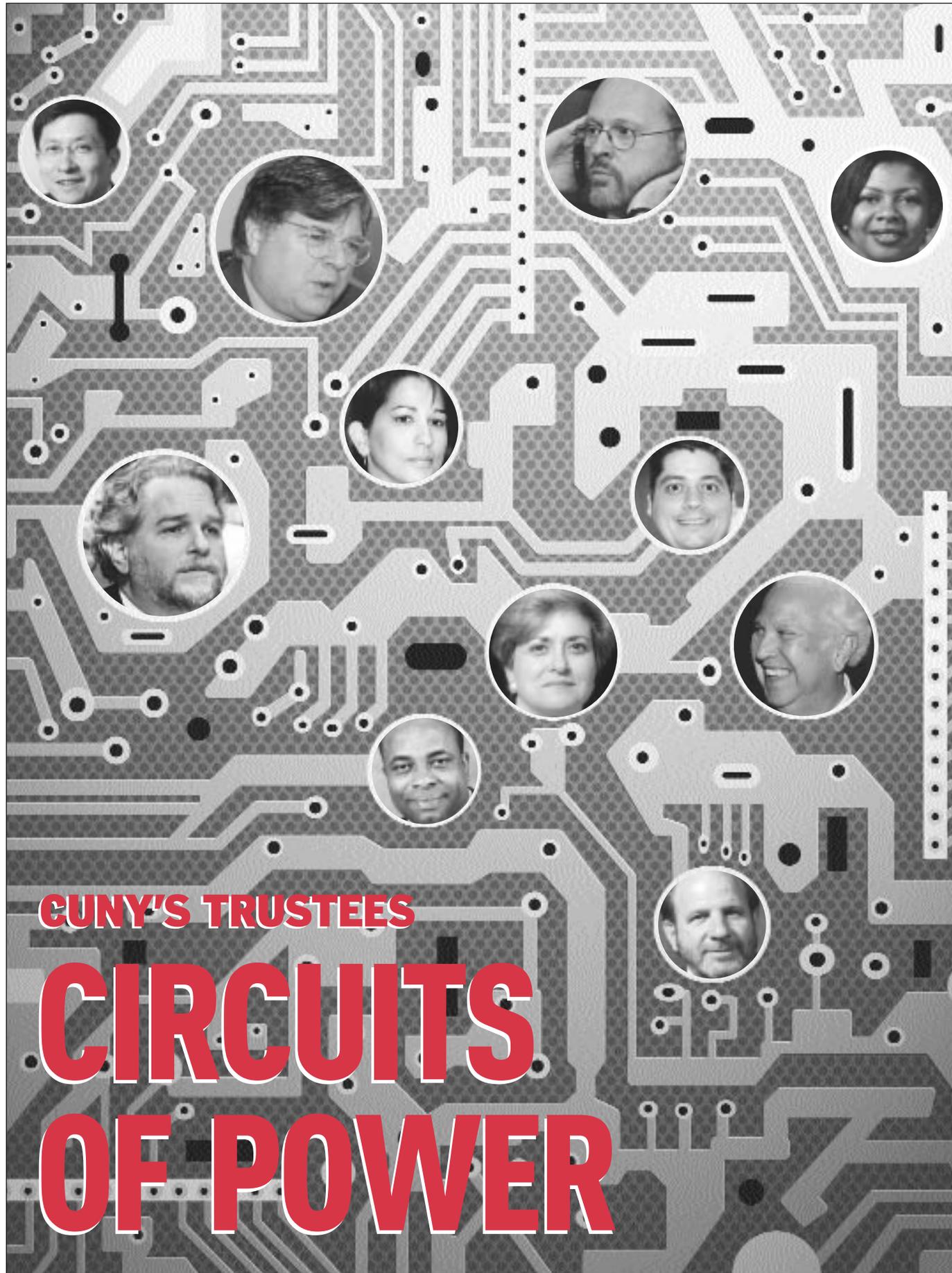


# Clarion

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



OCTOBER 2002



## CUNY'S TRUSTEES

# CIRCUITS OF POWER

Who's calling the shots at City University? What you don't know about the CUNY Board of Trustees may surprise you. *Clarion* spotlights the 17 board members, their political histories, their connections and who is supporting them. Several members are new, and quite different from each other. With looming budget battles and other crucial votes coming up, you'll want to know how the power flows. **PAGES 6-7**



## ACCESS Regents review policy on remediation

The ban at senior colleges affects who gets in.

**PAGE 5**

## ELECTIONS

### This year, it's politics as unusual

Unions backing Republicans, third parties blossoming, and – maybe – NY's first black governor. Expect the unexpected. **PAGES 4, 10-11**



## RESEARCH FOUNDATION

### RF workers ready to rock and roll

While RF workers at the central office press for a contract, RF staff at BCC and KCC are organizing for union recognition. **PAGE 3**



## VOX POPULI

### Your needs, your voice, your representation

From the Welfare Fund, to a new PSC questionnaire, to a meeting with education workers from other countries – your voice is needed. **PAGE 9**



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.

# Retiring HEOs and CLTs must be replaced

● As Higher Education officers and College Laboratory Technicians, we need to be constantly on the alert to make sure our rights are protected. We urged the PSC to urge the Chancellor to include HEOs and CLTs in the Early Retirement Incentive (ERI) and we were pleased to find ourselves included.

However, in the same letter that the Chancellor announced ERI for all instructional staff, he stated that all faculty would be replaced and he also stated that only some HEOs and CLTs will be replaced. He wrote that the colleges should see the vacancies as "an opportunity to restructure administrative support in a manner that reduces costs and provides greater efficiencies."

HEOs and CLTs are already stretched too thin. In some colleges, professional staff are working from 9 am to 9 pm, twelve hours per day, four days a week, and from 9 to 5 on Fridays. We have seen an increase in enrollment without an increase in staff. We could save the university millions of dollars in consultant fees if the university would ask us how our work could be organized more effectively and for suggestions about how to increase enrollment.

CUNY needs more staff, not less.  
— Jean Weisman  
CCNY Center for Worker Education

## Pay hikes and inflation

● We have all heard the UFT bemoan the fact that their members are paid less than surrounding communities. Why doesn't the PSC bemoan the fact that we get paid significantly less than the UFT? The maximum salary for a UFT member used to be exactly the same as that for an assistant professor. The PSC has countenanced the UFT breaking this tie and now a kindergarten teacher at maximum gets even more than an associate professor at maximum. (The city has some excellent kindergarten teachers but it also has excellent assistant and associate professors as well as lecturers and instructors.) Is this supposed to make CUNY more attractive to the best qualified scholars and teachers out there?

Those at the top of their scales might be interested to know that the final years of our last three contracts increased pay by 18% over the time interval October, 1994 through October, 2001. During this time inter-

val the consumer price index in the New York City area rose by 17.9%. I don't recall the PSC publicizing this fact. What were they thinking and what were we thinking when this contract was approved? We were probably thinking that some back pay is better than nothing. It's about time that we had a contract negotiated on time without, "We got the best deal that we could."

— Michael Brozinsky  
Queensborough

Editor's note: *During the last contract fight, a front-page story in the Summer 2001 Clarion did report that since 1972 inflation had eroded real salaries for CUNY faculty and professional staff by 27% to 41%. The contract approved this summer reverses this trend, with salary increases above inflation. The October 1994 to October 2001 time period cited by Brozinsky includes three years (1995, 1996 and 1997) during prior contracts in which there was no increase at all.*

## As beautiful as Brooklyn?

● It's beautiful up here on the bluff above the Harlem River. Have you visited the Bronx Community College campus? Come on up. BCC was the original campus of New York University, designed by Stanford White early in the previous century. The highest point in the five boroughs is at the center of the campus, providing breathtaking views of the Hudson, the Palisades across the river, and the Manhattan skyline. The campus' Hall of Fame of Great Americans is a national landmark. Soon the flaming fall review

of autumn foliage will envelope the campus and paint the landscape as far as the eye can see. Bring lunch. Come on up. We'll save a spot for you.

— Ben Carney  
BCC

## Needed: national drug plan

● If the richest nation in the world put people before profits our union's Welfare Fund would not be saddled with a \$6 million deficit. The lack of nationalization of health care and prescription drugs is one of the weaknesses of our democracy. The corporate lobby and male chauvinists vilified Hillary Clinton for her efforts to introduce a national health care plan for the country.

I would hope that the PSC, working with the union movement as a whole, could mount a formidable effort to fight for national health care coverage. As an alternative, could our union create a for-profit "entity," using the expertise of our business, finance and economics professors, assistant business managers, marketing and computer experts (HEOs) to create a corporation to finance our prescription needs. CUNY's management should be asked to assist in footing the bill for this.

Britain, Canada and Switzerland have nationalized drug plans. Why doesn't the richest and most powerful democracy of our time have one?

— Michelle Payne  
Brooklyn College

## No separate bargaining

● Recent *Clarion* articles have not addressed the question of how the

interests of the membership at the Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs) became separated from the main body of the PSC/CUNY collective bargaining negotiations, specifically in the area of salary schedules. Contrary to *Clarion* reports, at no time have we negotiated separate salaries, until the present contract. Nor have we, in 30 years of membership, ever before been asked to vote twice – on "them" and "us" contracts.

If our separate position is not the result of misunderstanding of past contract formats, perhaps it resulted from a really bad decision to abandon the "strength in numbers" tradition of unionism or from a concession to management to close the deal for the larger membership. None of these is a good reason why our dues (in which area our parity is not threatened) did not buy us equal representation at the bargaining table. The next *Clarion* article on the EOCs should detail how and why our interests were moved out of the main forum of negotiations and set aside for later attention.

— Constance Fennell  
Manhattan EOC

PSC President Barbara Bowen responds: *The PSC is committed to negotiating the same salaries for our members at the EOCs as for the rest of the PSC membership. The representation EOC members are receiving at the bargaining table is without question equal to that received by the rest of the membership. In fact, this is the first time that EOC faculty and staff themselves have been part of the negotiating team. The writer is incorrect about the bargaining history: EOC salaries have always involved a separate negotiation, although it has usually been concluded within the framework of the larger contract. This time, however, management has introduced a sweeping set of demands that would imperil both our working conditions and the future of the Centers themselves. The bargaining is taking longer than usual because we are refusing to concede.*

## Online research solutions

● Nowadays online research is as common as cellular phones and e-mail. There is a research tool, Serial Solutions, that is unique and indispensable for the online researcher. It has been offered by CUNY for about a year. Oddly enough, it appears on the CUNY-wide database screen under a generic description, "Alphabetical List of Full Text Materials" rather than as "Serial Solutions."

What does it do? On campus or off, you can access Serial Solutions

by clicking on the only red button on the CUNY-wide listing of e-journals and reference databases. You can view the CUNY-wide list, which contains Serial Solutions by entering the URL, <http://libraries.cuny.edu/resource.htm>. When you hit the only red square, you will see a complete list of every full-text electronic journal and database that our University offers. You will know with the click of a mouse, the title and time coverage of every journal title purchased by the CUNY consortium. It is easy to use, requires no training and will make your online investigations much quicker and easier.

— George Thorsen  
QCC

## CUNY NEWS IN BRIEF

### Enrollment jumps

Enrollment at CUNY surged to 208,047 students this Fall, 5.4% higher than the same period last year. According to initial figures from 80th Street, the number of incoming freshmen at City College and Lehman rose by almost 30 percent. York, LaGuardia and Hostos each had over 20 percent more freshmen starting classes than last year, while Brooklyn, Bronx Community College and Staten Island saw increases in the double digits. "We're of course happy to have the new students at City," commented Larry Hanley, PSC chapter chair at City. "After years of starvation diet, however, resources are stretched to the limit to meet the new demand."

### Baruch writing cut

The budget for Baruch College's Writing Center was slashed in half at the start of the new semester. The last-minute cut saw some adjuncts laid off and others facing reductions in hours. The Writing Center, part of Baruch's English Department, assists students in English courses with grammar and mechanics.

"I am concerned not only about the effect on my adjunct colleagues, but more importantly on the students who seek our assistance," said Sylvia Rackow, an adjunct in the Baruch English Department whose hours were cut from 10 to 4 per week. "It felt as if I'd been cast aside like an unwanted old shoe, despite years of service," another adjunct said.



On Oct. 6, PSC members joined over 20,000 people in Central Park to demonstrate against a US war on Iraq. The "Not in Our Name" rally was one of dozens held the same weekend in 30 different states. The PSC Executive Council voted to participate in the rally because it was in line with the resolution against expanded war adopted by the union's Delegate Assembly in May. A growing number of unions across the country are taking anti-war positions, including the California Federation of Teachers, SUNY's United University Professions (UUP), 1199/SEIU, the New York Central Federation of Labor in Albany, the San Francisco Labor Council, and the Washington State Labor Council.

## Write to Clarion

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

# UAPC workers demand union recognition

By **MAGGIE DICKINSON**

"Well, it's your right, so I guess if a majority of you want this, we'll have to recognize the union and sit down and negotiate a contract."

A loud cheer burst out of the 40 University Applications Processing Center (UAPC) employees who had gathered on Oct. 9 to demand union recognition. They represented the 80% of UAPC workers who had signed cards to be represented by the PSC. After the UAPC director's response, "the room just erupted," said UAPC worker Robert Booras. "There were cheers and hugs everywhere," said Gillian Anderson.

People were clapping and cheering a mere five weeks after finally making contact with the PSC. "This place was ripe for it," Stefan Triers told *Clarion*. "There's a lot of frustration here with the situation, especially with low salaries and having no cost-of-living adjustments or pay raises." The lack of a grievance procedure is also a problem, Booras

## RF employees on the move at KCC

said: "There's an issue of respect. If you have a problem, they reply, 'If you don't like it here you can leave.'" The 124 workers at the UAPC process student applications for all 17 CUNY colleges. But they are paid as employees of the CUNY Research Foundation (RF), and have never had a union.

### SIGN ME UP

UAPC Director Les Jacobs told the workers that final approval would have to come from RF Interim Executive Director Richard Rothbard, who promised a formal response on union recognition by Oct. 16.

UAPC workers had decided to form a union, and called the PSC in September to find out how. Then, after meeting with a PSC organizer, they took cards and began to sign people up.

At first the new activists weren't

sure how their co-workers would respond. But after the first week, 30% had signed union cards. At the next meeting with a PSC organizer, 20 workers came with questions. The next week another 25 employees came to what was becoming a regular weekly meeting. After four weeks, union cards had been signed by 70% of UAPC employees, and at *Clarion* press time it was up to 80%. "It just caught like wildfire, with more and more people coming on board," Booras said.

Thirty-six individuals put their names on a leaflet as part of the "out in the open committee." This committee decided to test the strength of their support with a button day be-

fore going to Les Jacobs to demand union recognition.

Buttons were made that read, "Union Yes! We deserve raises and respect." It was a success, said Triers: "Pretty much everybody wore it from the first day. It was a good way to show solidarity." The day

after, employees gathered for a lunch with PSC President Barbara Bowen and the union's treasurer, John Hyland. Preparing for the worst but hoping for the best, over 40 UAPC employees gathered in the lunchroom at 10 am and then headed down the hall. Everyone was anxious but also excited.

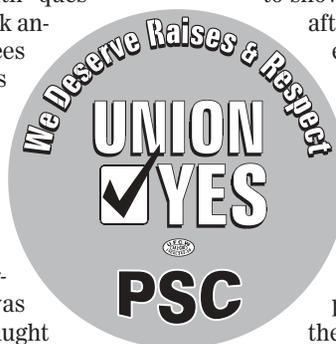
"It was incredible," said Booras. "More people started joining us, and if you looked back down the hallway it was completely full." When they reached Jacobs's office, his secre-

tary told him over the phone that there were "quite a few people here" to see him. When Jacobs came out, "he was shocked that there were so many of us," Booras said.

### RIGHTS AND BENEFITS

Jacobs invited everyone to the conference room, where he was informed that majority of UAPC employees had decided to form a PSC chapter and that they wanted the same rights and benefits as their union sisters and brothers who are paid by CUNY. Workers asked for a response within a week on whether management would voluntarily recognize the union.

Braced for a fight, the employees were overjoyed to hear Jacobs's response. "Everyone is still very excited, and waiting to see what happens on the 16th when they give us a response," said Anderson. "I've been here just a year and a half, and I can only imagine what it's like for people who've been here for years and years."



# Strike vote at RF Central Office

By **PETER HOGNESS**

On Oct. 4, PSC members at the central office of the CUNY Research Foundation voted to authorize their bargaining team to call a strike. The proposal was approved by a vote of 88%. At press time, a new negotiating session had just been scheduled. Bargaining team members expressed hope that an agreement could be reached shortly as the two sides are not far apart.

The action came after Research Foundation (RF) management rejected a union request to try resolving their differences through mediation. There had been no bargaining session since July, when management walked away from the table.

"There's a lot of frustration," said Bernadette Drumgoole, a member of the RF chapter's leadership. Union members want to get management back to the table, she said. "We want the contract to get resolved, and we want a fair agreement."

"People are tired of being pushed around by management," said Antoinette Morizio, vice chair of the chapter. "I think that's why the voting was almost unanimous."

### FIRST SINCE 1973

This is the second strike vote in PSC history. The first was in 1973, when the new union was negotiating its first contract. "We did it because we weren't getting anywhere with CUNY," said Irwin Yellowitz,

now chair of the Retirees Chapter. "We thought this would make a difference, and it did." PSC members voted to authorize a strike as of Oct. 1, 1973 if no agreement was reached; the contract was settled in September.

A strike of CUNY employees would have been illegal under New York's Taylor Law, which bans work stoppages by public workers. "It would have been no joke," commented Yellowitz.

In contrast, workers paid by the Research Foundation have the legal right to strike, as the National Labor Relations Board recently ruled that the Research Foundation falls under the jurisdiction of the National Labor Relations Act.



**Tony Dixon, PSC chapter chair at the RF central office, speaking at a chapter meeting in August.**

# RF workers at BCC organize

By **TOMIO GERON**

Employees of the CUNY Research Foundation (RF) at Bronx Community College are organizing to form a union. A ruling by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) this summer set the stage for about 300 RF workers at BCC to vote on their representation.

Many of the RF staffers at BCC work side-by-side with PSC members, doing the same or similar work. The distinction can seem purely arbitrary, with the only difference whether a person gets an RF

## Union election to be held

or a CUNY paycheck. "Sometimes someone is moved back and forth from CUNY to RF payroll doing the same job," says Marianne Pita, chair of the BCC PSC chapter.

But at BCC, an RF paycheck means lower pay, fewer benefits and no job security because these workers have no union contract. "One of the key issues is the lack of job security," says Pita. "They never know from one day to the next if they'll have a job."

The PSC already represents workers at the RF central office on 57th Street in Manhattan, and wants to organize the thousands of RF employees on all of CUNY's campuses. Last August the NLRB complicated this task by ruling that - unlike others who work at CUNY - RF workers are not public employees. The PSC had argued that the RF is public, since it does solely work for CUNY and operates as a part of it. But the NLRB accepted manage-

ment's argument that the RF is a private entity which "operates independently of CUNY's control."

The NLRB ruling called for this union election to be among the "out-reach workers" at BCC, rather than all RF workers on campus or University-wide. The "out-reach worker" category includes those employed by GED and welfare-to-work programs. The United Auto Workers (UAW), which filed a request with the NLRB in 1996, had asked for this smaller unit.

A vote is expected in the coming months, in which these workers can vote for the PSC, the UAW or no representation, but the date of the election is uncertain.

The UAW filed unfair labor practice charges against the RF some time ago, and the election cannot be held until these charges are resolved.

"RF workers see the successes of the PSC and want to be included," says Mary Ann Carlese, PSC associate executive director. "We hope to make that happen."

RF workers are getting excited about forming a union. "There's a tremendous amount of enthusiasm," says Pita. "Suddenly there are all kinds of complaints about working conditions. People are talking about what it would be like if they had a union and could demand fair treatment."

**The same job - but less pay, fewer benefits, and no job security**

# Gov race is up for grabs

By EILEEN MORAN  
PSC Legislative Committee

In early October the Board of Directors of the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), the PSC's statewide affiliate, decided to make no endorsement in this year's election for governor. The move left local unions within NYSUT free to back different candidates.

The PSC's Executive Council has voted to recommend both Democrat Carl McCall and Green Party candidate Stanley Aronowitz to the PSC's Delegate Assembly (DA), and the DA was set to decide the issue at its October 24 meeting. The 140,000-member United Federation of Teachers has given its backing to Gov. George Pataki.

At its August endorsement conference, in which the PSC was an active participant, NYSUT endorsed incumbent Eliot Spitzer for attorney general. The NYSUT's Board of Directors, which includes 3 PSC officials, also voted to back Alan Hevesi in the race for state comptroller at its meeting in early October. NYSUT is supporting candidates in 227 of 245 races for State Legislature.

## HIGH STAKES

Public education and higher education have much at stake in the legislative races, and the PSC is highlighting several candidates as particularly important to support: Vincent Gentile, George Martinez, Kevin Parker and Seymour Lachman in Brooklyn, and Liz Krueger in Manhattan.

Last February, Krueger won a tough special election for state sen-

## Some legislative races special for PSC



State Senator Liz Krueger, right, on the campaign trail

ator from Manhattan's East Side, replacing Sen. Roy Goodman. This fall she faces a well-financed Republican opponent, former NYC Councilman Andrew Eristoff.

Krueger has emerged as an outspoken critic of Albany's closed political system. She argues that "business as usual" will never break the cycle that has undermined state support for higher education and repeatedly shortchanged New York City. When she got to Albany, Krueger says, she was appalled to learn that Republican senators sign

and then are recorded as voting "yes" for the day - basically handing Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno their proxies to vote as he sees fit.

Krueger has emphasized issues that include more funding for public education, protecting tenants, repealing the Rockefeller drug laws, ending the death penalty, support for women's health care and the right to choose, and prescription drug assistance for the elderly.

Her Republican opponent, Andrew Eristoff, represented the Upper East Side on the NYC Council

from 1993 to 1999 and served as Mayor Giuliani's Commissioner of Finance from 1999 until 2002. Like Goodman before him, Eristoff strives to distance himself from some conservative positions of the Republican State Senate leadership. For example, he has stressed his support for gay rights legislation, rent regulation and funding for the arts. But at the same time, Eristoff calls for limiting state spending and does not mention public higher education in his campaign literature or position papers.

Eristoff contends that being part of the Republican majority in the State Senate will make him more effective. Krueger responds that the city's failure to get its share of state dollars occurred while the seat was held by Republican Roy Goodman.

## STRONG CUNY SUPPORTERS

Since she arrived in Albany, Krueger has been a strong supporter of increased funding for CUNY, and has worked closely with the PSC. With an impressive history as a grassroots activist on issues of hunger, housing and health care, Krueger has been endorsed by a long list of labor and community organizations, including the National Organization for Women and Tenants PAC. A Democrat, Krueger is also running on the Working Families Party and Green Party ballot lines.

Other candidates especially important for CUNY include Vincent Gentile, Democratic state senator from the 23rd District. Sen. Gentile, who has been a strong advocate for CUNY, is in a tough race against Republican Martin Golden, who is outspending him 4-to-1. The district includes Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights and Bensonhurst.

## CUNY CANDIDATES

The PSC is backing two CUNY candidates who are each both adjuncts and doctoral candidates. George Martinez is running in the special election in NYC Council District 38, which includes Bay Ridge,

**In addition to Liz Krueger, two CUNY candidates have been endorsed by the PSC.**

Sunset Park and Windsor Terrace. He has turned out for many demonstrations on CUNY budget and contract issues, as both a student and an adjunct activist.

In the 21st State Senate District, Kevin Parker is another CUNY adjunct and doctoral student endorsed by the PSC. Parker won an upset victory in the Democratic primary; his district includes Flatbush and Borough Park.

In a district that spans Staten Island and Brooklyn State Senator Seymour Lachman, a former professor at Baruch, is opposed by CUNY Trustee Alfred Curtis, a Giuliani appointee (see p. 7). Former head of the NYC Board of Education, Lachman has fought for increased CUNY funding as a member of the State Senate's higher education committee.

*The PSC Legislative Committee invites members to help with mailings, phone banks and other Election Day activities. If you'd like to help, please e-mail Eileen Moran at [eyedon@earthlink.net](mailto:eyedon@earthlink.net) or call the PSC office.*

# Members discuss Welfare Fund changes

By TOMIO GERON

PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund (WF) Trustees are holding meetings with members to discuss options for important changes the Fund. At press time, meetings had been held on half of CUNY's campuses and with retirees.

The Fund is facing an operating deficit that is currently \$6 million and rising. "If we do not take action very soon, in less than a year we will run out of reserves to cover the deficit and we will have to slash benefits," Steve London, WF Executive Officer for Member Relations and Planning, told the meeting at York.

Turnout at the events has been high, sometimes as large as any union chapter meeting in years. After an opening presentation, mem-

## Decisions coming in November

bers have peppered Fund representatives with questions and feedback. "We really want to have a back-and-forth on the various options and to hear members' opinions," London said. "We will take them to heart."

WF Trustees have based restructuring proposals on two general principles. One is "that we want to make the impact of the changes least burdensome on our sickest and most plan-dependent members," WF President Barbara Bowen told the meeting at Lehman.

The other, as London told the meeting at City Tech, is "to maintain substantial equality of benefits between active and retiree members, though out-of-pocket costs may differ." Reaction so far has been generally sup-

portive of the two principles, though some concern has been expressed about the departure from past practice represented by the additional \$100 deductible on prescription

drugs proposed for retirees. And while there have been different views on the details, there has been broad agreement that restructuring is needed.

The costs of adjunct health care coverage came up at a number of campuses. "There seems to be a



Shirley Frank, left, and Janice Cline at a September meeting at York College to discuss Welfare Fund changes.

misperception that adjuncts are using up all of the WF's funds," London said. In fact, adjunct health insurance is the only benefit category that is currently in balance.

"This is the first time that I've had a chance to really engage these issues," said one member at BMCC, "and I don't feel ready yet to come to an informed opinion." WF officers responded that WF Advisory Council members on some campuses might want to call an additional meeting for further discussion. The WF Advisory Council will meet with the Trustees on October 25 to relay members' concerns and opinions on the restructuring.

A recently-mailed questionnaire includes a section on benefit issues. After studying the feedback from both the meetings and the questionnaire, WF Trustees will make decisions in November.

*The September Clarion's special section on WF issues is still available: on the Web at [www.psc-cuny.org/Clarion\\_Sept\\_02.pdf](http://www.psc-cuny.org/Clarion_Sept_02.pdf), or call the PSC office for a copy.*

# Regents review remediation repeal

By TOMIO GERON and PETER HOGNESS

In a decision that will affect thousands of current and future CUNY students, the New York State Board of Regents will vote in mid-December on whether CUNY can continue to ban remedial courses at its senior colleges.

The policy change was phased in starting in 2000, along with a requirement that community college students complete all remedial work before they can take credit-granting classes.

"It is clear from the data...that the new policy has been successful," Louise Mirrer, CUNY's vice chancellor for academic affairs, wrote in an Aug. 22 memo to Chancellor Matthew Goldstein. "CUNY's baccalaureate programs are now attracting a stronger applicant pool," Mirrer stated, citing a 2% rise in SAT scores of those admitted in Fall 2001 compared to Fall 1999. While the proportion of entering freshmen who were black or Latino dropped by almost 5%, from 49.6% to 45.0%, Mirrer asserted that "the racial composition of the entering freshman class changed very little."

In Fall 2001, 35% of freshmen entering CUNY's four-year programs were white, 23% were Latino, 22% were black and 20% were Asian. White and Asian percentages grew 2% to 3% from Fall 1999, while the figures for black and Latino freshmen were the lowest in the last 10 years.

Some of these shifts in CUNY's enrollment appear to run counter to other trends. In New York City, the proportion of Latinos among new high school graduates grew during the same period. Nationally, black and Latino college enrollment was rising four to six times as fast as white enrollment at the time of CUNY's policy change, according to a recent report from the American Council on Education.

## PROPORTION FALLING

However, it is hard to draw firm conclusions from CUNY's 1999-2001 data. The proportion of black freshmen entering four-year programs at CUNY was falling even before 1999, and the proportion of Latinos has fluctuated in the past decade.

A new report by CCNY psychology professor Bill Crain and Sandra Del Valle of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund raises a different concern. "The most important measure for CUNY is not diversity but access," Crain tells *Clarion*. "Measures of diversity can provide useful information, but the fundamental question is, 'Who is being turned away?'"

Under CUNY's current policy, applicants to a four-year program must not only meet its general admissions requirements but must also pass three skills tests as proof that they do not need remedial classes. (CUNY

## December vote on three-year-old policy shift

also accepts certain SAT or Regents scores for this requirement.) The extra layer of testing, say Crain and Del Valle, has excluded thousands of African American and Latino students who would otherwise have been admitted.

For the Fall 2001 semester, Crain told *Clarion*, 21% of white students, 42% of African-American students, 42% of Hispanic students, and 27% of Asian students were denied admission due to the additional testing requirements, with a total of 4,472 students kept out in this way. "CUNY is disproportionately excluding students of color solely on the basis of highly questionable tests," says Crain.

University Faculty Senate (UFS) representatives met with State Education Department staff in May to express concerns about the tests in

reading and writing, designed by ACT, Inc. "ACT themselves say that these tests should be used only for advisement and course placement, not for admissions - which is how they are now being used," said UFS Secretary Lenore Beaky in September.

UFS President Susan O'Malley questioned the use of SAT and Regents' scores in this process, pointing out that no writing is now required on the SAT and that some students who get the required Regents score still have deficits in basic skills. "The faculty think standards have been lowered through the same means through which the Trustees...supposedly raised them," she wrote in the September *Senate Digest*.

PSC President Barbara Bowen

urges the Regents to take a hard look at the new remediation policy's effects. "If this policy leads to the whitening of CUNY, especially at a time when minority enrollment in college nationally is growing, New York City will not stand for it."

The scramble to change CUNY's policies on admissions and remediation was to a great extent sparked by former Mayor Giuliani, who charged that CUNY had become "a glorified high school" with low standards and called for eliminating remediation altogether. Supporters of the University argued that remediation had made it possible for thousands to succeed. They pointed out that remediation was still available at all SUNY schools

**4,472 students kept out in one year, says a new study.**

## The benefits of remediation

# Ken Thompson adds it all up

By TOMIO GERON

As federal prosecutor Ken Thompson delivered the opening statement in the Abner Louima torture case in 1999, many jurors might have been surprised to know that Thompson's path to a law career included remedial classes at CUNY.

"To think I went from taking a remedial math class at John Jay College to standing up on behalf of the US Attorney's office - that was quite an accomplishment, I think," says Thompson. "I was fortunate that [John Jay] had that class." He went on to graduate with honors and then earned a law degree at NYU.

## PUBLIC SERVICE

Thompson grew up in Harlem and Coop City in the Bronx. He says he was inspired to go into law by his mother, one of the first female officers on the NYPD. "She got me interested in law enforcement," he recalls. "The way she rendered public service as a police officer impressed me." Thompson decided he wanted to go into public service, too, and set his sights on law school.

When he enrolled at John Jay in the 1980s, Thompson's math skills needed some work. He took remedial math while simultaneously taking regular college courses, which he believes is important in not delaying a student's path to the workforce. "Students can tackle their deficiencies while still taking other courses," he argues. "That will allow



**Ken Thompson excelled in his coursework, graduating with honors from John Jay and with an award from NYU School of Law.**

them to get out of school faster and to contribute faster."

"It worked for me to take regular classes and one remedial class together," Thompson says. He believes this can provide students with a better support network. "You start with friends, you graduate with your friends," he explains. "Otherwise, you're isolated."

He went on to become an honors student at John Jay, even tutoring other students in English. After law school at NYU and clerking for a federal judge in Michigan, Thompson was hired by the Treasury De-

partment and spent two years investigating the federal raid on the Branch Davidians at Waco. He then worked for five years as a prosecutor in the US Attorney's office in Brooklyn before moving to his current position in private practice.

## BIG PICTURE

Thompson says he looks back "fondly" on John Jay - and particularly on "the best professor I've ever had," Blanche Wiesen Cook. "She taught history from a perspective unlike any other I'd had - from the perspective of those on the periphery of American society," Thompson says. "I had always learned from the perspective of the conquerors. She explained to me how my life was connected to a much bigger picture. She was excellent."

Thompson doesn't agree with CUNY's current approach to remediation. To be kept out of a senior college and required to finish remedial math before he could take any course for credit "would have been an extra barrier for me," Thompson explains. "Sometimes when you take remedial classes you're not interested in, you just take it. If you're allowed to take other courses - history, psychology - it allows you to become more interested in school."

These policies have real consequences for people's lives, Thompson says. "If I'd been held back," he says, "I don't know if I would've become a US prosecutor and Treasury Department attorney."

and four-fifths of all public four-year colleges, as well as at elite private institutions like MIT.

## DISCOURAGING EFFECTS

David Lavin, professor of sociology at the Graduate Center, says that to see the full effect of the new remediation policy would require a thorough study of which NYC high school students choose to apply to CUNY. "These discussions of policy change have discouraging effects on people's behavior," Lavin says, citing studies in California and Texas of the effects of ending affirmative action in college admissions.

Susan DiRaimo, head of the CUNY ESL Council, thinks both the perception and reality of the new policy could be a factor in the declining number of English as a Second Language students at CUNY. "Since '99, if ESL students fail the math test, they can't get into a senior college," DiRaimo says. "This maze of testing discourages students from coming to CUNY."

Marc Ward, director of the ESL program at Lehman College, says that the effect of the new remedial policy on ESL students is not yet clear. But he notes that in the last five years, ESL students have declined about 90% at senior colleges and 45% at community colleges throughout CUNY.

At press time, the New York Board of Regents had not scheduled any public hearings on remediation.

## LABOR NEWS IN BRIEF

### Firefighters rally

Thousands of New York City firefighters rallied in Central Park in the pouring rain on Oct. 11 to demand a settlement in their contract talks. Union delegates rejected an offer of an 11.5% raise over 30 months by a vote of 365-2. Praise for firefighters' sacrifice on 9/11 won't pay the bills, many said: one carried a cardboard sign that said, "Will fight fires for food."

### Labor press returns

A union newspaper editor banned from attending school district news conferences was allowed back in after an order from a federal judge in Florida. Annette Katz, editor of the United Teachers of Dade's newspaper, *UTD Today*, had been handcuffed and arrested by police for trespassing. But this summer the court ruled that a school district policy limiting access to members of general circulation press violated the First Amendment.

# CUNY's Board of Trustees: t

Only four current members of CUNY's Board of Trustees were on the Board in 1998, when the BoT voted to eliminate remediation in CUNY's senior colleges (see p.5). Today many of the issues faced by the University have changed – but others feel much the same.

What will these Trustees do about the storms now gathering over the State and City budgets? How will they handle future struggles over access to education? Where will they stand on academic freedom, as our country heads towards war?

Below is a very brief introduction to CUNY's Board of Trustees. You will be getting to know all of them better in the years to come. (A longer version of this article is available on the Web, at [www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org).)

## BENNO SCHMIDT, JR.

Appointed: 1999, by Gov. Pataki  
Term expires: 2006

Over the last 10 years, Schmidt has been President and then Chairman of Edison Schools, a corporation devoted to private management of public schools. Whether Edison has helped students to learn more is hotly debated; with cumulative losses of close to \$300 million, it has yet to earn a profit.



Schmidt (left) with Edison CEO Chris Whittle

Schmidt served as dean of Columbia University's law school in the mid-1980s. He joined Columbia's faculty in 1969 after clerking for Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren.

From 1986 to 1992, Schmidt was President of Yale University. He earned a reputation as a highly effective fundraiser, overseeing the growth of Yale's endowment from \$1.7 billion to almost \$3 billion at a time when buildings needed urgent repair. But his brusque management

style made Schmidt unpopular with Yale's faculty and staff. Faced with a \$20 million annual deficit, in 1992 Schmidt proposed cutting Yale's faculty ranks by 11% and eliminating the sociology, linguistics and engineering departments. Within months he had resigned under fire.

In 1998 Mayor Giuliani appointed Schmidt as head of his advisory task force on CUNY's future. Its recommendations included greater reliance on standardized tests in ad-

missions and placement, issuing vouchers for remedial classes so students could obtain them outside CUNY, grouping CUNY's colleges into more clearly stratified tiers, increased collaboration with the NYC public schools and more centralized management of CUNY. Schmidt became interim Chair of the BoT when Herman Badillo resigned.

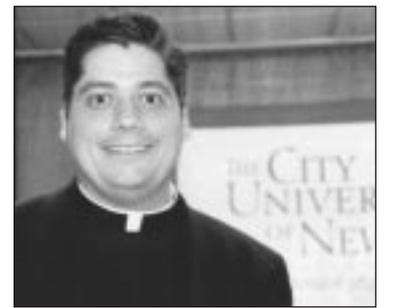
In July 2001, Schmidt made a \$10,000 donation to Gov. Pataki's reelection campaign.

## JOHN BONNICI

Appointed: 2002, by Gov. Pataki  
Term ends: 2008

Rev. John Bonnici is director of the New York Catholic Archdiocese's Family Life/Respect Life Office. His nomination sparked opposition from many academics, elected officials and the PSC; they cited his lack of experience in higher education. Faculty in lesbian and gay studies expressed particular concern about whether Bonnici would be a fair judge of curriculum questions and promotions within their field. Bonnici played an active role in organizing against a 1999 Westchester human rights bill because it included protections for gays and lesbians.

Bonnici has kept a low profile on the Board so far. At his first meeting in May he said he looked forward to learning about CUNY.



## WELLINGTON Z. CHEN

Appointed: 2000, by Gov. Pataki  
Term expires: 2003

An architect by training, Chen spent four years in the 1980s with I.M. Pei and Partners. He is currently a senior VP at TDC Development and Construction in Flushing, which is involved in the Flushing West Re-development Project.

Since 1975, Chen has been involved in downtown Flushing as a planning consultant and activist. He was the first Chinese American in Queens on a community planning board, and was a commissioner of the NYC Board of Standards and Appeals, which makes decisions on zoning variances. He is a board member of NYC 2012, which aims to bring the Olympics to New York.

Chen is a graduate of CCNY's School of Architecture.

## JEFFREY WIESENFELD

Appointed: 1999, by Gov. Pataki  
Term expires: 2006

Jeffrey Wiesenfeld is a VP with Bernstein Investment Research and Management. After four years with the FBI in its foreign counter-intelligence division, he entered politics as a Democrat, a staffer for Rep. Thomas Manton and Queens Borough President Claire Shulman. But after four years in the Koch administration, his career turned right: he became an executive assistant first to Senator Al D'Amato and then to Governor George Pataki. He is strongly pro-immigrant, once saying "immigrants have always rejuvenated American society," but often intolerant of dissent. He labeled the October 2001 CCNY teach-in, "Threats of War, Challenges to Peace," as "seditious."

## JOHN J. CALANDRA

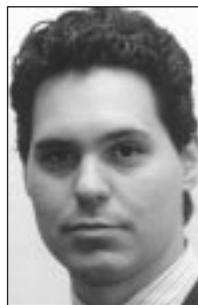
Appointed: 1996, by Gov. Pataki  
Term expires: 2005

Calandra is a corporate litigation attorney representing Fortune 500 companies for the law firm of McDermott, Will & Emery. Previously he was a litigator at Cravath, Swaine & Moore.

He has volunteered in the public schools, and serves on the boards of the Coalition of Italo-American Associations and the Bronx Columbus Alliance. CUNY's John D. Calandra Italian American Institute is named for his father, a former NY State Senator.

Calandra formally proposed the 1998 resolution through which the BoT voted to end remediation at CUNY's senior colleges.

Last fall Calandra and Wiesenfeld prepared a resolution that would have asked the BoT to condemn the October 2001 anti-war teach-in at CCNY as "un-American," but decided to withdraw it in favor of another that endorsed Chancellor Goldstein's comment on the affair.



## NILDA SOTO RUIZ

Appointed: 1996, by Gov. Pataki  
Term expires: 2008

Soto Ruiz is Superintendent of the NYC Board of Education's Office of Monitoring and School Improvement. An elementary school teacher in the 1970s, she has worked for the NYC public schools since, heading the Office of Bilingual Education from 1983 to 1988. She has taught courses in bilingual education at Hunter College.



Soto Ruiz is the only Trustee still on the Board who voted against banning remediation at CUNY's senior colleges in 1998, a stand at odds with the position of Gov. Pataki.

Her husband, former City Council member Israel Ruiz Jr., is a Democrat who endorsed Pataki for governor in 1994; he has worked for the Dormitory Authority of New York (DASNY) since 1998.

Soto Ruiz has a BA from City College, and an MA and a doctorate from NYU.

## KATHLEEN PESILE

Appointed: 1998, by Gov. Pataki  
Term expires: 2004

Pesile is an investment advisor who has operated her own Staten Island-based firm since 1995. She was Vice President of Finance and Administration at Capital Cities/ABC in the early 1980s, a JP Morgan VP from 1986 to 1993, and then chaired the American Bankers Association until 1994. She has taught business courses as an adjunct at the College of Staten Island since 1978.

Her nomination sparked controversy when Pataki tried to rush her Senate confirmation so she could join the Board before its 1998 vote on

remediation. Though her nomination was not approved in time, Pesile did vote against remediation when it came up again in January 1999.

Pesile sits on the Trustees' Council of Lynne Cheney's American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA). She was also a member of the short-lived "decency panel" that Mayor Giuliani appointed in the wake of his attempt to censor the Brooklyn Museum.

Pesile got her AA at COSI and her bachelor's degree and an MPA at Baruch.



# the powers that be

## HUGO MORALES

Appointed: 2002, by Gov. Pataki  
Term expires: 2009

A psychiatrist and Dominican community activist, Morales was director of the psychiatry department at St. Francis Hospital in the mid-1960s. In 1965 he founded the Bronx Mental Health Center in an effort to bring mental health services to people with low incomes, and he remained its Medical Director until 1999.

When Morales heard in 1995 that his name was being floated as a potential head of Mayor Giuliani's new Office of Hispanic Affairs, he told a reporter that he was unlikely to get involved in the "wasp's nest" of politics. And yet he's been political for years: he served as chair of Mario Cuomo's Office for Hispanic Affairs for eight years and is a regular donor to political candidates. In 1995, he and his Dominican-American Foundation made the start-up donation for Adriano Espaillat's political club in Washington Heights.

Morales earned his MD at the University of Santo Domingo.



## VALERIE LANCASTER BEAL

Appointed: 2002, by Gov. Pataki  
Term expires: 2009

Beal is an investment banker at M.R. Beal & Company, where she has worked on financing for the capital budget of Washington, DC. Previously she worked at Citicorp. Before becoming a banker, she worked for the Government Operations Committee of DC's city council.

Beal works with Bronx Comm.

## MARC SHAW

Appointed: 2002,  
by Mayor Bloomberg  
Term expires: 2007

Shaw is NYC's deputy mayor for operations. From 1996 until joining the Bloomberg administration he was executive director of the MTA. He also sits on the board of directors of the Grand Central Partnership, a group of midtown Manhattan property owners which runs the Grand Central Business Improvement District.

"He is experienced in all levels



## KENNETH COOK

Appointed: 1997, by Gov. Pataki  
Term expires: 2004

Kenneth Cook was a science teacher at Brooklyn's JHS 232 for 25 years, until 1994. He has also worked as a counselor with potential high school dropouts.

His nomination drew fire from Democratic state legislators, including some members of the Black, Puerto Rican and Hispanic Caucus, who argued that Cook had little knowledge of CUNY. Cook has run for state office on Republican and Conservative lines, and shared the same political base as former BoT chair Anne Paolucci.

In 1998 and again in 1999, Cook voted to end remediation at CUNY's four-year colleges.

He holds a master's degree in biology and chemistry from the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, and a master's in psychology from LIU.

College's COPE program, which helps welfare recipients to attend college. She is one of Gov. Pataki's appointees to the Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation.

Beal is on the Board of Regents of Georgetown University, where she earned her BA. She has an MBA from Wharton.

of government and has the smarts of a chess player," Gene Russianoff of the Strap-hangers Campaign told *Crain's NY Business*. "And Marc is wonderful at locating pots of money."

Shaw worked for the State Senate Finance Committee in the 1980s, until becoming finance director for the NYC City Council. Shaw moved over to City Hall in 1993, and was Giuliani's finance commissioner and then budget director.

Shaw has a master's degree in anthropology from SUNY Buffalo.

## ALFRED CURTIS

Appointed: 1997, by Mayor Giuliani  
Term expires: 2004

Curtis's and Cook's appointments to the BoT came after legislators criticized the Board's total lack of African American representation.

In 1996, Mayor Giuliani appointed Curtis to head the UN Development Corp. – a job he lost this January, when Mayor Bloomberg replaced him. Curtis is currently the Republican candidate for a state senate seat in Staten Island and Brooklyn (see p.4). He has campaigned on his "bold stand" to end remediation at CUNY's senior colleges in 1998.

A former Chemical Bank VP, Curtis was a Giuliani loyalist. Named head of youth services in 1994, he presided over \$19 million in cuts – and the death of the department itself. He also served on Giuliani's "decency commission."

Curtis got his BA at COSI.

## CAROL ROBLES-ROMÁN

Appointed: 2002, by Mayor Bloomberg  
Term expires: 2008

Carol Robles-Román is counsel to Mayor Michael Bloomberg and holds the newly-created post of deputy mayor for legal affairs. She has served in several jobs in the NYS Office of Court Administration, among them heading up a unit that investigated bias complaints within the court system. Robles-Román worked under state Attorney General as an assistant AG in the state Civil Rights Bureau. Her husband, Nelson Román has been a civil court judge in the Bronx since 1988, elected with the support of the county Democratic organization. "I'm happy to be representing the mayor's office on this very prestigious board," she said at her first BoT meeting last June.



## SUSAN O'MALLEY

Ex-officio, University Faculty Senate  
Elected: 2002

As chair of the University Faculty Senate, O'Malley is a member of the BoT but has no vote. She has played various roles in the UFS for the last 12 years, most recently as its secretary and editor of its newsletter. O'Malley has been a member of the English Department faculty at Kingsborough Community College since 1974, and a full professor there since 1991. She also teaches at CC-

NY's Center for Worker Education and is Professor of Liberal Studies at the Graduate Center. Author and editor of books on early modern drama and pamphlets, women's studies, disability studies and education, O'Malley is also a University-wide Officer of the PSC.



## RICHARD NUÑEZ-LAWRENCE

Ex-officio, University Student Senate  
Elected: 2001

Nuñez-Lawrence is just ending his term an *ex officio* voting member of the BoT, as chair of the University Student Senate. He earned his AA from LaGuardia, a BA in English

from CCNY, and is now a graduate student in political science at Brooklyn. Nuñez-Lawrence was one of two Trustees to abstain when the Board passed a resolution supporting the Chancellor's criticism of an anti-war teach-in at CCNY last fall. He voted in favor of the \$150 "technology fee" the BoT imposed last February.

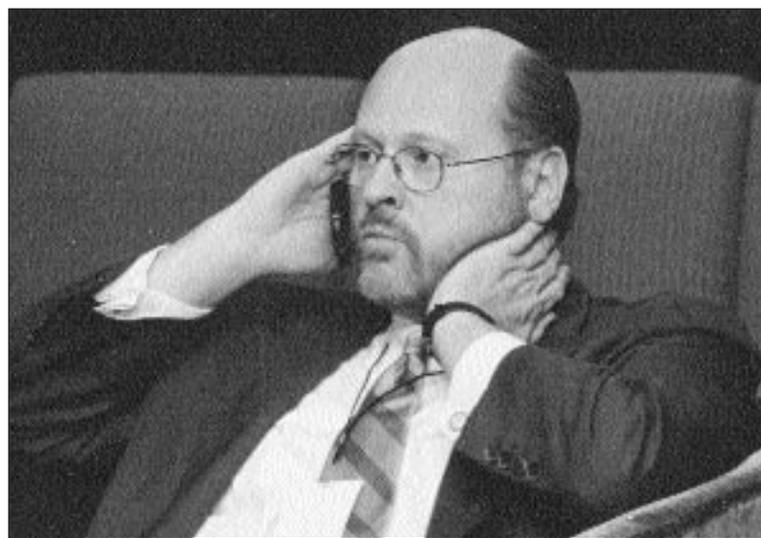


## RANDY MASTRO

Appointed: 1999, by Mayor Giuliani  
Term expires: 2006

Currently a lawyer in private practice, Mastro is a close personal

friend and confidant of former Mayor Giuliani. From 1985 to 1989 Mastro working on organized crime cases as an Assistant US Attorney. Before becoming a prosecutor, Mastro was a litigator with Cravath, Swaine & Moore. A registered Democrat, Mastro worked on Giuliani's 1993 campaign and was later named chief of staff. From 1996 to 1998 Mastro was NYC's deputy mayor for operations. Mastro headed Giuliani's task force on bilingual education, and criticized it for failing to recommend ending bilingual ed altogether. Mastro also headed Giuliani's 1999 charter revision commission, whose proposals included requiring a 2/3 "supermajority" before the City Council could pass any tax increase.



## JOSEPH LHOTA

Appointed: 2001, by Mayor Giuliani  
Term expires: 2008

Lhota returned to the private sector this year as an executive VP at Cablevision. Like Trustee Randy Mastro, Lhota is a former deputy mayor of operations and a trusted Giuliani associate. Deputy mayor from 1998 to 2001, Lhota was Giuliani's budget director from 1995 to 1998 and his finance commissioner before that. He is proud that the City had two successive years of surpluses while he

was budget director.

In the mayor's battle with the Brooklyn Museum, Lhota went in swinging, saying that no art was acceptable for City funding if "it would be inappropriate for my [8-year-old] daughter to see" – a rule he later conceded would include Michelangelo's "David."

His wife, Tamra Roberts Lhota, is head of NYC Public/Private Initiatives (PPI), which raises money for projects such as the "Schmidt Commission" on CUNY. PPI established and initially ran the Twin Towers Fund.

# Federal study of CUNY & WTC disaster

By CLARION STAFF

CUNY faculty and staff at BMCC had significantly elevated rates of respiratory and mental health symptoms six months after the attack on the World Trade Center, compared to those who worked further away from the disaster. A recently completed study by the National Institute for Occupational and Environmental Health (NIOSH) examined symptoms among employees at BMCC and at York College, 10 miles away.

The rates of emotional distress at both colleges were higher than those found in national studies with the same questionnaires. This is consistent with results at similar times for disaster sites, including Oklahoma City following the bombing of the federal building there.

The NIOSH study was undertaken early this year after several unions representing members who work near the WTC site requested a health hazard evaluation from NIOSH. In addition to the PSC, the United Federation of Teachers, AF-SCME District Council 37, the Public Employees Federation and Local 100 of the Transit Workers Union were part of the study.

## POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

Twenty-four percent of BMCC employees and 17% of York employees showed symptoms for "major depression," the study found. Fifteen percent of BMCC employees and 8% at York reported symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In both cases, the BMCC rates were significantly

## Post-9/11 problems with breathing and mental health



September 11: Dust cloud from the WTC roars towards BMCC.

higher than those at York.

High initial levels of physical symptoms, such as eye, nose and throat irritation and chest tightness, shortness of breath and wheezing, declined by about 50% at BMCC between Sept. 2001 and March 2002. However 10-30% of BMCC employees were still reporting such symp-

ptoms in March. The rates for irritation symptoms in March were two to three times higher than at York and respiratory symptom rates were four times higher. Over a third of the respondents at both institutions personally knew someone who was injured or killed in the WTC collapse, the study showed.

A summary of the results was published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the special Sept. 11, 2002 issue of its *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, available at: [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwr/html/mm51Spa3.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwr/html/mm51Spa3.htm). An accompanying editorial commented: "Because mental health and physical symptoms can persist for extended periods

after a disaster, persons who continue to experience symptoms should seek professional assistance. Counseling services should continue to target those who are vulnerable to depression and PTSD, particularly those who have lost family and friends, those who do not have a social network, and those who witnessed the attacks." (Note: The Sept. 11th Fund and Red Cross are providing free mental health services for those working or living in Manhattan below Canal St. For referrals, call 1-800-Lifenet.)

## THANKS TO NIOSH

"These results show that PSC members are still suffering the after-effects of 9/11, and need continued assistance from CUNY and from their colleagues in dealing with these tragic events," said David Kotelchuck, PSC Health & Safety Committee co-chair and associate professor of Urban Public Health at Hunter College. "We thank NIOSH for their fine, professional study of our members' problems."

The research effort was coordinated by the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH). Dr. Sherry Baron and Ken Wallingford of NIOSH directed the study. They conducted the surveys at BMCC and York in March, six months after the WTC's collapse.

Individuals who participated in the study and provided contact information will receive a letter with the results and recommendations for medical follow-up. In addition, Dr. Baron plans to soon visit each campus and report on the study.

# PSC campaign asks, "Got Air?"

By CLARION STAFF

"Our members have a choice," said Bob Cermele, chair of the PSC chapter New York City College of Technology. "They can either freeze or roast, and in both cases the air doesn't circulate." Cermele, like many PSC members, has voiced concern about a very fundamental part of our members' working conditions: air – or the lack thereof.

In response to members' complaints across CUNY, the PSC is launching a campaign on indoor air quality. The union has designed and ordered bright yellow "air strips," which members can post on vents in offices and classrooms. Each strip, which will move when the air flows, is printed with the simple question: "Got Air?"

The idea for air strips came from members of the Health and Safety Watchdogs, the committee of PSC health and safety activists from campuses throughout CUNY. "It

## You can't teach or learn without it

was like a spontaneous eruption," commented Joan Greenbaum, PSC Health and Safety Committee co-chair. "As far as we know, no other union or organization has come up with anything like these air strips, and now all the unions are asking how they can get them."

### AIR SPACE

Indoor air quality problems are a common and important issue in workplaces today, particularly in buildings with central heating and air conditioning systems and no operable windows. Sometimes faculty notice that students are falling asleep at particular times and in particular classrooms. "Usually," Greenbaum says, "faculty blame it on themselves, but this may in fact indicate that there is too little air being circulated in the room." At BMCC, for example, there are now

18,000 students occupying a building that was designed to circulate air to about one-third of that number.

Poor ventilation can cause other problems, too. Some faculty and staff have noticed that they routinely get headaches in the afternoon, or that there are times of the day when they are extremely hot or cold.

Baruch's new vertical campus building has a computer-controlled heating and ventilation system, which is still not "balanced" after a year of operation. Balancing the system involves testing all air ducts and air handling units to insure that a proper amount of air is distributed to each room. "While air balancing is an engineering problem," explained PSC Health and Safety Co-chair Dave Kotelchuck, "the more complex the building, the more engineers have to rely on the occupants to tell them what is actually

happening in any given area."

This is where PSC members come in. On each campus PSC Health and Safety Watchdogs will be handing out the air strips and asking members to adopt a room by taping the strip to a ceiling vent and keeping a log of when it moves (or doesn't). The logs will be gathered by campus health and safety representatives and discussed at labor-management meetings on each campus. These data will serve as a base for the next phase of the campaign: measuring carbon dioxide and air flow in problematic areas. PSC representatives will assist members in gathering information and conducting "walk-throughs" to note visible problems.

Queens College is one of several campuses with an active Health and Safety Watchdog Committee that holds regular meetings of building "residents." Union members present this information to the college's president and vice presidents at regular labor-management sessions. "We've had increased cooperation from man-

agement since we began to make noise and document these issues," said Bette Weidman, PSC health and safety coordinator at Queens. "Now they know we are serious."

The outcomes at City Tech have been more mixed. "Management is really paying attention to our demands and trying to do their best,"

says Cermele, "but the buildings' heating and ventilation systems are so old and poorly designed that they can't be made to work properly – and members continue to suffer." This points to the need to press CUNY for funds to redesign and rebuild old systems. "It has to be done," argued Greenbaum. "Without adequate air, how can effective teaching and learning take place?"

If you haven't gotten an "air strip" or don't know the name of your local PSC Watchdog, please call your chapter chair or the PSC central office. The PSC Health and Safety Watchdogs are always open to new members. (See Calendar, p. 9, for news about upcoming training.)

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## UNION VOICES

# Vox Populi

By **BARBARA BOWEN**  
PSC President

**W**hen you elected us as union leaders, one of the most significant responsibilities you gave us was to become your voice on matters related to employment at CUNY. I can imagine few weightier responsibilities than speaking for someone else, and that charge remains the one that keeps me up at night and also propels me through the day. This month the union is especially engaged in the project of coming to voice, as we enter into dialogue with you about the Welfare Fund and the contract, and as we prepare for an international conference designed to strengthen the voice of public education on October 26.

## WHAT IS A UNION

As I have traveled around the campuses to discuss the Welfare Fund, I have been moved by the generosity of your responses to the question of restructuring. A key issue is how to reduce our highest costs without unduly burdening those who are sickest and thus most dependent on the Fund for prescription drug support. In meeting after meeting, you have said that you would accept slightly higher out-of-pocket costs if that's what it takes to protect those with catastrophic illnesses and drug costs that would otherwise be in the thousands each year. In some ways, the public discussion of the Welfare Fund has forced us to come face-to-face with what it means to be a union.

Members on the campuses have sharpened the focus of the issues for me, while also making fresh suggestions. Several of you have put the Fund crisis in new perspective – as did the member who commented on how absurd it is that healthcare in the US should be tied to employment at all, or the brand-new faculty member who said that even with the proposed changes, our Welfare Fund benefits are still “an incredible deal.”

I thank everyone who has struggled with these tough and angering issues; please continue offering your suggestions, criticism and ideas. The Fund Trustees take all of your comments seriously and will combine them with our own knowledge and research as we make decisions next month. (One bright spot on the Welfare Fund horizon is that the Trustees are in the final stages of renegotiating our contract with the prescription drug provider; we are certain to save at least \$1.8 million

for the Fund a year without affecting benefits.)

This month sees another direct and democratic appeal for your voice: a membership survey. This is your chance to speak in a detailed and structured way to the union's negotiating team and Executive Council. If you do one “union thing” this fall, I ask that it be responding to the survey. We need to hear your answers to hard questions; as the union's chief negotiator for the last contract, my deepest education has been through members' ideas. How important is a reduction in workload? More important than a salary increase in one of the years of the contract? Would you allocate some of the final settlement to supporting the Welfare Fund, as we did in this contract, or devote it all to salary and other improvements? How fair are the processes of promotion and tenure at your college? What is the highest priority for adjuncts: job security, expanding paid office hours, progress toward pay parity?

The union's Executive Council listened hard to you at every opportunity during the last negotia-

## The next contract needs your input.

tions, but we took office so close to the expiration of the previous contract that we didn't have time for a formal survey. Now we have the chance to seek your responses systematically. The survey takes a bit of time and thought, but you have spent years thinking about your jobs at CUNY and you have a lot to say. Please take this opportunity – whether this is your first semester or you are a 30-year veteran – to make sure your voice is heard.

## BOMBS OR BOOKS?

Our fight on bread-and-butter contract issues has the best chance of success if we understand how these issues are implicated in a broader politics. On Saturday, October 26 the PSC will host an event that is the major US contribution to a hemisphere-wide initiative to reclaim public education from a global market and war economy. “Globalization, Privatization, War: In Defense of Public Education in the Americas,” brings together scholars and activists from Canada, Mexico, Latin America and the US to develop coordinated responses to the worldwide assault on public education. The PSC is part of an international network of unions working on the project, and the conference is our part of a week of events that give voice to academic unionists from Buenos Aires to Toronto.

The issues we face at CUNY – chronic underfunding, intrusion of



corporate interests into academic life – are connected to a much larger effort to subordinate education to the needs of the market. It's un-

canny to read academic union newspapers from Sao Paulo or Mexico City or Vancouver: you feel as if you're reading about your own life. To talk to our counterparts from these cities is to experi-

ence a dramatic expansion of understanding. Come to one of the workshops or plenary sessions at Borough of Manhattan Community College on October 26 if you would like to explore the connections and work toward strategies in response. Unions must have a voice on the deep causes of the issues that constrict our paychecks and punish our students; this conference is one powerful way to develop that voice internationally.

## A PSC Conference Globalization, Privatization, War: In Defense of Public Education in the Americas

Saturday, October 26  
9 am – 5 pm  
at BMCC

**Registration:** 9:00 – 10:00  
**Morning plenary:** 10:00 – 12:00  
Representatives of the Civil Society Network for Public Education in the Americas:  
Maria de la Luz Arriaga Lemus, Mexico  
Larry Kuehn, Canada  
Dan Leahy, Washington State

**Lunch:** 12:00 – 1:00

### Afternoon Workshops:

1:00 – 2:15: Responses to Privatization and Corporate Influence on Education, Organizing Contingent Labor, Academic Freedom, Racism Internationally and Access to Higher Education, Health and Safety.

2:30 – 3:45: Migration and Higher Education, Gendered Dimensions of the Crisis, Education in a Time of War, Intellectual Property, Higher Education Unions in a Globalized Environment.

**Closing plenary:** 4:00 – 5:00; Professor Manning Marable of Columbia University, founding member of the Black Radical Congress.

Sponsored by the PSC. Co-sponsors include Black Radical Congress (United New York Chapter); CUNY Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies; American Social History Project at CUNY.

This conference is part of a continental campaign, “Schools for People, Not for Profit,” organized by the Civil Society Network for Public Education in the Americas, a group including unions of educators in Latin America, the US and Canada. It aims to counter the threat posed by the neo-liberal recommendations of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) being discussed in that same week in Quito, Ecuador. The conference will also consider the additional threats to public education posed by a potentially permanent “war on terrorism.”

Registration is free. For more information, e-mail [ccage@pscmail.org](mailto:ccage@pscmail.org) or call the PSC office.

## CALENDAR

**THURSDAY OCTOBER 24 / 3:30 pm - 5 pm:** Health and Safety workshop on “Effective problem-solving through active Health and Safety Watchdog committees.” Sponsored by the PSC. At the PSC Office, 25 W. 43rd St. Call Joan Greenbaum at 212-354-1252 to confirm.

**FRIDAY OCTOBER 25 / 10:30 am:** Media action to expose high drug costs and corporate greed. At the Pfizer, Inc. World Headquarters, 42nd St. and 2nd Ave. Sponsored by NY Health Care for All and others.

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 26 / 9 am-5 pm:** Conference on “Globalization, Privatization, War.” Sponsored by the PSC. See ad, below.

**WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 30 / 3:30 pm - 5 pm:** Health and Safety workshop on “Construction and renovation headaches.” Sponsored by the PSC. At the PSC Office. Call Joan Greenbaum at 212-354-1252 to confirm.

**WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 30 / 4 pm:** Rally for TWU Local 100 to demand a contract. At MTA headquarters, 347 Madison Ave. at 44th St. in Manhattan. Call 212-873-6000 for info.

**FRIDAY NOVEMBER 8 / 6 pm:** Labor Goes to the Movies. The PSC film series screens “Blue Vinyl,” a new documentary about a global quest for environmental justice. At the Center for Worker Education, 99 Hudson St. For information, call Penny Lewis at 212-354-1252, ext. 234.

**TUESDAY NOVEMBER 12:** Belle Zeller Scholarship Awards Dinner at the Grand Hyatt. \$275 per person. For information, contact Linda Slifkin at 212-354-1252.

**DECEMBER 4 & 17:** Early Retirement Incentive counseling session for TIAA-CREF members. Sign up as soon as possible! All earlier slots are booked. Call Linda Slifkin at 212-354-1252 for more information.

**DECEMBER 23:** Early Retirement Incentive counseling session for TRS members. Sign up now! All earlier slots are booked. Call Linda Slifkin at 212-354-1252 for information.

## Correction

A subhead in last month's article on CUNY's Early Retirement Incentive (ERI) inaccurately stated, “All faculty and professional staff titles included.” As in previous years, part-time titles are not part of the ERI. This error was made just as we went to press, when news came that the HEO and CLT chapters had just won their fight against a move to limit the ERI to faculty. But a newspaper that aims to be both accurate and inclusive shouldn't say “all” when that's not the case. *Clarion* apologizes for the error.

## THIRD PARTY?

## A strategy likely to fail

By KEN SHERRILL

**D**o the costs exceed the benefits of organizing a third party in American politics? Third-party proponents claim their strategy will bring long-term benefits, opening up the system to new ideas and political alternatives. But the short-term costs of this strategy can be severe, and the promised payoff is unlikely to ever arrive.

In New York this question is more complex, because ours is one of a handful of states that allows cross-endorsement. Thus, third parties in New York often have a different purpose: activists aim to provide the margin of victory for a major-party candidate to prove that they are essential to a successful electoral coalition. Groups like the union-backed Working Families Party on the left or the Right-to-Life Party on the right are perhaps best understood as the electoral incarnation of an interest group. Their goal is really to influence the dominant parties, not take control of government themselves.

## FUTURE PARTIES

The logic of a future-oriented third party, like the Greens or the Libertarians, is different. Taking a stand for their own distinct ideas, they aim to raise voters' consciousness and ultimately to win elections and to rule. While they may not win now, the argument is that they are building for the future.

Future-oriented third parties aim to change the terms of debate, and to thus have

a broad effect on politics even before they hold office. One can say that Eugene V. Debs helped to shape the New Deal: the 1932 Democratic platform resembled the Socialist platform of 1928 on many points. But while such examples exist, they aren't as numerous as one might think. And in the US winner-take-all system, third parties are almost never able to move beyond consciousness-raising to victory.

There is a romantic mythology that the people who vote for third parties are those so turned off by the major parties that they would not otherwise vote. Empirically there is little evidence to support this idea. In fact, the people who would consider the complex calculus involved in a third-party vote tend to be those who are highly interested in politics – habitual, life-long voters who would feel guilty if they *didn't* vote. These are the most ideological of voters – and the least likely to abandon their partisan allegiance or to stay home on Election Day. This paradox faced by idea-oriented third parties limits their ability to grow.

The last 35 to 40 years have seen a drop in voter turnout – and more significantly, a decline in attention to politics. Americans know much less about politics than they did in the past. The rare US third-party effort that is successful tends to resemble the Jesse Ventura phenomenon: a charismatic,



perhaps demagogic, personality who rallies support based on the simplest of messages – just elect this strong, honest man and things will be better. Successful third-party appeals in the US today tend not to be based on ideas but on personalities – which can be very dangerous.

If one's goal is to foster progressive alternatives in electoral politics, a third party is not the most effective route. If you look at

the way the religious right has taken over the Republican Party, you see that the major parties' structures are remarkably porous. The major parties of today don't have that many activists. You've got to organize at the county level and the precinct level, but you can take over a national party if you do the work. It's hard work, but it's a lot easier than trying to build a party from scratch.

There are sometimes reasons for sitting out an election or voting for a third-party candidate – generally when one has strong moral reservations against any candidate who is likely to win. But if one's greatest concern is for CUNY, it is hard to imagine that abstention or a third-party vote would be the best possible option in the race for governor of New York.

## McCALL

The next governor will be able to name at least seven members of CUNY's Board of Trustees. There has not been a major-party candidate for governor of New York in the last 25 or 30 years as committed to public higher education, or to the type of student body we have at CUNY, as Carl McCall. And in this election, the practical effect of third-party efforts will be to hurt McCall's chances.

There's a romance to third parties, and it's easy to be caught up in it. But diverting votes to losing candidates is a strategy that limits, rather than maximizes, progressive influence. Progressives might take a lesson from the religious right: it has avoided the third-party temptation, and has seen its power grow.

*Ken Sherrill is a professor of political science at Hunter and the Graduate Center, chair of Hunter's Political Science Department and a member of the PSC's Legislative Committee. The views expressed here are his own; at press time the PSC had not yet made an endorsement in the governor's race.*

## THIRD PARTY?

## Building a real political alternative

By STANLEY ARONOWITZ

**A**merican democracy is in critical condition. As the country moves headlong toward the right, our two-party system fails to offer alternatives or even a real debate on the issues. Democrats get the votes of working people, African Americans, Latinos, women and the left, even as they repudiate the legacy of the New Deal and refuse to represent our interests once in office. Progressive efforts to influence the Democratic Party from within have been no match for the huge amounts of money corporations spend on campaign contributions and lobbying. On bottom-line issues – war on Iraq, tax cuts for the rich, the gutting of public services and social benefits – the Democrats have gone along with the Republican program, wrangling over details but never questioning the basic pro-corporate, militarist thrust of national policy.

It's in this context that I'm running for governor of New York on the Green Party

ticket. In the past I've been skeptical that any alternative party can make an impact on our winner-take-all, corporate-financed electoral system. I still believe that, ultimately, only a popular social movement can turn the country around. But I also believe that progressive unions can't afford to ignore the electoral arena, since to most Americans elections are what defines politics.

## TWO FRONTS

The Greens are organizing on both fronts, as an insurgent social movement *and* a political party. Weak, contentious and broke though it is, the Green Party has shown it can effectively raise issues that the major parties ignore. In 2000, Ralph Nader was the only presidential candidate to attack corporate corruption, a stance since vindicated by Enron, Worldcom and other scandals, and he won almost 3 million votes. Nader's positions on globalization and workers' rights led both the United Auto Workers and the Teamsters to flirt with his candidacy, and the Teamsters called for him to be included

in the televised debates.

Since the Green Party of New York gained ballot status in 1998, the number of its local organizations and registered voters has quadrupled. Today Greens are in the forefront of the struggles to close the Indian Point nuclear plant, repeal the Rockefeller drug laws and end the death penalty.

Admittedly, some progressives find this dismaying. Won't Green candidates just be spoilers, electing right-wing Republicans? Didn't Nader elect Bush? Actually, Bush *lost*; he's president not because of Nader but because of massive vote fraud in Florida and a right-wing Supreme Court. Still, it's true: Green candidates may defeat Democrats. And even I would argue that in some races, the Greens should stay out. But, that said, we can't forgo building a genuine left simply out of fear of the right. To remain loyal to a Democratic Party that takes our votes for granted and betrays us every time is a politics of despair. At best it means that America will move rightward more slowly.

In New York, the governor's race does not pit a liberal against a right-winger; both major party candidates are pro-corporate "moderates." Though the state faces a budget deficit that may reach \$8 or \$9 billion and the prospect of drastic cuts in public services, including higher education, I am the only gubernatorial candidate to call for raising taxes on those best able to pay. Pataki, of course, has already given away billions in tax cuts for the wealthy; McCall (a former vice president of Citibank) calls himself a friend of education, but denies that new rev-

enues are needed to pay for it. In fact, when Independence Party candidate Tom Golisano recently floated the idea of restoring NYC's commuter tax, he was promptly attacked – by McCall.

At a time when the president has declared that domestic needs must defer indefinitely to the imperatives of the war machine, I have opposed Bush's war policies and raised the issue of their impact on the state; none of my major opponents has done so.

## REAL ALTERNATIVE

People ask me why they should waste their vote on a third-party candidate who can't win. But elections are not only contests for power; they're an opportunity to gain a public forum and influence the debate, to make sure that the left's issues are not ignored, and, in the long run, to build a constituency for a real alternative politics. In my own case, if people who support my stands vote for me, they will help the Green Party win the 50,000 gubernatorial votes it needs to stay on the ballot. This enables local candidates, who *can* win, to run and ensures that our oppositional voice will continue to be heard. What's truly a waste is voting for a Democrat who stands for nothing, instead of voting for the future of democratic politics.

*Stanley Aronowitz is a distinguished professor of Sociology and Urban Education at the CUNY Graduate Center and a University-wide Officer of the PSC. The views expressed here are his own; at press time the PSC had not yet made an endorsement in the governor's race.*

## EQUALITY AND LABOR

## In search of democracy

By **CECELIA McCALL**  
PSC Secretary

The journey toward democracy for people of African descent has been long and tortuous. African Americans have suffered the social and economic consequences of inadequate political representation and the lack of a voice in powerful bodies. The Black Codes of the post-slavery South led to legal separation, and de facto segregation was the practice in the North. The debasement and oppression of black people was legalized by the Supreme Court of the United States when it denied, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, equal accommodations to blacks. While the Supreme Court recanted in its 1954 school desegregation decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, which held that separate is not equal, practice and lack of political will have trumped the law and we remain largely a segregated people in city, state, and country. One of the lessons of this history is that even a majority can act in ways that are undemocratic.

In New York State today, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) is fighting an important battle in the struggle for democracy with its suit to achieve just funding for K-12 education. The CFE charged that NY State had not provided NYC with its fair share of school aid: for example, under the STAR program, NYC receives \$74 per pupil compared to a statewide average of \$413. More fundamentally, the CFE argued that Albany had ignored the state constitution's requirement to provide "a sound basic education" to all.

## 8TH GRADE?

In response, attorneys for NY State argued that an eighth-grade education was adequate for the public school children of New York City, the overwhelming majority of whom are black and brown. This stance reflects a paternalistic attitude reminiscent of the worst of southern patriarchy. When Justice Leland DeGrasse rejected this claim and decided in favor of the children, Pataki appealed and won in a second court. (That decision is now under appeal.)

On higher education, Gov. Pataki has tried to cut the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) nearly every year. New York State spends only \$5.85 per \$1000 of taxable income on higher education. Pataki has cut childcare funds to colleges, and we may be threatened with a

tuition increase after the election. There has been, in effect, a dollar-for-dollar transfer of funds from higher education to the prison system.

Yet despite this record, the UFT has endorsed Pataki for re-election, even though his actions do not appear in the best interest of their students or their members. And the UFT pushed for the NY State United Teachers (NYSUT), which includes both the UFT and the PSC, to go along. At the NYSUT Endorsement Convention in Albany, the PSC's representatives opposed the lauding of Pataki's record in the face of his total disregard of public higher education's fiscal needs and his opposition to the CFE suit.

## NYSUT ENDORSEMENT

It might seem strange that NYSUT would even consider backing Pataki, but its endorsement decisions for legislators are usually based on a voting record on selected bills that favor incumbency and often do little to differentiate among candidates. Not included in the mix this year were the bills that equalized tuition for undocumented immigrant students and that banned sale of sweatshop-made

accommodated. Unions basing their allegiance on the narrow interests of their own members may be one result of the 2000 national election, when labor backed Al Gore and George W. Bush immediately retaliated once the presidency was secured. So now it's every union for itself and an apparent abandonment of solidarity, unity, and long-standing friends like Carl McCall.

Over the 30 years of his career, McCall has shown himself to be a friend of CUNY and the PSC. NYSUT first went to him to secure the permanent COLA for retirees. He made increased take-home pay possible for TRS members in Tiers III and IV who no longer have to pay into their pensions. He has befriended this union's new leadership in small and large ways, most recently by ensuring that members receive retroactive checks and increases in a timely way. Yet as this paper goes to press, it is uncertain that even the Delegate Assembly of the PSC will endorse McCall.

Even more important than pensions and retroactive pay are the bigger issues at stake in this race. All should be concerned about struggles for equality and



clothing at CUNY and SUNY, both of which were enacted. Including these bills would have highlighted the anti-immigrant position of Senator Padavan, who has not been our friend and who voted against both bills, yet received NYSUT's endorsement.

Based on similarly narrow thinking, other unions, which have until this moment supported Carl McCall, have decided to back Pataki. Looking at 1199, PEF and UNITE, one might argue that a *quid pro quo* arrangement had occurred. Endorsements were made after specific demands, such as wage increases in the instance of 1199 and UFT, were

justice. It has been almost 50 years since the *Brown* decision, but we have not yet secured integrated and equal education for our children. As one member of 1199 put it, you can't "separate what is good for health care workers from what is good for healthcare workers' children." Carl McCall certainly knew that when he became one of the original plaintiffs in the CFE suit.

*Cecelia McCall is PSC Secretary and chair of the PSC Legislative Committee. The views expressed here are her own; at press time the PSC had not yet made an endorsement in the governor's race.*

## POETRY

## Morning news

By MARILYN HACKER

Spring wafts up the smell of bus exhaust, of bread and fried potatoes, tips green on the branches, repeats old news: arrogance, ignorance, war. A cinder-block wall shared by two houses is new rubble. On one side was a kitchen sink and a cupboard, on the other was a bed, a bookshelf, three framed photographs.

Glass is shattered across the photographs; two half-circles of hardened pocket-bread sit on the cupboard. There provisionally was shelter, a plastic truck under the branches of a fig-tree. A knife flashed in the kitchen, merely dicing garlic. Engines of war move inexorably towards certain houses

while citizens sit safe in other houses reading the newspaper, whose photographs make sanitized excuses for the war. There are innumerable kinds of bread brought up from bakeries, baked in the kitchen: the date, the latitude, tell which one was dropped by a child beneath the bloodied branches.

The uncontrolled and multifurcate branches of possibility infiltrate houses' walls, windowframes, ceilings. Where there was a tower, a town: ash and burnt wires, a graph on a distant computer screen. Elsewhere, a kitchen table's setting gapes, where children bred to branch into new lives were culled for war.

Who wore this starched smocked cotton dress? Who wore this jersey blazoned for the local branch of the district soccer team? Who left this black bread and this flat gold bread in their abandoned houses? Whose father begged for mercy in the kitchen? Whose memory will frame the photograph and use the memory for what it was

never meant for by this girl, that old man, who was caught on a ball-field, near a window: war, exhorted through the grief a photograph revives. (Or was the team a covert branch of a banned group; were maps drawn in the kitchen, a bomb thrust in a hollowed loaf of bread?) What did the old men pray for in their houses

of prayer, the teachers teach in schoolhouses between blackouts and blasts, when each word was flensed by new censure, books exchanged for bread, both hostage to the happenstance of war? Sometimes the only schoolroom is a kitchen. Outside the window, black strokes on a graph of broken glass, birds line up on bare branches.

"This letter curves, this one spreads its branches like friends holding hands outside their houses." Was the lesson stopped by gunfire? Was there panic, silence? Does a torn photograph still gather children in the teacher's kitchen? Are they there meticulously learning wartime lessons with the signs for house, book, bread?

*Marilyn Hacker teaches at City College. Her most recent collection, Squares and Courtyards, was published by W.W. Norton in 2000. Here There Was Once a Country, her translations of the Franco-Lebanese poet Venus Khoury-Ghata, was published in 2001 by the Oberlin College Press. A new book, Desesperanto, will be published in the spring of 2003. "Morning news" was first published in the Forward, June 7, 2002.*

## Clarion OCTOBER 2002

Newspaper of the Professional Staff Congress/City University of New York, collective bargaining representative of the CUNY instructional staff. Vol. 31, No. 8. PSC/CUNY is affiliated with the American Association of University Professors, the American Federation of Teachers (Local 2334), AFL-CIO, the New York City Central Labor Council and New York State United Teachers. Published by PSC/CUNY, 25 West 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036. Telephone: (212) 354-1252. Web site: www.psc-cuny.org. E-mail: phogness@psccmail.org. All opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the PSC.

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# Sameer Pandya: A life in the day

## Starting a career at CUNY

By TOMIO GERON

One recent night Sameer Pandya, a new assistant professor at Queens College, caught a cab home from Manhattan. The driver was playing reggae music on the radio, but abruptly switched to French music as he neared Pandya's apartment in Fort Greene.

Pandya asked if he spoke French. "Yes, I'm from Senegal," the driver said. "The French colonized us."

"The British colonized us," Pandya replied.

"Where are you from?" asked the driver.

"India," he said, handing him the fare.

"Ah," the driver said with a knowing look, handing him the change. "Gandhi. Nehru. We learned about them in school."

### A CONNECTION

It was the kind of encounter that happens every day. But for Pandya, a new New Yorker, it now stands out as his first "New York moment": a meeting with a total stranger, in a city of 8 million, that led to an unexpected connection. "That was nice," Pandya says. "It made me want to stay here."

For Pandya, who studies the interplay between nationalism and colonial and post-colonial literature, the encounter was also a reminder of the contemporary resonances of his work. "It's really interesting when you look at these cross-pollinations of culture," he says – and in New York they happen every day.

Cultural diversity was one attraction of CUNY for Pandya. "One of the things that really got me interested in Queens College when I came to visit was sitting in on a SEEK class," he says. "The instructor showed me the class list and the languages that they speak. It was really unbelievable: Arabic, Bengali, Spanish, German and Polish."

In his first semester at Queens, Pandya is teaching an intro composition course and an introduction to literary study. At this early point in the semester, he says, "my students are still checking me out." And Pandya is checking them out as well, getting a sense of how his students respond to different pedagogical approaches. "In the beginning you're not sure whether an exercise will take 10 minutes or an hour," he remarks.

When Pandya greets this reporter on an early morning in Fort Greene, he is reading a profile of Harold Bloom, the noted literary critic and proponent of the traditional Western canon who has argued that literature has been on the decline since Shakespeare.

For Pandya, the alleged loss of attention to Western civilization is not



Sameer Pandya, assistant professor of English at Queens College

really the point. "I don't think most people are really against the works in the canon," he says over orange juice, "but rather how the canon is formed." Pandya eagerly teaches Kipling and Conrad in his course this semester. "I like the canon," he says with characteristic enthusiasm, "as long as I can teach it the way I want to teach it." The classic Western literary texts are important to study, he says – both in themselves and for what they say about society.

### FROM KIM TO LI'L KIM

Pandya is a specialist in South Asian literature and will teach courses on the subject at Queens. During the hour-and-a-half commute from Brooklyn to Flushing, he talks about how his academic interests relate to changes in the humanities. Despite the "culture wars" of the 1990s, there are increased opportunities for scholars who focus on the literatures and societies of non-Western or non-European peoples. "Several years ago, someone like me wouldn't be hired to teach this subject," he says. "I would just be teaching Kipling and Conrad."

Once on campus at Queens, the intellectual focus shifts from *Kim* to Li'l Kim, a hip-hop diva whose work and image are the subject of a lecture that Pandya had made plans to

attend. The topics of gender, sexuality, race and representation are all part of the mix in the presentation by Michelle Smith-Bermiss, a Queens College graduate who is currently a visiting assistant professor of English at George Mason University.

Pop culture is not his specialty, but Pandya appreciates the freedom to cross-train between social-cultural analysis of popular culture and imperial British literature. He studied at Stanford's interdisciplinary Program in Modern Thought and Literature and says this kind of intellectual mixing makes academic life fascinating. "That's what you can appreciate about a broadly defined training in literary or cultural studies," he says. "It gives you the opportunity to study historical figures like Gandhi and then apply the same reading strategies to contemporary figures."

Pandya is asked to do similar multi-tasking in his teaching, as he will teach both skill-building classes in the SEEK program at Queens and more advanced classes in literature and literary theory.

His new colleagues have been very welcoming and easy to work

with, he says. Several are doing related work on literature from other areas of the world. "One of things I like about my colleagues is that there are other people who do post-colonial studies," he says. "Others work on Africa, the Caribbean or ethnic America, from [a similar] kind of critical stance."

### INDIAN NATIONALISM

Pandya's research currently focuses on autobiographies of Indian nationalist leaders, especially Gandhi and Nehru, from the 1920s to the 1950s. He is interested in exploring both the autobiography as a genre and the character of nationalism in the Indian independence movement. In the works he is studying, Pandya says, "issues get solidified that shape the way we think about decolonization, and that shaped social and cultural life in India in the '50s and '60s." He notes that autobiography in India "does take some inspiration from the genre in West, particularly for Gandhi, who wrote in Gujarati." Gandhi's work is influenced simultaneously by Gujarati literary history and by the Western autobiography, providing an instance of the "cultural cross-pollination" that draws Pandya's interest on the streets of New York.

Pandya looks forward to using the new junior faculty reassigned time, as provided for in the new PSC contract. "It's a great thing because it gives you a summer and a semester to do your work," he says; Pandya will gain the concentrated time he needs to turn his dissertation into a book.

In some ways the biggest adjustment for this longtime Californian will just be living in New York. During the trip back to Brooklyn on the G train, the E train and Q74 bus, Pandya talks about the excitement of moving here. Everything is new to

him and often a bit of a mystery on first encounter, from the subway system to cultural institutions like the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

His first real introduction to New York came in July when he came with his wife to look for an apartment. The 95 degree heat and the

humidity came as a shock, since Pandya had lived in the San Francisco area since he was eight years old. "It just wore us down," he says. After seeing apartments the size of walk-in closets and meeting with several less-than-trustworthy landlords, they finally found their place in Fort Greene.

Now Pandya is settling in, getting to know his new neighborhood and his new department. But he does not expect the students and the cab drivers of New York to stop surprising him.

## HIGHER ED IN BRIEF

### Sleight of hand

The cost of an education at New York's public colleges has been going up, according to a study by the New York Public Interest Group. Though tuition did not rise in the five years after 1995, various fees doubled in that time. Since then CUNY has added a \$150 per year "technology fee" and added to tuition costs by ending its policy of "last semester free." In 2000–2001, fees at CUNY and SUNY were almost \$800 per year, twice as much as five years earlier. Tuition and fees together averaged \$4,062 in 2000–2001, compared to about \$3,700 five years before. Community colleges in New York are the fifth most expensive in the country, at an average of \$2,257.

### Free academy

The American Association of University Professors has created a special committee to review and analyze post-Sept. 11 effects on academic freedom. The committee will look at responses by academic leaders and state officials to controversial teaching and speeches on campus, provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act relevant to higher education, restrictions on foreign scholars and students and proposed restrictions on non-classified university research. The AAUP has condemned the University of South Florida for faculty review procedures to fire Professor Sami Al-Arian.



**30**  
**15-MINUTE ACTIVIST**

## Send it in!

All active PSC members were recently mailed a membership survey, asking for your views on contract demands, benefits and other union issues. What are the main problems you face at work? What do you think the PSC's priorities should be?

Results of the survey will also be a valuable source of data for the union's next round of contract bargaining. By documenting problems in working conditions at CUNY, the survey results will help to demonstrate to management why change is needed. (Some members received two surveys. Please return only one.)

The survey takes about a half hour to fill out, so this month we're asking "15-Minute Activists" to do a little more. But your responses shape the PSC's decisions, so it's worth taking the time to do it right. Responses are due back by October 29 – so fill out your survey today!