to expect people to teach when they are sick."

EVERYBODY'S ISSUE

"This is everybody's issue, not just the adjuncts," she added. "CUNY's failure to provide regular health insurance for adjuncts and graduate employees is just one more way they save money on our backs. Because CUNY does not contribute the real cost of adjunct health insurance and just keeps adding more adjuncts without increasing payments, the Welfare Fund is, in effect, subsidizing CUNY." Transferring eligible adjuncts to the City health plan would provide them with stable coverage and would strengthen the financial stability of the Fund as a whole, Bowen said, which is to everyone's benefit.

The fear of losing coverage too often does lead adjuncts to work while sick or injured. "Part-time employees should not go off payroll as soon as they have been absent for more than one or two days," said Marcia Newfield, PSC vice president for part-time personnel, "and this needs to be addressed in a number of ways." In addition to demanding that adjuncts be brought onto the regular City health plan, in the current contract negotiations the union has also proposed creation of a "sick leave bank," through which members could voluntarily contribute sick days that would be used by others.

GRADUATE EMPLOYEES

While adjuncts' health benefits are worse than full-timers' coverage in many ways, graduate assistants have it even worse: CUNY pays nothing for their health insurance coverage. CUNY graduate employees must pay the entire cost themselves, and only very limited coverage is offered.

Graduate students who teach on an adjunct line may qualify for paid health insurance coverage. But if they do the same kind of work on a graduate assistant line, they won't. As a result, many walk around with no coverage, hoping for the best. When they have a serious problem, they fall back on emergency-room care and underfunded public hospitals.

While the vast majority of US universities — including SUNY — provide health insurance to graduate students who teach, CUNY does not. "As every executive officer and faculty member at the Graduate Center knows only too well, the failure to provide comprehensive, affordable health insurance for doctoral students jeopardizes the reputation of CUNY by compromising its programs' ability to recruit candidates," said PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant, who is executive officer of CUNY's doctoral program in social welfare.

Sean Murray is a student in CUNY's doctoral program in musicology, considered one of the best in the country. "This semester, I declined my teaching fellowship in order to impoverish myself to qualify for Medicaid," Murray told *Clarion*. It was, he determined, the only way he could get medical care while he was uninsured.

"It is not my illness which is inhibiting my progress, it is dealing with the medical bills," said Anna Nugent, a doctoral student in molecular biology. Nugent has lupus, and bought a bare-bones health insurance policy when she began her doctoral studies at CUNY. Unfortunately, she said, it hasn't covered any of her accumulated expenses, even after she spent 15 hours or more a week fighting with the bureaucracy. "I know my health was made worse by the stresses of being behind in my program, getting bills for hundreds, even thousands" of dollars, she told *Clarion*. "The current situation at CUNY essentially means that an individual with my disability cannot do a PhD here."

Murray said that his decision to turn down his teaching fellowship is "jeopardizing my education and academic career," but he concluded it was a necessary decision if he was going to get the health care that he needs. "The decision not to provide insurance to CUNY graduate students...saves public coffers no money, for in the end the City and the State foot the bill," he said. "The current policy is immoral, fiscally irresponsible and bad public policy."

"Employers have a responsibility to provide health care for their employees," New York City Central Labor Council Executive Director Ed Ott told *Clarion*. "If we're going to change that standard, we need to do it in a universal and organized way." Moreover, he pointed out, "it's actually to the benefit of the employers to have a healthy workforce."

DEDICATION

"CUNY part-time faculty are dedicated to our students," said Newfield. "They teach through chemotherapy and broken bones — and while they can, no one should have to do so." Most adjuncts don't share these hardships with students, Newfield said, but students know.

"What is the message that CUNY is presenting to our students?" she asked. "That hard work, degrees and dedication will earn you no consideration? What students deserve instead is a CUNY that provides all faculty and staff with decent health insurance, and allows them to take time off when they face a health catastrophe. That's the kind of university we want."



~ Best Photograph ~

Class B

Dave Sanders

Clarion, Professional Staff Congress/
CUNY, AFT

Main course

LatAsian cuisine creates hunger for learning at Lane HS

BY ELLIE SPIELBERG

David Espinosa with prize-winning student Richard Ayala. "When I go home I have a father and when I come to school I have a father," Ayala said. Fusionistas, pick up your forks. You want fusion? Forget those trendy downtown eateries. Just take the J Train to Elderts Lane and Jamaica Avenue and you'll find a Mexican-Japanese-American chef whipping up incredible LatAsian dishes with kids in Queensly.

Walk in the front door of gigantic Franklin Lane HS and you're in Brooklyn. Walk in the side door and you're in Queens. Whichever borough you prefer, go up the stairs to the Blue Knight Café, as the student kitchen is called, and you'll find a bunch of teenagers in hoodies, jeans and Jordans completely rapt as David Espinosa demonstrates the best way to *fraisage* a ball of *pâté à choux*.

That's French for kneading puff-pastry dough.

So how did France get into the mix?

Because in Espinosa's double period, three-term cooking course, you don't even get to spill a fleck of flour on your sneakers without a solid semester of theory and, according to Espinosa, baking theory owes a lot to those Gallic masters of dough.

In the second term, students roll up their sleeves and get into the act and in the third they learn design, including creating menus with dishes that the new second-term kids will learn to cook.

Dishes like Sautéed Bok Choi with *Pico de Gallo* and Ginger-Lime Flan that blow Cuban-Chinese food out of the water. For these kids, a side of black beans and avocado with fried rice is so last year.

These days, however, Espinosa has a lot more on his plate than teaching kids with newly discerning taste buds. He's trying to keep his popular cooking course from extinction.

"We're breaking into small academies soon," he says. "Lane HS owns the cooking course, so to speak, and I have a big job ahead of me selling the concept to one of the new academies."

But right now he puts that on the back burner and, dressed in his whites, demonstrates technique. "Why wouldn't you crack an egg on the side of the Cuisinart bowl?" he calls out. "Why wouldn't you leave a jar of salt out on the counter when you're mixing a sweet type of dough?"

Watching the clock to check a student's time spent mixing ingredients

That *any* school wouldn't lap up Espinosa's cooking course seems unimaginable as you watch lively, engaged students call out the answers: The egg shell would get into the pastry; the salt might be mistaken for sugar. And it seems unimaginable when you hear about the change in student August Crespo since he started cooking up a storm.

"August was always in a lot of trouble and had no direction," Espinosa says. "He asked me a year ago if he could be in the class. I told him he had a reputation and that if he came to my class he was not going to be demonstrative, argumentative or confrontational. I mean this kid used to spend his time breaking all the windows in the hallway."

Today, August is passing all his classes and just won first place in the Institute of Culinary Education's citywide competition. That got him a half-scholarship of \$15,000, and now he's a finalist in another competition that could win him the other half of his college tuition.

"His parents never thought they'd see the day," Espinosa says. "He calls me 'The Stalker.' I'm always after him, looking for him to make sure he's in school."

What's The Stalker's secret to steering kids away from the streets and into the kitchen?

Crusty on the outside, soft on the inside.

"This should take 10 minutes, not an hour like it took you last time!" he barks over pastry ingredients prepped by Kristian, his sous chef for the day. "You better watch this because you're going to be making 200 of these pastries at the big dinner in the spring!"

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~ Best Writing ~

Class C

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(Continued from page 14)

A whirr of the blender, a flurry of flour, flicks of the wrist as he turns and kneads the dough, then kids scurry to their stations in the big kitchen to replicate the process.

"You have to work hard for your food here like Oliver Twist!" shouts Espinosa, a kind of drill-sergeant bon vivant with a shaved head, dark goatee and a twinkle in his eye. He has a big voice and a big laugh that comes into play when one boy flubs it.

"Didn't you watch what I demonstrated? I can tell that you put the water in all at once instead of drizzling it in. Now no matter how much flour you put in, it's going to be a sticky mess," Espinosa chides.

Checking measurements in another step of the process

"Oh, we like it when someone messes up," Espinosa tells the ceiling, arms akimbo. "It's a learning experience! This way, their knowledge gets solid!"

There's a lot of knowledge to solidify under Espinosa's tutelage. Glaze vs. *glacé*. Sweet vs. savory. Pie crust vs. pizza dough vs. puff pastry. Tarts vs. tortes. Little tricks of the trade, like the fact that raspberries are *awesome* for a chicken marinade.

It all gets learned in the kitchen where Espinosa is king. Unlike the usual teaching kitchen where everyone stands at a line of stoves or at counters all doing the same procedure, "This kitchen has everyone doing different things at different places, like a real restaurant kitchen, so they can get a feel for it," says Espinosa.

"I plan on being an executive chef," says Richard Ayala, who won second prize in the citywide culinary contest.

"I'm going into restaurant management," says Dexter.

"Cooking is my passion," says Jasmine.

"I take this class because it's fun, it smells good, it's inspiration," says Kristian.

"Home ec is baking out of a box! Not here," says Michael.

"When you're stressed, it's so much fun to come in here and just cook and eat," says Haydee, laughing.

"I'm here because my mom's too lazy to cook," says Amani.

"Hey, it's heaven for me when even half the kids in my

classes are here because they want to be and didn't just wind up here," Espinosa puts in.

And it's seventh heaven for him when the reluctant get turned on to cooking and get with the program. Like Luis, for example, who discovered he loved to cook only after enrolling in the class last semester. Or like the former window-smashing culinary star August and like Richard, the other culinary star and contest winner who plans to be an executive chef.

"I didn't choose this class, they gave it to me," says Richard. "To tell the truth, I wasn't really into it. And then this man, Mr. Espinosa, saw something in me, a talent he didn't often see. It's indescribable, what happened, but I developed a passion, a real passion for cooking."

Like his classmates, Richard is well-versed in the flavors of Latin food and Chinese food, savored at either the family table or restaurants or from takeout windows across the hood.

It was not Espinosa's own genetic fusion or familiarity with the great culinary traditions of the Japanese and Mexicans that gave birth to a cuisine the kids dub LatAsian.

The idea came from the kids themselves after two weeks of research and a class consensus. Although food snobs may get their Chinese takeout on the sly, no one can dispute that egg rolls, sweet-and-sour chicken and shrimp lo mein have their own cachet. Combine that with the robust spicy flavors of the neighborhood's Latin food, experiment, make it work, make it healthy and nutritious, and you have a winner.

It was a LatAsian dish, in fact, Chicken Ayala Marsala with Shiitake Mushrooms, that won Richard his prize in the city-wide culinary competition.

But that isn't the only thing that's putting a smile on his face these days. And chopping onions isn't the only thing that brings water to his eyes.

"This man, David Espinosa, he's a second father to me," Richard says. "He and my father are friends. When I go home I have a father and when I come to school I have a father."

"David is joyful. He is humble. He does so many things he doesn't need to do that it brings me to tears."

The impact of college study in prison

Higher ed linked to lower recidivism rates

BY KARAH WOODWARD

IN 2007, ONE IN 99 adults in the United States was incarcerated — the highest rate of any nation in the world.

Keeping 2.3 million people behind bars costs US taxpayers about \$60 billion each year, and high recidivism rates are one reason those numbers are so large. Within three years of release, 67% of former prisoners are re-arrested and 52% are re-incarcerated.

One cost-effective way to help former prisoners stay out of jail is to provide them with access to higher education while still in prison. "College education for prisoners is life transforming," said Dr. Michelle Fine, distinguished professor of psychology at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Fine's study of inmates in a New York women's prison found that those who took college classes were four times more likely to remain out of prison over a three-year period after release. More than 15 other studies have also linked college study behind bars with lower rates of re-imprisonment. The size of the effect may vary, the studies have different strengths and weaknesses, but almost all research points in the same direction.

"If we know this and we know this works, then why isn't there a college program in every prison?" asked Sean Pica, executive director of Hudson Link, a prisoner education program serving inmates at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. Such programs in fact are scarce. Though CUNY helps many former inmates reenter society, it offers no college programs for men and women currently in prison. The reasons are bound up with the politics of crime, where an emphasis on punishment over rehabilitation has ruled for the last few decades. Those who work in prisoner education are hopeful, however, that this is beginning to change.

PUNISHMENT VS. REHABILITATION

For almost 25 years, the federal government provided Pell Grants for all students in financial need, including those serving prison sentences. From 1970 until 1994 incarcerated students were eligible to receive federal tuition assistance. Higher education programs extended throughout the nation's prison system, with 350 college programs in 45 states.

Then in 1994, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton. This overturned a section of the Higher Education Act of 1965 by eliminating prisoner eligibility for Pell Grants.

The number of programs nationwide dropped to fewer than 10. In New York State there were nearly 70 post-secondary prison programs in April 1994. Within four months, only four remained.

Individual states soon followed the national government's lead, cutting State funds for post-secondary education funding by limiting or eliminating prisoner eligibility. In 1995 New York's Governor Pataki eliminated the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) for incarcerated individuals and barred the use of public funds for college programs in prison. "At that point in time, it was believed that politicians got elected to office by being tough on crime," said Fine.

Thirteen years later, post-secondary prison education at the national level is a shell of its former self. In that landscape, Pica said that New York State is doing better than most. Today there are 16 college programs within the 69 facilities of the New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS). All are coordinated with private colleges and universities, and most rely upon private funding. Many of the supportive faculty and advocates are from public institutions, but in contrast with states such as North Carolina or Texas, public colleges in New York are not institutionally involved.

Today about 1% of New York prisoners are enrolled in on-site programs of higher education.

College programs originally spread through New York state prison facilities in response to prisoner demands for improved living conditions in the wake of the Attica uprising of 1971. In 1973, former Attica inmates transferred to Green Haven Correctional Facility in Poughkeepsie worked with prison administrators and community members to start a bachelor's degree program with Marist College. Other institutions followed suit.

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~ Best Writing ~

Class B

*Clarion, Professional Staff Congress/
CUNY, AFT*

(Continued from page 16)

When programs were cut due to the funding restrictions of the mid-1990s, it was again through prisoner advocacy that higher education slowly began to return. Prisoners at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility and, later, at Sing Sing petitioned for college degree programs at their respective facilities after student aid for prisoners was eliminated. Bedford Hills started offering a privately funded degree program in 1997. The Hudson Link degree program at Sing Sing began in 2000, also funded by private donations and grants.

According to Pica, none of the Hudson Link graduates has returned to prison. “Our programs at Sing Sing are shattering recidivism numbers all over the country,” he said. As someone who went to prison at age 16, Pica has witnessed the transformative results of education firsthand. By the time he left at age 33, he had acquired his GED and bachelor’s and master’s degrees. After release he earned a second master’s degree at the Hunter School of Social Work.

POSITIVE EFFECTS

Bedford Hills, New York’s only maximum security women’s prison, has one of the best known college programs across the country, called College Bound. Affiliated with Marymount Manhattan College, it has served as a model for other state programs including Hudson Link, which partners with Mercy College.

The study of the program at Bedford Hills, titled “Changing Minds: The Impact of College in a Maximum Security Prison,” completed in 2001, was undertaken by a participatory research team that included seven, women prisoners in Bedford and five researchers from the Graduate Center at CUNY. A three-year recidivism study, conducted by the New York State DOCS, found a recidivism rate of 7.7% among the 274 inmates who took college courses, compared to 29.9% among 2,031 who did not. Participants in the college program were also far less likely to violate parole: only 1.1% did so, compared to 17.8% of those with no involvement in college study (http://web.gc.cuny.edu/che/changing_minds.pdf).

Selection bias is of course a potential issue and hard to control for in this kind of research. But in a cautious review of the literature on all types of prison education, Gerald Gaes, former director of the Office of Research and Evaluation at the Federal Bureau of Prisons, concluded that studies designed to control for stronger motivation or other selection effects “still demonstrated reductions in recidivism and [positive] effects on labor market outcomes.” Effects shown in these studies were not as large, Gaes told a conference on prisoner education at John Jay last spring — but he

noted that “even small effect sizes can produce substantial net cost-benefits.”

The interview-based component of the Bedford Hills study “explicitly sought evidence that could disconfirm positive impact,” the authors wrote, interviewing women who had dropped out of the program or who were dissatisfied with it. But the interviews, with both prisoners and guards, still pointed to a range of strong positive effects. Guards were unanimous in the opinion that the college program improved safety and discipline inside the prison walls — even those guards who were not supportive of college for the women conceded the positive effects on the women, their children and the prison disciplinary environment.

SUPPORT

Beyond the recidivism numbers, the interviews in the Bedford Hills study describe how the experience of college study changed women’s sense of themselves and their relationships with others, including guards and other prisoners.

“For these inmates a college education is a lifeline, a new identity, a new self,” said Fine, who worked with college programs at Bedford Hills from 1994 to 2001. “People really need a strong liberal arts education, not only vocational training. They need to read, write, think and reflect.”

A broader education, she told *Clarion*, allows students to develop critical and reflective thinking skills, to see, as one student noted, “my own intellectual signature for the first time.” Learning from mistakes and revising, increasing one’s ability to understand different points of view, understanding the past and re imagining the future, and taking responsibility for the crime and for tomorrow are skills that apply to life beyond the classroom, said Fine.

The current program at Bedford Hills started in 1997, three years after its predecessor shut down due to the loss of public funding. One of the leaders of the effort was Regina Peruggi now president of Kingsborough Community College. Then head of Marymount Manhattan College, Peruggi helped form a consortium that worked to bring college classes back to Bedford Hills.

“I went up to the prison and met with a committee of inmates,” Peruggi told *Clarion*. She had heard of their interest from a friend who was a volunteer, former New York State Deputy Commissioner of Aging Thea Jackson. In a joint effort with prison staff, inmates and Westchester residents, Peruggi gathered support from academia, particularly from other women college presidents. “As women and presidents of colleges, we thought we should do something for these other women,” she recalled. “We thought education was essential.”

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The Impact of college study in prison

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Faculty at Marymount Manhattan were “extremely supportive.”

CHANGE

The results included a more positive atmosphere within the prison, Peruggi said, with 60% of inmates involved in some type of education. “The program makes a real difference. Frankly it is startling to see the difference it makes, especially in the lives of women.”

For years the impact of College Bound was little known outside of Bedford Hills, but Peruggi credits Fine’s research with changing that. “Her study was very important work,” Peruggi said, “one of the first to get the data from the system and really follow this” over time.

Fine and colleagues also found that College Bound participants often continue their studies after they are released. Whether this involves completing their degree or earning a more advanced diploma, Fine said, “there is a lot of interest in college once they are on the outside.”

Chrystal Kitchings is one former inmate who is intent on continuing her education. She enrolled at Lehman College this fall as a sociology major, transferring credits earned while getting her associate’s degree during six years at Bedford Hills.

Using the skills she gained while incarcerated, Kitchings went to work with the College Initiative Program at Lehman College after her release in December of last year. The College Initiative is a reentry program that assists former inmates who want to begin or continue college studies. It is one of four programs at CUNY that work to help those released from prison succeed in higher education.

CUNY’S ROLE

“Education is the best thing a place like that can offer you,” she said about life at Bedford Hills. “Everything else is just something you do for the state. But your education is for you, for the betterment of you.”

Launched in 2002, College Initiative (CI) was formerly at John Jay before moving to Lehman College last year. Each semester about 200 students benefit from its services, which help clients bridge the gap between prison release and a college program. Tutoring, mentoring and help with college applications are among its offerings. A stipend helps cover the cost of participants’ books if they maintain their academic performance and work to give back to the community.

“They use college as part of their plan to re-integrate into society because it’s a real anchor and helps with their identity – they can say ‘I am a student,’ ” explained Benay Rubenstein, the program’s director. To date, the recidivism rate for College Initiative participants is just 3.2%.

Other programs at CUNY are the College and Community Fellowship (CCF) at the Graduate Center, the Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College and CUNY CATCH, a youth program that operates out of three college campuses.

At the Graduate Center, the College and Community Fellowship began in 2000. CCF was founded to serve formerly incarcerated women to help them overcome barriers to transition into work and school. Close to 200 people have benefited from the program, with more than 30 going on to obtain post-graduate degrees. In its eight years of operation, less than 2% of program participants have returned to prison.

Today CCF has about 125 participants, with about 50 enrolled at CUNY and the rest at other area schools. CCF’s director, Vivian Nixon, is herself an alumna of the program. “In today’s world, education will be the only way that people can stop the cycle,” said Nixon. “Places like CI and CCF need to be everywhere.” “Reentry” is a popular buzzword,” she added. “But it’s superficial until we understand that the way for people to stay out of prison is through educating people for jobs that will sustain a different way of life.”

The Prisoner Reentry Institute (PRI) was established in 2005 at John Jay and is housed within the college’s Office of Continuing and Professional Studies. Rather than providing direct services to ex-offenders, PRI’s mission is to promote education and public policy that support successful reentry into society for former prisoners.

One example is the training and technical assistance programs for CUNY Career Placement Centers that PRI recently initiated. After hearing from College Initiative and CCF students that there was a gap in services, PRI began working with the career centers to help advisors provide better career counseling to ex-offenders.

“The Career Placement Centers lacked the expertise to work with this population,” explained Debbie Mukamal, the institute’s director. “And when these students went to employment programs outside of the colleges, such as the Fortune Society, where most of the clients do not have college degrees, the programs were unfamiliar with how to deal with an educated base. We are providing training curriculum and making resources available to help them do a better job.”

“Education of all kinds is an excellent vehicle for re-integration,” said Mukamal, noting that not everyone is ready for college and many former inmates will need pre-college preparation.

Such pre-college preparation is one of the missions of the CUNY College Alliance for Transitional Career Help (CUNY CATCH), a program based at LaGuardia Community College, Bronx CC and Medgar Evers College. In collaboration with the

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NYC Department of Education, CUNY CATCH works with adolescents in City jails, on probation or just at risk, among both high school students and dropouts. The program provides outreach and career counseling, with an emphasis on GED test preparation and pre-college prep. “What we are doing in the program is teaching transitional skills,” explained Samuel Farrell, administrative director of CUNY CATCH. In operation for the last 15 years, it is the longest running program at CUNY that works with prisoners and ex-offenders. Many of its participants at any given time are at Rikers’ Island, making CUNY CATCH the only program at City University to provide educational services directly to people currently behind bars.

MISSION

“In all the years we have offered GED classes, we have not needed to do outreach,” Farrell said. “The fact that we don’t have to do any outreach to get students shows that the need is great.”

These four CUNY programs provide vital assistance to those they serve. But college classes for prison inmates are still not part of the mix, and Fine argues that this needs to change. “Our mission is to educate all the people of the city,” said Fine, adding that more than 55% of inmates in New York State prisons are New York City residents. “CUNY has the intellectual and political know-how to build such a program.”

“A couple of years ago we tried to initiate a program to teach a course at John Jay College and Lincoln Correctional Facility, a New York State work release prison in Manhattan, that would be comprised of both John Jay College undergraduates and Lincoln prisoners,” said PRI’s Debbie Mukamal. The course didn’t get off the ground, she said, but the discussions led the New York State DOCS and CUNY to explore new ways they might collaborate to provide higher education to people with criminal records.

MODELS

Manfred Philipp, chair of the University Faculty Senate, would like to see CUNY take the lead by seeking State funding for higher education in prison. State law needs to change, he said, to enable CUNY to play the role that it should. The

University Faculty Senate advocated for this proposal to be included in the University’s 2008-2012 Master Plan. But to Philipp’s disappointment, the idea was not incorporated in the document’s final draft.

“Governor Pataki arranged it so that State money could not be used,” said Philipp. “But while incarcerated, those individuals should be able to be productive and have an opportunity to go beyond what got them into prison in the first place. This would really help CUNY fulfill its mission of being an institution in the public interest.” North Carolina provides one model of how post-secondary education can be provided throughout a state’s prison system. “State-sponsored tuition is one of the keys to success in North Carolina,” according to a paper presented by Jeanne Contardo and Michelle Tolbert at last spring’s prisoner education conference at John Jay.

PRO EDUCATION

“The State does not make specific appropriations for prison education; rather, it treats inmates enrolled in college courses the same as non-incarcerated students,” wrote Contardo, director of programs for the Business-Higher Education Forum, and Tolbert, a senior researcher at MPR Associates. The cost of prisoners’ tuition is then covered by a “robust funding structure,” including both waivers and education grants.

New York has yet to move in that direction, but prisoner education advocates are hopeful. They see signs of a shift away from a purely punitive approach in the growing use of drug courts and other alternative sentencing measures and the recent partial reform of New York’s Rockefeller drug laws. “Right now people in parole and corrections are very pro-education,” said the College Initiative’s Benay Rubenstein. “It’s the first time in a long time that there has been a collaboration on all parts — colleges, parole officers and prison facilities. I’ve been waiting for this for 15 years.” Fine argues that making college widely available in State prisons would also mean a substantial investment in prevention and supporting families. “We save dollars on re-incarceration and in return we create stronger communities,” said Fine. “There are lots of good reasons,” says Mukamal, “why now the time is right.”

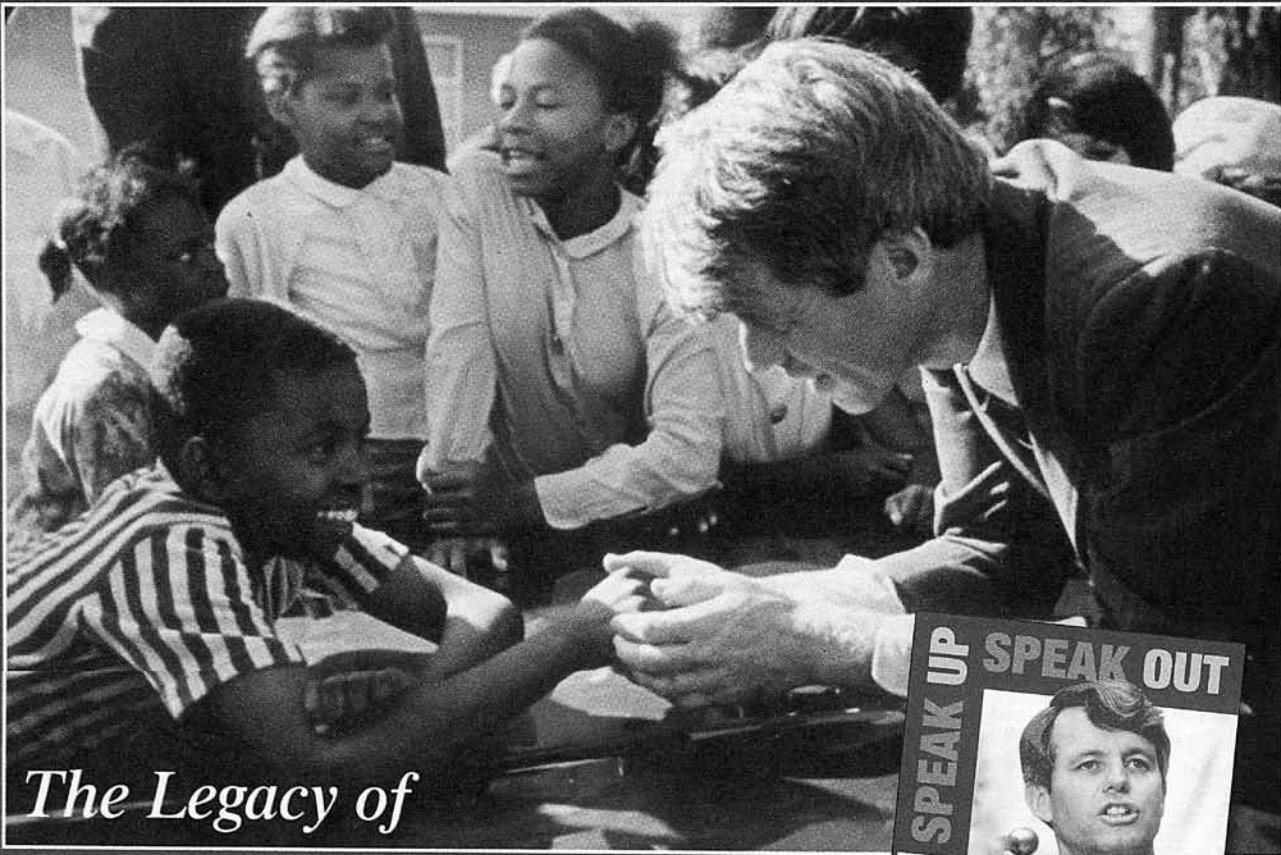
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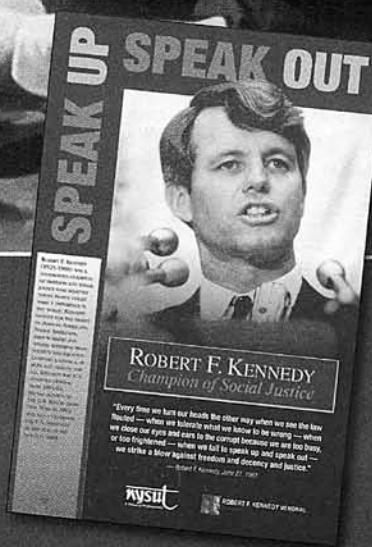
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*A look at the project and
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NOVEMBER 2008

CONSTRUCTION

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PAGE 4



PAT ARMOR

PSC FOR OBAMA IN PENNSYLVANIA **LABOR TO NEIGHBOR**

Since September PSC members have been working to elect Senator Barack Obama the next president of the United States. The PSC had one of the first NY

In addition to the phone banks, the PSC sent buses to Pennsylvania on three weekends in October. More than two hundred members had taken part by mid-October. Above, Marguerite Spence, a continuing education adjunct at Queens College, talks with a Philadelphia voter.

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~ General Excellence ~

Class B

Clarion, Professional Staff Congress/
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PAGES 8



HEALTH PLANS

**November: your
chance to change**

In November, you can
change your health
plan choices. It's also the
open enrollment period for
doctoral employees' new
health coverage...
PAGES 9

The postal system belongs to the people – The Constitution says so

BY FLO SUMMERGRAD

ARTICLE 1, SECTION 8 of the United States Constitution set forth the purpose and scope of a postal system for the people of this country. The Postal Reorganization Act of 1971 preserved this vision, providing that, “The United States Post Office shall be operated as a basic and fundamental service provided to the people by the Government of the United States, authorized by the Constitution created by Act of Congress, and supported by the people.”

APWU President Bill Burrus said: “These are the constitutional and legal underpinnings of the service now known as the United States Postal Service. The clear constitutional intent was that the government would provide postal services ‘to the people’ that would be supported ‘by the people.’” In direct contradiction, postal management is now by and for the business community.

“Decisions,” Burrus said, “including network redesign and plant consolidations, are not based on their impact on the people, but on their effect on the large mailers... This business model ...has, by its design, excluded ‘the people’ for whom the service was originally intended. Through the creation of organizations that are closed to the general public and their representatives, large mailers act in concert with postal management to develop processes and plans to reconfigure the Postal Service to better serve their corporate interest.”

A clear example is the reduction of mail collection boxes across the country. In many communities, the familiar corner

blue USPS mailbox disappeared. Because the large corporate mailers do not use these boxes, they didn’t want to bear part of the cost of collection in the communities.

“Function 4” cuts in window staffing have created long lines and angry customers. Again, this is of no concern to the corporate mailers who could care less about these services to the public.

With the same disregard for the needs of the American people, the May 12th rate change will give breaks to those big mailers who bypass the sortation system where postal workers work. Burrus said, “The USPS network realignment plan focuses in major part on reducing the number of facilities that process outgoing mail, because large mailers now print, presort, and transport large parts of their mailings to points of destination. Outgoing processing, within certain geographical limits, does not serve their interest, therefore, but adds to their cost. The major mailers and the USPS are unconcerned that the realignment they are proposing will add a day—or two or three—to delivery of mortgage payments, utility bills and birthday cards.”

This will impact service to the ordinary customer, at the same time that it will reduce the mail that postal workers handle. To save our service and our jobs, our Local and National Union must take this message to the community. It is time to get involved and pressure elected officials at every level and hold them accountable to the people for their response.

Get out the word that the big corporate mailers have hijacked the USPS. The Postal Service was created for the people. It is up to us to take it back to the people.

~ Editorial/Opinion ~

Class B

The Union Mail, NY Metro, APWU

Reason to Believe: A Political Hate Machine Rejected

Haven't you heard? The rain is falling down. The windows are boarded up. Things all around us have fallen apart. How do we begin again?

BY KEVIN SHEIL, VICE PRESIDENT

UNDER GEORGE W. BUSH'S leadership, labor policy, and vision, union members and working Americans have suffered and endured some of the harshest financial conditions in history as a consequence. Never before has the United States government worked so hard against its own citizens. The question of small government or big government is inconsequential. The answer is effective government – a government that works for the people. During the last eight years, with six of the last eight controlled by a Republican president, a Republican majority in the Senate and a Republican majority in the House of Representatives, it was their responsibility to make the rules and move the agenda. And boy, did they ever push! A radical program that consisted of tax cuts for the wealthy in a time of war, a failure to invest in our nation's infrastructure, corporate hatred and dogma that infiltrated the Department of Labor and anti-worker/anti-union court decisions that endeavored to set back the labor movement for decades.

The I-35W bridge falling down in Minnesota and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans were certainly symbolic of our nation's decay and served as ugly reminders of a domestic economic policy gone awry. The sight of Americans hanging from rooftops and living in trees as if we were some third-world country was an offset to our senses. The fact that our government didn't protect us, couldn't protect us, wouldn't protect us, said something more to working class Americans than just simple incompetence. It screamed that we did not belong anymore. It was the administration's doctrine of You're all on your own, and the intentional implementation of domestic policies precisely carried out that ultimately resulted in the government's avid abandonment of us. We suspected that class warfare had been declared on us, even though it was never publicly announced, because we felt it and lived it. But it was there on our TV sets, playing out right in front of our

disbelieving eyes. For many working class American, that was the moment of clarity that perhaps we were being left behind.

During Barack Obama's successful campaign for president of the United States, the financial meltdown had been touted as the turning point that put him in office. It can be argued that it was only part of the perfect storm, which included a 'collective awakening' that put him into office. The policies of the Bush administration and John McCain's willingness to support and continue them had by then been rejected. Working class Americans were living with daily doses of reality and faced obscene decision to either pay the medical insurance bill for a sick relative or pay the mortgage to keep a roof over their head. They understood the fundamentals of the economy were not sound. They understood that their jobs were being shipped to countries that we had free (not fair) trade agreements with. They understood that their salaries had remained stagnant or even diminished when adjusted for inflation. They understood that social security, overtime pay and pensions were all threatened. They understood all the talk and foolishness about redistribution of wealth, because they witnessed the taxpayer money given to corporation and then redistributed to their own greedy executives. They knew the false outrage created by FAUX NEWS regarding social welfare or handouts to the "poor" or "lazy" was a ruse when "welfare for the wealthy" was already a way of life in America due to tax breaks for the rich and tax incentives to corporations that send American jobs overseas (a different form of handout). They knew the talk about socialism was a distraction because a month earlier the government essentially nationalized our banking system. George Bush and John McCain and their cronies have been redistributing wealth for years now; not to us but to their wealth friends. They understood that no matter how many times John McCain said "my friends", John McCain was not our friend because he didn't care about us. They understood that there were two Americas — one for the wealthy and one for everyone else. But something amazing happened. Instead of just understanding and accepting our fate, CWA Members actually did something about it. They knocked on doors, made phone calls and spread Barack Obama's message of hope and change for "one American for all." Our Members knew that there was no good reason not to support Barack Obama, there was only one bad one. The Labor movement once again sacrificed blood, sweat and tears for this moment. Our moment! Our Members did what union members have been doing for years. They made a difference. That's how you begin again.

~ Editorial/Opinion ~

Class A
The Eagle, CWA Local 1103

Taxpayers wanted!

BY JOSEPH C. GORDON,
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER

TAXPAYERS WANTED? That's a slogan you're not likely to hear this campaign season, but maybe it's an idea the candidates should be talking about.

A recent column in *Fortune* magazine by Geoff Colvin argued that the proper debate over income taxes shouldn't be who gets a tax cut, but why so many Americans make such low wages as not to be paying tax at all. That's an interesting thought coming from a conservative business magazine.

According to the numbers in the article, the bottom 40% of Americans in income had a negative tax rate, that is they actually received more money (largely through the Earned Tax Credit) than they paid in.

Colvin says that's bad for "social cohesion" — the haves who pay taxes resent those who don't pay, and the poor resent the people with higher incomes. I would add that people in the middle — TWU members and other unionized workers — have the biggest gripe: Their share of taxes is a much higher percentage of their incomes than the wealthy. That's why cuts for those at the top of the income ladder.

But, as the article notes, "More fundamental is why some people's incomes are growing so much faster than other people's incomes." That wasn't always the case.

Reminding us of that, — and what unions have done for this country — is a recent article in *The New York Times* by Louis Uchitelle. Using a current level of \$20 per hour as the

inflation-adjusted equivalent of the wage levels first won by unions after WW II, Uchitelle writes, "The \$20 hourly wage, introduced on a large scale in the middle of the last century, allowed masses of Americans with no more than a high school education to rise to the middle class. It was a marker, of sorts. And it is on its way to extinction."

As labor economist Harley Shaiken is quoted: "The important model that rolled off the Detroit assembly lines in the 20th century was the middle class for blue-collar workers."

I think most workers would agree that the economic model rolling off the assembly line today is nowhere near as attractive as that mid-century classic. It's top heavy on wages for the bosses, sluggish in buying power at the grocery store and in real danger of having the wheels come off at the first sign of recession.

Unfortunately, too many politicians in both parties argue that education and training are the route back to middle-class wages. Yet, some 15% of college because nothing better is available. White-collar jobs in computers and other technology have joined the blue-collar jobs in the march overseas.

This situation didn't develop overnight, and it will take awhile to fix. The election this year gives us an opportunity to get back on track. The first thing that should be done is to pass the Employee Free Choice Act so more workers can join unions.

More union members will mean more better-paid workers — and more taxpayers.

~ Editorial/Opinion ~

Class C
TWU Express, TWU

LOCAL 1180

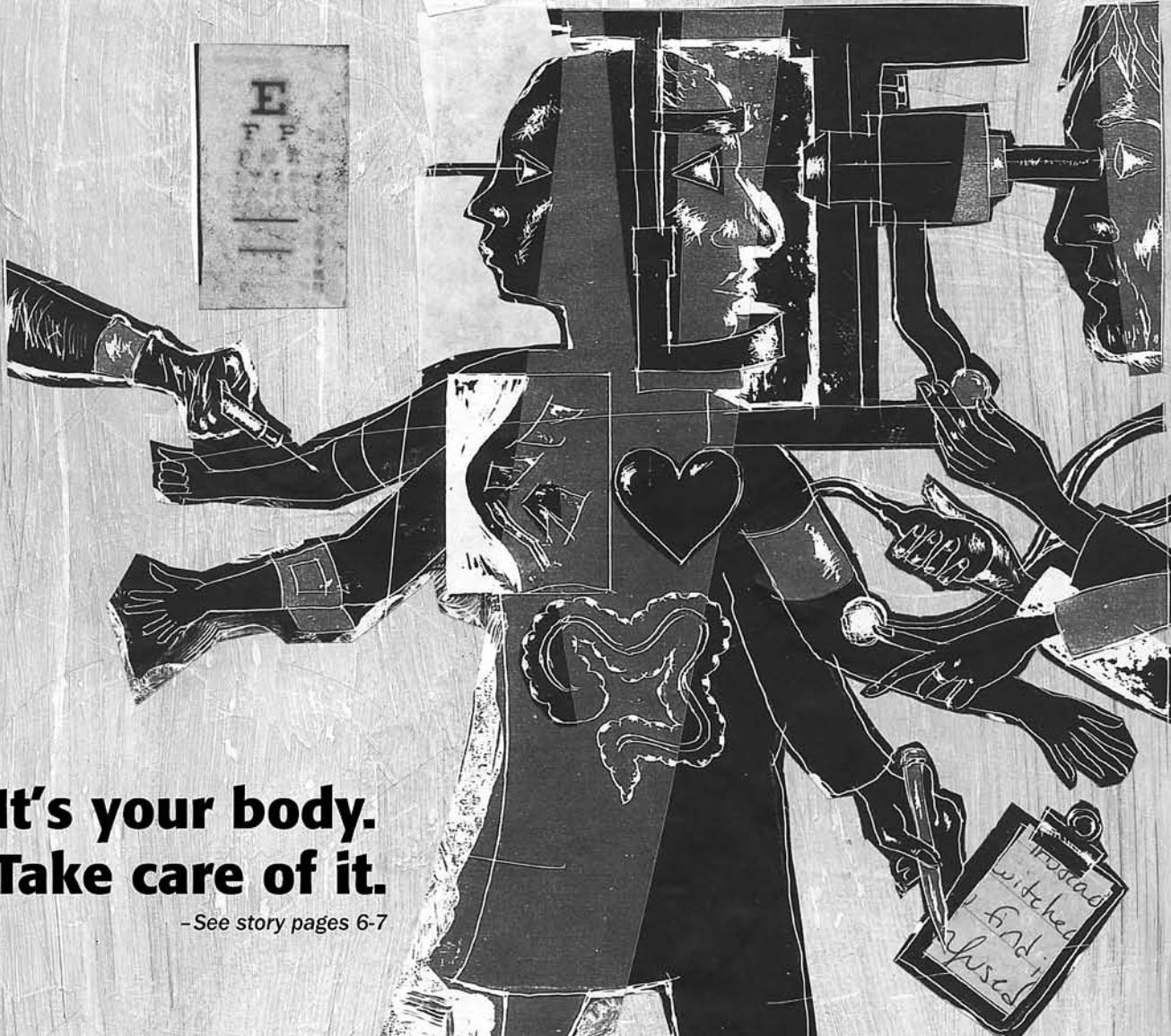
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MAY/JUNE 2008



It's your body. Take care of it.

- See story pages 6-7

~ Best Graphic Design ~

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New York TEACHER

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Fightback on Layoffs

linda - Fri, 05/15/2009 - 10:42

Start: 05/15/2009 - 10:37am

The "at risk" letters received by workers should be seen as the beginning of a process. The Union will be fighting these layoffs and everyone should participate. There is a BCW Chapter meeting on May 19 to plan strategy. There is a City Council Budget Hearing on May 26 for DHS, HRA and ACS - members should plan to come out and express outrage at the Mayor's budget. Buttons are available against the ACS cuts and a flyer and ad campaign are in the works. A demonstration may be announced soon and a letter writing campaign to City Council members is ongoing. Unite and fight back!

Calendar

ACS Announces Layoffs

michelle - Tue, 05/12/2009 - 18:26

News

On Tuesday, May 12, the Union received official notification of more than 500 planned layoffs in the Administration for Children's Services. The Union has been informed that the agency expects to notify at-risk workers on Thursday, May 14. The notice includes positions that are being eliminated due to State approval of the Improved Outcomes for Children initiative, in addition to layoffs for economic reasons.

The Union is reviewing the information, as we continue to fight to prevent these layoffs.

BCW Chapter Meeting May 19

michelle - Mon, 05/11/2009 - 17:55

News

Meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 19, at East 22 Street in Manhattan.

~ Best Web Site ~

Class B

www.sseu371.org
SSEU Local 371

Intention to Lay Off Workers

News

of the City's intention to issue at-risk letters in es:

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UPDATE: Sunday, May 17, 2009, 12:00 AM.

Swine flu forces school preparedness

School officials should plan ahead in case a local health emergency is declared and schools are required to close, the State Education Department and the Department of Health announced after an outbreak of swine flu had already closed three New York schools as New York Teacher went to press.

[READ MORE >](#)



AFT Innovation Fund: Grants to boost your students' achievement

What if you and your union could receive money for projects you've always wanted to try to boost your students' achievement?

[READ MORE >](#)



Striking Stella D'oro bakers won't back down

NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Lee Cutler, Professional Staff Congress President Barbara Bowen and dozens of local leaders from the Hudson Valley and New York City labor movements gave a boost to the 135 striking Stella D'oro workers as their strike enters its ninth month.

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The Latest:

- First Person: Life as a student with dyslexia
- Prescription for success: Educate
- PHOTOS: Activists rally for farm workers at the Capitol
- Drug ruling a victory for cancer patients
- TRS: What to do when faced with 'early' retirement
- Health Briefs: Promoting bus safety
- AQE: Rochester community calls on state to block staff cuts
- Elementary educators: apply now for Better Beginnings Award
- Hundreds of NYSUT activists to push circuit breaker - oppose Tier 5
- Tell SED what you think - take the testing survey
- UPDATE: Tenure for Teachers in Instructional Support Service Positions
- Grade 3-8 English exams: New York students continue steady progress
- Film, music festival celebrates labor history
- School budgets seek slight increase
- Health briefs: School nursing

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Lesson plan initiative highlights work of Robert F. Kennedy

"Speak Up, Speak Out: Robert F. Kennedy, Champion of Social Justice" is an initiative to share Kennedy's legacy with a new generation of students. Lesson plans suitable for 4th, 8th and 11th grade classes link his social justice agenda to New York state standards in social studies and English language arts, ideas, concepts, themes and skills of the standards



NYSUT's new **Career Center** resources for professionals in e



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OR 2009

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LOCAL 46 METALLIC LATHERS, SHED AND REINFORCING IRON WORKERS
Lather

The latest issue is:
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April 2009

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New Teacher >>>> Diaries

Second Chances

May. 15, 2009

6:17 pm

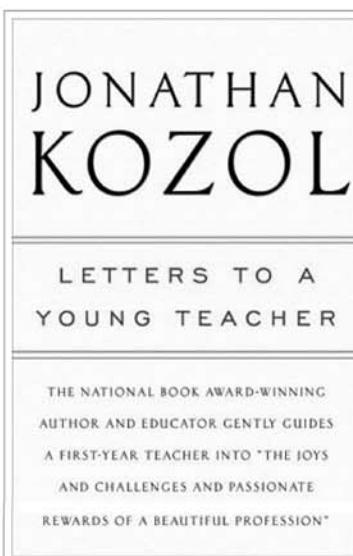
by bronxteach
No Comments

Filed under: New Teacher Diaries

[Editor's note: Bronxteach is the pseudonym of a second-year teacher in an elementary school in the Bronx. He blogs at bronxteach.com, where versions of this post first appeared.]

Recently I started reading Jonathan Kozol's *Letters to a Young Teacher*. I'd tried to read it last year, but found it hit a little too close to home, especially when he was fawning over the first-year teacher and I was presiding over total chaos. Now, with a bit more confidence in my own abilities and the past in the past, I'm giving the book a second chance. It's been a really gratifying read so far, as it's reminded me of some essential ideas I'd forgotten in the course of the past year and a half.

Before I started teaching I read Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*. I figured it was an important book for any teacher going into the Bronx, and once I finished I realized how right I was. The book, almost 20 years old, is an impassioned and moving portrait of America's poorest schools and the children who learn in them. Besides bringing me face to face with some of the challenges I would face, the book also sparked a mixture of passion and outrage as well as a sense of purpose. [More »](#)



NY1 Covers "There Is No Excuse" Meeting on Staten Island

May. 15, 2009

4:30 pm

by W.J. Levay
No Comments

Filed under: UFT News



~ Best New Media ~

Class C
Edwize, www.edwize.org
UFT

Featured post

Teachers at KIPP's AMP Academy Are Officially Certified as a Union Bargaining Unit

by Leo Casey

The New York State Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) has voted to certify the teachers at KIPP's AMP Academy as a recognized collective bargaining unit of the United Federation of Teachers. The decision was made during PERB's monthly meeting in Albany, and clears the way for the teachers and their union to collectively bargain with KIPP.

[More »](#)

Recent comments

Phyllis C. Murray said "Re . "AFT Marks 55th ..." on AFT Marks 55th Anniversary of Historic Brown Decision

Jeanne Gumbleton said "There is a discussion going ..." on CFE: Education Funding Makes a Difference

Phyllis C. Murray said "Ron Isaac is correct: "Teachers, ..." on The Teacher as Guardian Shadow

Remainders: How "many" ATR teachers were rated poor? | GothamSchools said "[...] UFT's new TV ad: ..." on UFT's New Ad: "Today's Lesson"

Donaldson said "Hello, Ms. Mc I command ... on An 8th Grader's Vow: "Yes, We Will"

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