

Clarion

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DECEMBER 2011



HEALTH CARE Uniting for adjuncts

From Hostos
to CSI,
Bronx CC
to the BoT.

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AFP/Getty Images

A SMALL STEP ON TAXES

Two months ago, most observers predicted that Albany would let New York's "millionaires' tax" expire on December 31 and put nothing in its place. But Occupy Wall Street has changed the political equation, and legislators began to feel nervous about opposing calls to tax the rich. (Above, the "March on

the Millionaires of Park Avenue" in October.) Union and community advocates say the tax changes fall far short of what is needed. But the tax package does represent a significant shift in direction. And if fair-tax advocates have their way, it's just a start.

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BENEFITS

Paid parental leave renewed

An agreement between the PSC and CUNY means that funding for this benefit will continue past December 31. Across CUNY, parents-to-be welcomed the news. **PAGE 3**

TUITION PROTEST

Crackdown and shutdown

CUNY's decision to use force against nonviolent demonstrators was sharply criticized, as was Baruch's decision to cancel classes a week later. **PAGES 5,9**

OCCUPY

People's library comes back

One of the most creative institutions in the Occupy Wall Street movement is the People's Library. Most of its books were destroyed by the NYPD. **PAGE 10**



PSC-CUNY

Research Award deadline Jan. 15

A pilot program that began last year has brought some changes to the PSC-CUNY Research Awards, which have supported CUNY scholars for 40 years. **PAGE 8**

LABOR IN BRIEF

Cleaners ready to strike

Thousands of New York City office cleaners and commercial building workers voted December 1 to authorize their bargaining committee to call a strike if necessary. Failure to reach a new contract by January 1 could trigger a strike of 22,000 office cleaners at over 1,500 commercial office buildings citywide.

"The real estate industry's demands to roll back the wage and benefit standards of lower middle-class workers are unacceptable," said Mike Fishman, President of SEIU 32BJ. "Today's strike vote shows we are determined to keep our city a place that working families can afford to call home."

The union is resisting management's two-tier wage and benefit plan for new hires that would create a lower rung of workers. Management's push for concessions comes at a time when business is good for the commercial real estate industry, which is seeing its highest sales since the boom years of 2006 and 2007.

After taking their strike vote, workers from Local 32BJ joined thousands of fellow unionists in a march for economic justice convened by the New York City Central Labor Council.

Wisc. gov faces recall drive

The drive to oust Wisconsin's union-busting Governor Scott Walker continues to gain momentum. The governor's opponents began circulating recall petitions on Nov. 15 and within 12 days had collected more than 300,000 signatures. Under Wisconsin law, they must gather 540,000 legally valid signatures within a 60-day period in order to force a recall election. Walker took office in January 2011 and quickly angered many Wisconsinites with his assault on the collective bargaining rights of most public employees in the state, and his push for deep budget cuts along with tax cuts for the wealthy.

If the petition campaign succeeds, Walker would face a recall vote sometime in the spring.

Musicians' union to clubs: Change your tune

Musicians from Broadway to symphonic orchestras to the recording session studio are covered by union pensions. Jazz musicians who play in night clubs have no such rights. But that may change. The American Federation of Musicians Local 802 in New York launched a campaign December 8 to unionize New York City's night-clubs by handing out leaflets in front of the Blue Note in Greenwich Village. "We envision a world in which a musician can, while touring the jazz circuit, rack up enough pension benefit credit to be vested in the AFM pension fund and have a steady pension income when the time comes," said Local 802 Vice President John O'Connor.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 61 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10006. E-MAIL: PHOGNESS@PSCMAIL.ORG. FAX: (212) 302-7815.

To be ready for the unexpected

● I was recently reminded of how fast things change in times of crisis. I have a Monday afternoon Social Problems class this semester, and on November 21, we discussed the problems of rising tuition, debt and overwork that American college students increasingly face. Part of the reading for that day was the *New York Times* article "CUNY Rise in Tuition Elicits Protests but no Militancy" from last December. It went over all the reasons that CUNY students had supposedly lost their militancy, become more deferent towards authority and pursued more institutional forms of protest, such as lawsuits, against tuition hikes.

As we were discussing all this, the students protesting the Board of Trustees hearing rendered this whole line of argument obsolete, confirming what PSC member Frances Fox Piven said in the article regarding the unpredictable and fast

development of social movements once they get off the ground.

Costas Panayotakis
City Tech

You teach 16 years, and what do you get?

● I was on the subway on Monday coming home from teaching at City College when I saw a former student. I moved over to sit with her and we talked for about 20 minutes about her studies.

Before I left, she said, "You are the best teacher I have had at City College so far." She had come in early before each class and I would sit with her to help her improve her English.

I have taught Art in Education at City College for 16 years as an adjunct lecturer. It is hard for me to believe how little respect and security a college adjunct is given, even after 16 years of service. Our

health insurance is in jeopardy. There is no seniority clause in our contract. I only keep my job according to the good will of a full-time faculty member. I am 61 years old and frightened.

This is not how a good university operates, and it's time for it to change.

Bonnie Lucas
CCNY

Popular education

● On November 17 and 18, I learned more than on any other day in my college experience. Lectures were held on the need for voicing a wide-range of political philosophies. Q&A sessions arose on the merits of different economic systems, and most important, there was a large panel discussion on how to change our country for the better.

I'm a junior at Fordham University and I had this rich educational experience when I was arrested for

civil disobedience in the Occupy Wall Street protests. The opportunity rarely arises to spend so much time in an environment as intellectually stimulating as that one.

That, to me, is one of the most important messages of Occupy Wall Street. A new conversation needs to happen and we need to do whatever it takes to make sure every side of that conversation is heard. Those in power have no trouble making their voices heard. When the large majority of people are unable to do so, it's essential to remember the power inherent in being a large majority.

Building strength in numbers is a huge part of what unions do for their members and the solidarity from the PSC and all the other unions that have put out a hand to hold up Occupy Wall Street has done a lot to make these conversations possible.

Brian Mangan
Fordham University

Trustees approve Bylaws changes

By PETER HOGNESS

When the CUNY Board of Trustees prepared to vote on an overhaul of CUNY's Bylaws last June, the PSC objected to many of the changes as undermining the rights of faculty and staff.

CUNY central administration claimed the changes were essentially technical in nature, designed to clean up obsolete language and unclear passages that had developed over the years. But the union warned that these were "far more than minor revisions," and faculty and staff seemed to agree: nearly a thousand PSC members sent messages to management in a single day when the changes were announced in May.

UNION OBJECTIONS

In response, management agreed to postpone a vote on the revisions until the Fall, and in subsequent discussions with the union the administration made some significant changes to its proposals. But on several important issues, CUNY did not alter the proposed revisions, and when the trustees voted to approve the package of changes on November 28, it was over the union's objections.

PSC officers laid out the union's continuing concerns in testimony at the board's public hearing on November 21. "The PSC objects to the revisions to Article 11, which diminish the integrity of the job descriptions for both faculty and staff of CUNY by eliminating most from the Bylaws," Mike Fabricant, the union's treasurer, told the board. Taking job descriptions out of the

PSC opposes many revisions



PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant testifying against changes to the CUNY Bylaws.

Bylaws makes it possible to change them with little notice, and appears intended "to limit the union's ability to grieve violations of job descriptions," Fabricant said.

At the same time that descriptions for existing jobs were eliminated, new jobs were introduced with no descriptions at all. "For example," said Fabricant, "the proposed position 'Affiliated Professional' is a meaningless, catch-all title" with no clear purpose or duties – and this "foreshadows a disturbing lack of transparency and accountability in the structure of employment at CUNY."

On the other hand, Fabricant said, "we appreciate that some changes have been made in response to our concerns," which removed some provisions that could have potentially undermined faculty rights.

A lack of meaningful CUNY-wide consultation.

One important example is on guidelines for retrenchment: the provisions of the PSC-CUNY collective bargaining agreement that protect members' rights in retrenchment are defined with reference to Bylaws provisions that were being eliminated. After discussion of the union's concerns, CUNY management agreed to remain bound by these terms.

But despite some positive changes, union leaders said that management failed to address some of the union's main concerns. Nor had CUNY ever sought broad public discussion of the changes – most faculty and staff heard about them only from the PSC. The full text of the revisions was never posted online, and a summary of their final version was not posted until two weeks before the vote by the Board of Trustees.

'ISOLATED'

"This wholesale rewriting of the Bylaws tarnishes the board's historic vision, developed over decades, about how this University should operate," said PSC First Vice President Steve London. "Transparency and employment rights have been sacrificed for a more corporate and hierarchical structure. In adopting these new Bylaws without meaningful consultation with the whole University community, the Board of Trustees stands isolated from the community it is charged to govern."

"The CUNY administration would not have budged one inch on the Bylaws if a thousand PSC members hadn't spoken out last spring," said the union's president, Barbara Bowen. "The faculty and staff response was amazing, but it shouldn't take a thousand protest messages to produce just this partial movement. The Board holds hearings presumably to be influenced by what people have to say. I am disappointed, but not surprised, that they made no further changes in response to our November testimony."

Cuomo shifts tax stand

By PETER HOGNESS

On December 8, New York's Legislature gave its approval to a package of changes in the state's income tax structure. Based on a proposal by Gov. Andrew Cuomo, the tax plan adds new brackets to basic tax rates at the higher end of the scale and cuts rates for many at middle and lower incomes.

But the vote also signaled that the existing surcharge on the state's highest-income residents, known as the "millionaires' tax," would be allowed to expire on December 31 – which means that wealthy New Yorkers will get a net tax reduction, and the State will lose a major source of revenue.

THE NUMBERS

The failure to renew the millionaires' tax means a loss of \$4.6 billion in revenue, while the new tax changes will bring in \$1.9 billion in new funds. The new tax structure will be more progressive than if the millionaires' tax had simply been allowed to expire – but gives the largest reductions to those earning between \$500,000 and \$2 million a year.

Other parts of the plan reduce the MTA payroll tax, which helps fund mass transit, and provide special flood relief upstate. After these deductions, \$1.55 billion will remain for reducing the projected \$3.5 billion in next year's budget, leaving a \$2 billion hole to fill.

A SHIFT

"Albany has moved on taxes – after months of intense political protest – but has not moved far enough," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. While the plan "represents a significant shift in Albany's approach," she said, "it does not produce enough revenue" and "does not eliminate the injustices in our tax structure."

"There is nothing fair about making some of the poorest fami-

Albany revenue deal helps, but not enough



PSC members were among the 30,000 people who marched from Foley Square across the Brooklyn Bridge November 17 in support of Occupy Wall Street.

lies in the state pay CUNY's 30% tuition increase when the richest families are still getting a tax break," argued Bowen.

For Cuomo, the plan marked a sharp turn in language and an adjustment on policy. Since his election, the governor had insisted that the millionaires' tax must end, and that retaining it would in effect be a tax increase. His main talking point, frequently repeated, was that keeping the tax would cause the rich to leave New York. Existing studies show that this is not the case (see tinyurl.com/April2011Clarion-Rich), but Cuomo gave no ground.

By November, the governor had changed his tone. "Fairness in the tax code is a very important issue,"

he told a group of Latino legislators. In December, when the tax plan was announced, Cuomo declared, "We do need additional revenue." While he still wants to reduce New York taxes in the long run, Cuomo said, "If I were to close the entire gap by budget cuts, it would decimate essential services."

Why the change? Observers across the state credited the Occupy Wall Street movement and the political debate it sparked. "The protesters have attacked Cuomo and coined a sticky new moniker: Governor One Percent," wrote Albany *Times-Union* reporter Jimmy Vielkind. Cuomo, who has cultivated support from corporate groups like the Committee to Save New York, is anxious to shed that label.

Occupy protests push 'Governor 1%' to act.

Vielkind also credited union community groups like Strong Economy for All, which organized people "to knock on doors around the state" this fall, asking constituents to pressure key legislators to back increased taxes on the rich.

INEQUALITIES

"PSC members and CUNY students have been exceptionally active in demanding fair taxation," commented Bowen. She pointed to "the union's peaceful direct action for progressive taxation last spring, which resulted in 33 arrests outside the door of the governor's office"; the PSC's role as the first union to back Occupy Wall Street; and "the sustained work by coalitions of which the PSC is proud to be a part," including Strong Economy for All,

99% New York, and the Working Families Party (WFP).

But while the tax package was a change in direction for Albany, labor and community advocates agreed with the PSC that it falls far short of what is needed. Bowen pointed out that the plan's \$2 billion in lost revenue, compared to a renewal of the millionaires' tax, is roughly equal to the projected State deficit for the next fiscal year.

The New Deal for New York Campaign pointed out that, compared to rates in 2011, the new tax structure will give the biggest tax break to those with incomes between \$500,000 and \$2 million a year. "A family making \$50,000 a year will get less than \$200 a year in tax cuts," it noted, while "a family making \$1 million a year gets more than \$20,000 in tax cuts – or \$408 per week." The highest bracket is set to expire in 2014, leading to another tax break for the rich unless it is extended.

REFORM PUSH CONTINUES

With the debate over next year's budget about to kick off in January, fair-tax advocates across the state are planning their next moves. "If Albany's tax deal is a first step," said Bowen, the Fiscal Policy Institute's 1% Tax Plan offers a good map of where our next steps should take us." FPI's plan would raise up to \$5 billion a year by raising marginal tax rates on taxpayers with annual incomes above \$665,000 – roughly the top 1%.

Strong Economy for All and the WFP have vowed to go after corporate tax loopholes; they say that closing these could add up to billions in badly needed revenue for public services.

"The movement for progressive tax reform is far from over," said Bowen. "With a huge budget deficit looming," she continued, "we can't allow...the opportunity for a more ambitious reform to be lost. What's at stake for the PSC is whether our classrooms will continue to be so crowded that students sit on windowsills, whether CUNY faculty will have resources for research, whether students who have dared to dream of a better life will have a chance to succeed."

Paid parental leave renewed

By PETER HOGNESS

On December 8, the PSC and CUNY management signed a letter of agreement that provides for ongoing funding for paid parental leave. Money for the current benefit would otherwise have run out on December 31. Existing provisions of the benefit, which covers full-time faculty and staff in the PSC bargaining unit, thus remain in effect.

WILL NOT RUN OUT

In the 2007-2010 contract, when the PSC won paid parental leave for the first time, the new benefit was created with a fixed amount of cash: paid parental leave was originally slated to end when that money ran out.

That has changed, and paid parental leave is now a regular part of the contractual benefit package for full-time employees in the bargaining unit after one year of service. The PSC and CUNY agreed that funding for the ongoing benefit will be worked out in the context of the next collective bargaining agreement, which will be in effect from October 20, 2010, going forward.

"While the current political and economic context means that progress on the overall collective bargaining agreement has been slow, [see November *Clarion*], the union continues to make progress on contract issues, such as this one, away from the table," said PSC President Barbara Bowen.

Rujin Tian, assistant professor of biology at Bronx Community Col-

lege, is due to give birth January 10, and had been concerned that paid parental leave might no longer be available. "But the union representative in my department, Alex Wolf, was very helpful," said Tian. "He put me in touch with Patricia Young in the PSC office, who told me they were working to get it renewed." When the deal was sealed, said Tian, "I was very glad to get the news!"

NO INTERRUPTION

Any employee who became eligible prior to January 2012 and did not exhaust their paid parental leave by that date will be now entitled to the full benefit into 2012 without interruption.

The parental leave benefit provides for up to eight consecutive

weeks of paid time off immediately after the birth or adoption of a new child. For a child's birth mother, the period of paid parental leave begins immediately after the end of any approved temporary disability leave related to childbirth. Paid parental leave can also begin prior to birth, if medically necessary, or prior to the estimated date of an adoption, if needed to fulfill an adoption's legal requirements, such as foreign travel.

Procedures for using the benefit remain the same. Eligible employees who want to take paid parental leave must give notice of intent to do so by filing an application form at least 90 days prior to the estimated due date of a baby or the adoption placement date of a child with adoptive parents. The form must be filed with the employee's Human Resources department,

and it must include the signature of the employee's department chair or unit head to confirm that the chair or unit head has been given notice.

As before, the benefit covers full-time CUNY employees in the PSC bargaining unit with at least

Now a regular part of the benefit package.

a year of service. Also eligible are full-time teaching faculty who have completed at least two continuous semesters of teaching and will become parents during their period of annual leave. (Substitutes who do

not have a regular, underlying annual appointment are not eligible.) For further details, see psc-cuny.org/our-benefits/paid-parental-leave-agreement or ask your HR office. If you have questions that your college HR department cannot answer, please call or e-mail Patricia Young in the PSC office (pyoung@psmail.org or 212-354-1252).

City Tech cafeteria shut down

By CARLA MURPHY

After City Tech's main cafeteria was shut down by the NYC Department of Health for the second time this year, the college moved to terminate the contract with Canteen, the North Carolina-based operator of the campus eatery.

In a health department inspection on October 3, the cafeteria in the Namm Building earned 103 violation points – almost four times higher than the worst number listed on the city's restaurant grading scale. It was the worst score of any restaurant inspected in Brooklyn that month, according to the weekly *Brooklyn Paper*, which dubbed the campus cafeteria “the dirtiest in the borough.”

NO ACTION

Other CUNY-based cafeterias appear to be in better shape, with the vast majority getting “A” grades from the Department of Health in 2011.

The health code violations at City Tech came after faculty, staff and students had complained to administration for the past year about the

Rodent droppings & ‘filth flies’

cafeteria's problems: they say little to no action was taken.

“We continually brought up declining conditions in the cafeteria at labor-management meetings, but management just kept saying that things were improving,” said Kyle Cuordileone, associate professor of history and a member of the PSC chapter's executive committee. To advocate for change, Cuordileone took photos of the poor food on offer, creating a PowerPoint presentation that documented the cafeteria's problems.

The menu at the now-shuttered cafeteria read like a how-to for Type 2 diabetes: heavy on junk food, fried food and sugary drinks; no yogurt or juice; premade macaroni salad instead of green salad, etc. According to a 2010 report on food choice in CUNY cafeterias, a three-way contract required Canteen to “serve only Coke” at City Tech.

“Maybe on a handful of occasions I'd eaten there,” says Carole Harris,

an English professor who arrived at City Tech in 2006, “but it just seemed so unappealing I started bringing my lunch.”

Through her writing classes, Harris learned that many students had similar reactions. “I'd give them an assignment to write a letter to the president,” Harris explained: the cafeteria's problems were a common target.

After seeing no visible improvement throughout the Spring semester, the union chapter's executive committee asked the administration to consider terminating Canteen's contract.

Spring semester was also when Canteen ran afoul of the Department of Health. A late January health inspection of the cafeteria resulted in 63 violation points, thereby triggering two repeat inspections. The second such inspection, in June, resulted in 69 points – one infraction was not providing

hand washing near food prep or in the bathroom – and led to the cafeteria's first closure.

The second shutdown in October forced the administration to act. By the time of the labor-management meeting later that month, termination of Canteen's contract was already in the works, Cuordileone recalls.

“The [health department's] report was so stunning I couldn't even read it all at first,” said PSC Chapter Chair Robert Cermele, who put it away for a time in order to digest the news. “Rodent droppings, ‘filth flies,’ workers smoking in the food prep areas – every conceivable violation.”

RELATED

Union members think that the health and sanitary issues and Canteen's poor quality and service had a common source: bad management. “If it was so dirty outside on the tables where people are eating,” said librarian Tess Tobin, “then it's not a surprise that the kitchen wasn't kept up.”

City Tech's Vice President for Administration Miguel Cairol emphasized that the health department

issued violations and imposed fines on Canteen, not the college. Cairol added that it was the Auxiliary Enterprise Board (AEB), a private entity that is technically separate from the college's administration, that “approved the existing food service, will approve the interim contract and [will] choose the replacement food service company.”

Cermele agreed that the AEB is responsible for monitoring vendors – but in his view, the college administration is ultimately responsible for overseeing the AEB.

Canteen's statement offered little explanation: “Due to sanitary issues beyond Canteen's control, both parties have mutually decided to terminate the dining and vending contract.” The company declined further comment.

The school has publicly announced that a new bidding process is underway – and there is concern among faculty, staff and students that they may not be consulted on the choice of a new vendor.

But after the events of the past year, union members and students are not willing to be ignored. “All we want,” said Cuordileone, “is a decent, clean cafeteria, with healthy food for the entire college community.” And they will be watching to see that they get it.

Adjunct insecurity increasing, says report

By PETER HOGNESS

As CUNY's public funding is cut, budget reductions at the department level have been frequent across the University. Reducing the adjunct hiring budget has been one of the most common approaches to cutting departmental budgets. Due to the whipsaw of conflicting pressures on college budgets, cutting the adjunct budget has not always translated into a net reduction in adjunct lines – but the insecurity experienced by adjunct faculty has been on the rise.

And class size is on the rise

These are among the conclusions of a report prepared for the PSC Executive Council at the onset of the Fall semester. “The precariousness of [adjuncts'] status is made quite visible under the current economic conditions,” wrote Michael Batson, an Executive Council (EC) member and adjunct lecturer in history at the College of Staten Island, who prepared the report with PSC officers and staff.

The report aimed “to ascertain the impact, if any, of the 2011 budget

cuts on [CUNY's] academic departments...with particular attention paid to the status and stability of adjunct faculty.” Batson and PSC staff examined CUNY-wide employment data and information collected from department chairs and part-time grievance officers.

PRESSURE TO CUT

A survey of department chairs conducted for the report targeted 149 academic departments, with a particular focus on those where CUNY data or reports to the union pointed to a possible reduction in adjunct employment. Responses were obtained from 42%. While the resulting data was limited by respondents' self-selection and other factors, the report notes, the results point to some broad conclusions.

Seventy percent of respondents reported feeling the impact of reduced departmental budgets. Cuts are felt “across a wide array of areas,” states the report, but the adjunct hiring budget was the area most frequently affected. “Larger class sizes and full-time lines remaining unfilled appear to be fairly widespread,” states the report.

Cuts in a department's adjunct budget allocation did not always translate into a net loss of adjunct jobs. Where departments had open full-time lines or unfilled substitute positions, chairs often redeployed these funds to hire adjuncts. In many departments, minimum enrollments and overall class size are on the rise – but CUNY's recent en-

rollment has been at a record high. The net effect of these contradictory pressures varies by campus and department.

“Many [chairs] reported pressure to reduce their adjunct budgets by replacing long-serving, and thus higher paid, adjuncts with newer ones,” the report states. This suggests that budget cuts can increase adjunct insecurity even when adjunct head count is not reduced.

As budgets shrink, adjuncts may be reappointed but end up teaching fewer courses. This can trigger loss of health insurance coverage at the same time that their income is reduced. In the surveyed departments, the report estimates that reduction in course load was more than twice as common as a complete loss of employment.

ANXIETY

CUNY-wide, the net effect of budget cuts on adjunct numbers is unclear. “Data from CUPS/CUNY first indicate an increase in the number of total teaching adjuncts from 9,903 in Spring 2010 to 12,041 in Spring 2011,” states the report. On the other hand, the final 2010-2011 University-wide performance management report “shows that the number of FTE part-time faculty [i.e., the equivalent number of full-time faculty that would be required to cover all courses taught by adjuncts], after increasing steadily from 3,432 in 2005 to 5,009 in 2009, went down to 4,541 in the Fall 2010 semester” – which may support the reduced workload finding.

What is clear is that, as departments across CUNY wrestle with how to teach more students with less money, adjunct insecurity has increased. Rising insecurity leads to a “sense of crisis or anxiety” among many adjuncts, says the report, to an extent that even sympathetic full-time faculty are not always aware.

MIX OF FACTORS

When department chairs must choose which of several qualified adjuncts will not be reappointed or will have their schedules reduced, chairs in this survey often reported

Department budget cuts put adjuncts on shaky ground.

giving weight to length of service or ability to maintain health insurance. The report cautions that this may be less common among department chairs as a whole, since survey respondents were self-selected. But the fact that these job stability factors were commonly cited suggests they could be included more systematically in adjunct staffing decisions.

As the report concludes, “Without a transparent and clear-cut system in place...adjuncts are placed in a very vulnerable situation.”

“Year after year, these cuts to CUNY's budget increase adjuncts' insecurity, increase faculty workload and undermine the quality of our students' education,” commented PSC Vice President for Part-Time Personnel Marcia Newfield. Newfield noted that in contract negotiations, the union will have demanded job stability for long-term adjuncts who have been evaluated and rehired by their departments over several years of service. “Adjunct insecurity is a serious problem,” said Newfield, “and we deserve a solution.”

Dec. 9 ‘CUNY and Race’ forum



Professor Frank Deale of the CUNY Law School discusses some preliminary findings of a PSC study on how race, gender and ethnicity affect hiring, promotion, tenure and reclassification at CUNY, held December 9 at the New York City College of Technology. While the majority of CUNY students are people of color 71% of CUNY faculty are white.

Tuition protest crackdown

By JOHN TARLETON

CUNY's use of force sharply criticized

A student demonstration against increased tuition was met with force by CUNY security officers on November 21, sparking larger protests the following week. CUNY's decision to use batons and arrests to clear the lobby of Baruch's Vertical Campus was widely criticized, and the college's president, Mitchel Wallerstein, later said that he regretted the decision to use force.

The PSC demanded an independent investigation of the November 21 events, which the Chancellor has agreed to. "We have made it clear to the University that violent response to students who are protesting non-violently is not acceptable," said the union's president, Barbara Bowen.

The confrontation occurred outside a public hearing of the Board of Trustees, at which students unanimously opposed the plan for tuition increases that will add up to \$1,500 over five years. In the hearing and at the rally downstairs, students said the increases would cause many to go further into debt, delay their degrees or drop out of college altogether. The hearing also included testimony on adjunct health insurance (see page 7) and revisions of CUNY Bylaws (see page 2).

STANDOFF

When the trustees reconvened at Baruch on November 28, a thousand students and PSC members demonstrated in support of the right to protest and against the tuition hike. The college's administration sharply restricted access to the building that afternoon, canceling all classes after 3:00 pm; the PSC and others argued that the shutdown short-changed education.

The strong turnout was in response to the treatment of protesters on November 21, where students rallied in Madison Square Park and marched the few blocks to Baruch shortly before the 5:00 pm hearing began. About 100 entered the Vertical Campus lobby where they were blocked from going upstairs by a line of CUNY peace officers standing in front of the turnstiles, holding wooden batons in front of their chests.

In response to the standoff, student organizers shifted their approach. "Since we're not allowed in this public hearing, why don't we have our own hearing?" one asked via the "human microphone," a technique in which one person speaks in short phrases that are repeated by everyone else in the crowd. The proposal was met with loud applause, and the group began a discussion of the tuition protest, using the "human mic." Most students sat down on the ground; those closest to the security officers remained standing but turned their attention to the "people's hearing," their backs to the officers.

A few minutes later, the line of CUNY peace officers suddenly surged into the crowd with batons



CUNY peace officers use batons to force student protesters out of the lobby of Baruch's Vertical Campus on Nov. 21.

outstretched, thrusting them toward students to push them out the door. Protesters jumped to their feet to avoid being trampled in the pandemonium. (See tinyurl.com/BaruchVideo.) "I had to pull a woman in her sixties to her feet or she would have been crushed," said Dave Sanders, a freelance photographer.

"It was a really terrifying situation," said Conor Tomás Reed, a graduate student and an adjunct in Baruch's English Department who was one of the protest's organizers.

Reed told *Clarion* he was tripped and thrown to the ground by security officers, who wrenched his arms behind his back and handcuffed him. Reed said his glasses were broken, his shirt torn and the contents of his bookbag were dumped out on the floor. The bookbag was returned to Reed after his arrest, but a CUNY library book and a notebook with his students' writing, grades and attendance sheets were not.

PANDEMONIUM

Tiffany Huan, a staffer for the *Hunter Envoy* student newspaper, said she was arrested simply for not moving quickly when ordered to leave. Video posted on the paper's website shows what happened next: Huan was grabbed by her hair and thrown to the ground by CUNY peace officers, who then dragged her along the floor and put her under arrest. "I was in such pain at this point I was barely able to stand up," Huan said.

Fifteen students were arrested in all, on charges such as criminal trespass or disorderly conduct. As reports reached the hearing on the 14th floor, one audience member silently held aloft a hand-written sign that read, "Chancellor Goldstein,

your students are being beaten downstairs."

A CUNY statement issued that evening (tinyurl.com/Nov21-CUNY) said that the crackdown became necessary after students "surged forward toward the college's turnstiles." But online video (e.g., tinyurl.com/BaruchVideo) does not support that account.

The University's statement said access to the hearing room had been cut off because the room was "filled to capacity" and that students were directed to an overflow room with a video feed of the hearing but refused to go.

PSC President Barbara Bowen spoke with CUNY officials when the hearing room was closed to additional audience members. She pointed out that the room's posted capacity was 300 people, and that there was still ample room for more. The reply was that a decision had been made, and no one further would be allowed in. Some students shut out of the hearing room said they had not understood that the overflow room included a video feed; others said they wanted to present their testimony directly to the Board.

A *Clarion* reporter and PSC video team were excluded from the hearing by CUNY officials, an action that the union protested. (See page 9.)

Speaking at a December 1 meeting of the Baruch Faculty Senate, the college's president, Mitchel Wallerstein, placed primary responsibility for the use of force on the CUNY Central Administration and the SAFE Team, a special squad of CUNY peace officers drawn from multiple campuses. "In

retrospect," he said, "I regret the CUNY decision to use force to remove students."

Three days before, protest had returned to Baruch on November 28 when the Board of Trustees voted

A week later, Baruch shut down classes for a trustees' meeting.

on the tuition hikes. This time, the Vertical Campus was shut down before they arrived. A memo from Wallerstein had canceled all classes in the building that began after 3:00 pm on the day of the protest, ordering that they be rescheduled to Friday, December 2. Access to the Vertical Campus was restricted "to those with an urgent and legitimate need to be in the building." Almost 250 classes, serving an estimated 5,000 students, were affected.

In an open letter, PSC President Bowen urged Chancellor Goldstein to rescind Wallerstein's memo and keep the campus open on November 28. "The right of free expression does not stop at the door of the Trustees' meeting," Bowen wrote. "It is inconceivable to us as faculty and staff that a college would cancel its primary activity — teaching — to prevent the trustees from being 'inconvenienced or embarrassed' by public protest, she added. Bowen noted that the December 2 date would be impossible for many, due to religious observance, professional obligations or personal commitments.

In a message to union members at Baruch, PSC First Vice President Steve London promised to defend the contractual rights of those affected by the shutdown: "We will not tolerate any attempts to speed-up members' work on days subsequent to the shutdown in an effort to make up for the loss of time."

In addition, London said that PSC would insist that any staff assigned overtime to make up for time lost in the shutdown be awarded compensatory time or overtime pay.

"I feel violated," said Marc Dweck, a junior at Baruch majoring in finance who was prevented by campus security from entering the Vertical Campus at 2:40 pm to attend an economics class that had begun ten minutes earlier. "The Board of Trustees are supposed to be promoting education and they are the ones stunting it."

A couple of hours later, about a thousand students, faculty, staff and supporters rallied outside the Vertical Campus. Several hundred PSC members participated in the union-backed demonstration.

"We need to show solidarity with students," said a faculty member from QCC. "If standing up and protesting in a building gets you dragged out and arrested, that could be us."

Franky Laude, an adjunct teaching art history at Medgar Evers College, said that if CUNY keeps shifting costs to its students, "we're going to go back to the days when only the rich went to college."

Gina Wolff of Hunter College was one of the student protesters who had been shoved out of the lobby of the Vertical Campus on November 21. Wolff returned on November 28, determined to assert her rights to free speech and free assembly. "It made me more involved," she told *Clarion*. "I couldn't believe they would use violence against people standing in a hallway."

PSC leaders said that the union felt it was important for faculty and staff to show up for the Nov. 28 protest, in part because their presence might help avoid a repetition of the events of Nov. 21.

A MOVEMENT RE-ENERGIZED

The Board of Trustees approved the tuition hikes by a vote of 15 to 1, with only the student representative voting no. The decision will boost the cost of attending CUNY from the present \$5,100 per year to \$6,300 per year by 2015. That comes on top of a \$300 increase that took effect this year, for a total increase of more than 30% in five years.

But the CUNY student movement has been re-energized. The influence of Occupy Wall Street (OWS) was apparent through the November protests, from the human mic — popularized by OWS — to working-class students' anger at being told to pay more while their economic prospects shrink. For Conor Tomás Reed, active in both movements, the end of the semester is an opportunity to regroup and set future plans.

"Now is a time to consolidate the movement we have built," he said at the November 28 rally, "so we can come back stronger than ever in the Spring!" As the human mic repeated these words, it dissolved into cheers and applause.

Dave Sanders

Inside the Ohio landslide

By JONATHAN VANDENBURGH

On November 8, 2011, the voters of Ohio rejected Senate Bill 5 by a 61% to 39% margin. At issue was a partisan law that would have eliminated collective bargaining rights for 350,000 state employees.

When the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) called for people to come to Ohio and support the repeal campaign, I signed up along with my wife, Raisa, and our three-month-old son, Leander. We spent the final two weeks before election day going door to door knocking and talking with voters in Cleveland and its suburbs.

ENTHUSIASM

All day, every day, we knocked on doors – more than 1,200 in all – with Leander riding snug in a baby carrier on either mom or dad. It's no exaggeration to say that 99% of people we met were supporters who promised, often vehemently, to "Vote 'No' on Issue 2."

On our first day in Cleveland, we heard a Saturday morning speech from AFT President Randi Weingart-

Unions mobilize for big win

ten at the union hall of Laborers Local 310. Then we headed out to Brooklyn, Ohio – yes, Brooklyn – with a targeted list of names and addresses. Before I could climb the porch steps of one house, a woman leaned out the screen door and yelled, "Save you the trouble! I'm voting 'No.' I'm a teacher! Cute baby!"

I turned back to the sidewalk to find my wife, Raisa, who reported that the woman in the house across the street had a fireman nephew and wanted us to get her a yard sign. Then we each circled the "1" on our sheets to note strong supporters and moved on to the next houses on our lists.

This strong support we met reflected both the well-organized campaign that was up and running for months before we set foot in Ohio, and the stage of the campaign when we arrived. In those last two weeks, our job was not to persuade the undecided, but to turn out supporters who had already been iden-

tified. So we knew that the doors we knocked on would very likely be opened by friends.

Some people were supporters, but not friendly. For example, one man in Willoughby, Ohio, answered his door and listened patiently to my pitch. I handed him a leaflet featuring a heroic-looking fire fighter in uniform with the headline, "Duty Calls."

His response: "I'm voting 'No' because I support the fire fighters and the police, but I don't support the teachers."

Our instructions were to avoid confrontations and this man was already a supporter in terms of how he intended to vote. So I reluctantly left without engaging in further discussion about teachers and marked him down as a "1" on my list. At the end of the block I reported this conversation to Raisa, a PhD candidate and aspiring professor of French literature.

"Which house?" she demanded. "I want to go ask him why he doesn't support the people who basically raised him and his kids." I declined to identify the house and together we went on to the next one.

After sunset on election day, I was in Lakewood, another suburb, trying to turn out a few last votes. At my final door a man answered and, seeing the "No on 2" sticker on my lapel, immediately asked, "What kind of car do you drive?"

Confused, I stammered, "Uh, I don't actually own a car because I live in New York City. But right now I'm driving a Chevy, um, Cobalt. No! I'm wrong. It's a Malibu." I pointed to my rental, parked a few houses down the street.

He was satisfied. "OK then. I already voted 'No.'" He turned out to be a well-informed General Motors retiree and UAW member. We talked about how the current assault on public workers is a sequel to the long trend of political attacks on private-sector unions, from the Taft-Hartley Act to the PATCO strike to the re-

cent case of *NLRB v. Boeing*.

When the votes were counted, more people across Ohio had voted to repeal SB 5 than originally voted to elect John Kasich, the anti-union governor who signed the bill into law. The landslide was the culmination of a campaign that saw a diverse coalition of unions invest more than \$30 million and thousands upon thousands of volunteer hours.

DEFENSIVE VICTORY

It was an important victory, but very much a defensive one. Workers in Ohio gained no new rights or benefits as a result. For example, Ohio remains the only state that grants bargaining rights to full-time, but not part-time, faculty at its public universities. As I learned in my canvassing, some of those who voted "No on 2" are still susceptible to other kinds of anti-union appeals.

But we won, and we won big. And in a year that began with a wave of aggressive right-wing assaults on public workers, the Ohio landslide may mark a point when the tide began to turn. Unions' big margin of victory echoed far beyond Ohio – and the campaign to recall Wisconsin's Gov. Scott Walker (see page 2) is already running ahead of schedule.

PSC joins Nov. 17 Occupy protests

By JOHN TARLETON

Several hundred PSC members were among the thousands of people who rallied at Foley Square and marched across the Brooklyn Bridge on November 17, showing their support for the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement two days after police shut down the group's encampment at Liberty Park.

"I'm here to be part of the resurgence of protest and optimism," said City College Professor of Architecture Alan Feigenberg. "The theme of the 99% and the broadest united front has really been encouraging."

"The youth have woken up.

'The youth have woken up'

There's no putting a cap on this thing," said Roopali Mukherjee, an associate professor of media studies at Queens College. "OWS has shown not only that something should be done; it can be done."

ACROSS NYC

The labor-backed march across the Brooklyn Bridge was the culmination of a day of protest and actions across the city that began early that morning as waves of protesters tied up the Financial District while seeking to shut down the New

York Stock Exchange. There were also teach-ins and student-led general assemblies at several CUNY campuses, speak-outs at subway stations in all five boroughs and a student-led rally at Union Square.

Dozens of labor and community leaders, including PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant, were arrested at the end of the day when they sat down in an on-ramp to the Brooklyn Bridge. It was one of many direct-action protests organized that day at bridges across the nation, calling attention to America's crumbling infrastruc-

ture and the need to create good jobs through increased public investment.

Fabricant told *Clarion* that the seven hours that he and his fellow arrestees were in custody helped build closer ties for the future, as they discussed organizing work in the different social movements they are each a part of. "It helps you to more fully understand the scope of the work going on around the city," he said of their jailhouse conversations.

Adam Tripp, an adjunct who teaches economics at Bronx Community College, was arrested during the morning protest for sitting down in the street a few blocks from the Stock Exchange. He was glad to be released later in the afternoon, and headed to Foley Square rally in time to join the PSC contingent there.

At the Union Square rally, Mazal Ben-Moshe told *Clarion* that she has a personal reason for marching against tuition hikes: she was forced to postpone her first semester at the Hunter School of Social Work this fall after imposition of a \$300 tuition increase that she was unable to pay.

"We're sick and tired of being told that CUNY has to be operated from our pockets," said Ben-Moshe, 27, who worked as a telemarketer for four years to save money to return to school. "We have more than enough money in this country and in this city, especially to help students go to school."

Teach-ins on were held on November 17 at several CUNY colleges, including Queens College and York. OWS-style General Assemblies were also held at Queensborough

Community College, Brooklyn College, and the Graduate Center.

"Queensborough students don't usually do something like this, so it was really special," William Marsh, an assistant professor of English, said later. "This is the first time for many of them that they saw something that was democratic and that amplified their voices."

On December 1, the New York City Central Labor Council (CLC) held a "March for Jobs and Economic Fairness," with several thousand union members marching from Herald Square to Union Square. The CLC demonstration was clearly influenced by the Occupy protests, with many banners evoking the OWS slogan, "We are the 99%." Occupy Wall Street activists organized in support of the CLC march, and invited the marchers to join them in continuing down Broadway to Liberty Park.

Labor & OWS's evolving relationship

DEFIANT

The November 17 and December 1 demonstrations showed the relationship between OWS and the labor movement is important to both, and is still evolving.

"Occupy Wall Street has enjoyed so much success in part because of the defiant tactics they have adopted," commented Alex Vitale, an associate professor of sociology and acting chair of the Brooklyn College PSC Chapter. "The labor movement has been trying to build on, or emulate, that success, and the willingness of numerous labor leaders to risk arrest in a direct-action protest may be a sign of things to come."

"The relationship between these two social movements is a work in progress," Vitale continued. "So far it's mainly been helpful to both."

Defending voting rights of the 99%



Several thousand demonstrators from unions and civil rights groups marched December 10 – International Human Rights Day – against voter ID laws in more than a dozen states that could disenfranchise millions of voters.

Adjunct health care push

By JOHN TARLETON

This semester CUNY faculty and staff, both full-time and part-time, pressed the University to maintain health insurance for eligible adjuncts. "It's not optional," said Blanca Vazquez, an adjunct assistant professor at Hunter, at a November 21 public hearing.

On September 26, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein told the Board of Trustees that, for the first time ever, CUNY planned to include funding for adjunct health insurance in its annual budget request. The announcement came as hundreds of PSC members rallied in the street below the meeting. And at the board's subsequent November 21 hearing, more than three dozen part-time and full-time faculty and staff urged CUNY to follow through on this commitment. Due to the University's past failure to provide adequate funding, 1,800 CUNY adjuncts are at risk of losing coverage next August. (See psc-cuny.org/clarion/november/2011 for details.)

PRIORITY

"Health insurance for adjuncts needs to be made a priority," testified Alexandra Story, an adjunct professor at BMCC. "We teach more than half of the University's courses. We put in the same work for each course as the full-time professors. We deserve to have our health needs treated equally," she said.

Story urged the trustees "to look at what we as adjuncts have brought to CUNY, the hard work that adjuncts put in for really very little money." That work often seems taken for granted, she said – except for "the appreciation I receive [from] my students for helping them approach their writing skills in a new way they had never thought of before."

As someone who had thyroid cancer three years ago, Story knows that maintaining her health insurance is vital. "On the wages I make as an adjunct," said Story, "I am just able to barely get by as a single mother of two boys, ages 5 and 8. The loss of my health insurance would be crippling to me. And as much as I love teaching and find it gratifying, I would have to change careers" if coverage is not continued.

STUDENTS LOSE TOO

Jennifer Hayashida, director of the Asian American Studies Program at Hunter, noted that more than 80% of her program's courses are taught by part-time faculty. "If I can no longer offer potential candidates the promise of health insurance after two semesters of teaching, I am afraid to think of what kind of turnover that would lead to among our adjunct faculty," Hayashida said. "The ones who would suffer the most would be our students who benefit from

Message heard across CUNY

the kind of attention, mentorship, and letters of recommendation our adjuncts provide."

"The adjuncts who rely on CUNY's adjunct health insurance benefit are often the most experienced," said Annette Gourgey, an adjunct assistant professor who has taught at Baruch and other CUNY colleges for more than 15 years. "It would be a great loss to CUNY if...experienced and committed adjuncts were forced to find other work because they could not continue uninsured."

members who their departments held dear were unable to gain access to health care or found their health care coverage tenuous at best," Kirkland told the trustees.

TABLES & TEES

Assistant Professor Heidi Jones said, "For us at the CUNY School of Public Health, a failure to insure access to health care for colleagues within our institution would contravene the foundations of our professional ethos," and reminded listeners that 45,000 people die ev-

teach-in the Hostos chapter organized on November 16. The Hostos chapter has used a hallway table to distribute flyers, buttons and posters on the issue, and to ask people to sign a petition in support of adjunct health care.

College of Staten Island adjuncts set up an information table on November 3 and 17 outside the student union and gathered 600 signatures on a petition in support of the union's position. Students "were amazed when I told them that CUNY might not pay for our health care anymore," said William Smith, who has taught at CSI since 1985. "They couldn't wait to do something."



Hostos students gather around an information table the campus PSC chapter set up November 16 to help promote the campaign to preserve adjunct health insurance.

Jane Clark, an adjunct lecturer at BMCC, noted that the engine of education at CUNY could not run without adjunct labor. She asked the hearing to consider "what it would mean to have that engine constantly plagued with disease and sickness." Maintaining adjunct health insurance is "a practical measure to take care of the majority of the workforce," Clark said – and is also "the right and humane thing" to do.

"I personally will face a life-or-death health crisis when our benefits are cut," said Emily Benson, an adjunct at LaGuardia who was recently diagnosed with late-onset Type 1 diabetes and must take insulin six times a day. "I see doctors all year to make sure that I will not end up with debilitating health conditions as a result of this chronic disease," she said.

Full-timers and part-timers alike said it is both a moral obligation and a practical necessity for CUNY to ensure that adjunct health coverage continues. Even the current system falls short on both counts, said Frank Kirkland, professor and former chair of the philosophy department at Hunter. "Many of my fellow chairpersons...found it disconcerting that part-time faculty

ery year in the US due to lack of health insurance.

Arlene Geiger, an adjunct lecturer in economics at John Jay for the past 20 years, testified that if benefits are cut, she will have nowhere to turn but her hospital's emergency room. "This is not the way that a great university such as CUNY should treat its faculty," Geiger said. She welcomed CUNY's inclusion of adjunct health care funding in its budget request.

"I urge you to hold firm to that commitment during the long budget process," Geiger concluded.

The large PSC presence at the Board of Trustees hearing occurred in tandem with organizing at the campus level. Activists at Bronx Community College held a rolling series of actions, including announcements at departmental meetings, a rally outside Meister Hall, and "T-shirt days" in which union members wore matching T-shirts to declare their support for the union's demands. "It makes a strong statement when you're teaching in front of your class while wearing a T-shirt calling for adjunct health insurance," said Lenny Dick, an adjunct in math and computer science at BCC.

Dick also spoke about CUNY adjunct health care at a social justice

At City College, the chapter leadership pressed the president, provost and other top administrators to express support for adjunct health care at their October 27 labor-management meeting – and got a positive response. Administrators took "Save Adjunct Health Insurance" stickers and wore them throughout the day, Chapter Chair Alan Feigenberg reported.

'WE ARE ALL CUNY'

From college presidents to the co-worker in the next office, PSC members have been working to make the issue of adjunct health care inescapable across the University. Rebekah Johnson, an assistant professor of English at LaGuardia, has spoken with a dozen adjuncts in her department about the campaign, and has distributed posters that other full-timers have put on their office doors. Johnson, who is president of New York State TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), won unanimous approval from her department for a "Resolution on Adjunct Faculty Health Coverage" supporting part-time faculty's right to health insurance.

"We are all CUNY," she told *Clarion*. "We all need to support each other."

One adjunct's story

Renee Mizrahi is an adjunct lecturer in English at Kingsborough Community College and the author of *Secrets to Reading Success*. Below is an excerpt adapted from her testimony at the November 21 hearing of the CUNY Board of Trustees. Full text and testimonies from many other PSC members are online at tinyurl.com/AHI-testimony.

My name is Renee Mizrahi and I've been an adjunct lecturer in the Department of English at Kingsborough Community College for the past nine years. My greatest passions are to teach English and to help my remediation students successfully overcome their literacy challenges so that they can continue their education.

'MY LIFELINE'

On February 8, 2008, I was given the gift of life by my sister Susan. I received the miracle of a kidney transplant because I was fortunate enough to have adjunct medical coverage. The surgery went well and I'm now fine, but in order to stay alive I must continue to take immunosuppressant medication for the rest of my life. Health insurance is my only lifeline to it.

Before my transplant surgery, my hospital social worker's words were "never go without medical insurance." After working with a health care advocate, who was referred to me by the Deputy Mayor's office, I learned that if adjunct health insurance was discontinued or greatly reduced, I and many other adjuncts would be forced into an unfair and life-threatening position. [It] would force me and other adjuncts into the open market to replace our current policies... Because of the disproportionately high cost, many would go without it.

ESSENTIAL & ETHICAL

Working as an adjunct at CUNY is a labor of love. We do not receive high salaries, and we are paid for far fewer hours than we actually work. Reducing or eliminating health insurance for adjuncts [would cut off] proper medical care and life-saving medication for 1,800 hardworking and dedicated people who make up a very important sector of the CUNY workforce.

Continuing to fund this life-saving necessity is the only civilized and ethical choice. I urge you to communicate to the state that it is essential that adjunct health care funds be part of the final budget. As you make the case in Albany, please consider the people like myself who have given their professional lives to CUNY because we believe in what CUNY stands for – people whose lives are now literally on the line.

CALENDAR

FRIDAY, JANUARY 13 / 4:00 pm: First Friday meeting for part-time personnel (this month on the second Friday). Please join us as we set the agenda for the coming semester's activities. PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th floor. For more information, contact Marcia Newfield at mnewfield@psccmail.org.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16 / 12:30 pm: PSC Retirees Chapter January Luncheon. Please join the Retirees Chapter for our annual winter luncheon, with guest speaker Jonathan Buchsbaum who will discuss "New Directions in Film," with visuals. Borough of Manhattan Community College, 199 Chambers Street, Richard Harris Terrace. Tickets are \$24 per person. For more information or reservations contact Linda Slifkin at (212) 453-1252.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20 / 10:00 am: PSC International Committee meeting. Please join us in our efforts to connect PSC members with their global colleagues in an effort to better understand how international economic and political developments inform our shared goals and progress. PSC office, 61 Broadway, 16th floor. For information, contact Renate Bridenthal at bridenthalr@yahoo.com.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21 / 12:00 pm: Labor Goes to the Movies presents a special back-to-back screening and discussion of Davis Guggenheim's *Waiting for Superman* (2010) and the documentary response it inspired, *The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman* (2011), pictured below. PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th floor. For more information, contact Sarah Hughes at shughes@psccmail.org.



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5 / 1:30 pm: Retirees Chapter meeting. PSC office, 61 Broadway, 16th floor.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10 / 6:00 pm: Labor Goes to the Movies presents *Nightjohn* (1996), a film by Charles Burnett about a former runaway slave who returns to a plantation to educate his people in the ante-bellum South. PSC office, 61 Broadway, 16th floor. For more information contact Sarah Hughes at shughes@psccmail.org.

Medicare Part B premium refund

By **JOHN TARLETON & DANIA RAJENDRA**

You could gain up to \$1,200

If you retired from CUNY in 2011 and are covered by City health insurance, be on the lookout for a letter from CUNY in this month's mail. It could save you \$1,200 a year.

The letter provides details on how to apply for a 100% reimbursement of your Medicare Part B premium costs. Medicare Part B is the part of Medicare that covers doctors' visits, outpatient care and other services not covered by Medicare Part A, which covers hospitalization. In most cases, the premium is deducted from your Social Security check.

In 2011, retirees with annual incomes of less than \$85,000 paid Part B premiums of \$96.40 to \$115.40 per month, depending on their year of enrollment. In 2012, all Medicare beneficiaries with income under \$85,000 will have their monthly Medicare Part B premiums reset to \$99.90.

IRMAA EXPLAINED

Medicare beneficiaries with incomes above \$85,000 pay progressively higher monthly premiums above the basic rate.

Reimbursement of your Part B premium costs comes from the City of New York, and you won't get it unless you have signed up to receive it. For the amount of the basic premium (the monthly rate for incomes below \$85K), you only have to sign up once and thereafter should receive your refund check for the basic amount every year.

If you must pay more than the basic premium (increased by what is termed "an income-related monthly adjustment amount," or IRMAA), you will have to fill out a form to seek reimbursement of those additional payments. This form must be



PSC members listen during an October 25 public forum on the future of Social Security and Medicare. Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, keynoted the event which was organized by the PSC Social Safety Net Working Group. The safety net working group educates union members, especially younger active members, about the issues and joins larger coalitions already working in defense of the social safety net. For more, see www.psc-cuny.org/social-safety-net.

filed annually. Detailed information and the form for IRMAA reimbursement are both online at tinyurl.com/NYCirmaa.

'OLD-FASHIONED POLITICKING'

If you do not receive the letter from CUNY, check in with your college HR office or contact the NYC Health Benefits Program directly. (See at the end of this article.)

Reimbursement of your Medicare Part B premiums is a benefit

that was won through union action. Municipal unions first won reimbursement at the bargaining table in 1966, but a succession of mayors pled poverty and paid only a portion of the premium. In 2001, the city paid just 70%, which was then \$384. The return to 100% reimbursement was won through "old-fashioned politicking" by the New York City labor movement, says Irwin Yellowitz, a labor historian

and former chair of the PSC Retirees Chapter.

PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF

By 2000, "it had been an issue that was out there for a very long time," Yellowitz said. The reimbursement meant more and more to people, especially lower-paid city workers, as the premium was going up steadily. "The argument that the City couldn't afford it didn't wash anymore," he said.

New York City unions, including the PSC, the UFT and AFSCME District Council 37, helped mobilize retirees and other members to send postcards, meet with City Council members and testify before the Council on the issue. In 2001 the City Council passed a measure reinstating the full reimbursement and overrode Mayor Rudy Giuliani's veto of the bill. But Giuliani sued to block implementation, and the measure remained tied up in court. In 2002, union efforts finally bore fruit: with Giuliani out of office, the City agreed to drop its suit.

CLAIM YOUR REFUND

You can sign up for your refund of the basic Medicare Part B premium by sending a copy of your Medicare card to: NYC Health Benefits Program, 40 Rector Street, 3rd floor, ATTN: Medicare Unit, New York, NY 10006. (Be sure to send a copy, not the original.)

Benefit a result of union action

If your spouse or domestic partner is eligible for coverage, send a copy of his or her Medicare card, along with your name and Social Security number, to the same address. For further information, contact your college HR office, or call the New York City Office of Labor Relations at 212-513-0470.

Research Award: Time to apply

By **CLARION STAFF**

40-plus years of support

If you're considering applying for a PSC-CUNY Research Award, it's time to prepare your application. The application deadline for the next round of PSC-CUNY grants is January 15, 2012, at 5:00 pm. All applications must be submitted electronically via the CUNY Research Foundation website. (See tinyurl.com/PSC-CUNYawards-apply.) The project description for most awards will be limited to three pages.

THREE CATEGORIES

Established for more than four decades through the union contract, the PSC-CUNY Research Awards have helped thousands of faculty members develop original research projects. Last year, the

PSC and CUNY management initiated a three-year pilot program that modified the awards in several significant ways. (See tinyurl.com/pscAwardsPilot and tinyurl.com/AwardsPilotJan2011.)

Under the new guidelines, applications must be submitted for one of three categories of awards:

- "Traditional A" Awards, of up to \$3,500;
- "Traditional B" Awards, of more than \$3,500 and up to \$6,000;
- Enhanced Awards, of more than \$6,000 and up to \$12,000.

The largest number of grants will be "Traditional A" Awards, with panels charged to fund all the meritorious Traditional A applications and then Traditional B appli-

cations using remaining funds. The Enhanced Awards of up to \$12,000 require a more extensive project description and budget justification. There will be no more than 40 Enhanced Awards.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications that include released time must be for at least \$3,990, and thus should be made as a part of a proposal for the Traditional B or Enhanced Awards. Tenured faculty may not receive more than two awards during a three-year period, and only one of these may be an Enhanced Award.

For further details, see www.tinyurl.com/PSC-CUNYawards-guide

lines. Information on the online application process is at www.tinyurl.com/PSC-CUNYawards-apply.

As established in Article 25 of the union contract, funds for PSC-CUNY Research Awards are available to full-time members of

PSC-CUNY Award applications due Jan. 15 at 5:00 pm

the instructional staff represented by the PSC, and untenured faculty in particular. Part-time faculty and professional staff should note that the PSC has negotiated additional professional development funds for which they can apply. Information and applications for the HEO/CLT Professional Development Fund and the Adjunct-CET Professional Development Fund are on the PSC website, at psc-cuny.org/our-benefits/professional-development.

EDUCATION FIRST

Keep the University open

The afternoon of November 28, Baruch College canceled all classes beginning after 3:00 pm, “during the period surrounding the meeting of the CUNY Board of Trustees.” Access to Baruch’s Vertical Campus building was restricted “to those with an urgent and legitimate need to be in the building.” (See news story on page 5.)

The cancellation, affecting roughly 5,000 students, was announced on two days’ notice. Below is the text of an open letter that PSC President Barbara Bowen sent to CUNY’s chancellor, asking him to keep Baruch’s campus open.

Dear Chancellor Goldstein:

I write on behalf of the 25,000 CUNY employees the PSC represents to object in the strongest terms to the cancellation of classes and denial of student access to Baruch College as of 3:00 pm today. It is inconceivable to us as faculty and staff that a college would cancel its primary activity – teaching – on the grounds that doing so will “ensure the safety of all students, faculty and staff during the period surrounding the meeting of the CUNY Board of Trustees,” as President Wallerstein writes. What creates unsafe conditions is not the presence of peaceful protesters on a college campus, but rather the college’s approach to policing: confining student protesters to an inadequate area and limiting access to public space at this public college.



Jud Gutteau

President Wallerstein’s decision sends the message that Baruch College, and by extension CUNY, puts the desire for control ahead of the interests of education.

That is the wrong message for a university – especially a public university – to send. Speaking for faculty and staff who want to continue the work of education uninterrupted, I call on you to ask

President Wallerstein to rescind his decision.

The lockdown of the Vertical Campus is not about our safety or the safety of our students. It is about repressing student protest, intimidating those who wish to dissent, effectively closing an open meeting, and making Baruch a campus where free speech may take place only in designated spaces. President Wallerstein apparently believes that “the right

of free expression on the Baruch College campus” must await the construction of an outdoor public plaza or the designation of specific areas in which that right may be exercised.

THE TRUSTEES

The right of free expression does not stop at the door of the Trustees’ meeting. Free expression as a right has no meaning if it can be curtailed whenever Trustees might be inconvenienced or embarrassed by its being exercised. Students, faculty, staff and

the community have a legitimate right to engage in peaceful protest, and the PSC will do everything lawfully in our power to protect it.

The decision to reschedule classes and close administrative offices was made without consultation with the PSC representative at Baruch, and, as far as I have been able to determine, without consultation with the elected faculty governance or student leaders on campus.

DISRUPTION

President Wallerstein apparently fails to recognize that many of the faculty who teach after 3:00 pm on Mondays, particularly adjuncts but also full-time faculty, may not be available at the time he has unilaterally declared for the rescheduling of their classes. Faculty may have other professional commitments at that time. In addition, some faculty and students participate in religious observances that prevent their being available on Friday evenings. The ability of professional staff to fulfill their responsibilities is not addressed in President Wallerstein’s message. The union will not tolerate speed-up for professional staff as a result of the closing of offices early today.

It is not too late to reconsider the decision to shut down Baruch’s Vertical Campus. On behalf of the faculty and staff who make CUNY work, I call on you to ask President Wallerstein to rescind his announcement and allow work to continue. Open the campus, open the meeting, and let this university be a university again.

Sincerely,
Barbara Bowen
PSC President

Campus closing a mistake

CUNY & MEDIA ACCESS

Labor press shut out of Trustees’ hearing

By PETER HOGNESS

On November 21, CUNY officials excluded a *Clarion* reporter from the public hearing of the Board of Trustees. A pair of videographers, who were there to record the event for coverage on the PSC website, received the same treatment. In the more than 10 years that I’ve been editor of *Clarion*, this is the first time that union press have been denied entrance to a CUNY public meeting.

EXCLUDED

Clarion’s reporter and the video team both showed up 45 minutes early for the 5:00 pm hearing, to make sure they’d have no trouble getting in. To their surprise, they were told by CUNY security officials that press would be allowed in only if they had a Police Department press pass – a new rule that excludes *Clarion*, CUNY student newspapers, and their associated websites. They said there would be no flexibility on this point.

When our reporter called to tell me he was shut out of the meeting, I

immediately phoned CUNY’s communications office to ensure that our reporter and videographers were given the kind of press access that’s been routine for us in the past. I was told that my message would be passed on immediately to the head of the department, who was at the hearing. But that call went unreturned, as did follow-up calls and e-mails.

At 6:15 pm, during one of several phone conversations I had with our reporter, he spotted CUNY Director of Communications & Marketing Michael Arena standing nearby. I asked him to hand the phone directly to Arena, who took the call. Arena assured me he’d arrange for the reporter to get inside soon, adding, “Give me a few minutes, we’ll work it out.”

But our reporter was not admitted to the public hearing until more than two hours later, around 8:25 pm. Only four or five speakers remained and, by that time, the PSC video team had already left.

During our phone conversation, Arena told me that *Clarion*’s reporter and the PSC videographers had

been denied entry because officials felt they would be “duplicative” of *Clarion*’s still photographer, a freelancer who does have an NYPD press pass and thus had been allowed inside.

I know a picture is supposed to be worth a thousand words, but a photographer is not a writer. Still photos are not video. CUNY’s School of Journalism has rightly emphasized that the future of journalism is bound up with how it develops in all media, on all platforms. Labor journalists, like those of the community and ethnic press, need equal access to newsworthy public events, and we need the ability to cover those events in different media, unimpeded.

BEHIND THE LINES?

The new requirement for an NYPD press pass makes no sense at all – at least, not from the point of view of keeping the CUNY community informed. The Police Department grants its press passes

primarily to journalists who can show a regular and frequent need to go behind NYPD lines. It’s a criterion that excludes *Clarion*, CUNY student newspapers and scores of other working journalists.

While press passes are sometimes granted to journalists who don’t fit that rule, the NYPD’s application of its press pass regulations has been widely faulted as inconsistent and restrictive. Even legendary journalist Leonard Levitt, a police reporter for decades, has had difficulty getting his press pass renewed. This November, the editor of the *New York Observer* (who was ruled ineligible) described the NYPD’s press pass standards as “Kafkaesque” and “ridiculous.” Certainly the NYPD’s rules are not relevant to whether a CUNY-based reporter or camera operator should be allowed to attend a CUNY public meeting.

The week after our exclusion, I was allowed to attend the Board of Trustees’ November 28 meet-

ing, as were reporters for two CUNY student papers. But we were denied entrance as press, and gained admission only as part of the general audience. Once again, CUNY officials insisted that an NYPD press pass was required for media access.

Press access for *Clarion* has been routine at CUNY public meetings in years past, even to sessions that drew an overflow crowd. At the November 28 Trustees’ meeting, I asked CUNY communications staff what had prompted the change. No one could give me an answer.

NO ANSWER

On November 25, the PSC wrote to CUNY to protest the exclusion of labor press from the trustees’ public hearing. The union proposed that the NYPD press pass requirement be dropped, and that in its place some clear, simple procedures be established for media access to CUNY public events. As *Clarion* went to press in mid-December, our proposal was still unanswered.

New rule bars student papers, too

OCCUPY WALL STREET

A library in the public square

By WILLIAM SCOTT

The People's Library at Zuccotti Park – a collection of more than 5,000 donated books of every genre and subject, all free for the taking – was created not only to serve the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) protesters; it was meant to provide knowledge and reading pleasure for the wider public as well, including residents of Lower Manhattan. It was also a library to the world at large, since many visitors to the park stopped by the library to browse our collection, to donate books of their own and to take books for themselves.

DUMPSTERS

At about 2:30 am on November 15, the People's Library was destroyed by the NYPD, acting on the authority of Mayor Michael Bloomberg. With no advance notice, an army of police in riot gear raided the park, seized everything in it and threw it all into garbage trucks and dumpsters. Despite Mayor Bloomberg's Twitter promise that the library was safely stored and could be retrieved, only about 1,100 books were recovered, and some of those are in unreadable condition. Four library laptops were also destroyed, as well as all the bookshelves, storage bins, stamps and cataloging supplies and the large tent that housed the library.

For the past six weeks I have been living and working as a librarian in the People's Library, camping out on the ground next to it. I'm an English professor at the University of Pittsburgh, and I've chosen to spend my sabbatical at Occupy Wall Street to participate in the movement and to build and maintain the collection of books at the People's Library. I love books – reading them, writing in them, arranging them, holding them, even smelling them. I also love having access to books for free. I love libraries and everything they represent. To see an entire collection of donated books, including many titles I would have liked to read, thoughtlessly ransacked and destroyed by the forces of law and order was one of the most disturbing experiences of my life. My students in Pittsburgh struggle to afford to buy the books they need for their courses. Our extensive collection of scholarly books and journals alone would have sufficed to provide reading materials for dozens of college classrooms. With public libraries around the country fighting to survive in the face of budget cuts, layoffs and closings, the People's Library has served as a model of what a public library can be: operated for the people and by the people.

LISTENING

During the raid, Stephen Boyer, a poet, friend and OWS librarian, read poems from the *Occupy Wall Street Poetry Anthology* (see peopleslibrary.wordpress.com) aloud directly into the faces of riot police. As they pushed us away from the park with shields, fists, billy clubs and tear gas, I stood next to Stephen and watched while he yelled poetry at the top of his lungs into the oncoming army of riot police. Then, something incredible happened. Several of the police leaned in closer to hear the poetry. They lifted their helmet shields slightly to catch the words Stephen was shouting out to them, even while their fellow cops continued to stampede us. The next day,



The Other Bolena/theotherbolena.tumblr.com

Protesters and library donors respond to the November 15 destruction of the Occupy Wall Street People's Library by the NYPD, with messages of support and more than 200 immediate book donations.

an officer who was guarding the entrance to Zuccotti Park told Stephen how touched he was by the poetry, how moved he was to see that we cared enough about words and books that we would risk violent treatment and arrest just to defend our love of books and the wisdom they contain.

FROM THE GRASS ROOTS

At 6:00 pm on November 15, a group of writers and supporters of the People's Library appeared at the reopened park carrying books, and within minutes we received around 200 donations. All night and into the next day folks stopped by to donate to and take from the collection. Because the new rules of the park forbid us from lying down or leaving anything there, Stephen and I stayed up all night to protect the books until other librarians came to take over for us. Frustrated and exhausted, but still exhilarated and eager to maintain the momentum of the movement, we kept the People's Library open all day in the pouring rain, storing books in Ziploc baggies to keep them dry.

Then at 7:30 pm on November 16, the People's Library was again raided and thrown in the trash – this time by a combination of police and Brookfield Properties' sanitation team. The NYPD first barricaded the library by lining up in front of it, forming

an impenetrable wall of cops. An officer then announced through a bullhorn that we should come and collect our books, or they would be confiscated and removed. Seconds later, they began dumping books into trash bins that they had wheeled into the park for that purpose. As they were throwing out the books, a fellow OWS librarian asked one of the NYPD patrolmen why they were doing this. His answer: "I don't know."

Five minutes after it started, the raid was over and the People's Library's collection was once again sitting in a pile of garbage. Yet just as the trash bins were being carted off, a man stepped out of the crowd with a book in his hand to donate to us: Joan Didion's *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*. We joyously accepted and cataloged it, placing it on display under a new sign for the library that we made right then on a blank sheet of paper. A true people's library, after all, doesn't depend on any particular number of books, since it's ultimately about the way those books are collected and lent out to the public.

PEOPLE'S LIBRARY 3.0

We're still accepting donations and lending books just as we always have, but we've reorganized ourselves somewhat. We now have three mobile units staffed by OWS librarians, which we can take any-

where we want. For the November 17 Day of Action, we made sure the People's Library was there to supply books to anyone who wanted them. All day long, OWS librarians walked among the crowds shouting, "The People's Library 3.0, mobile and in the streets!" For me, it was easily the most rewarding day in the six weeks I've been with the movement. The people we met at our mobile units – Occupiers from New York and other states, friends of the People's Library, tourists – went out of their way to express their joy that we were still here. They also struggled to articulate their feelings of loss, frustration, anger, disgust and outrage over the seizure and destruction of the library. All we could say in response was, "We're here to stay! Please take a book! They belong to you!" A group of eight OWS librarians even started a new chant: "Whose books? Your books!" It quickly caught fire with the other marchers.

DEMOCRACY & DIALOGUE

Libraries are where we learn about things that are new to us. Their books broaden our perspectives, change the way we see the world and, at the most basic level, provide us with free and open access to knowledge and information. Over the two months that the People's Library has been in operation at Zuccotti Park, we librarians have come to see how vital this mission is to the enrichment of our broader society. What's more, in the course of our day-to-day work there, we had – and are still having – the best time of our lives. The library provides a space of dialogue, creativity, intellectual and cultural exchange and personal growth. When freshmen and sophomores in college ask me, "What should I be reading to understand what this movement is all about?" I see it as an opening for a great conversation. And when they come back to the library to return the books they took, I love to hear about the new horizons that the books helped to open for them.

Although we often shout, "This is what democracy looks like!" on our marches, it's also something we can say every day to those who pay a visit to the OWS library. In fact, it's something that the People's Library, by its very presence – in any location, in any form, with any number of books – is perfectly capable of saying for itself.

William Scott is an associate professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh. This article appeared in the December 12 edition of The Nation. Visit peopleslibrary.wordpress.com for more information and occupyeducated.org for a related effort.

Reading poetry to the riot police

Clarion DECEMBER 2011

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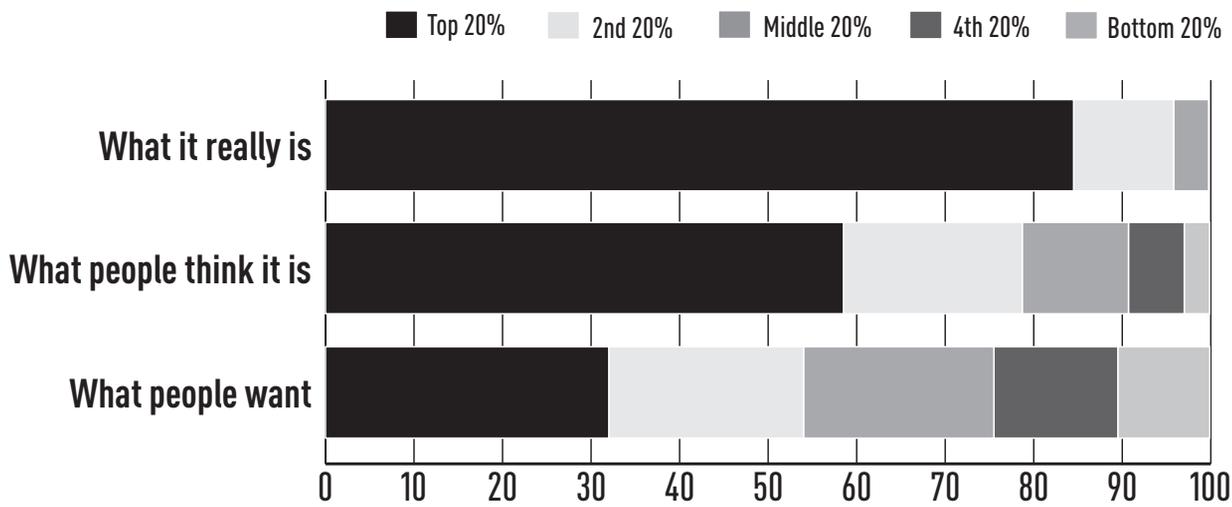
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STATE OF THE NATION

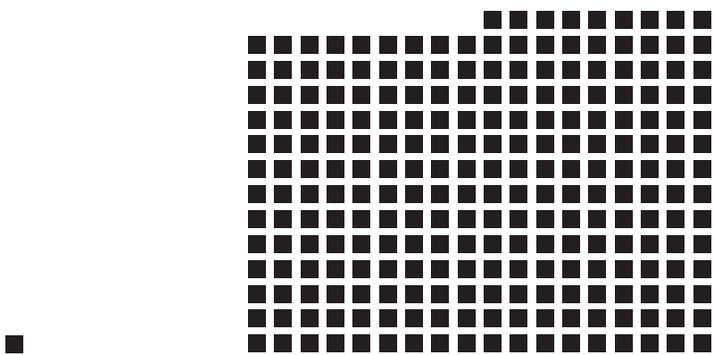
Wealth, wages & inequality

WEALTH DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES



Second and third bar graphs based on a survey of more than 5,000 people conducted in December 2005, described in *Perspectives on Psychological Science* (January 2011). In the top bar graph showing actual wealth, the share of wealth owned by the poorest quintile (0.1%) and by the next-to-poorest (0.2%) are both so small that they are not visible.

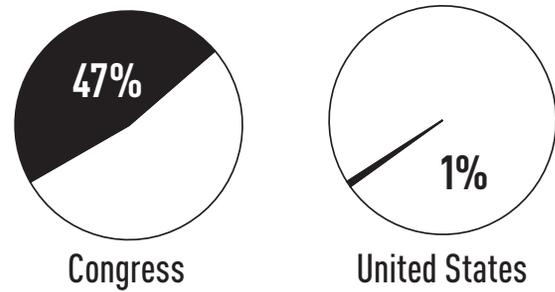
Data from Michael Norton, Harvard Business School & Dan Ariely, Duke University.



**AVERAGE CEO PAY IS 243 TIMES
AVERAGE WORKER PAY**

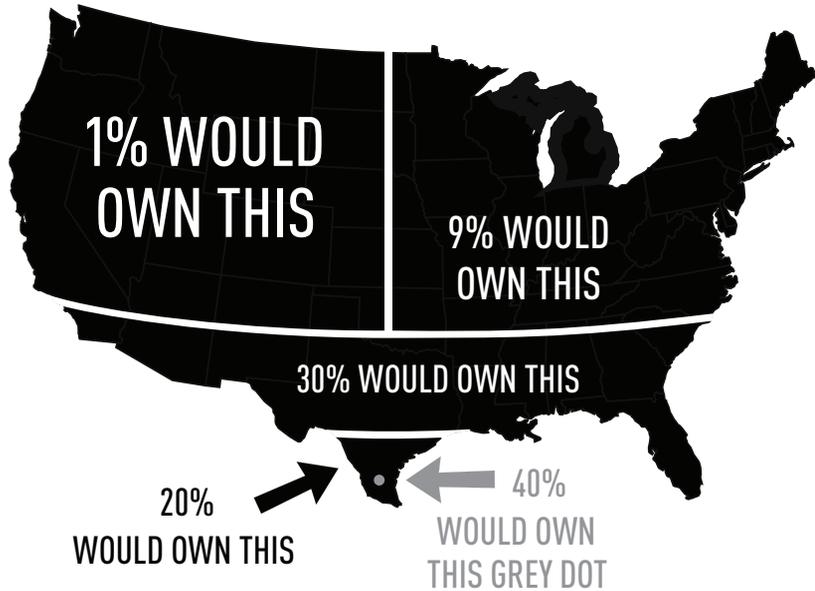
Data from the Economic Policy Institute.

PERCENTAGE OF MILLIONAIRES



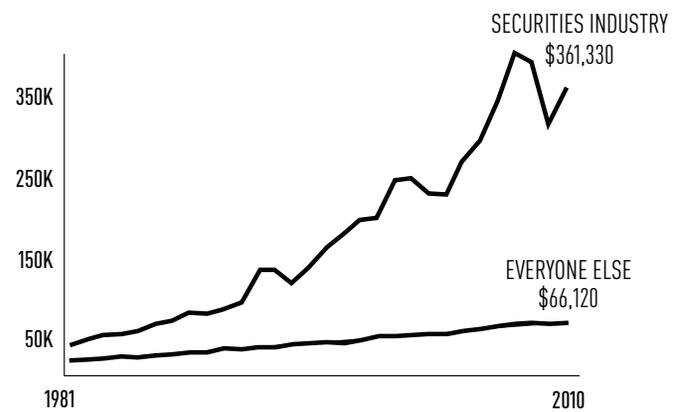
Data from the Center for Responsive Politics.

IF U.S. LAND MASS WERE DIVIDED LIKE U.S. WEALTH



Data from Edward Wolff, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College.

AVERAGE SALARIES IN NYC



Is a stockbroker's work
more valuable than yours?

Data from the Office of the New York State Comptroller.

Images or design concepts thanks to occupydesign.org, except for Percentage of Millionaires in Congress chart (chrispiascik.com) & wealth distribution bar graphs (Norton & Ariely in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, January 2011).



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Keeping an eye on Pathways

CUNY's Pathways process, the central administration's controversial overhaul of general education and transfer requirements for its colleges, has drawn sharp faculty criticism as it unfolded this fall.

October 31 saw the release of the newly proposed University-wide rules, with the deadline for comments set only two weeks later on November 15. These

changes, drafted largely without elected faculty input, will affect every college and faculty member – so stay informed.

Go to www.cunyufs.org/A/CampusResponses&Activities.pdf and read some of what faculty members across CUNY have been saying. CUNY's own pathways web page is at www.cuny.edu/academics/initiatives/degreepathways.html.

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CUNY & OUR COMMON GROUND

Faces and voices of 2011

By **ANDREA ADES VÁSQUEZ**
Graduate Center

Recently, while scrolling through hundreds of photographs taken with my cell phone since spring, I found myself struck by the sheer number of rallies, marches, and pickets I had participated in. They were large and energetic, sometimes numbering in the hundreds, sometimes in the thousands. Among them were the Albany “war room” rally and direct action, the PSC budget/contract demonstration at BMCC, and the May 12 mass mobilization on Wall Street. Bloombergville kicked off the summer, then Verizon workers picketed on West Street, and recently students and the PSC protested at meetings of the CUNY Board of Trustees (twice). Scattered throughout the fall months, of course, was Occupy Wall Street (OWS).

BUILDING MOMENTUM

The excitement grew with each event and there were poignant and memorable moments specific to each: Verizon workers boisterously cheering as a PSC contingent joined their picket line; the beautiful comments tweeted from young people at Bloombergville; construction workers in cranes high above honking and cheering for a large OWS demonstration heading for Police Plaza; the warm response at Zuccotti Park after making a contribution (“Oh thanks, we really need men’s pants!”); adjunct faculty speaking passionately and intimately of their basic right to health care; students in the lobby of the Graduate Center holding a speak-out before marching to Union Square; and so many more.

During this year, I was also busy attending important and motivating PSC-HEO meetings at campuses across CUNY. It is, of course, this day-to-day work of the



Jud Guiteau

PSC chapters that, over the long run, trains us and builds a union capable of providing leadership, working in coalitions, and collaborating with other workers and students. But it was the excitement happening outdoors, in the streets, that brought the union to life for me this year.

NEW FACES

What struck me were the new faces at each event, younger members and supporters who brought renewed energy and militancy. Most poignant, though, were the personal stories: those of workers in other unions, students, adjunct and full-time faculty and staff.

The student voices were especially moving. Whether in person or via online videos, young people were honestly and passionately sharing their concerns, predicaments, fears, anger, and hope.

Sometimes I would find myself thinking about them days and even weeks later, their profound narratives lingering.

For the October Graduate Center conference on Defending Public Higher Education, co-sponsored by the PSC, graduate students urged me and other staff and faculty members involved in planning to “make it non-hierarchical, make it a real conversation.” We very much intended to do this, leaving lots of time for audience participation – but we could not have imagined that, in the atmosphere a few weeks after the start of OWS, the CUNY community and others would respond so strongly to this event. Doing what we should be doing in academia – respectful listening, debating, and planning – connected analysis and inquiry to action at this crucial moment.

At the Graduate Center I work with doctoral students. I am constantly impressed with the creativity, intelligence, curiosity and commitment they bring to their learning. But this year their activism has revealed yet another facet of what they feel compelled, at this moment, to present about themselves.

A BETTER CUNY

One graduate student began her testimony at the speak-out in the Graduate Center lobby with “I love to teach. I love to learn.” It would have been fine had she chosen to begin with “I want...” or “I need...” or “We need...,” or any other number of other insights or demands. Instead, she chose to begin with “I love to teach,” succinctly and beautifully describing her dedication to her students and her vision for teaching at CUNY. And then there were the many undergraduates who detailed personal family circumstances – at demonstrations, to the press, to the CUNY Board of Trustees – about how it has become increasingly difficult for them to remain in college.

All of this made me reflect on my own story, because a good number of years ago I was at a personal crossroads when my career “went computer.” I was recently divorced with two young children, trying to decide where I would go professionally. How would I find direction, new opportunities, new inspiration?

I chose to return to college by enrolling at CUNY, as my mother once had. I asked a friend how to proceed, and she suggested Women’s Studies and a professor of political science and women’s studies, Ros Petchesky.

No, CUNY was not free (thank you very much), but I took out a small loan and, with the help of family and friends, I was on my way. When my daughter graduated, we became a family of three generations of women with degrees from CUNY. I took one class

on immigrant women in which the students came from over two dozen countries. Where but CUNY would you find such inspiring faculty and students to learn from? This is where my commitment to this University comes from.

So when we as students or members of our union chant “Whose CUNY? Our CUNY!” what are we saying? Yes, it is sometimes about the physical space of our public university, but it is also about our personal stories, about CUNY’s historic mission to educate all, and about our collective aspirations for a better CUNY today. And while various circumstances and reasons have brought students, faculty, and staff to this University, in this transformative moment we have inspired and supported each other in unexpected ways. We have found common ground among ourselves and with a wide array of other groups on issues of income inequality and fair taxation. The sharing of our experiences and different realities has invigorated and emboldened us. The listening, learning, and solidarity that has resulted from so many disparate voices coming together bodes well, I think, for our building an enduring movement for change.

COURT CHALLENGE

Pathways lawsuit update

As announced earlier this year, the PSC has prepared a legal complaint against CUNY’s passage and implementation of the “Pathways” resolution. The case will be filed at the time and on the grounds that offer the best chance of success. “We are 100% committed to this litigation,” said PSC president Barbara Bowen. “It will be filed at the most strategic moment. I think it’s a sad day when the University administration refuses to reconsider a plan that thousands of faculty believe is a betrayal of CUNY students, and we will challenge the plan in court.” The PSC will be joined in the suit by the chair and vice-chair of the University Faculty Senate.

A movement and its meaning