

By Esther Kaplan
& Alisa Solomon

Don't believe everything you read. The CUNY rally at City Hall you read about in last week's papers was a scene of mayhem created by bottle-throwing students who couldn't spell. The *Post* told a tale of "angry—and violent" students who "broke through the barricades"; the *Times* had students initiating violence by "knocking down one officer." But *Voice* reporters on the scene witnessed a different story: brutal police who themselves were so out of control that even a white-shirted

A TALE OF "ANGRY AND VIOLENT" STUDENTS? *VOICE* REPORTERS WITNESSED A DIFFERENT STORY: POLICE SO OUT OF CONTROL THAT EVEN A CAPTAIN TACKLED AND CHOKED A REPORTER.

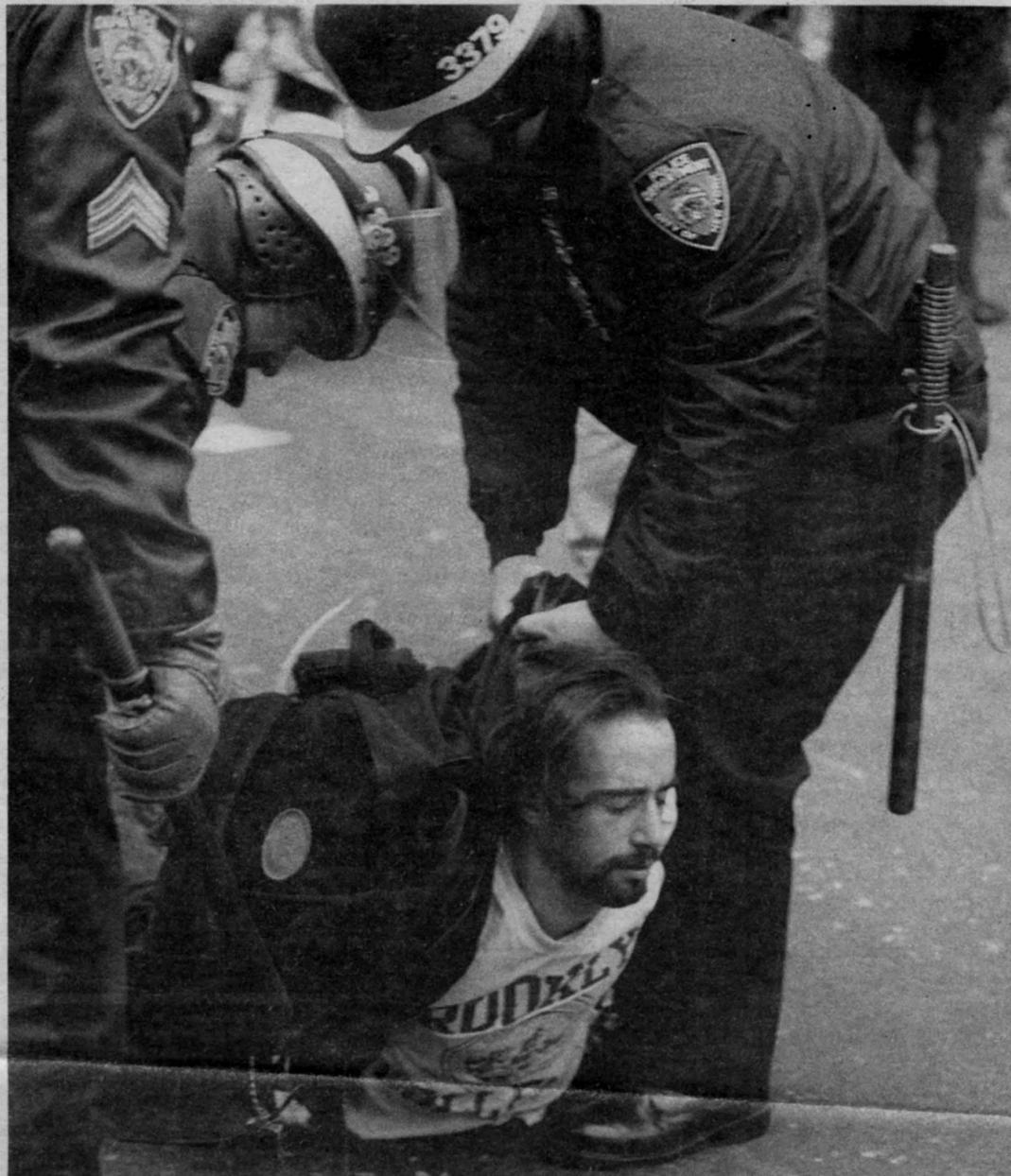
captain tackled and choked a reporter with visible credentials.

Consider the way the paper of record described the genesis of violence at the rally. Relying on a police report, the *Times* said that "students began pushing at the barricades around City Hall Plaza, knocking down one officer. When other officers tried to help him up, the students began kicking and shoving." But the fallen officer actually collapsed more than 10 feet away from the nearest student—and 10 feet from *Voice* reporters. And it was not students who broke through the barricades; police did, snapping wood and knocking over metal as they moved in on demonstrators.

The student-cop showdown actually went like this: after two hours of a peaceful rally of 10,000 students, those who remained sought to march from City Hall

CORRECTING PAPERS

The CUNY Protest You Didn't Hear About



ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN

Park to Wall Street. At the southern tip of the park, students were met by three layers of barricades, motorcycles, and foot officers, the latter carrying conspicuous green army packs around their thighs, which turned out to contain Mace.

For the next hour, students marched up and down the length of City Hall Park, preceded and followed by police. Students were told they could march from the park to the north. They marched. The police stopped them at the north end of the park for half an hour. Then the police turned the students onto Chambers Street. The students marched a block, only to be forced back into the park. Then they marched south.

At this point the only single-file exit from the park was closed; the only way to get out was through the subway, but police had pulled the plug on the student p.a. so there was no way to communicate this to students.

As students pushed south, the ones in front were jammed into barricades. Police pushed toward them from the front. A few small cardboard containers filled with paint were thrown from the crowd; a Snapple bottle hit a clear spot of pavement and shattered.

This tense stalemate ended when the famed officer fell—in an open patch of road. He was immediately surrounded by a crowd of uniforms; one shouted orders to go in and make some arrests; two dozen undercover officers ran into the crowd; uniformed cops knocked

down the barricades and rushed in from the south, brandishing Mace and clubs; mounted police rode into the students from the north.

The trapped students sat down. Officers began dragging students out of the barricades and loading them into police vans. Several students collapsed on the street from Mace. All of this took place within the boundaries of the legal demonstration area.

Meanwhile, police advanced with nightsticks on students and others who had gathered on the west side of Broadway to watch. They sprayed Mace on the group and began to slam students against a plate glass window; as the students retreated down Barclay Street, police, in fours and fives, grabbed students to arrest them, slamming some to the ground, sitting on them, breaking one student's glasses as they crunched his face into the pavement. Reporters and photographers were thrown bodily from the street.

The only student injuries that were counted were the five students that police themselves brought to Bellevue; countless others who sought treatment on their own, or who were denied treatment, did not appear in press reports. Sattara Lenz, a Brooklyn College junior, tried to get a pepper-gassed woman out to an ambulance and was told by an officer to "forget it."

The police weren't the only ones overreacting on Thursday. Indeed,

the police response merely echoed the attitudes expressed by the state's highest officials and by the press: that CUNY students—many of them poor, immigrants, and people of color—are ineducable brutes who don't deserve a first-rate university. This pervasive attitude was not lost on students. One who took the microphone at the rally pointed out that the state is building prisons while cutting education. "They're saying we belong in jail, not in college," she said.

Responses to the demonstration

from the mayor and governor—responses that went virtually unchallenged in the press—expressed blatant contempt for CUNY students, for the principle of public higher education, and even for the democratic act of protest. "Instead of protesting," Giuliani suggested, students should "go find a job for the day," as if two-thirds of the students at CUNY senior colleges don't already work 20 to 40 hours a week. He dismissed the projected \$1000 tuition increase as "a few hundred dollars," unaware, perhaps, that for the 91 per cent of students at Hostos College who live beneath the poverty line, the difference is colossal.

If Giuliani was offering a tough-on-thugs response to student protest, Pataki revealed the same ideology in the language of top-down management. He chided professors for "cancell[ing] classes so students could participate in protest rallies" when in fact, says Queens College professor and faculty activist Barbara Bowen, "Professors who attended the rally and agreed to student requests to be excused for the rally scheduled make-up sessions. Many of them—teachers of political science, urban studies, journalism, sociology, history—built analytical assignments around the protest."

The governor proposed that SUNY and CUNY could save the state some \$60 million if they increased their student-faculty ratio, added an hour to faculty teaching loads, and eliminated sabbaticals. But that would account for only a portion of the \$158 million the governor has proposed cutting from CUNY senior colleges and, more important, would diminish the quality of the education and research the universities offer. "Pataki used misleading and mystifying numbers," says Bowen. "The idea that faculty only work when they're in the classroom is ludicrous; every hour in class represents an average of five hours of preparation and grading."

What's more, the governor's insistence that faculty do not require time to conduct research promotes the idea that public institutions need not be first-rate universities, and that their students need not be exposed to the production of new knowledge. Thus the portrayal of faculty as a lazy elite that's not pulling its weight meshes with the portrayal of CUNY students as a bunch of semiliterate hoodlums. Both support the vision of CUNY as a second-rate service school, the most

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

PRESS CLUBBED

By James Ledbetter

The CUNY demo appears to have ushered in a new era of police violence against the working press. Melees from Gulf War protests to Tompkins Square have seen individual journalists roughed up by police. But the breakout of violence at City Hall last week was, according to many media vets, the first time that police systematically used gas against a team of journalists trying to cover a news story.

"I was right there at the barricades—I could see the police getting ready to attack the crowd," said freelance photographer Peter Levasseur. "I had a good vantage

point, and they sprayed directly in my face." Levasseur says that he was wearing his police-issued press pass prominently around his neck when he was sprayed. Because his vision was blurred, he did not see exactly who had sprayed him. He went for treatment at an on-site ambulance, and later to Beekman Hospital.

Although some press reports have said the police were using pepper spray, Levasseur said his head and face stung for hours, whereas pepper spray is supposed to fade relatively quickly. "It was too long-lasting for me to believe that," he said.

Allan Tannenbaum, a staff pho-
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Metro

SOLOMON

CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

poor and immigrant students have any right to expect.

This assumption conveniently renders irrelevant the fact that New York ranks 47th in the U.S. in state spending on public education, and that Pataki's proposed 25 per cent cut is much higher than that sustained by any public education system in the country—facts that none of the dailies reported last week.

Indeed, the media colluded in the portrayal of CUNY as a waste of taxpayer dollars. All the dailies—and the mayor—made much of student placards that had Giuliani's name spelled wrong. (Curious that none of them pointed out such errors a few years ago when police officers rallied with misspelled signs supporting Giuliani's candidacy. And never mind that the mayor probably couldn't spell most of the names on CUNY's rosters.) Selecting this placard, journalists left out of the story the abundance of creative and compelling signs, such as one showing Munch's screamer surrounded by the legend, "No Art, No Culture." And how much easier it is to make fun of a misspelled name than to find someone to translate placards that say "Educari ius est non beneficium."

Some went even further in denying student capabilities by portraying student participation in the rally as a duty enforced by faculty. Despite many news reports and Giuliani's remarks, the faculty did not "lead" the protest—though the march of 3000 professors dressed in caps and gowns across Brooklyn Bridge



Pictures not taken: 3000 faculty marched across the Brooklyn Bridge; for most, the rally was a peaceful success.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LINDA ROSIER

was a powerful, dignified image of resistance that did not make it into any of the dailies. The rally was the result of weeks of organizing by hundreds of CUNY students. And for the vast majority who came on Thursday—many engaging in political protest for the first time—the violent media version of the day bore little resemblance to their experience. Having left before the cops let loose, they took part in an event that was peaceful, effective, empowering.

Students described how in preparing for the rally, kids who wouldn't sit together at lunch would join in to make signs; how during prerally marches from their campuses to City Hall, people honked horns in support and waved from office buildings. The rally was one of the most multiracial and multiethnic that the city has seen—as diverse as CUNY itself. Indeed, characterizing the march as faculty-led was Giuliani and Pataki's way of denying what they don't dare acknowledge: the birth of a forceful, remarkably grassroots student movement. ■

CUNY students will take part in a national day of student actions on March 29, and, on April 4, the CUNY Coalition Against the Cuts—in conjunction with heavyweights like Local 1199—will return to City Hall to reattempt the march to Wall Street.

LETBETTER

CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

tographer for the Sygma agency, says he was clubbed by a police sergeant. Just as the violence began in earnest, Tannenbaum said, he stepped up onto a Walk/Don't Walk signal pole to get a better angle. He held the pole with his left hand, and shot photos with his right. According to Tannenbaum, a police sergeant "came up from behind three rows of cops and clubbed my [left] hand, causing me to lose my grip." His hand was bloodied.

Tannenbaum, a professional photographer for more than 20 years, said he sits on a police-sponsored Block Watch committee in his precinct. "We have to be aggressive to

do our jobs, but if I'm told to get down or not to go somewhere, I'll do it... I don't have any agenda against the cops." Nevertheless, Tannenbaum said he plans to sue the city to recoup his medical expenses (after hospital treatment, his thumb is in a splint). The only comparable experience Tannenbaum has had professionally, he said, was getting hit with a rock on the Gaza Strip.

Ironically, staffers at the generally cop-friendly *New York Post* and *Daily News* were also assaulted. *News* photog Misha Erwit was sprayed moments after photographing a mace-wielding cop, though overall he thought the police were relatively restrained. In all, the *Voice* has learned of eight separate allegations that members of the press—not all wearing credentials—were roughed up (including *Voice* reporter Esther Kaplan, whose notebook was swatted out of her hands and whose glasses were broken).

Why the rash of violence against the media? Some of the roughed-up photographers believe that the

police were preparing a massive assault against the protestors, and wanted to insure that there would be no documentation. One photographer offers a different explanation: "Since Rudy gutted DCPI [the police public information office], there's no buffer. Usually there'd be a couple of recognizable lieutenants out there to act as liaison."

Detective Martinez, who answered the phone at the office of the Deputy Commissioner for Public Information, said he was at the demonstration and saw no such attacks against the press. He added that there were DCPI personnel in the two designated areas for members of the press; if someone wanders out of those pens, "no one knows" what will happen. As of Monday, "We have no reports of anyone from the working, credentialed press getting clubbed or maced during the attempt to bring the crowd under control." Except, he said after questioning, the reports of such attacks that ran in Friday's *Post* and *News*. ■

MOVING SALE
WE MUST SELL
ALL INVENTORY IN THIS STORE
50% OFF
mfrs. sug. list prices
Grand Central Artists' Materials, Inc.
14 East 41st Street • New York • 212-679 0023
Monday thru Friday 9:00a.m.-5:45p.m.

TAKE
A SOUND
BREAK!
TELE **INDIES**
212 598-4051

KOKOPELLI
Fine Jewelry



YOUR DESTINATION FOR THE
LARGEST SELECTION & FINEST QUALITY
OF TRADITIONAL & CONTEMPORARY
NATIVE AMERICAN JEWELRY AND
HANDCRAFTED FETISHES



120 THOMPSON STREET
(between Prince & Spring)
212-925-4411

NYSC
1-800-796-NYSC

**we're expanding
so our members don't.**

NewYorkSports
CLUBS

more locations. more stuff. less money. special grand opening rates expire 3/31.

midtown: 404 5th avenue at 37th • herald square 50 w. 34th • 614 2nd ave. at 34th • 541 lex at 50th • 380 madison at 46th • broadway & 49th • 502 park avenue at 59th • **upper east side:** 151 e. 86th at lex • 1815 2nd at 94th • 349 e. 76th at second • **upper west side:** 61 w. 62nd at broadway • 248 w. 80th at broadway • **downtown:** 30 cliff street • 151 reade at greenwich • 125 7th ave. so. at sheridan square • **brooklyn:** 110 boerum place • **great neck:** 15 barstow road • **new jersey:** 8 cornwall ct, e. brunswick

mind/body/spirit

To advertise,
call Lynn Brenner
at 212-475-3333, x 3030.