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INFUSION

the national magazine for progressive student activists



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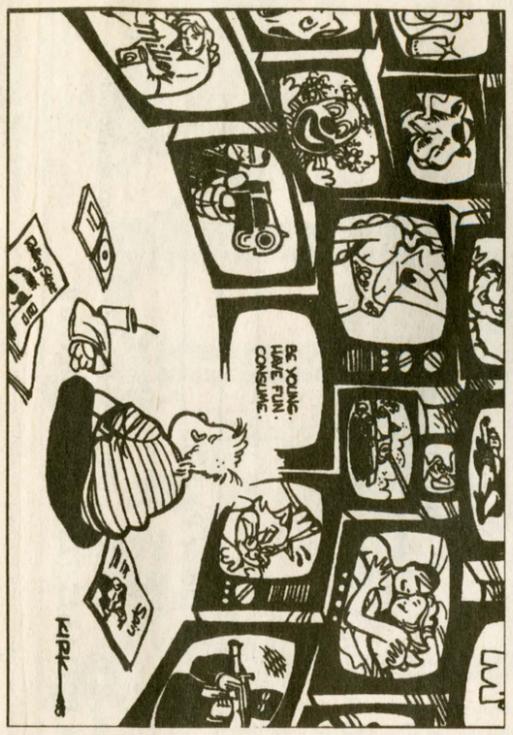
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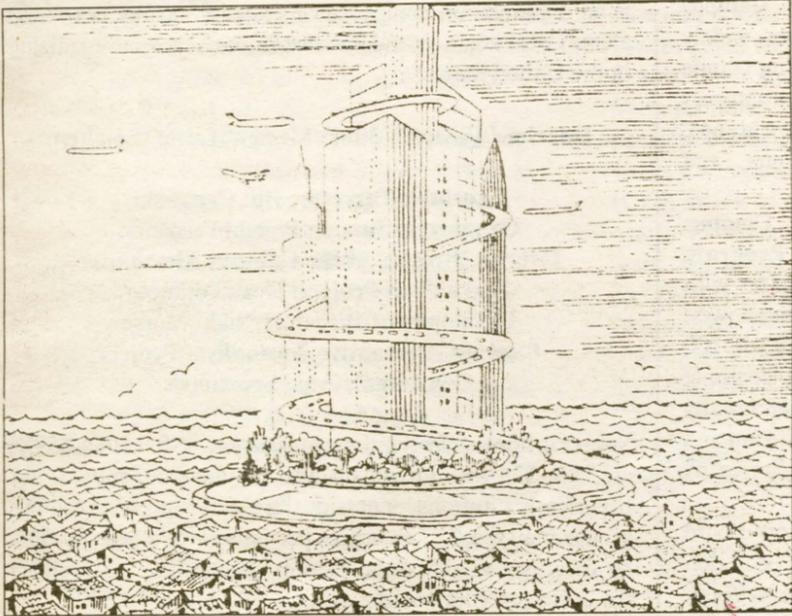
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New York: A View From Below



BY GRASSHOPPER

If you're not from New York City, you must have heard a lot about how nice it's become. That the crime levels have been declining, that the local economy is doing very well, with the city boasting of billion dollar surpluses and windfalls from the booming stock exchange. This is in comparison to the notorious image of New York City as a nitty gritty crime ridden wild west frontier town. The national media has been very supportive of the particular individual that has been credited for this "achievement," NYC's very own Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani.

Giuliani, a former federal prosecutor, made history in NYC in his own way by leading a several thousand police rally turned police riot on the steps of City Hall before he became mayor. Then Mayor, David Dinkins (the city's first Black mayor) had made some overtures to develop a fully functioning and autonomous Civilian Complaint Review Board. Giuliani tapped into an obviously angry police force and took advantage of this conservative backlash from NYPD, by leading this rally. Off duty cops that day were heard calling the Mayor Dinkins a "washroom attendant" who had no business running governmental affairs. Black council members at City Hall that day were verbally harassed and racially insulted by off duty officers who were also getting drunk in public while their on duty fellow

officers watched on. Giuliani came out of this riot smelling like a rose.

Giuliani was able to tap into a racially polarized city by exploiting the worst aspects of suppressed racist tendencies in the white middle and working class against neighboring Black communities. If you are old enough to remember, you may have heard of Howard Beach, Bensonhurst, and Crown Heights. NYC neighborhoods that propelled incidents of racial violence so rank and odious, it made international headlines. Rather than being a peace maker, Giuliani campaigned on a Nixonian "law and order" platform which appealed greatly to a white voter constituency that was fearful and distrustful of Blacks.

Needless to say, Giuliani won the elections by swaying enough liberal turncoats to his position. He initiated what

he termed a "Quality of Life" campaign. He strongly argued that what New York City needed was an absolute clamp down on all those things that made life unbearable. Sounds good? Okay, so that means we're going to raise working people's wages, fight racism, raise the minimum wage, improve the education system, promote and aid higher education students, fight domestic violence, fight racist police brutality, create more jobs, aid poor and impoverished people, fight greedy corporations, eliminate sweatshop labor— am I coming across here? But from the beginning, Giuliani masterfully exploits the frustrations of predominately white commuters by cracking down on "squeegee men." That's right, squeegee men, the scourge of civilized society who try to make a living by wiping the windshields of passing motorists. While liberals whined about civil liberties, Giuliani won his first victory unchallenged, allowing NYPD to remove or arrest squeegee men. He then logically moved against the homeless and panhandlers. It didn't seem to bother the conscience of hardened New Yorkers one bit.

What was particular about this mayor was not just his skillful rhetorical style, but his tightly controlled press conferences. This tactic also forewarned other journalists and toed marginal journalists into line. Pretty soon,

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Linking History:

The Great Chicano Protest of 1968 & Proposition 227

BY CARLOS MUÑOZ, JR

Thirty years ago, on March 3, 1968, more than a thousand Mexican American students walked out of Abraham Lincoln High School and marched through the streets of East Los Angeles, California. In the days that followed, they were joined by several thousand more students who walked out of five other predominantly Mexican American high schools. By the end of the week, more than 10,000 had joined the strike which lasted approximately ten days and disrupted the nation's largest public school system.

The major purpose of the student strike was to protest the conditions of inequality which Mexican Americans had been forced to endure since they were colonized after the end of the U.S. Mexico War of 1846-48.

Three months after the student strike, the Los Angeles white power structure, with the help of the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (COIN-TELPRO), arrested thirteen Chicano college student leaders and community activists who helped to organize the high school strike. Indicted for conspiracy to "willfully disturb the peace and quiet" of the City of Los Angeles, each faced 66 years in prison if convicted. These activists were members of the United Mexican American Students (UMAS), the Brown Berets, and other community organizations.

Approximately two years later, a California Appellate Court cleared the activists, ruling that they were innocent of the conspiracy charges by virtue of the First Amendment. As one of those thirteen activists, this ruling freed me to participate in more battles such as the unsuccessful fight against Proposition 227, which may eliminate bilingual education in California.

Significance of the Strike

The strike was the first mass protest against racism ever staged by Mexican Americans in the United States. Carried out in the non-violent protest tradition of the Southern civil rights movement, the strike's historical significance paralleled the 1960 black student sit-ins in Greensboro, N.C. The Los Angeles strike signaled the beginnings of a powerful Chicano student movement throughout the Southwestern United States.

The strike marked the entry of Mexican Americans into the turbulent history of the 1960s. The student movement generated by the strike was crucial to the emerging Mexican American civil rights struggles and helped shape the Chicano Power Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Those struggles opened doors for equal opportunity in higher education and created Chicano Studies programs in colleges throughout the country. From these emerged the first generation of Mexican American scholars, writers, poets, artists, filmmakers, actors, lawyers, medical doctors, health care and social workers, and teachers. Bilingual education, too, was a product of these fights for Latino equality.

Despite these gains, Latino educational inequality still persists. Latino students in public schools continue to experience the same tracking system which I went through back in the late 1950s. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 30 percent of Latino youth drop out of high school—compared to 8 percent of white students and 12 percent of blacks. And most Latino students who are fortunate enough to graduate from high school are ill-equipped academically or don't meet college entrance requirements. For example, Latinos are the least qualified

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Making Sense of Student Activism in 1998

Welcome back to campus and welcome to our first issue of the 1998-1999 school year! We hope you like our new look. Since our last issue in April a lot has happened. We'd like to update you on a few activities at the Center for Campus Organizing (CCO).

- We moved from Cambridge to Boston a few months ago. Somehow we managed to get a place that is cheaper and bigger than our previous space, and that is above ground with a few windows! Please note our new contact information.

- We'd like to thank some excellent former CCO staff members who contributed mightily to the student movement. Sonya Huber, our former *Infusion* editor and Campus Alternative Journalism Director for almost two years, was hired as the Associate Publisher for *In These Times*. Marti Garza, our former Organizing Director is now the Campaign Organizer at United for a Fair Economy. And Mark Piotrowski, our all-purpose organizer and consultant, has recently relocated to Chicago and is doing tech-support work.

- CCO is happy to welcome Nikki Morse, a May 1998 graduate of the University of Massachusetts, as our new

Development Director. She was one of CCO's first interns in 1995 after having been active in the Day of Action Against the Contract on America, and she has been active since then on the Board of Advisors and on the Board of Directors. Dean Fujimoto is our new Interim Campus Alternative Journalism Director. Dean is originally from Los Angeles and is a junior at Antioch College studying English and creative writing. Preethi Fernando has also joined us this semester. Preethi is a graduate student in Ethnomusicology at Tufts University in Boston, and is our new Organizing Intern.

- Working Assets Long Distance has selected CCO as one of the social change organizations that will receive a portion of their 1998 donor pool. If you are a Working Assets customer, please select CCO as one of your choices when you vote! If you are not a Working Assets customer, please consider switching.

Students Active Around the Globe

Students are active all around the world: in Burma, students are supporting the democratically elected Aung Sang Sui Kyi and the National League for Democracy; in Peru, students are demanding an end to military

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CUNY'S War on CUNY

The Fight to Preserve Open Admissions Against Attacks by the Board of Trustees Involves Nothing Less Than Blocking Educational Apartheid

BY ROB WALLACE

In late May, the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York (CUNY) ended CUNY's 29-year-old policy of Open Admissions by aborting remediation classes at CUNY's senior colleges. In August, a State Supreme Court judge blocked the change in policy.

As started in 1970, the Open Admissions policy allows any New York City high school student who obtains a diploma a spot at CUNY. Those students who can not handle the college material are placed in remedial courses until they can. The point of the policy was to allow access to a college education to students that were traditionally provided substandard high school educations by the public school system.

Open Admissions was implemented after Black and Latino students at City College started successful protests against the exclusionary nature of the CUNY system which, in 1969, was comprised primarily of white students.

Following implementation of Open Admissions, a veritable revolution in education swept New York City. By 1976, the majority of CUNY students were of color. By the early 1990s, 63 percent of CUNY undergraduates were non-white, 54 percent Black or Latino. One barrier in the racial apartheid of New York education had been smashed.

In May, the Board of Trustees began to implement the apartheid once again. The Board voted to block from entering CUNY's four-year senior colleges any student who could not pass proficiency tests in math, reading, and writing. The Board planned to implement the new policy at CUNY campuses starting in September 1999. The Board, comprised primarily of Mayor Giuliani and Governor Pataki appointees, oversees CUNY-wide policy.

The new policy would effectively end remediation classes at the senior colleges. As of now under Open Admissions, students who could not pass any one of the tests could still attend the colleges, take remediation courses, and retake the exams when ready, albeit within a certain set time. The remediation courses were therefore a linchpin of Open Admissions.

The Board's decision turned the three assessment tests into entrance exams. You can't pass the tests? You can't enter CUNY's senior colleges. No other public university in the country uses such entrance exams. The tests act then as another barrier for New York's poor and working class. The senior colleges have been shown by studies by Lehman College's David Lavin to be gateways to higher education and professional jobs for a generation of students of color. The Board's vote to end remediation officially returned apartheid and class war to CUNY.

Apartheid Again

Anne Paolucci, the chair of the Board of Trustees, told reporters after the vote, in revealing language, "We are cleaning out the four-year colleges and putting remediation where it belongs," at the already devastated two-year community colleges.

The end of remediation at the senior colleges will effectively "clean out" tens of thousands of poor, principally Black, Latino, Asian, and immigrant students.

According to CUNY's own study, five colleges, including City College, would lose half their entering students under the Board's new policy. City College has already lost over 3,000 students, many in good academic standing, over the past three years. The losses at City College can be attributed to budget cuts, tuition hikes, and City College-specific departmental closures. In 1995, Yolanda Moses, City College's president, closed, among several other departments, four ethnic studies departments and an entire School of Nursing.

The CUNY report declared under the new Board policy, minority students will be the worst hit. The report stated 55 percent of Latino, 51 percent of Asian, and 46 percent of Black students who would have been allowed entrance under present admissions criteria will be barred from entering the senior colleges. Whites too will be blocked, with 38 percent kept from entering by the new policy. In total, 12,000 students—46 percent of 1999's entering class—will be barred if the policy is successfully implemented.

The CUNY report seconded projections by Lehman College professor Lavin who has for years tracked the positive effects Open Admissions has had and continues to have on CUNY students and New York City. Lavin and colleagues reported that of the 8,000 regular students who entered the senior colleges in Fall 1997, 5,000 would have been excluded under the new policy. That included 2/3 of the entering Black, Latino, and Asian students, and half of the white freshman.

Clearly, if this policy is implemented it would represent one of the worst defeats New York City's working class will have suffered this half-century.

The Board of Trustees was provided the CUNY report a week before it voted in the new policy. And Lavin's study had been available for months. So Board members, many of them bankers and government hacks, were quite aware what impact their decision would have on the schools and their students.

Indeed, before the vote, the Board met for an hour with CUNY lawyers to discuss the likelihood that lawsuits would be leveled at the university system on the grounds the new policy racially discriminated.

Mayor Giuliani, who has continually hammered CUNY with threats and recriminations, called the Board's vote "courageous." He declared, "[The Board's] vote sends a powerful message that CUNY is starting the important process of restoring its reputation as one of the great public institutions of higher learning in this country."

Under the new policy, many students brilliant at political science or physics, for example, but not versed in the material any one of the entrance exams would test, would be barred entrance to the senior colleges. Imagine a newly immigrated Einstein barred from City College because he flunked the reading entrance exam.

A Legal Battle Won

On August 10th, State Supreme Court Judge Elliot Wilk issued an injunction against the Board's decision to end remediation at CUNY's senior colleges. The decision stems from a suit brought against the Board for violating state Open Meetings Laws when it voted against remediation in May. The suit was brought by Professor William Crain of City College's psychology department, and David Suker, a City College graduate student.

Furthermore, on May 26th the Board ejected what few public audience members the room could hold. Inside the meeting, six audience members were arrested, "including those watching and listening peacefully," as Justice Wilk's ruling put it. Among those arrested were a Franciscan nun and Assemblyman Ed Sullivan (D-Manhattan), the chairman of New York State Assembly's Education Committee. Outside the building, 20 demonstrators protesting the decision were arrested.

The Board, never elected by their CUNY constituency, would not permit such violation of Board "democracy," as Chair Paolucci called making fundamental decisions on the future of CUNY behind closed doors!

"This is a huge victory for the forces of democracy in this city," said Crain of Judge Wilk's decision. "Hopefully, it will force the CUNY Board to reconsider their closed-meetings policies, as well as the destructive decision to eliminate remedial education for thousands of students who need it."

Anthony Coles, a senior Giuliani advisor, called the ruling "ludicrous." The Giuliani administration has lost just about every lawsuit filed against the City for violating Open Meetings and Freedom of Information laws.

Coles' comments, and later Giuliani's personal attacks, apparently so pissed off Wilk that in late August he denied what CUNY had automatically received from other state judges in the past: a stay of the injunction while CUNY appealed. That means the Board's decision is currently blocked and the campuses must refrain from making any moves to dismantle remediation programs.

The Board's decision is also being contested on another front. Earlier this summer, former City College administrator and current faculty Board of Trustee representative Bernie Sohmer requested New York State's Board of Regents to review the decision to end remediation. The Regents oversee education state-wide, including CUNY's master plan, a document describing the structure of CUNY and the principles by which the university is to be run.

Sohmer charged that because ending remediation fundamentally changes admission standards and the very structure and mission of CUNY, the Regents would have to review the decision. A key question the Regents are looking into is whether sufficient access to CUNY would be maintained if remediation were ended at the senior colleges. From CUNY's own report and Professor Lavin's work, access under the new policy would be denied.

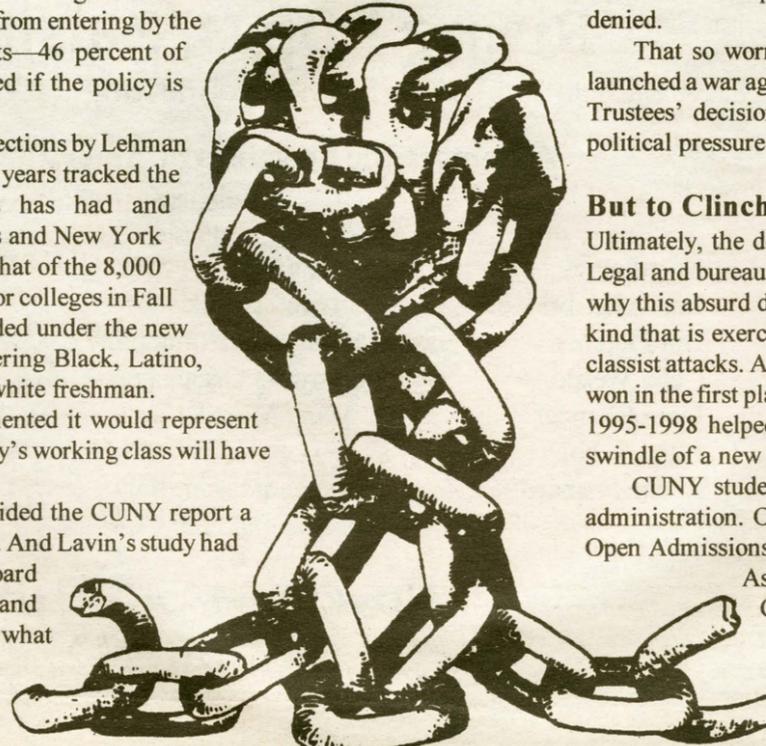
That so worries the Board of Trustees that, in their usual style, the Trustees have launched a war against the Regents, bitterly questioning the Regents' authority to review the Trustees' decision. That in turn pissed off the Board of Regents which is less open to political pressure from Giuliani and Pataki.

But to Clinch Victory...

Ultimately, the decision to end remediation will have to be blocked by CUNY students. Legal and bureaucratic finagling won't get the job done. Political power is the only reason why this absurd decision to end remediation is being pursued. So it is political power, the kind that is exercised in protest out in the streets, that will in turn counteract these racist classist attacks. After all, political protest was how Open Admissions and remediation were won in the first place. Moreover, City College student protest and organizing in 1989, 1991, 1995-1998 helped block budget cuts, tuition hikes, arming of security guards, and the swindle of a new ID card-CUNYCard.

CUNY students need to exercise political power by organizing against the CUNY administration. Only those most affected have the interest, and the power, to defend an Open Admissions policy that permits New York City's working class and Black, Latino, Asian, and immigrant peoples the right to earn a college degree. Otherwise CUNY administrators, whatever race they may be, will willfully send CUNY back in time—to educational apartheid—if it would further their own careers.

Isn't that right, President Moses?



Summer of Spying and Drama at CCNY

It was June 1st, the day before last spring's commencement, and four days after the CUNY Board of Trustees voted to end all remedial courses at four year colleges at a tumultuous meeting where 24 people were arrested.

On that day, a City College of New York (CCNY) employee approached a CCNY student who he knew to be an activist. He told him that what appeared to be a smoke detector in front of NAC room 3/201 really wasn't a smoke detector at all. He said that the "smoke detector" actually was a surveillance camera. The CCNY employee said he had seen the surveillance equipment—a receiving device, a TV monitor and VCR recording the image in front of the "smoke detector" in the room next door to 3/201.

The student, David Suker, gained access to the room where the employee had told him the recording equipment was. Upon entering, a long, bizarre summer started at CCNY.

Why NAC 3/201?

NAC 3/201 has been the center of student activism on campus since it was taken over by student activists during a student strike in 1989. The room was renamed the "Shakur-Morales Community and Student Center," in honor of two revolutionary leaders who had gone to CCNY in the 1960s, and it was dedicated to student activism and building links between students and the Harlem and Washington Heights communities.

It is the home of the Pre-University Program, a grassroots student-run program to prepare high school students for college. The Pre-University Program brings more than 200 high school students to CCNY every Saturday. It is organized and staffed entirely by volunteers, and it is free for the students.

Going Public

After Suker saw the surveillance equipment, he and two other students—Ydanis Rodriguez and Brad Sigal—videotaped footage of the surveillance camera and equipment, and called student-rights attorney Ron McGuire, who immediately came to campus with a reporter from the *Amsterdam News*. The equipment was examined and it became clear they had uncovered an organized surveillance operation.

Attorney Ron McGuire filed a lawsuit against City College on behalf of the three students two days later, alleging that their constitutional rights to free assembly had been violated. They did not, however, know who exactly at CCNY was running the surveillance operation. The equipment was anonymously given to Mr. McGuire for safekeeping, who immediately brought it before the judge. At that point the CCNY Security Department, seeing that they had been "caught in the act," acknowledged that the equipment was theirs.

The students held a press conference on the steps of City Hall to break the story to the public. That night, the story broke on all the television news programs (it was the lead news story right after one of the Chicago Bulls playoff games), and over the next week it hit almost all of the New York newspapers including the *New York Times*, *El Diario*, and the *Daily News*.

Moses Busted

CCNY President Yolanda Moses didn't seem to know how to respond. If she knew about the surveillance, then she authorized spying on students organizing peaceful and legal activities. If she didn't know about it, then she was out of touch with possibly illegal spy operations going on under her reign. So the CCNY administration made up a far-fetched tale to explain their political spying.

The June 5th *Daily News* reported that, "Officials at the Harlem campus said the camera was a routine security measure to stop thieves from swiping computers." CCNY Security Director Timothy Hubbard stated, "This was just a standard surveillance device we use to determine criminality. It's a standard practice we have employed over the years to combat crime." It is certainly unsettling if it is "standard" for CCNY security to spy on students with hidden cameras. But even that explanation, unsettling as it was, did not give the whole story.

Many on campus questioned Hubbard and Moses's story. The *New York Times* reported on June 17th that, "Gary Benenson, a Mechanical Engineering professor at City College and chairman of its faculty union chapter, said

security officials were correct in saying that there were burglary problems on campus—he has lost six computers in his lab in the last two years, he said. But, he added, the security office had done little to prevent thefts, and he had been told to install his own alarms."

The Real Reason for the Surveillance

Reality finally caught up with Security Director Hubbard. When he was subpoenaed by McGuire and the students, he was forced to submit an affidavit explaining his reasons for the spying operation. In his affidavit, dated June 10, 1998, he still tried to maintain that the main reason for the surveillance was to prevent computer theft. But the truth squeaked out at the end of his affidavit.

Directly contradicting all the administration's denials of political spying, he said there were also two other reasons, both political. In Hubbard's June 10 affidavit, he states:

"Finally, the third reason for placing the camera outside room 3/201 was in response to a report of a possible student or non-student take over of all or portions of NAC, including room 3/201. [I was informed] that a group of students (or non-students) might be planning to attempt to take over the building sometime around commencement, on June 2, 1998 ... [so] we decided that the security staff would keep an eye out for unauthorized persons on the premises, including in and around 3/201."

This stunning admission directly contradicts every other statement made by President Moses and university spokespeople. For example, Moses stated in a "Presidential Communique" dated June 22, 1998, "I wish to assure the College community that [the use of surveillance directed toward students or other persons based upon their political views] has never and will never occur at CCNY." In her affidavit to the court dated June 23, 1998, Moses repeats the same theme, saying, "City College has not conducted and will not conduct any surveillance against any of the plaintiffs or any other students or visitors to City College...."

Hubbard says one of the reasons for the surveillance was to monitor for a political protest or building takeover at commencement, while Moses says City College has never and will never engage in political spying. Since their affidavits contradict each other, it appears that either Hubbard or Moses is lying under oath.

Moses Retaliates

Stung by the bad publicity, President Moses lashed out in retaliation at the students who had discovered the secret camera. On June 18th, President Moses took the highly unusual step of declaring last spring's Graduate Student Council (GSC) elections "null and void," while also changing the locks on all GSC offices to keep out both the outgoing and the incoming student governments. These actions effectively shut down the graduate student government.

CCNY administrators locked the editors of the *CCNY Messenger* graduate student newspaper out of their office as well, asserting that the *CCNY Messenger* was actually just a newsletter of the GSC, and therefore it would be shut down along with the GSC. This was convenient for Moses, since one of the plaintiffs, Brad Sigal, was also editor of the *CCNY Messenger*, which had consistently criticized the Moses administration's inaction in defense of open admissions.

Why Moses Did It

President Moses resorted to these anti-democratic measures because she didn't like the slate who won the GSC election, which included Rodriguez, Sigal, and Suker. The election was swept by the "New Millennium" slate, who won ten of the 11 council seats. The slate included many prominent activists in the struggle to save remediation and open admissions at CUNY. Moses had been wishy-washy on the issue all year, and CCNY students had confronted her numerous times to try to get her to take a stand against Mayor Giuliani and the CUNY Board of Trustees. Moses was fearful of an activist student government that would demand accountability and political backbone in this tumultuous time at CUNY.

The Student Election Review Committee (SERC), which coordinates and certifies student elections, had already certified the GSC election as free and fair. Normally, this would be the end of the story. But President Moses twisted a rule allowing college presidents to review SERC decisions, declaring that the election was not certified until she said so.

President Moses accused the *CCNY Messenger* graduate student newspaper of "biasing" the election, saying that it was biased toward the New Millennium slate. Even though it did not endorse any candidates, Moses asserted its supposedly slanted coverage constituted a subtle endorsement. Therefore, she said in a twist of logic, the *CCNY Messenger* constituted campaign literature, and therefore the cost of producing it (which she said cost \$1,400 even though receipts show it cost less than \$400) put the New Millennium slate over their spending limit.

Most student newspapers at CUNY overtly endorse candidates every year. This is normal and acceptable journalism. The *New York Times*, the *Daily News*, the *Post*, etc., also endorse candidates in elections. Elections are not canceled because a newspaper endorses candidates. This past spring, student newspapers at College of Staten Island, Hunter College, and Brooklyn College all endorsed candidates, including candidates that were on the staff of the endorsing newspaper.

The inconvenient fact for President Moses is that there is nothing illegal, wrong, or even unethical about a newspaper endorsing candidates (which the *CCNY Messenger* didn't even do!), even if it is an endorsement of a slate that includes members of a paper's own staff. The public can determine the bias of a newspaper on their own; it is not the role of a college president to determine for students that a newspaper is biased and then shut that paper down and cancel an election.

Challenging Moses's Actions

The legal process grinds along at a snail's pace, and if the courts find President Moses's actions illegal, it will probably be after the goal she desired—damaging student activism at CCNY—has already been accomplished. The legal challenge is important, but student activists are focusing more on putting mass pressure on President Moses.

The CCNY Coalition to Defend Open Admissions is demanding that President Moses recognize last spring's legitimate GSC election and re-open the *CCNY Messenger* graduate student newspaper. While this has not yet happened, the campaign has generated a huge showing of solidarity from students and faculty across the country. More than 50 graduate student governments and graduate student unions signed an open letter to President Moses written by Bryan Hannegan, the President of the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS). Hundreds of individual students around the country have also sent protest letters to Moses.

NAGPS President Hannegan's letter to Moses expressed "strong opposition to your recent actions against the City College of New York's Graduate Student Council." Hannegan's letter declares that Moses's actions "set a precedent which threatens the rights of students at any college or university in the United States, and these actions show blatant disregard for the fundamental principles of a free society: freedom of speech and association."

As students are speaking out around the U.S., students at City College and other CUNY schools must also speak out more vocally if Moses is to feel the pressure. Until CUNY students' bring their collective weight to bear, President Moses will continue to run roughshod over democracy. This will make it that much easier for Giuliani and the Board of Trustees to implement their insidious plan for educational apartheid at CUNY.

Students are strongly encouraged to contact President Moses and let her know that you oppose her actions in shutting down the Graduate Student Council and the *CCNY Messenger*. President Moses can be contacted at 212.650.7285, fax: 212.650.7680, or ytm@crow.admin.cuny.cuny.edu.



These articles appeared in the September 1998 issue of "The Messenger," an independent student newspaper published by CCNY students—not be confused with the "CCNY Messenger" which is the official graduate student newspaper at CCNY that has been shut down. In the absence of the CCNY Messenger, some students at CCNY have created this new, independent publication, "The Messenger," to carry the news that students wouldn't otherwise be getting.

UNC Student Attends Black Radical Congress

BY CAROL BEN DAVIES

The month of June was a great time to be in Chicago, IL. I and thousands of other people set out on planes, trains, and buses headed to the Windy City for a historic event. Surprisingly, it wasn't to celebrate the Bulls 6th World Championship title. Close to 2,000 activists, scholars, organizers, and artists converged on the campus of the University of Illinois for the first Black Radical Congress (BRC). The term radical may have deterred some individuals from attending, but it was an event I did not want to miss.

Two years went into planning the BRC whose theme was "Setting A Black Liberation Agenda for the 21st Century." The call was made by five individuals: Barbara Ransby, Manning Marable, Leith Mulling, Abdul Alkalimat and Bill Fletcher Jr, in response to the void in African-American leadership as well as the digression of 30 years of programs used to uplift minorities.

The recent attacks on Affirmative Action, services to the poor and homeless, subsidized housing, as well as the increase of unemployment rates, welfare reform, and the various issues surrounding the criminal justice system were just a few of the critical issues the founders of the BRC saw that stirred the initial efforts. They established a National Continuations Committee with 200 representatives from Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. Atlanta, Seattle, Raleigh-Durham, and Chicago etc.

This Committee gained the support of Angela Davis, Cornel West, Amiri and Amina Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, Charlene Mitchell, Kathleen Cleaver, Robin D.G. Kelley, and many others. Information about the BRC was made through the internet, e-mail, radio interviews, and word of mouth.

I first heard about the BRC through the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) Black Student Movement listserv. I then met the Local Organizing Committee members for Raleigh-Durham, Ajamu and Rukiya Dillahunt, and I joined them in planning for our trip to Chicago by selling raffle tickets and organizing transportation. The long trip to Chicago was offset by the great people I traveled with, individuals who were equally

excited about what we would experience.

We were all embraced with brotherly and sisterly love as we made our way into the Chicago Circle Center on University of Illinois-Chicago's campus. An Inter-generational Dialogue on Culture, History, and Politics occurred at the Opening Plenary. Activists of the 1960s, Angela Davis and Kathleen Cleaver, were interviewed by youth activists of the 1990s in hope to learn from each other.

It was unlike any learning experience I had in my UNC-CH courses. Not only did it serve as a history lesson for younger participants, (I got a first hand account of COINTELPRO—an FBI program established to break down the Black Panther Party), but it allowed the older generation a chance to look on the next generation of radicals with pride and encouragement. Oftentimes my generation (late 1970s) is criticized for not being as active as our parents' generation, but the youth present showed that we are as committed to improving the lives of blacks and other minorities as our ancestors have been.

The BRC consisted of many different caucuses—Black Feminist, BRC Youth, Lesbian-Gay, Trade and Union, and others—over its three-day course. As a former leader of the UNC-CH Black Student Movement, I participated in the BRC Youth Caucus. It was a great opportunity to hear so many young individuals discuss their efforts and dedication to their communities.

In a workshop session titled "Youth and Student Organizing: Supporting Those Who Have the Courage to Run Against the Storm: The Next Generation," we discussed the attacks on youth as gang bangers and promiscuous teens, as well as the results of recent cuts of minority programs and scholarships on college campuses. We worked to establish ways to link together and combat the issues. In this session, as well as in the BRC Youth Caucuses, the minds of intelligent, active, yet stubborn individuals clashed.

The concept that so many people were trying to get together to solve age old problems became very problematic. Many of us decided not to attend many of the break sessions

or the BRC Cultural Event featuring Sonia Sanchez, but instead stay up until 3:00 AM to have our reportbacks from our sessions. We argued and disagreed on ideologies and basic procedure.

When finally we broke off into regions of East, West, Midwest, and South we began to accomplish many things. Each region came up with critical issues facing their communities. Some of the issues included political apathy, failing criminal justice system, police brutality, welfare reform, liquor and cocaine addictions among several others. The issue of southern Black and Latino farmers was a pressing one that didn't show up on the list of other regions.

Since the BRC, the BRC Youth Caucus has composed a listserv, I receive on the average five to ten messages each day about the efforts of participants and the continued quest for solutions to these many issues. We realize that our problems will not go away if we are not willing to fight for what we believe is right, and that merely having conversations and daily chats will not alleviate our problems.

There is quite a long road to take in the education of many of our communities. When we left the BRC youth caucuses we vowed to stay abreast of the issues facing the African-American community and to fight to end racism and inequality in America. I hope to do my part by creating awareness about the expansion of the prisons—the punishment industry. The BRC was an event that will occur again in the future. Next year I hope to attend again but this time with more knowledge about what radicalism is—"getting to the root."

Carol Ben Davies is a UNC-Chapel Hill student working with the Black Cultural Center and Black Ink, published by UNC's Black Student Movement.

This article originally appeared in the North Carolina alternative newspaper, The Prism, which can be reached at 919.968.3154 or prism@sunsite.unc.edu.

New York City's "Quality of Life"

continued from page 1

everyone seemed to agree on the story angle being put out by the mayor's press conferences. Nobody seemed to have any questions anymore. Then in line with his national counterparts, he initiated attacks on New York's welfare system and social safety nets by scapegoating and perpetuating the myth of the Black Welfare Queen. Those welfare recipients who have been forced into the Work Experience Programs now find themselves locked into slave wage menial jobs that offer no real skills or social mobility and often end up replacing fired union workers.

His Quality of Life campaign targets another vulnerable group: Black and Latino youth. In New York City and nearby vicinities, no less than 115 had been killed by the police since January 1994, Giuliani's first year in office. In 1994 alone, 31 people were shot on the streets and 23 died in custody. On average, cops shoot and kill someone on the average of one person every ten days. The cases clearly indicate the abuse of power and use of excessive force by NYPD officers. In 1996, Amnesty International issued a report on "Police Brutality and excessive force in the New York City Police Department." The report made comparisons between the NYPD and the death squads of dictatorial regimes around the world which are infamous for torture and murder.

The skyrocketing rates of police brutality and abuse of power by officers is alarming. The overwhelming number of victims have been Black and Latino. All people of color, however, are also affected as well as a small number of white people. Many of those killed often receive scant attention in the media. What media attention these killings have received has been dismissive of the case, and used to justify shooting the victim. This went hand in hand with an intensification of the criminalization and repression of young people of color.

Pretty soon all types of shootings were making headlines. One Black youth was shot for holding a silver candy bar mistaken by cops as a gun. Another was shot for holding a key chain mistaken for a gun. Numerous young teenagers and youth were shot for holding water guns or toy guns. No person of conscience can forget the death of Nicholas Heywood Junior, a 13-year-old youth shot to death by a cop while playing with a toy gun. Then there was Xong Xin Huang, a 16-year-old Chinese student shot to death by a cop while playing with a toy gun. Anthony Baez, a young married Latino man who was strangled to death by NYPD officer Frances Livoti. Officer Livoti assaulted Anthony and his brother when their football accidentally hit Livoti's squad car. And so the quality of life rolled on.

But it was becoming clear that the question was painfully becoming whose "Quality of Life" were we talking about? Giuliani's second term in office, which began this year, kicked off by using the City University of New York as a punching bag. He supports the nationwide and statewide cuts to public higher education, but in particular to the CUNY system, a predominately working class, immigrant, and majority people of color institution. Decrying the so-called "poor standard" of education in the CUNY system, Giuliani unleashed attacks on CUNY's Open Admissions policies. In a particular dark episode, College security forces called the SAFE team heightened their political surveillance of CUNY activists by installing a hidden camera in a smoke detector near a student center at City College up in Harlem.

By this time Cab drivers were targeted, as were school teachers, food vendors, street artists, new vendors, community gardens, tenants, and various city agencies. People of all persuasions began to smell the coffee. The mayor was able to hold onto his base of support insofar as his attacks were directed toward particular communities of color. His tactical use of dividing and conquering communities of color worked hand in hand with consolidating

a strong base of white conservatives and winning over vacillating liberals.

His most recent media crusade was directed toward the Million Youth March (MYM) which was recently held in Harlem. The MYM which was turning out to be a rather obscure event, was given an incredible amount of promotion by the mayor in his attacks of the march. Labeling one of the controversial event organizers, Khallid Muhammad a Black Hitler and the event a hate march, Giuliani succeeded in creating an incredibly hostile confrontation at what was a rather peaceful and unified and multi-racial rally. One of the most horrifying actions by the NYPD was the attack of the stage by riot cops, and the use of police helicopters at tenement building levels in what was essentially a paramilitary operation directed toward a minority population. During this police raid, a white legal aid recalled watching in shock as a police officer choked a young black girl by the throat and only released the girl after the legal aid pleaded with him to release her.

While a large part of the mayor's tactics in carrying forth policies hinges around racializing serious social issues, it is important for students to remember that there is an underlying economic aspect to these attacks. For us to reduce these attacks as being purely racist would be foolish. What is important to understand is that the mayor, all throughout his attacks, has been a strong proponent of neo-liberal economic policies. He is an ally of some of the most powerful business and multi-national corporations in the world. He favors the interests of privatization and the elimination of small time businesses to make way for larger corporate conglomerates.

The results are Nike Towns, Disney Shops, Warner Shops, Barnes and Nobles, K-Mart's—the list goes on. The painfully obvious effect is an increasing in rents, which forces gentrification of low-income people of color and working class neighborhoods. It decreases the level of self-sufficient small business owners. It advocates for the privatization of public institutions like schools, hospitals, and various service organizations—even prisons. Masses of unionized workers would be laid off in order to increase profitability instead of upholding social well being. We are essentially talking about the absolute takeover of every dominant structural institution of our lives by multi-national corporations. Mayor Giuliani is attempting to turn himself into a national figure with all the right media spin doctors at his side. Unfortunately, through the uncritical prism of the corporate media, we'll be lucky if we even catch a glimpse of the real devastation that is being wrought in the city.

All throughout these various attacks, progressive and radical students have organized and mobilized in defense of Open Admissions, have rallied against police brutality, fought against sweatshops, strived for the self-determination of people of color, stood in solidarity with teachers and cab drivers. Still, there is more to be done. We in NYC have lost our share of battles. We have been dealt serious blows, but the most important lesson learned by the young is that *we have not lost the war*. The past few years have taught us to persevere, to be serious and committed, to be principled in our struggles while struggling to maintain operational unity, to try to build our own organizations and most importantly to never forget our humanity and capacity for love. We fight for the "equality of life" for all. We salute all the other students across this nation who have done the same and will continue the struggle for what we know in our hearts to be right and true.

Grasshopper is a member of the Student Liberation Action Movement.

The Prison Blues

HOW EDUCATIONAL FUNDS ARE SIPHONED INTO JAILS

BY KEVIN PRANIS

"They say that George Pataki (the governor of New York) hopes to run again in the fall. With the budget he's proposing, we will barely read at all." The cadence rang out across West Capitol Park as a group of students marched, dressed in the caps and gowns of college graduates, attracting the attention of reporters and capitol staffers. Student protests are hardly

course availability) to complete a four-year degree.

Students are not the only people who suffer from fiscal appropriations that place jails before schools. Dependence on incarceration to deter poverty-driven crime has turned urban communities into war zones, transforming a prison sentence into a standard rite of passage for one out of three Latino and African-American men. Targeting of minority communities by law enforcement feeds racist media images and denies more than a million people of color the right to vote (as a result of felony convictions).

Students are taking the lead in organizing against prison expansion. In 1996, students from the Democratic Socialists of America came together with former prisoners from the Harlem-based Community Justice Center to form the Prison Moratorium Project (PMP). The mission of PMP is to educate the public about the causes and consequences of prison expansion and to build a coalition of students and community activists to challenge the growing prison-industrial complex.

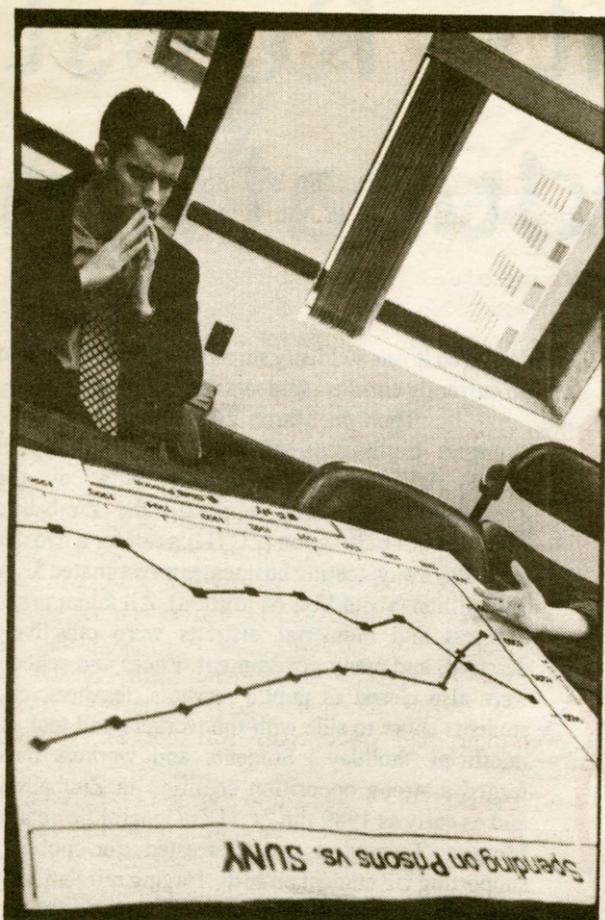
Since 1996, PMP has developed programs to educate, train, and organize students and youth to oppose prison expansion and defend access to education. While PMP has been active from Virginia to California, much of our energy has gone to the development of a model organizing program in New York.

In 1997, students from New York University, Columbia University, and State University of New York (SUNY) campuses at Binghamton and Geneseo organized a series of educational events, including a rally, gameshow, concert, and forums to raise awareness about Pataki's proposal to spend \$800 million on new prisons. In 1998, PMP began to work closely with a statewide coalition of criminal justice organizations pushing for reform of the state's drug laws that force judges to sentence drug offenders to extremely long prison terms and leave kingpin drug traffickers with a plea-bargain advantage over sellers on the street.

With the assistance of the Student Association of the State University, PMP activists organized forums at college campuses around New York City and the state, putting together two guerilla theater actions at the state capitol. The campaign culminated in a letter, signed by student government representatives from nine SUNY campuses, calling on Pataki to repeal the Rockefeller Drug Laws and restore funding to SUNY. Thanks in part to these efforts, the coalition succeeded in convincing the student assembly to pass modest Rockefeller reform provisions, which unfortunately failed to pass in the Senate.

Join the movement toward long-lasting, sustainable remedies for social problems through education, and let lawmakers and educators alike know that augmenting prison funds is a short-term fix at best. For more information about PMP and activities taking place at campuses nationwide, contact Kevin Pranis at 212.727.8610 ext. 23 or at kpranis@dsausa.org.

Kevin Pranis was the Youth Section Organizer for the Democratic Socialists of America, and is currently on staff at PMP.



front-page news in Albany, certainly not with a governor who seems hell-bent on dismantling the state university system. But this protest was slightly different, because in addition to protesting cuts in education funding, these students came to protest the governor's prison expansion policies.

The protest is a sign that activists and policy analysts have begun to discover the dirty little secret state politicians have kept hidden for several years. Across the nation, state governments are stealing funds from higher education in order to pay for a massive and unnecessary program of prison expansion.

In 1997, the Justice Policy Institute (JPI) released *From Classrooms to Cellblocks*, a national study of trends in state and federal spending on education and incarceration. The results are disturbing. In 1995, for example, total state spending on prison construction increased by \$926 million to \$2.6 billion, while spending on university construction fell by \$954 million to \$2.5 billion. In states such as California, which has built 21 prisons and only one university since 1984, the pattern is even more pronounced. General expenditures mirror those in construction. Since 1987, total spending on prisons has increased by more than 30 percent, while higher education has been cut by 18 percent.

The impact of this trend on students has been tremendous. As budgets are slashed and the number of people seeking post secondary education grows, state schools are forced to reduce services and raise tuition—making a college degree inaccessible to many qualified applicants. In New York, the Student Association of the State University (SASU) estimates that tens of thousands of students may have been pushed out of school by large tuition and fee hikes at the beginning of the Pataki administration. In California, according to the JPI study, 450,000 students will be heading toward public higher education and most likely be unable to attend because of lack of space or tuition fees."

Those who remain in school do so under difficult conditions, working long hours, taking on large debt, and spending an average of five and a half years (as a result of limited

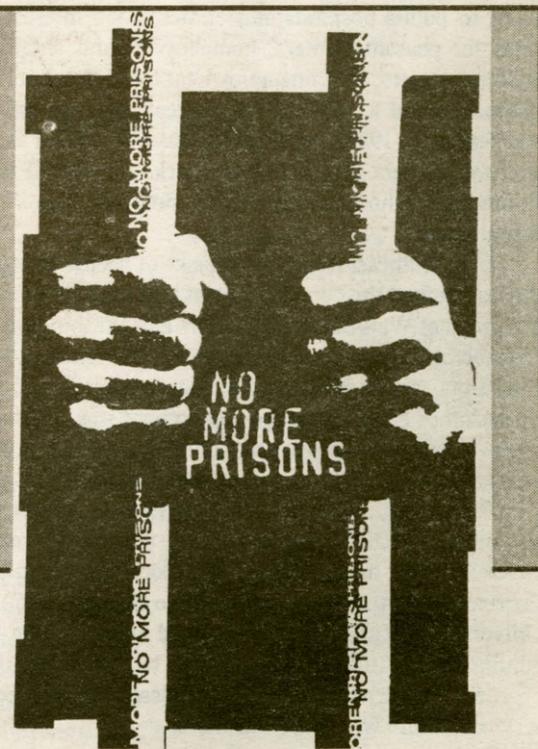
No More Prisons

Denounced and exploited by mainstream media, hip hop music speaks to the devastation wrought by crime and the criminal justice system within minority communities. The Prison Moratorium Project's (PMP) first rally and Hip Hop concert in Brooklyn's Prospect Park to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Attica rebellion has borne another creation that will continue to inspire prison activists—"No More Prisons," a PMP hip hop compilation CD released in September.

More than two years in the making, "No More Prisons" brings together an amazing team including old-school and underground hip hop artists (including Bahamadia, The Coup, Edo G, L Daheadtucha and Mental Giants), spoken word artists (including The Last Poets) and professor and social commentator Cornel West.

The release of the single coincides with the PMP's participation in Critical Resistance, a major national conference on the prison-industrial complex taking place at University of California-Berkeley on September 25-27.

The release of the "No More Prisons" single will be a tremendous opportunity for students to become involved by organizing house parties or concerts to raise awareness of the issue and the project. If you're interested in taking part in this, or any other aspect of the PMP, contact Kevin Pranis and PMP.



SLAM!

(Student Liberation Action Movement)

To find out more about the struggle to fight educational apartheid within the City University of New York or New York City, contact 212.462.9106, cunyslam@hotmail.com, or www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/lobby/6353.