

# Clarion

NEWSPAPER OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS / CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



MAY 2006



**WAR SPENDING**  
**CUNY vets**  
**speak**  
**out**

Iraq veterans  
marched with  
hurricane survivors  
to New Orleans.

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## 12-HOUR SESSION YIELDS PROGRESS

# CLOSING IN ON A CONTRACT

Union negotiators and CUNY management resolved key issues in a series of intense meetings in March and April. Through bargaining sessions and less formal discussions, the two sides narrowed their remaining differences to the point

where a final contract settlement appeared close at hand. See inside for the main points of the emerging deal. Above, from left, PSC bargaining team members Steve London, Anne Friedman, Steve Trimboli and Barbara Bowen. **PAGES 6-7**

### GETTING TENURE

## Junior faculty development

Building a career at CUNY is a challenge. The PSC's annual Junior Faculty Development Day allowed new arrivals and survivors alike to share their experiences.

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### ACADEMIC FREEDOM

## 'Dangerous' professors?

Right-wing pundit David Horowitz's new book lashes out at some CUNY faculty. One talks about what it's like to be the target of a national smear campaign.

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### BUDGETS

## Fair funding for CUNY

Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg want cuts to CUNY funding. Can the Legislature and City Council do better for CUNY students?

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### YOUR RIGHTS

## Part-timer reappointment

Written notice of reappointment is due in May. If you don't receive your letter of reappointment, you should call a grievance counselor in the union office.

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# Junior faculty conference draws crowd

By DANIA RAJENDRA

On April 7, more than 100 people took part in the PSC's third annual junior faculty development day. The conference, titled "How to Survive (and Thrive) in Your First Five Years at CUNY," was organized by the union's Junior Faculty Organizing Project.

The packed workshops addressed the tenure process, grant funding, the "shadow workload" and academic freedom. The conference gave participants a chance to meet other faculty from across CUNY, making connections outside their own department.

## SHARING

"The best part was the sharing of knowledge from other faculty members," said Susan Brillhart, an assistant professor in nursing at BMCC. "You could ask a specific question and get a real answer to something you'd been thinking about or worried about. It's great to get advice from someone who isn't sitting on your P&B committee, so it's okay to ask them anything. They can be what I call 'a mentor for a moment.'"

## Tenure, grants, academic freedom

"Listening to the experiences of other faculty members was very helpful," agreed Jane Fitzpatrick, a librarian at the Graduate Center. "I went because I'm only at the lecturer level and I need to get promotion and tenure." Fitzpatrick said the most useful advice she heard was to "pay attention to the CVs of those who got tenure ahead of you."

"I went to the panel on academic freedom," Fitzpatrick added, "and it was good to learn that the people who are active in the union are also active on this issue." Even though she is not new to academic freedom issues, Fitzpatrick said, hearing panelists' and participants' first-hand experience was useful. And for those with academic freedom concerns, she said, "having the union behind you gives you some extra clout."

Event organizer Carolina Bank Muñoz concurred. "People really wanted to hear what was going on at other campuses, and have a discussion about what kind of attacks

are happening elsewhere within CUNY," she said. "People were feeling the pressure. There's a lot of interest, so maybe a working group will come out of it."

## UNION ISSUES

The conversation continued at the cocktail party afterwards, said Bank Muñoz. "A lot of people asked me about the contract and other union issues. It was a good opportunity to talk about the complex bargaining environment we're in, and discuss the history of the union." She added that for some junior faculty members, the development day is their first introduction to the union.

"People were very excited that something like this exists for them," she said, adding that she hoped future Junior Faculty Organizing Project events could focus more on the ways junior faculty have power on the job, as well as their anxieties.

Brillhart, who is an agency fee

**At a union event, every question is OK to ask.**



Peter Hogness

Tenured and untenured faculty shared experiences on April 7.

payer, said the event encouraged her to join the union. "I liked what they were doing, and made me consider joining more than I ever have before," she said.

Both Fitzpatrick and Brillhart

said they would "absolutely" recommend to their colleagues that they attend next year. Added Fitzpatrick, "I hope the union continues to have these events, I think they're very helpful."



**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** | WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 25 W. 43RD STREET, FIFTH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10036. E-MAIL: PHOGNESS@PSCMAIL.ORG. FAX: 212-302-7815.

# A movement of immigrants strengthens us all

● Since March, hundreds of thousands of immigrants and concerned citizens in cities around the country have protested proposed immigration reform legislation that would criminalize the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the US and levy sanctions against organizations that serve them. The outpouring against HR 4437 and S 2454 surprised even those optimistic about averting this punitive legislation.

This sort of mass movement deserves and has gotten the support of the labor movement. When unions speak out merely on their own immediate issues, they earn the diminished clout of being just a "special interest group." And if unions are silent about politics, our members will have a hard time making themselves heard over the loud voices of corporations. That is true whether the issue is immigration or public education.

The PSC has good reasons for taking up immigration reform. Ful-

ly half of CUNY's students are immigrants who contribute mightily to the diversity and vitality of the University and the City. I applaud the union's work to prevent immigrant New Yorkers from being charged prohibitively high out-of-state tuition, its support for legislation that would protect immigrant access to city services, as well as efforts to gain municipal voting rights for all legal residents. The coalitions we cultivate in pursuit of these goals, of course, also strengthen our hand in our own battles.

**Paula Finn**  
CUNY Center for Labor, Community and Policy Studies

## Changing the debate

● Recognizing that more than half of CUNY students are immigrants or the children of immigrants, the PSC Solidarity Committee joined local immigration reform efforts. But it looked as if we'd have to settle for limited victories, like the restoration of in-state tuition rates for some students who are undocumented, or rhetorical ones, like City Council Resolution 1009 urging New York State to opt out of implementation of the federal REAL I.D. Act. In the cur-

rent climate, immigrant advocacy groups despaired of national reform more enlightened than the police-state measures put forward by the likes of Rep. Sensenbrenner (R-WI).

But suddenly we see a turnaround. Mass mobilizations of immigrants themselves have put humane, practical, and comprehensive legislation on the front burner. Granted, weaknesses remain: none of the bills before Congress, for example, guarantee worker rights. But the tide may have turned.

And if it has, it didn't happen because folks were "nice" or bowed to political "realities." It happened because they took their own interests and their own power seriously and built the coalitions necessary to make real change.

**Jim Perlstein**  
PSC Solidarity Committee

## Against conversion lines

● In Vice President London's *Clarion* article, 'Adjunct conversions help all,' he defends the PSC's proposal for "500 full-time lines reserved for long-serving adjunct faculty." Remarkably, in his extended defense, he never addresses the fundamental objection to the plan: it violates fair hiring procedures.

The PSC's proposal will bypass and weaken the now (thankfully) standard procedure whereby new positions are widely advertised to maximize the pool, thus, promoting excellence, and to avoid exclusion of candidates for non-merit based reasons. Adjuncts are not hired under such a procedure. I expect that the PSC's proposal violates both the spirit and the legal demands of affirmative action, though I'm not competent to judge the latter. Instead of merit as the governing determinant of hiring, it promotes favoritism and a variant of the "old boy network." Would London indicate other universities that have adopted such a plan? Although the violation of fairness is the main point, a comment on London's repeated remark that adjuncts are "evaluated, observed, and reappointed." They are not evaluated for quality of research as a criterion for reappointment.

**Jonathan Adler**  
Brooklyn College & the Graduate Center

*PSC First Vice President Steve London responds: Professor Adler conveniently ignores the specifics of the PSC proposal and the conditions it addresses. The union's proposal is for funding 300 regular searches and*

*500 adjunct conversion searches. The latter would establish a pool of long-serving adjuncts eligible to compete for adjunct conversion lines advertised by departments. Given the large number of long-serving adjuncts in CUNY, the pool of applicants will be large enough to address Adler's concerns of "favoritism."*

*The PSC proposal recognizes the reality that many adjuncts are lecturers teaching introductory and basic skills courses. Conversion in these cases would be to a full-time lecturer title, a teaching title that does not carry with it a research obligation.*

*Adler ignores the reality of who teaches our students, the conditions of that instruction, and the impact of "adjunctification" on the quality of education. Right now, approximately half of all undergraduate instruction in CUNY is done by highly exploited adjuncts. They are not treated fairly and our students suffer as a result. Social justice and quality education are important values to the University and should be considered along with other goals.*

*Adler's abstract arguments about "merit" and "excellence" do not address the reality of the working conditions long-serving adjuncts and the working conditions of our students.*

## Write to Clarion

Letters should be no more than 150-200 words in length, and are subject to editing.



# 'Best budget in generation' vetoed

By PETER HOGNESS

On March 31, New York's Legislature approved a State budget with the largest increase in CUNY funding in many years. It included \$66 million more for CUNY's operating budget than proposed by Governor Pataki, and an additional \$302 million in capital spending. But Pataki vetoed most of these funds on April 12, and as *Clarion* went to press the final outcome was uncertain.

"The Legislature's budget was the first in recent memory to reverse New York's shameful pattern of underfunding higher education," said a PSC statement. "The vetoes to higher education must be defeated. This is the moment to restore CUNY funding, not slash it."

## FUNDING DOWN

"State funding for higher education has dropped precipitously since 1990," commented PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall. "If the Senate and Assembly vote to override these vetoes, it would give us a turnaround that's badly needed." The union's president, Barbara Bowen, pledged a strong fight for an override. "The Legislature's budget shows the results of five

## PSC presses Legislature to override Pataki

years of PSC research, strategizing and organizing," said Bowen, "and we are not about to stop now."

The Legislature's budget for CUNY included \$45.7 million in public funding to avert Pataki's proposed \$300 tuition hike, plus \$20.3 million more than the governor proposed for new full-time lines and other operating aid at CUNY's senior colleges. State base aid to community colleges was raised by \$175 per full-time-equivalent student, or \$75 beyond what the governor had called for. Funding for SEEK and other opportunity programs such as College Discovery was increased by 10%.

Also new in the Legislature's budget was an expansion of New York's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), establishing part-time TAP on a permanent statewide basis. The Senate/Assembly budget rejected changes to TAP urged by Pataki that would have made it harder for many CUNY students to remain in school. These included a proposal to increase the number of credits required for full-time status from 12 to

15 per semester, reducing financial aid for thousands.

The Legislature also expanded CUNY capital spending, with a \$302 million increase above the executive budget proposal. This included \$13.8 million more for repairs to the dangerously decrepit Marshak Building at CCNY; an additional \$7.5 million for replacement of BMCC's Fiterman Hall (severely damaged in the WTC collapse); and \$4 million for overdue construction at Medgar Evers.

Miriam Kramer of the NY Public Interest Research Group called it "the best budget for higher education that New York has seen in a generation."

## CUTS TO TAP

But if Pataki's vetoes stand, they would block most of this added funding. His veto pen crossed out *all* of the increased capital funds, plus the additional \$20 million for new faculty lines and other operating expenses. The governor also vetoed \$119 million in funding for TAP statewide; if this is not overturned,

the governor would force the 15-credit definition of full-time status to go into effect.

Elements of the Legislature's budget that Pataki accepted included the increases for SEEK and community college base aid. The governor also left in place the funding added to avoid his proposed \$300 tuition increase – which means there will be no tuition hike this year at CUNY's senior colleges.

## VICTORY

Avoidance of any tuition hike was a particular victory for the PSC, as the PSC and CUNY management had disagreed on this point. The union had pressed Albany to appropriate more public funds for CUNY without raising tuition. In contrast, Chancellor Goldstein proposed a "compact" that essentially offered Albany a deal: more state aid in exchange for CUNY acceptance of annual tuition hikes.

In the end, legislators chose the PSC prescription. "Our advocacy for increased funds with no tuition increase was effective," said McCall, the union's legislative coordinator,

"and we appreciate that they listened to us."

The Legislature also rejected the idea of "indexing" tuition to inflation in the future. This proposal for automatic annual tuition hikes was supported by both Pataki and the CUNY administration, but opposed by the PSC. Currently about 48% of the University's operating budget comes from State funding, compared to 41% from tuition. Despite their differences on tuition, the PSC and the CUNY administration worked together to secure increased State aid for the University, and have both opposed Pataki's vetoes.

As *Clarion* went to press, the State Senate and Assembly were expected to vote on veto overrides during the last week in April. In an article in *The New York Times*, a spokesperson for Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver cited new full-time faculty lines for CUNY and SUNY as one of three top priorities.

"This budget has raised our hopes high," said McCall, "and PSC members will be watching to see whether legislators remain firm and vote to override the governor's vetoes. This will be a decisive issue for us in the state-wide election, determining who we recommend for endorsement."

# Mayor wants cuts for CUNY

By FERNANDO BRAGA

Mayor Michael Bloomberg has proposed cutting tens of millions in City funds for CUNY in his 2007 executive budget. Under the mayor's ax are student financial aid, funds for the University's daily operations and a number of programs that focus on people of color.

City Council Member Charles Barron, chair of the Council's Higher Education Committee, predicted that the cuts would ultimately be reversed. "But it's going to be a battle," he told *Clarion*. The City funds most of the operating costs of CUNY's community colleges and the associate degree programs at other City University campuses.

## BUDGET BATTLE

Budget reductions proposed by the mayor include:

- \$14.8 million in reduced funding for CUNY's day-to-day expenses, affecting everything from library books to fuel oil;
- Elimination of the \$11.4 million Peter Vallone Scholarship program, which provides financial assistance to New York City high school graduates who attain at least a B average;
- Elimination of the \$4.5 million Safety Net financial aid program, which gives need-based aid to community college students affected by CUNY's recent tuition hike;

## Despite this year's \$3.1 billion surplus



City Council Speaker Christine Quinn at the PSC's April 5 legislative breakfast.

- Slashing \$7.4 million from a range of other programs, most of which focus on people of color. Targeted programs include the Center for Puerto Rican Studies and the Dominican Studies Institute; the University's Black Male Initiative; a fellowship program at John Jay designed to increase diversity in the NYC Fire Department; and the Immigration Center at Medgar Evers.

Also on the chopping block are funds for GED/college prep classes and adult literacy programs.

## MORE MONEY

"It is a myth that CUNY is doing well," PSC President Barbara Bowen said in testimony at a Council hearing on March 10. Since 1990, she said, city and state support is down by more than 30% after inflation.

"These cuts would move us in the wrong direction," she told *Clarion*.

Racial inequality is both an important cause, and a harmful result, of the underfunding of CUNY, Bowen added. "Per student, our senior colleges receive only 55% as much State support as those at SUNY," she noted. "This is intimately related to the fact that 72% of our undergraduates are students of color."

Both the PSC and the CUNY administration urged the Council to go beyond restoring the cuts and approve additional funds to meet CUNY's needs. At the March 10 hearing, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein asked the Council for \$19.6 million in new money, including \$5.7 million to meet mandatory cost increases at the community colleges; \$6.3 million for new full-time faculty lines and expanded library and student services; and \$7 million for student scholarships in science, mathematics and nursing.

The PSC supports the administration's \$19.6 million request, but not the tuition hikes that are part of the chancellor's proposed "Compact" on public funding (see State budget article, above). "Since 1990, tuition has risen by 98%," Bowen told the Council. She argued that CUNY students are already carrying an unfair burden.

In addition to supporting the new funds requested by CUNY, the PSC urged the Council to approve an additional \$8 million for 100 new full-time faculty lines to be hired as "City Council Scholars." This new funding would be targeted to make progress on three goals: hiring more full-time faculty; expanding the number of faculty counselors; and increasing racial diversity in faculty hiring. The PSC proposal has been developed with support from the chair of the Council's Higher Education Committee, Charles Barron.

CUNY was not the only target of Bloomberg's proposed budget cuts: libraries, day care, K-12 education and public health care were among the many other programs slated for deep reductions, despite a projected \$3.1 billion budget surplus this year. A *Daily News* report on the mayor's budget was headlined, "The slasher in City Hall."

## RED HERRING

"We intend to restore all these cuts [again this year]," Council Member Barron told *Clarion*, though he warned against taking the outcome for granted.

Barron expressed frustration with what he called the "annual budget dance" of cuts and restorations, and said that, in a sense, the cuts are "a diversionary tactic." With public attention focused on whether the Council is successful in restoring the mayor's cuts, Barron said, tens of billions of dollars in unmet social needs receive less attention.

The Council has until June 5 to approve a final budget.

## Union asks City Council to act

Lisa Quiñones



# PSC office to move downtown this summer

By CHRISTINA INGOGLIA

The PSC will move its office downtown to 61 Broadway this summer, and construction in the new space is already underway.

The old office will close on a Friday, probably in July, and the new office will be open for business the following Monday. The exact date of the move will not be chosen until construction is closer to completion. "The goal is to be fully functional for the Fall, 2006 semester," PSC Executive Director Deborah Bell told the February Delegate Assembly.

The new space will be more member-friendly than the union's current office in midtown – which has become increasingly crowded as the PSC's membership has grown by half. "If you volunteer or work at the office, you know we are piled on top of each other," said PSC Treasurer John Hyland. "There are evenings when we have three or four committee meetings going on at same time, and people end up stuck into corners, finding space wherever they can."

## CONFERENCE ROOM

At present, grievance counselors often meet with members in the lunchroom because it is the best location available. In the new office downtown, grievance counselors will continue to share a common workspace – but they will also have a small private conference room. "Members and grievance counselors won't have to worry about being distracted by phones ringing or other people walk-

## More space for less money

ing around," said Patricia Rudden, grievance counselor for Hunter College. "Privacy is always important for the grievant, and having a separate meeting room will make members feel more comfortable."

The reception area, offices of PSC staff, and two other conference rooms will be on the building's 15th floor, along with offices of the Welfare Fund. On the floor above, the union will have a room big enough to hold more than 100 people. This can be used for Delegate Assemblies, conferences, Labor Goes to the Movies and other large events, "We are reviving the old tradition of the

union hall – a place for members to come together," said PSC President Barbara Bowen.

## MORE ROOM

This large room will have a movable partition that can divide the space in half for committee meetings or smaller union functions. With the two main conference rooms on the 15th floor and the ability to subdivide the 16th floor, the union's office space shortage should be a thing of the past.

By moving downtown, the PSC will be getting more while paying somewhat less. Even after the costs

of the move are taken into account, it would have been more expensive for the PSC to remain in its current building on West 43rd Street. "Rents in lower Manhattan are lower than rents in midtown," noted Hyland. "In addition, our new landlord was willing to pay up to \$65 per square foot to renovate the new space – a total of \$1.6 million. There are also some tax incentives for moving to that area."

"The final design for the new offices is relatively straightforward," said Bell. "To keep construction costs down, we kept it simple. But there are some architectural features that will make the new space interesting, and provide access to plentiful natural light."

Since September 11, 2001, air quality has been a concern for residents, businesses and organizations in lower Manhattan. "On September 11, the building management at 61 Broadway shut down all air vents in the building before the first tower collapsed," Bell reports, "and they later cleaned the entire ventilation system." PSC Health and Safety Committee Co-chair David Kotelchuck told *Clarion* that committee members conducted several walkthrough surveys of the office. They inspected the office's ventilation system, which is separate from the rest of the building, and found it had been well maintained. As the rebuilding of lower Manhattan moves forward, Kotelchuck said, the committee will continue to monitor local environmental issues.

## WELCOMING

After 30 years in midtown, the move is a big change and while the new office will be less accessible for some members it will be a better location for others. Transit access to the area is good, and there is a parking garage a block away. Nearby subway lines include the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, R, W, J, M and Z. The A, C and E lines are just a few more blocks away, and PATH trains are also close at hand.

"We wanted our new office to be a place that welcomes union participation, that welcomes union activity," Hyland said, "and we expect that it will."



The new downtown PSC office space before construction began.

Peter Hoogness

# RF Central Office contract talks enter 2nd round

By ELLEN BALLEISEN

Employees of the Central Office of the CUNY Research Foundation (RF) rejected a proposed contract in a ratification vote in February. On March 29 and April 12, union and management negotiators met to discuss terms for a new settlement.

The proposed contract would have provided pay increases of 3.75% in the first year, 3.5% in the second year and 3.25% in the third year, for a compounded total of 10.87% over 39 months, from October, 2005 through December, 2008, and would also have provided increased increments for longevity. But the deal would have also increased employee contributions towards health insurance premiums, and objections to some of those provisions led members to vote the deal down.

## CENTRAL ISSUE

Health insurance was a central issue from the start of negotiations for the 83 PSC members at the RF Central Office, who process grants received by CUNY faculty and staff. "Prior to the formal bargaining, we were told by the RF that if we did

## Members nix RF's 'best offer'

not agree to increase employees' share of health insurance premiums, then the RF would reduce the benefits provided," said Debra Bergen, PSC Director of Contract Administration. The expiring contract gave management the power to change the terms of benefit programs without negotiation.

## TOP PRIORITY

In response, members said that maintaining current health benefits was one of their highest priorities, even if there was an additional cost. Under the prior contract, RF Central Office employees pay 11% of the employer's health insurance premium cost. After three months of negotiations, management presented what it said was its "last, best offer," under which employees would pay 14% of the premium in the first year and 17% in the second year.

Based on member reaction in late December, the local union chapter's bargaining team was willing to take the proposal to a vote of the membership. But an incident right before

the New Year's holiday swung opinion against management's offer.

In late December, paychecks were distributed for the first payroll period of 2006 – and employees were shocked to find that management had illegally implemented the increase in employee health care contributions, before a membership vote on the contract had even begun. The RF did not, however, implement the pay raise – so instead of a net increase, members saw their pay decline.

"The members went ballistic, and so did the union," said Bergen. "Barbara Bowen got on the phone the same day with [RF President] Richard Rothbard and told him this was an unfair labor practice and had to be corrected immediately. You can't implement a contract, in whole or in part, before it's been ratified." Rothbard agreed it was improper, she said, and management moved quickly to correct the error, and members were paid back within a day.

While the deductions were reversed, the error put a spotlight on

the size of the premium contribution increase. "Once members saw the actual dollar amount that it was going to be in the future," said PSC Chapter Chair Anthony Dixon, "they decided the package wasn't a fair package to them." It was defeated by a vote of 30 to 20.

After discussions with members, the chapter's bargaining team circulated a petition to management that focused on two key issues. In the contract's first year, it asked for a larger pay increase. "Everyone understands that the cost of benefits is rising, and we are prepared to pay more," said Dixon. "But we want management to understand that the cost of benefits isn't the only rising cost of living in New York City."

For the second year, the petition asked RF management to withdraw its demand that employees' share of the health premium rise to 17%, because this would be 17% of "an unknown quantity."

"Members are concerned about the second-year health care increase because the premium for that year hasn't been set," explained

Antoinette Morizio, the chapter's vice chair.

The petition was signed by 83% of the bargaining unit. "It showed that we are united," said Dixon. "If management was thinking that there's a division among the members, the petition made perfectly clear that that's not the case."

## POKER FACE

After the March 29 and April 12 bargaining sessions, Morizio was cautiously hopeful. "We're not that far from an agreement – but we have to see if we get there," she told *Clarion*. "It's hard to say," agreed Dixon, "because everyone has their poker face on. But I'm optimistic." As *Clarion* went to press, RF management and union negotiators had scheduled a sidebar meeting to discuss specific numbers; the next formal bargaining session is set for TK.

The PSC has represented RF Central Office workers since 1974. In the last couple of years, campus-based RF employees at LaGuardia and City Tech have voted to join the PSC, and they are currently conducting their own separate contract negotiations.



# CUNY, Katrina and the role of race

By PETER HOGNESS

From March 27 to 31, PSC chapters marked the sixth annual "CUNY Week" with campus teach-ins across the University.

The events examined New York's disinvestment in CUNY, and how this is related to America's underfunding of public resources and the inadequate response to Hurricane Katrina. The teach-ins also offered ways that students, faculty and staff could take action – organizing for a fair budget for CUNY (see page 3), and supporting reconstruction efforts in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

The York College union chapter organized hallway information tables, timed so that they could reach out to night shift students as well as those who attend class during the day. "We showed posters with graphs that showed the gap in funding between CUNY and SUNY," said Chapter Chair Janice Cline, "I feel this is such a clear demonstration of how racism affects public services." CUNY's senior colleges receive only a little more than half as much funding, per student, as the state-supported colleges of the SUNY system.

## DONATIONS

Students at York were quick to connect their own situation to the disparate racial impact of Katrina, said Cline, and dug into their pock-

## Discussion at CUNY Week events

ets to contribute to relief and rebuilding efforts. The CUNY Week events publicized twin fundraising efforts by the PSC – one for Dillard University, a historically black school in New Orleans whose campus is still devastated, and another to support members of the American Federation of Teachers who were displaced by the storm.

At LaGuardia, about 80 people attended a discussion titled "Women, Racism and Katrina," sponsored by the PSC Women's Committee and the Student Center for Women. Speakers discussed the ways women had been particularly affected by Katrina – for example, the intersection between poverty and gender that left so many single mothers and widows living alone unable to evacuate before the storm.

Panelists included Tulane University's counseling director, Jilandra Rovaris; Adjoa Gzifa, of LaGuardia's Workforce Education Center, who has been working as a community organizer with Katrina evacuees in NYC-area hotels; and PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall. The event was also coordinated with the college's two-day African Heritage Celebration.

"The conditions of most New Orleans blacks before Katrina and the position of the poor in this city right now are basically the same," said

McCall. The difference, she said, was that Hurricane Katrina "focused a spotlight on the invisible poor." NYC's poor are still largely ignored, she said – from homeless people on the subway to service workers in the city's hotels and restaurants. "One has to wonder," asked McCall, "if Katrina had happened here, would we have seen our 'invisible' service workers huddled on the rooftops of our skyscrapers, asking for help?" Racism, said McCall, "is sewn deeply into the fabric of this country...in policies that have shrunk support for the public sector in order to give tax breaks to the wealthy." These backwards priorities hurt CUNY students every day, said McCall.

## ORGANIZING

The Queens College PSC chapter held a series of panels over the course of one day that drew a total of about 200 people – including a discussion of war spending and social priorities that featured veterans of the Iraq and Vietnam Wars. Other campuses with CUNY Week activity included BMCC, Brooklyn, City Tech, CSI, Hunter and Queensborough. Speakers included Margery Freeman of the New Orleans-based People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, at BMCC, and City Council Member Larry Seabrook at John Jay.

"The energy after our two events was great," said Avi Bornstein, John



Tulane University Counseling Director Jilandra Rovaris speaks while Adjoa Gzifa of LaGuardia's Workforce Education Center listens, during a CUNY Week event at LaGuardia.

Jay chapter chair. "You could see that there was still a lot of untapped potential, and it got us to begin a conversation about what more we can do." Students and PSC members discussed how creative use of internet organizing and other tactics could expand the circle of involvement, Bornstein said.

## CITY COUNCIL

A legislative breakfast the following week, on April 4, gave the PSC an opportunity to thank mem-

bers of the New York City Council for working with the union to turn around the decline in CUNY's public funding. Among those honored as a "Friend of the PSC" was the City Council's new Speaker, Christine Quinn. Other honorees were immigrant rights activist Allan Wernick, who is a law professor at Baruch, and the Black Faculty and Staff Association at City Tech, which was recognized for its fundraising efforts to support Dillard University.

# Irwin Yellowitz's PSC life

By DANIA RAJENDRA

Irwin Yellowitz has served the PSC since its inception – as chapter chair at City College, vice president of senior colleges, treasurer and more. For the last six years he has been chair of the union's Retirees Chapter – a post from which he resigned on March 31.

He remains president of the New York Labor History Association, and will continue to be active with the PSC's state and national affiliates. In April, he sat with *Clarion* to talk about his dual career as academic and labor activist.

## CITY COLLEGE ALUMNUS

A New York native, Yellowitz is a City College alumnus. "It made my life," he said of CCNY. "We were a poor family; the only opportunity I really had was City College. I was lucky enough to be able to find a spot." There, he said, his teachers encouraged him to become a professor. As an entering freshman, he said, "my horizons were much lower – a PhD didn't mean anything to me."

After receiving his doctorate

## Leader and founding member

from Brown, Yellowitz returned to CUNY in 1961. "In those days, there were a lot of teaching positions," he said. "Not like now." He was a lecturer at Hunter for one year, then moved to City College, including a five-year stint at Baruch, which was a part of City College until 1968.

His doctoral thesis was on unions and the progressive movement in New York state, and labor history became the main focus of his scholarly work. It was a professional interest that grew in part out of personal experience. Ten years old when his father died, Yellowitz recalled how his mother returned to work after 13 years out of the industry.

## UNION IMPRESSIONS

"She was a millinery worker, and she worked on piece rates," he explained. "The employer said, 'you're too slow,' but the union rep stepped in to say, 'No, you've got to give this woman a chance.' Otherwise she would have been thrown out on the street. That made an impression on



Irwin Yellowitz is a labor historian and labor activist.

me – I was 10 or 11 at the time."

Yellowitz's intellectual commitment to the labor movement made it natural for him to join the United Federation of College Teachers (UFCT), one of two precursors to

the PSC. "The '60s and '70s were a good time for the labor movement in higher ed," Yellowitz told *Clarion*. "It was really the glory days. Faculty were surprisingly open with respect to being organized." In 1972, the PSC was formed from a merger of the UFCT and a rival group, the Legislative Conference.

From the vantage point of 2006, Yellowitz is pleased with what the PSC has accomplished. "If you compare what the situation was for faculty before the PSC, and what it is today, you'll see changes that are enormous," he said. "And it's not just salary." The contract's due process provisions greatly reduce discrimination or favoritism, he said, and faculty control over their own professional lives increased with union representation: "I'm proud to have helped in that."

## ALWAYS TAUGHT

Along with several terms as a chapter chair, and twice serving as chair of his department, Yellowitz was elected as the PSC's vice president for senior colleges from 1973 until 1984, and was then the union's treasurer until 1997. He retired from CUNY in 1996. Yellowitz continued teaching throughout his union service. "My experience is that being a good professor and being a good union leader are things that fit easily with each other," he said. "There

is no conflict between the two." In fact, he added, "I have loved it."

Not surprisingly, Yellowitz followed those passions into retirement. He immediately signed up to join the PSC Retirees Chapter – a course of action he recommends to all, because continued PSC membership in retirement is not automatic. Three years later he became its chair. "The Retirees Chapter was a going concern when I was elected," he told *Clarion*, noting that his immediate predecessor, Larry Kaplan, "built a very sound structure."

"I think what I did was to try to make the Retirees Chapter more active within the PSC at large," Yellowitz told *Clarion*. "We have had people visible in the contract struggle, we have many retirees on union committees, and we played an active role in the struggle to keep the Welfare Fund intact," he said.

A culmination of this expanded role was the 2006 PSC constitutional change adding two retiree representatives to the Executive Council. "I consider that to be my major accomplishment as chapter chair," he said. "It's not only important because we'll have two people, it's important because retirees are really an integral part of the PSC."

Which is exactly what Irwin Yellowitz has been since the union was first established.



## NYC LABOR IN BRIEF

### Transit turnaround

On April 18, members of Transport Workers Union Local 100 voted to accept the same contract proposal that union members rejected by a seven-vote margin in January. This time the deal won support from 71% of members voting. But Governor Pataki had blasted the agreement as too generous after it was criticized by the tabloid press, and the MTA has declared that it is no longer bound to accept it. Instead, management wants a settlement imposed through binding arbitration, to which the union is strongly opposed. The issue is likely to be fought out in court, as well as through a political battle for public opinion.

Just days before the re-vote was counted, Local 100 President Roger Toussaint, who led members in a three-day strike last December, was sentenced to 10 days in jail, and Local 100 was fined \$2.5 million. While Toussaint will not fight his jail sentence, the union will appeal the fine.

### City unions vs. Taylor Law

In March, local labor leaders urged City Council members to push State lawmakers to amend the Taylor Law, which punishes striking public workers. Labor representatives testified that the law leaves workers with no leverage while allowing the City administration to drag out negotiations for years.

Randi Weingarten, president of the United Federation of Teachers, proposed changing the law to guarantee that wages rise with cost of living, leaving room for unions to bargain for more money and the City to bargain for less. Patrick J. Lynch, president of the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, called for the city to pay interest on back pay when negotiations are delayed. The mayor's office responded that the Taylor Law has helped foster "harmonious labor relations."

### FBI raids CLC

In March, the FBI raided offices of the New York City Central Labor Council (CLC) to investigate whether its president, Brian McLaughlin, was involved in an alleged bid-rigging scheme. McLaughlin has not been charged with any crimes and maintains that he is innocent. The *Chief Leader* reports that Denis Hughes, head of the New York State AFL-CIO, has arranged for Ed Ott, director of public policy at the CLC, to take on some of McLaughlin's responsibilities while the probe continues. The FBI is investigating an alleged bid-rigging plan aimed at steering city street light contracts to certain employers; McLaughlin is a member and past officer of IBEW Local 3, which represents workers who carry out street light repairs.

# The contract: closing in on

By PETER HOGNESS

As *Clarion* went to press in late April, PSC and CUNY negotiators were moving toward final agreement on a contract package. "Much progress was made" in a marathon 12-hour bargaining session on April 10, and the two sides "were able to resolve most remain-

## Most remaining issues resolved

ing issues," union president Barbara Bowen wrote in a report to members.

Progress at the April 10 session, which went past 10:30 pm, built on many hours of informal discus-

sions during previous weeks. Over the next couple of days the two sides took care of the main points still outstanding, and the focus shifted to settling final details with New York City and State.

### LONG PROCESS

"The process is long because of the number of parties involved, but also because we are determined to get the best settlement we can within the constraints of the city and state economic package," Bowen said. "That means arguing for fair implementation of every provision we have negotiated. Many of the provisions are complex, and have required hours of back-and-forth discussion before they were satisfactorily resolved."

Under the emerging deal, by the last day of the contract, salaries would be increased by an average of 9.5% (8.48% plus an additional \$800 increase to base salary). In addition, upon ratification faculty and staff would receive at least two years' worth of retroactive pay increases, totalling 6% or more of current salary.

The terms under discussion also provide for a large increase in CUNY's recurring contributions to the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund. The

contract would cover a period of four years and 10 months.

Management agreed to provide more research time for junior faculty and higher sabbatical pay, and the PSC agreed to support a change in state law that would shift the time to tenure from five to seven years. (The change would apply only to untenured faculty hired after the revised law takes effect.) The union described this as "increased research support to accompany the longer tenure clock."

One hundred new full-time lecturer positions would be created, for which long-serving CUNY adjuncts would form the hiring pool. An Adjunct Professional Development Fund would be created, and the HEO/CLT Professional Development Fund would continue.

### EQUITY ISSUES

Fall classes could begin three weekdays before the current start date of August 30, and there would be a range of equity improvements affecting different groups of members. The latter include reducing the teaching load at City Tech to 24 hours; higher minimum pay for faculty in the CUNY Language Immersion Program; and improvements in professional leave for



Benjamin Franklin Carney of Bronx Community College raises a question at the March Delegate Assembly.

Gary Schorichet

# Several city unions still at the table

By BENNETT BAUMER  
and PETER HOGNESS

Many municipal unions have faced drawn-out contract negotiations in this round of bargaining. Fire officers, police detectives, public school principals and city nurses are among those who spent this winter working under contracts that expired years ago. As spring began, some of these talks finally moved toward settlement while others remained deadlocked.

The main reason this round of bargaining has been so contentious has been Mayor Bloomberg's insistence that raises be "self-funded" — meaning that union members must cover the cost of any salary increases themselves through "productivity" measures such as lower pay for new employees. Once AF-SCME DC 37, the largest municipal union, accepted this premise, it became established as the "pattern" for other contracts, and unions that

## 'Horrorific' round of bargaining

have tried to challenge it have not been very successful.

### NURSES

In this context, unions representing higher-ranking workers have had a particularly difficult time hammering out contract agreements. On March 1, for example, an impasse was declared in talks between the NY State Nurses' Association (NYSNA) and the Bloomberg administration. "The City's conduct during negotiations illustrates the lack of respect it has for registered nurses," said Nancy Kaleda of NYSNA, which represents 6,400 RNs employed in city hospitals and other agencies.

The union says that RNs employed by the City earn about \$10,000 per year less than those in private hospitals, and that substandard salaries have led to high turnover and a staffing shortage.

NYSNA reports that 44% of new hires quit within three years, and that 1,000 nursing positions have been left vacant.

With other unions, the City often demanded lower pay for new hires in exchange for raises for more senior employees. But in talks with nurses, it was the other way around: NYSNA representatives said the City had called for concessions from more senior nurses to "pay for" raises in starting pay, in order to ease recruitment problems.

After an impasse panel is appointed, it will hear arguments from both sides and then recommend terms for a settlement. The panel's report is not binding.

### FIRE OFFICERS

The Uniformed Fire Officers' Association (UFOA) announced on March 13 that it had reached a ten-

tative contract settlement with the City, giving union members a 17% pay hike over 4½ years, in exchange for significant concessions. The pay scale for those promoted to Lieutenant or Supervising Fire Marshal after March 1, 2006, will be "stretched," so that those new to these titles will earn about \$37,000 less in the first four years than under the old contract. New fire officers will also take an extra year to reach maximum pay.

In addition, management also won provisions that will reduce the amount of overtime pay, the position of chief of department was removed as a civil service position and now will be an appointed position, and the City's annual contributions to the UFOA annuity fund (a supplemental retirement program) will drop by \$261 per person.

In return for these and other concessions, the reduction in pay for new fire officers was made less severe. According to the UFOA, if they



# on a final deal

library faculty and in annual leave for faculty counselors.

But however much these provisions have been discussed by the two sides, none can be regarded as completely settled until the City and State have signed off on all details. As Bowen put it, "nothing is final until everything is final."

As March began, PSC negotiators said that "less than 10 issues" stood in the way of a settlement and they offered proposals on each.

Perhaps the most important single issue was the Welfare Fund, where the union bargaining team argued that the amount of CUNY's recurring contributions to the Fund had to be increased. Since February, the two sides have made some progress on this point, and the terms now under consideration would result in what Bowen called "a multi-million dollar increase" in management's annual contributions.

## SABBATICAL PAY

Along with some equity issues, another important point was management's reluctance to enhance sabbatical pay. While CUNY management had accepted this change last November, it was not included in the package they proposed in February. But there has been movement here as well, and the terms now under discussion would significantly boost sabbatical pay.

Other issues that required more discussion in March and April were contract provisions specific

to the Hunter Campus Schools and CUNY's Educational Opportunity Centers. In past negotiations, issues affecting these institutions have sometimes been hard to settle. But progress has been made on

both, and the union expects to reach an agreement.

For the most recent updates on the status of contract talks, check the PSC website at [www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org).



Lorraine Cohen, acting chair of the PSC chapter at LaGuardia Community College, makes a point about organizing.

## Ratification process has several steps

Once negotiators for the PSC, CUNY management, and New York City and State agree on terms for a new CUNY contract, a series of steps laid out in the PSC constitution will lead up to a membership vote on ratification. Here's how the process works:

- Negotiators for the union and CUNY management will iron out implementation issues in a "Memorandum of Agreement" on terms for a new contract.

- Following steps laid out in the PSC constitution, this agreement is considered by the union's Executive Council, which votes on whether to recommend it to the union's Delegate Assembly.

- If the settlement is approved by the EC, the Delegate Assembly will then discuss it and vote on whether to recommend the deal to the membership. The regularly scheduled meetings of the DA are April 27, May 25 and June 15, though a special DA meeting could also be held to consider the tentative accord. (The DA is made up of representatives elected by each union chapter. To find out who your chapter's delegates are, contact your chapter chair – a list of chapter chairs and their phone numbers can be found at [www.psc-cuny.org/whoiswho.htm](http://www.psc-cuny.org/whoiswho.htm).)

- If the contract settlement is approved by union delegates, PSC members will then vote on whether to ratify it. The vote will

be conducted by the American Arbitration Association (AAA), and will be held by mail ballot.

- To help members make an informed decision, information about the proposed agreement will be made available in several different ways. A special issue of *Clarion* will be published, which will include the full text of the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), an explanation of its terms, Frequently Asked Questions, etc. This information will also be posted on the PSC website, and the full text of the MoA will be sent out along with the ratification ballots.

- Ballots are sent out to AAA, and are returned to it by mail. The count is then conducted by the AAA at its office in midtown Manhattan.

- In addition to PSC members voting on the agreement, it also must be approved by the CUNY Board of Trustees.

- Finally, before bargaining unit members can receive their retroactive pay, the City must formally allocate its share of the funds for the new contract, and at the state level a special pay bill must be approved by the Legislature in Albany. In past contracts, members have received their retroactive pay about a couple of months after CUNY's trustees approved the new agreement.

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had "paid for" the settlement's raises purely through pay reductions for those newly promoted, the "stretch" would have cut initial earnings by a much greater amount – \$60,000 each.

UFOA members ratified the contract by a tally of 1,899 yes to 277 no votes in a mail ballot, with more than 90% of the membership casting ballots. In recommending a "yes" vote, UFOA President Peter Gorman said the deal was the best possible in what he had earlier called "this horrific round of attrition bargaining." Gorman told the *Chief*, the civil service weekly, that municipal unions should consider coalition bargaining in their next set of contract negotiations, instead of each union fending for itself.

## PRINCIPALS

On March 16, the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA), the union representing principals and other supervisors in the public schools, asked for

a declaration of impasse in its talks with the City.

"It was our thought and our hope that over these past few months we were moving in the right direction," said CSA President Jill Levy. "But it became obvious Tuesday that CSA and the City will not be able to reach an agreement without outside intervention." Despite 23 meetings with both the Department of Education and the NYC Office of Labor Relations, the union said, the two sides are still far apart.

CSA has expressed interest in a settlement along the lines of the recent United Federation of Teachers contract, under which teachers agreed work an extra 50 minutes a week in exchange for raises. However, Levy told CSA members, "the City and the DOE have stated that they are not interested in extending the workday of CSA members in exchange for salary," because management says it is "already getting the time."

Worse, Levy added, the City is insisting that the union accept concessions on work rules as a precondition for any agreement on wages. Management's stand is that "unless CSA capitulates to the chancellor's

proposals...even the City pattern is not available to CSA members," Levy said.

If the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) agrees that negotiations have reached an impasse, the next step would be mediation. If the mediator's efforts do not lead to an agreement, PERB would appoint a fact-finding panel to begin non-binding arbitration. But the CSA is not just waiting for the results – the principals' union took its case to the public with an April 5 rally at City Hall and a series of broadcast ads.

## DETECTIVES

On March 15, members of the Detectives' Endowment Association (DEA) ratified a contract with the approval of 72% of those voting. The contract gives DEA members a 17% wage increase over 49½ months, but new detectives will suffer salary cuts that will cost them more than \$25,000 in their first seven years on the job. All members will have to work an additional 15 to 18 minutes a day. The "productivity" concessions in the DEA settlement thus borrowed from both the UFT contract, in which teachers agreed to



Nurses in city hospitals say low salaries leave them short-staffed.

work more time, and the Police Benevolent Association agreement, in which new hires took deep wage cuts.

With meager results for city workers in the round of bargaining now nearing an end, the UFOA's Gorman is not the only union leader calling for a new approach in the future. "We should learn the lessons of the last round and bargain as a coalition," UFT President Randi Weingarten declared in January.

"In the last round, we really got picked apart." Weingarten spoke at a conference of the Municipal Labor Committee, a 100-union coalition that she chairs.

PSC President Barbara Bowen, a member of the MLC's Executive Committee, has also urged serious consideration of coalition bargaining. "Only by acting militantly together will the city's unions have the power to advance our own agenda," she told *Clarion*.



## HIGHER ED IN BRIEF

### Step forward for DREAM Act

In March, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, or DREAM Act, as part of a larger immigration bill, and sent it on to the Senate floor.

The DREAM Act would allow states to grant in-state tuition at public universities without regard to immigration status – an issue on which the PSC led a successful fight in New York. It also offers undocumented youth who have lived in the US for more than five years a path to legal permanent residency, by requiring two years of college or military service.

But when *Clarion* went to press, the Senate had not passed any immigration legislation. DREAM Act supporters said they will try again in the future – but the Judiciary Committee vote was an important landmark.

### Online faculty seek union

More than 60 professors at Kaplan University, a for-profit online institution, have pledged to unionize. Faculty say they need to organize to change low academic standards and a lack of academic freedom, reports *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Advocates for a union say that administrators and school policy encourage plagiarizing and cheating while discouraging faculty members from giving students low grades or voicing complaints about the workplace. Kaplan, which employs 110 full-time professors and some 1,500 adjuncts, is owned by the *Washington Post*.

Kaplan's Faculty Senate has opposed unionization. But one union advocate attributes this to a "climate of fear." He adds, "hopefully, if there's a union, then that will change." Faculty who have voiced complaints in the past have been told that Kaplan would not hire them in the future.

### Feds investigate gender gap

The US Education Department's Office for Civil Rights is about to begin an in-depth examination of whether certain universities and colleges comply with anti-bias laws in regard to women students and employees in math and science programs, reports *Inside Higher Education*.

Assistant Education Secretary Stephanie Monroe said discrimination can take the form of subtle unwritten practices that form real barriers or "glass ceilings" for women, such as placing women with children on a "mommy track."

A 2004 government report criticized the Education Department's inadequate enforcement of Title IX, which bars sex discrimination under education programs that receive federal support. The report found that in 11 years, there have been only three reviews of colleges' records on gender equity in the sciences.

## PSC people: Joyce Solomon Moorman

# Part-time and full-time at CUNY

By DANIA RAJENDRA

Joyce Solomon Moorman, assistant professor of music at BMCC, began her academic career as an adjunct at Queens College in 1982. Over the next two decades she became a CUNY veteran, as one of the thousands of adjuncts who teach half of CUNY's classes.

While she was winning awards as a composer, Moorman's skill as a teacher got her rehired semester after semester – but always as contingent labor. Though constantly needed, during these 20 years she was hired only on a temporary basis.

For Fall, 2003, Moorman was hired as a full-time assistant professor at BMCC, and this spring she talked with *Clarion* about the change. At her desk in a tiny 7-foot by 12-foot office she shares with another professor, she reflected on the differences between full-time and part-time work at CUNY.

### CUNY MUST PAY

The biggest difference is something very basic. "It's getting a check every two weeks. That is the best thing of all," says Moorman. As an adjunct, "when classes weren't running, there were times when I did not have a check coming in, and sometimes it got tight."

Health is another source of adjunct insecurity. "I taught for years afraid to get sick, and even going in and teaching sick," Moorman tells *Clarion*. "As long as I did not have a fever or was not vomiting, I went to work." Sometimes she felt guilty, she says, because bringing a contagious disease into the workplace isn't the best for public health. But adjuncts are often left with little choice. No matter how many years – or decades – part-time faculty have worked at CUNY, they are not permitted to accumulate sick days from one semester to another.

### ZOOMING AROUND

For those who make their living as adjuncts, zooming from campus to campus is basically a given. Employed for ten years at LaGuardia and five as an adjunct at BMCC, Moorman also held part-time posts at Queens, York and City Tech, and a separate music school on the Brooklyn College campus. She's also been an adjunct at two private colleges and taught at private music schools – all while being an active composer and holding down gigs as a working musician.

"Sometimes I had one bookbag for one campus and one for another, to make sure I kept all my papers straight," she recalls to *Clarion*. "I have file cabinets, still, in my apartment that I had to have to keep my students' papers because I had no room to keep them anywhere else."

An adjunct's schedule is often hectic. "Generally, I managed to

schedule one campus on a day," Moorman says. "But when the school at Brooklyn College told me I could do a weekday, I chose Tuesday. I told them, 'Oh, I'm sure I can get there from City Tech by 6:00 pm.' But it turned out I really had to run to the subway to get from downtown Brooklyn to Flatbush Junction on time. You would think it wouldn't be that difficult, but it could be a strain."

In 1990-91, Moorman received a grant that allowed her to devote the year entirely to composition. And for two years, she worked full-time at LaGuardia on substitute lines. But these breaks from the part-time hustle were temporary – essentially different types of contingent labor. Soon she was back to making a living by stitching together part-time positions.

The wholesale shift toward reliance on part-time faculty made the academic job market very different from what Moorman expected. She holds a BA from Vassar, an MFA from Sarah Lawrence, a master's in teaching from Rutgers and a doctorate in music education from the Teachers College at Columbia. "I had thought that once I got the master's degree, getting a full-time job

in academia would not be that big a problem," she says with a laugh.

Moorman anticipated that it would be tough to sustain her work as a composer. "Composing is a male-dominated field," says Moorman, who won an international competition for female composers in 1998. "But I really have had much more success as a composer than I expected. Getting a full-time job has been more difficult. When I reflect back on the whole thing, it's sort of interesting that I had more success as a woman composer."

Of the different places she has taught, Moorman says, she liked CUNY the best. "I taught at two private colleges and I just did not like the atmosphere or the students at either one. At CUNY, I liked the students better. They seemed to be nicer, generally, and more respectful of their professors."

### NEW DEMANDS

Now that Moorman is a full-time junior faculty member, she faces some new demands. In addition to the scholarship required for tenure, there are committees and other work involved in department service. For Moorman, this has included joining the board of BMCC's Teaching and Learning Center, and working with the BMCC Symphony in jobs from page-turner to keyboard player.

"When I first saw my [full-time] teaching schedule, I thought there were places where I would have some free time," she says. "I didn't know about all the meetings and so on that I'd have to go to! Really, I have no free time." Still, she says,



Lisa Quiñones

Joyce Solomon Moorman is an assistant professor of music at BMCC.

it's better than running between three different schools.

### MORE TIME

Despite the new demands, Moorman says she now spends more time with her students. "I am able to concentrate more on my teaching as a full-timer, and I can devote more time to my classes. And I'm giving the students more time outside of class."

In addition to longer office hours, Moorman now spends substantial time tutoring the most advanced of BMCC's music students. "We do it for the benefit of the students, and for the benefit of the college," she says. "If we're going to continue to attract the best students, it's something we feel we just have to do."

"This is on top of our 27-hour teaching load," Moorman notes. "Maybe someone should point that out to 80th Street."

As a full-time faculty member, Moorman is now better paid. But the emotional rewards of teaching are much the same. "I always knew I wanted to teach, preferably at the college level," she tells *Clarion*. "I like interacting with people, I enjoy helping people." She recalls one recent student who'd been classically trained in Korea, and wanted to learn to play jazz. "It took her a while to get used to the idea of improvisation – of performing without all the notes being written out ahead of time," Moorman says. "Then one day she came to me and said, 'I think I've figured something out.' And she sat down and played an improvisation on 'My Favorite Things.'"

"I feel good when my students 'see the light,' so to speak, and master the material," Moorman ex-

plains. And that feeling's remained the same, whether she was part-time or full-time.

A talented teacher, composer and performer, a CUNY veteran who knows the system and its students well, Moorman is an example of the professional experience to be found among long-serving CUNY adjuncts. It's these CUNY veterans who would apply for the new "conversion lines" the PSC has proposed. CUNY needs hundreds of new full-time faculty, and the union has urged that some of these positions be created by combining part-time lines into full-time ones. These conversion lines would be filled by hiring from within CUNY's large pool of long-serving adjunct faculty, who have been rehired year after year.

### SOLIDARITY

Moorman joined CUNY Adjuncts Unite! in 1998, and she remains in solidarity with adjunct concerns. Part-time faculty deserve better pay and conditions, she says, and CUNY needs to reverse the "part-timerization" of academic work.

"I really think the students are being cheated by having so much of the faculty part-time," Moorman told *Clarion*. "Adjuncts are quality teachers, but full-time faculty have more resources to devote to their work." She cared just as much about her students when she was an adjunct, she says, but now can give them more focused attention.

"The chancellor and many trustees were students at CUNY when the faculty was mainly full-time," Moorman says. "Our students today deserve the same."



# Adjunct reappointment & evaluation

By **DEBRA BERGEN**  
PSC Director of Contract Administration  
and **PETER HOGNESS**

In May, adjuncts at CUNY are informed about reappointment for the Fall semester. The rules on reappointment and evaluation for CUNY's part-time employees are often different than those that apply to full-timers, and this article outlines some of the key provisions.

## 1) When are part-time employees notified about reappointment?

Adjuncts who have worked in the same department of the same college for at least six consecutive semesters should receive written notice by May 15 about whether or not they will be reappointed for the following Fall. If so, they must be reappointed for the entire academic year.

Other adjuncts, who are hired one semester at a time, should be notified about reappointment to Fall semester positions by May 1. (The notification date for Spring semester adjunct reappointments is December 1.)

All adjunct reappointments are contingent, and can be withdrawn if the class will not be offered because of insufficient enrollment or changes to a department's curriculum.

## 2) What if I don't get a notice, or if I get a notice of non-reappointment?

If you do not receive a written notice of either reappointment or non-reappointment by the appropriate deadline, you should contact an adjunct grievance counselor in the PSC Central Office, at 212-354-1252. Make the call as soon as possible, since grievances must be filed within 30 work days from the time you become aware of a problem.

## Corrections

Due to a production problem, there was an error in the March issue of *Clarion* in the campaign biography for Lizette Colón, a New Caucus candidate for PSC Community College Officer. The second sentence of her bio should have read, "As a member of the Chapter Executive Board, she has been active with the staff in assuring their rights under the contract."

There were some errors in each caucus's listing of its candidates for AFT and NYSUT delegates, which were corrected on the election ballot.

## What part-timers should know

If you get a letter of non-reappointment and are not working elsewhere, you can apply for unemployment compensation. You can file a claim over the phone by calling 888-209-8124. File your claim during the first week for which you will not be paid by CUNY; if you delay, you may receive less money.

## 3) What does the contract say about teaching observation for part-time faculty members?

Adjunct faculty in their first ten semesters of service should have a teaching observation once per semester. They should be observed by a member of the panel of observers as designated by the department chair. Observation should be carried out for a full classroom period during the first ten weeks of the semester, with at least 24 hours notice. After ten semesters, teaching observation may be held only at the request of either the adjunct or the department chair.

Procedures for the post-observation conference and post-observation memorandum are contained in Article 18.2(b)2 of the union contract

(see [www.psc-cuny.org/PDF/contract96-00.pdf](http://www.psc-cuny.org/PDF/contract96-00.pdf)).

## 4) What about annual evaluations?

The contract provides that adjunct faculty should have an evaluation conference at least once a year with the department chair or member of the departmental Personnel & Budget Committee. After four semesters of service, however, this evaluation conference is conducted only at the request of the department chair or adjunct.

## 5) What goes in my personnel file?

As Article 19 of the contract explains, you have two personnel files. The first, your "personal file," contains reports of teaching observations, descriptions of your professional accomplishments, and other information. You have the right to examine the file at any time. No document can be added to it until you have had the opportunity to read it and attach any comments you may want to add. You should initial all documents before they are placed in the file as evi-

dence that you have seen them. If you refuse to do so, the document will be added to your file along with a statement that you refused to initial it.

Your second personnel file, the "administration file," is open only to the department P&B committee and individuals responsible for recommendations on your reappointment or promotion. This file may contain only materials requested by the University or supplied by you in connection with your employment.

## For a one-semester appointment, notice is due by May 1.

## 6) Whom should I contact if I have questions on the contract or if I think my rights have been violated?

Grievances for part-timers are filed by the adjunct grievance counselors who work in the PSC Central Office; they can be reached by calling 212-354-1252.

If you do not receive a notice of reappointment, call a Central Office counselor immediately. In other cases, your campus grievance counselor (see [www.psc-cuny.org/rights.htm](http://www.psc-cuny.org/rights.htm) for a list) may be able to resolve a problem informally – so you may wish to contact them first.

## Reappointment to full-time positions

Spring is also an important time for many new employees who are up for reappointment to full-time positions. Those in their first year of employment as an instructor, tenure-track faculty member or full-time CLT must be notified by April 1 about whether they are being reappointed for a second year.

April 1 is also the notification date for lecturers in their first and second years. For most other full-time employees in their second year and after, the date for notice of reappointment is December 1. Further details can be found on page 8 of the November 2005 *Clarion*, on the web at [www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm](http://www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm). — PH

## CALENDAR

**TUESDAY, APRIL 25: 10:00 am/** The American Arbitration Association counts the ballots cast in the PSC's union-wide election. Results will be posted on the union website, [www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org).

**SATURDAY, APRIL 29: 12 noon/** March in NYC for Peace, Justice & Democracy. End the war in Iraq – bring all our troops home now! For location and other details, check [www.april29.org](http://www.april29.org).

**MONDAY, MAY 1: 6:00 pm/** HEO-CLT Professional Development Grant Committee will review applications. For info, call Linda Slifkin at 212-345-1252.

**MONDAY, MAY 8: 6:00 pm/** PSC Solidarity Committee meeting, at the PSC office, 25 West 43rd St., 5th floor. For info, contact Jim Perlstein, [jperlstein@bassmeadow.com](mailto:jperlstein@bassmeadow.com).

**TUESDAY, MAY 9: 6:00 pm/** PSC Women's Committee meeting, at the PSC office, 25 West 43rd St., 5th floor. For info, contact Norah Chase at [nchase391@aol.com](mailto:nchase391@aol.com).

**FRIDAY, MAY 12: 4:00 pm/** "First Friday" part-timer meeting at the PSC office, 25 West 43rd St., 5th floor. Contact Marcia Newfield, [mnewfield@pcsmail.org](mailto:mnewfield@pcsmail.org).

**FRIDAY, MAY 12: 6:00 pm/** Labor Goes to the Movies. At the CCNY Center for Worker Education, 99 Hudson Street, 6th floor. For info, contact Dania Rajendra at [drajendra@psc-mail.org](mailto:drajendra@psc-mail.org). No RSVPs.

**SATURDAY, MAY 20: 9:30 am – 12:30 pm/** PSC International Committee meeting. For location and info, contact Renate Bridenthal at [Rbriden1@juno.com](mailto:Rbriden1@juno.com).

**TUESDAY, MAY 23: 6:00 pm/** PSC Racial Diversity Committee meeting, at the PSC office, 25 West 43rd St., 5th floor. For more information, call the PSC office, 212-354-1252.



**PSC members were among the thousands of New Yorkers who demonstrated their support for immigrant rights on April 10. The City Hall protest was part of a national wave of pro-immigrant rallies.**

## Clarion MAY 2006

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## ACADEMIC FREEDOM

# Political fiction vs. academic reality

By DANIA RAJENDRA

**P**riya Parmar, assistant professor of education at Brooklyn College, is one of five CUNY faculty members attacked in David Horowitz's new book, *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*. (See sidebar.)

*The Professors* mainly recycles false charges made against Parmar in a newspaper article, published in the ideologically driven *New York Sun* in May, 2005. Horowitz extensively quotes the *Sun* to cite one student who accused Parmar of "bigotry toward white students," and retaliation against those who disagreed with her politically.

Horowitz does not mention that this student was found to have committed plagiarism in Parmar's class – and chose not to appeal. Nor does *The Professors* mention that the vast majority of Parmar's students – both white and students of color – said the charges were untrue "The claim of Parmar being anti-white and refusing to let students express their opinions in class was a complete falsehood," said Elisheva Rison, a senior history major who was one of more than 50 students to sign letters in Parmar's defense.

This spring Priya Parmar sat down with *Clarion* to talk about what it's like to be the target of a national smear campaign.

## How did you find out about your inclusion in *The Professors*?

It's funny, I was at a union meeting to hear an update on the contract. [PSC First Vice President] Steve London walked up to me and said, "Congratulations on being a 'dangerous professor!'" I was a bit confused and asked, "What are you talking about?" So that's how I found out – through Steve London.

My first reaction – I was in shock, and then I was consumed with fear and concern, because I am just now completing my third year at CUNY and am not yet tenured. But while I was reacting, I knew that the union was responding and that was comforting.

My feelings have slowly turned into anger because of the defamatory and unsubstantiated claims made about me in the book. Horowitz relied on shoddy hearsay, focusing on one disgruntled student quoted in a newspaper article.

Nonetheless, it is an honor to be associated with such internationally acclaimed scholars such as Stanley Aronowitz, Angela Davis, bell hooks, and Manning Marable. And so I thought, "Wow, I'm in very good company, maybe undeservedly." [laughs]

## What was your strongest reaction to how you were portrayed?

I was extremely offended for being called a bigot towards my white students. It's defamatory and insulting, especially when my student evaluations and support letters prove otherwise. Many of my white students were offended as well and as a result, have come to my defense and are actually writing about the attacks because they felt their voices were excluded from the conversation. That's what's most infuriating to me – that my other students weren't even contacted.

## Is this what you imagined when you chose a career in education?

Not this soon in my career. However, during my graduate studies at Penn State, I was warned by professors – whom Horowitz

would probably consider "dangerous" – that cultural studies scholars, especially women and women of color, could become targets for discussing "controversial" issues that challenged mainstream ideologies, dominant paradigms and power structures.

I just didn't expect to be targeted so quickly – that was a little disconcerting.

## Where do you get support?

My colleagues at Brooklyn College, regardless of their political or ideological position, have been tremendously supportive. I've also received dozens of e-mails of support from graduate students and colleagues from across the country whom I've never met.

My students have been one of my greatest strengths of support. I'm proud – and humbled – that they felt the need to take action, writing support letters to the administration and student newspapers, against something they felt was unjust and misleading.

And my family has been incredibly supportive – and worried. I just recently told my parents about the Horowitz book, but I never disclosed any of the other attention I received last year, courtesy of the *Sun*, because my mother, in particular, is not in the greatest health. I could not bear to put any unnecessary stress on them. Now they're calling me nearly every day because they fear for my job...and safety.

## Do you fear for your safety?

At first, yes. When the *Sun* article came out, I received a lot of hate e-mail. It ranged from "you racist bitch," to derisive ones thanking me for supporting the promotion of Ebonics over standard English because I am now "ensuring the success of white students and the failure of African Americans." I mean, it was ridiculous how the content of my course was completely distorted and tak-



Assistant Professor Priya Parmar has found herself in conservative crosshairs twice in one year.

en out of context on the internet, to the point that people actually believed I condemned the speaking of standard English!

So I did worry then. Especially after the *Sun* printed my picture, I was very conscious, even just walking around campus and while driving home, constantly watching my back.

## Does this controversy make you reconsider a career in academia?

No, not at all. I am still passionate and dedicated to addressing diversity and social justice, to bringing multiple and alternative

perspectives into the classroom – including my own. I will continue to encourage and challenge my students to question texts, even my own, as I do every semester. I encourage them to question everything around them and to analyze the politics of education. If one thinks that education and politics are unrelated, I welcome them to visit the New York City public school system.

I feel my role as an educator is one who facilitates critical consciousness. I strive to empower my students to think critically, to find their voice, and to become active citizens.

So, I'm going to remain in this profession.

## "Dangerous" professors?

**D**avid Horowitz is a former 1960s radical who moved to the right and has devoted the last few decades to attacking the American left. Though he has never been a faculty member and does not hold a PhD, in recent years he has become preoccupied with academia. He has won media exposure as architect of the so-called "Academic Bill of Rights," which would enforce "balance" on university faculties through government investigation of professors' political views.

Horowitz's latest bid for public attention is a book titled *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*. The jacket copy warns that American universities are full of "ex-terrorists, racists, murderers, sexual deviants, anti-Semites and al Qaeda supporters," and promises a "riveting exposé."

### WHOLE DISCIPLINES ATTACKED

Beneath the heated rhetoric, the facts in the book's short profiles fall somewhat short of this description. They include such shockers as a faculty member at a Quaker college who is "dangerous" because she teaches peace studies. A University of Illinois communications professor is "dangerous" because he analyzes how corporate ownership affects the news media. *Publisher's Weekly* observed that what most agitates Horowitz

is "that tenure allows professors who disagree with his personal political opinions to continue teaching."

Frequently Horowitz objects not just to one professor, but to the existence of entire disciplines. For example, CUNY Distinguished Professor Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a founding theorist of queer studies, is targeted because she explores questions of sexuality and homosexuality in literature.

*The Professors* is also riddled with basic factual errors. Some are the result of sloppiness – for example, the book takes a statement from British journalist Paul Foot and attributes it to Columbia's Eric Foner. Others are deliberate distortions, as when Professors Larry Estrada and Dean Saitta are both said to have "defended" Ward Churchill's comments about the attacks of 9/11. What Estrada and Saitta defended was Churchill's right to free speech – but both made clear that they disagreed with the content of his remarks. Saitta, for example, has called them "outrageous and inflammatory."

Six of the book's 101 professors are listed as employed at CUNY: Distinguished Professors Sedgwick, Stanley Aronowitz, and bell hooks; Professor Leonard Jeffries; Associate Professor Timothy Shortell; and Assistant Professor Priya Parmar. But even this list is inaccurate, as bell hooks has not been on the CUNY pay-

roll since 1999. She was named to a three-year appointment at Southwestern University in 2001, and has been a Distinguished Professor at Berea College since 2004.

To track the many mistakes in *The Professors*, Free Exchange On Campus, a national coalition that includes the American Federation of Teachers, has launched a growing "Horowitz Fact Checker" on the web. (See [www.freeexchangeoncampus.org](http://www.freeexchangeoncampus.org).)

### NOT SCHOLARSHIP

"Perhaps it is unfair to suggest that [Horowitz] was actually aiming for scholarship," Estrada commented. "This book is produced to be polemical and incendiary...to create fear and distrust of higher education and to spread the notion that our colleges and universities are full of dangerous people." Aaron Barlow of Kutztown University described *The Professors* as part of "an attempt to bring the universities more firmly under legislative control."

When hearings in Pennsylvania turned up no evidence of any pattern of left-wing faculty discriminating against conservative students, one legislator called Horowitz's Academic Bill of Rights "a solution in search of a problem." The goal of *The Professors* is to scare the public into believing that this imaginary problem is real.

– PH & DR



## PEACE &amp; JUSTICE

# Walking to New Orleans

Three Iraq veterans at CUNY, members of Iraq Veterans Against the War, spoke with *Clarion* about their participation in a six-day march from Mobile, Ala., to New Orleans on the third anniversary of the war in Iraq. From March 14 to 19, veterans and hurricane survivors joined together to demand real reconstruction on the Gulf Coast and an end to the war's waste of money and human life.

José Vasquez is a PSC member, an adjunct at John Jay who is enrolled in the PhD program in anthropology at the Graduate Center. Demond Mullins is a junior at Lehman, a black studies major with a minor in political science. Fernando Braga is a sophomore at Hunter, majoring in film, and an intern at *Clarion* this semester.

**JOSÉ VASQUEZ:** There's a Veterans For Peace chapter in Mobile, Alabama, that gets the credit for coming up with the concept for the march. They were inspired by the civil rights movement and wanted to do something to draw attention to the Gulf Coast and also mark the beginning of the fourth year of the occupation of Iraq. We started at a historic Baptist church, Stone Street Baptist Church, which is older than the state of Alabama, and then went 140 miles along the Gulf Coast to New Orleans.

Actually Vets for Peace members were some of the first relief workers in a lot of areas down there. Before Katrina hit, they were planning to be part of a national tour with Cindy Sheehan, so they had tour buses already loaded up with lots of water and other supplies. After the storm passed, they just took their supplies to people who needed them. Besides New Orleans, they went along the coast into Slidell and Bayou Le Batre and Biloxi. That's how they had all these connections along the Gulf Coast that they built on to organize the march.

They worked with a community group in Mobile called Saving Our Selves, and when we arrived there we stayed in a warehouse that Saving Our Selves was using for relief work. They've got pallets and pallets of food and water and other supplies, sent from around the country, that they distribute into areas that have not gotten a lot of attention from FEMA or the Red Cross.

**DEMOND MULLINS:** I heard about the march when I met José and Fernando, at an event at the Grad Center where people were reading from their Iraq war memoirs. At that point I had only been home from Iraq for about five months, and I had a really pessimistic view of the world and human nature entirely. But I really felt comfortable with these guys, I really felt like I could relate to them and I was impressed by what they were doing in Iraq Veterans Against the War. It really helped me focus, just talking to them.

I had a lot of negative energy and I wanted to use it in a positive way – so the march sounded like something I wanted to be a part of.

**CLARION:** What was the experience of the march like?

**VASQUEZ:** You know, by the end of it, my stereotype of Southerners had been completely shattered.

I was born in the Bronx and I grew up in California. As far as I was concerned, the South was "Jesusland" or whatever. When I

was stationed in Georgia, I was so afraid to leave the base that I basically spent the whole year on Ft. Benning, not wanting to go off-base just because my ideas of who Southerners were was so negative.

So this was the first time that I actually spent time with some Southerners. I was in Alabama and Mississippi and Louisiana, and people just welcomed us. Not only the people marching, but the people along the streets – they were honking their horns and

peared, just some stairs left and that was it. Titi's been very outspoken, pushing officials to do something for her area, and she ended up joining us on the march.

**BRAGA:** You could see that the churches and grassroots organizations were making the biggest difference in these communities, for the survival of these people who are there. And to see people helping each other like that is really beautiful – but I also found it appalling, because where are the federal

ple's own assets, that were already paid off and people could be using them, they just left them there. To me, that was disgusting.

**VASQUEZ:** I think these failures don't only reflect on this administration. It's just that, in general in US society, we care more about things and about commercialism and consumption as opposed to people. We don't care about poor people, we don't care about people of color. We don't care if people can't pay their way through school, we don't care about public housing or education or healthcare.

There's no reason why, for example, we in the United States can't have a national health care system. But our priorities are screwed up. We pay more per person per year to have healthcare, compared to other countries like Germany or Canada, yet they're able to provide all of their citizens with healthcare through a public system at half the cost. It's not like we don't have the money to do it – it's that our priorities are so wrong and so driven by profit that lots and lots of people fall through the cracks.

**MULLINS:** And you can break it down: if we talk about CUNY it's the same type of thing. Does government really care about the needs in the community, the things that people need to keep themselves going toward some kind of goal? CUNY is serving 200,000 students who live in New York City. I mean, they need this school, they need this university. But the governor wants to take money out of it, so he can cut taxes – even with a big surplus this year.

**VASQUEZ:** One of our vets from Buffalo, his name is Geoff, along the route he would ask people we met, "Do you think the \$510 billion in the defense budget could help solve any of your problems?" And that really did seem to resonate with people who'd lost their homes.

**CLARION:** What other conversations stayed with you?

**MULLINS:** I recall talking with a woman named Mary Beth Black. She said she felt so good that we were there speaking out about the war in Iraq, because even though she opposes it she doesn't really know how to address it because she wasn't there, she didn't take part in it and she doesn't want people to think that she is opposing the soldiers.

I told her, you don't have to be a veteran to speak out about the war or oppose it. I said I felt kind of the same way about the Hurricane Katrina survivors – because I can say that this is messed up, this is horrible, it's an atrocity to see what people have to live with in America. But I still live in the Bronx, and I sit on my cozy couch and I have heat and water and everything – and I feel kind of guilty about it. And she said, well, you don't have to be a hurricane survivor to say how you feel about the state of our country, as far as New Orleans goes.

I thought about it and I said, yeah, you don't have to be a hurricane survivor, you don't have to be a veteran of war to tell this country that you're fed up with the way this system is working. You just have to be a conscious American. You just have to know that there is an injustice in this system and you want to do something about it.



Lehman student and Iraq war veteran Demond Mullins speaks out against the war in New Orleans.

giving us the peace sign and the thumbs up. Folks who had lost their homes were especially happy to see us. They appreciated the fact that we were trying to draw attention to areas outside of New Orleans that were equally devastated, but that hadn't been given much attention.

**FERNANDO BRAGA:** Some areas were worse than anything the vets on the march had seen in Iraq. In Iraq, after someplace gets bombed, life around that area continues. In a lot of the Gulf Coast, people don't have the ability to continue living there – whether it's because of jobs, or sanitation, or being kept out.

Basic services are just not being taken care of. Like in one Vietnamese neighborhood we went through – well, some people were living there, but they have no trash pickup. The trash since September is just piled up in the streets, and people just have to try to get rid of it in their own ways.

**VASQUEZ:** This one woman, her nickname was Titi, she took us down to her area and said, "Look at this place!" And really there was no kind of cleanup going on, much less rebuilding. The houses were completely off their foundations. Or they were gone, disap-

agencies at? What are they doing? I really didn't see a government response.

Honestly, some people said that they saw some stuff from FEMA, but aside from seeing a sporadic trailer every now and again, I didn't see anything. And I really thought about that. The whole time I was there I didn't see any FEMA or Red Cross presence but I saw grass roots organizations like Common Ground.

**CLARION:** What is that?

**BRAGA:** Common Ground is an organization in New Orleans that's helping to provide for some of the survivors down there. From just the bare necessities like food and water, to helping in the deconstruction of some of the houses. It's headed by a former Black Panther, Malik Rahim. They asked for students to volunteer during spring break, and they got people from every historically black college in the country.

**MULLINS:** I was told by someone who lives in New Orleans that FEMA was taking the cars that still had a mortgage on them, that still had money owed to the bank. They would take those cars and get them out of the water so they could be reclaimed by the banks. But the cars that were individual peo-

## Veterans and hurricane survivors say the Iraq war is wasting lives & money.

Braga, Mullins and Vasquez can be reached through Iraq Veterans Against the War at [ivaw.nyc@gmail.com](mailto:ivaw.nyc@gmail.com).



## HEALTH CARE

# Why the new Massachusetts health plan won't solve the crisis

By PHYSICIANS FOR A NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM, NEW YORK METRO CHAPTER

The health insurance package passed by the Massachusetts legislature in April has been touted by its advocates as providing "universal health insurance coverage" for the citizens of that state. Some, including William Weld, the former governor of Massachusetts now seeking that position in New York, have proposed the Massachusetts plan as a model for our state. This would be a serious mistake. The Massachusetts plan gives new money to insurance companies and large medical centers, but it will do little for the nearly 750,000 citizens of that state who lack insurance today.

The Massachusetts plan is a cruel hoax. As long as the wasteful and unnecessary private insurance companies are kept in the system, costs will continue to rise and the numbers of uninsured will climb as well.

## WHAT'S IN THE BILL?

The new bill includes three key provisions meant to expand coverage. First, it would modestly expand Medicaid eligibility. Second, it would offer subsidies for the purchase of private coverage to low-income individuals and families, though the size of the subsidies has yet to be determined. Finally, those making more than three times the poverty income (about \$30,000 for a single person) would have to buy their own coverage or pay a fine to the state.

To help make coverage more affordable, a new state agency will connect people with the private insurance plans that sell the coverage, and allow people to use pre-



Republican Governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts backed that state's health care reform.

tax dollars to purchase coverage (a tax break that mostly helps affluent tax payers who are in high tax brackets). This new agency is also supposed to help design affordable plans.

Businesses that employ more than 10 people and fail to provide health insurance will be assessed a fee (not more than \$295) to help subsidize care. Additionally, hospitals won a rate hike assuring them better payments from state programs.

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

The linchpin of the plan is the assumption that uninsured people will be able to find affordable health plans. A typical group policy in Massachusetts costs about \$4,500 annually for an individual and more than \$11,000 for family coverage. A wealthy uninsured

person could afford that but few of the uninsured can.

The legislation promises that the uninsured will be offered comprehensive, affordable private health plans, but it offers no specifics. The subsidies in the plan are completely inadequate: To cover the cost of health care for the uninsured – estimated at between \$700 million and \$4 billion each year – the plan provides a mere \$125 million.

The only way to get cheaper plans in this situation would be to strip down the coverage, boost co-payments and deductibles, remove services from coverage, etc. Governor Romney has suggested an insurance policy costing \$2,400 per year per person (or \$9,600 for a family of four) but has offered no details on this proposed policy. In neighboring New Hampshire a policy costing \$2,484 is available for a

single 30-year-old non-smoking woman and offering the following coverage:

- \$1,000 deductible before insurance pays anything;
- 20% co-payment on covered services for the next \$5,000;
- Inpatient mental health capped at \$2,500 each year;
- Outpatient mental health 50% of charges (including drugs), maximum \$40 per day;
- No coverage for routine preventive care, gynecologic exams, or maternity care.

Such a plan would not protect people from huge bills if they were to become seriously ill. Hence, the requirement that the uninsured purchase coverage will either require them to pay money they don't have or buy nearly worthless, stripped-down policies that represent coverage in name only.

Equally important, the legislation will do nothing to contain the skyrocketing costs of care. Indeed, it gives new infusions of cash to hospitals and private insurers. Predictably, continually rising costs

will force more and more employers to drop coverage, while state coffers will be drained by the continuing cost increases in Medicaid and the subsidies promised in the reform legislation. This program is simply not sustainable over the long or even medium term

## WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?

The legislation offers empty promises and ignores real and popular solutions. A single-payer universal coverage plan could cut costs dramatically by streamlining health care paperwork, making health care affordable. Study after study by the Congressional Budget Office, the General Accounting Office and respected private consulting firms have confirmed that the savings in administrative costs from a single-payer system will be more than sufficient to provide coverage for everyone, without any additional spending at all.

And single-payer is popular. Surveys show that consumers, labor, seniors and even many business leaders support such a plan. National polls find that almost two-thirds of Americans favor a tax-funded plan like Medicare that would cover all Americans.

But single-payer national health insurance threatens the multi-million dollar paychecks of insurance executives, and the outrageous profits of drug companies and medical entrepreneurs.

It's time for politicians to stand up to the insurance and drug industries and pass health reform that can work.

*Physicians for a National Health Program is a national organization of 14,000 physicians who support universal access to health care. PNHP is headquartered in Chicago and has chapters and spokespeople across the US. The New York Metro Chapter of PNHP can be reached at 212-666-4001, by e-mail at [pnhpnyc@igc.org](mailto:pnhpnyc@igc.org), or on the web at [www.pnhpnyc.org](http://www.pnhpnyc.org).*

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## 15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

### Fund CUNY fairly

In his executive budget, Mayor Michael Bloomberg is seeking tens of millions of dollars in cuts to CUNY's operating budget. (See page 3.) That's money we need for everything from library books to heating oil. The PSC is asking the City Council to do more than restore the funds – the union is asking for a

real improvement in CUNY funding, so the University can hire more full-time faculty and expand student access to counseling. Lend your support by logging onto the union's website, [www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org). Click on ACT NOW to tell the City Council that the City's university needs its support.