



Volume 27 Fall no. 3, 2015

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THE

WHITE (86%)

MALE (62%)

CITY UNIVERSITY
OF NEW YORK



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advocate

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Feeling... under the weather?

We've got you covered.

Student Health Services is staffed and directed by a licensed Nurse Practitioner, providing episodic and primary health care to all registered Graduate Center students. Services include visits for acute medical problems as well as management of ongoing health issues, women's health examinations and Pap smears, men's genitourinary examinations, screening for STIs, immunizations, referrals to outside health care providers, and health and wellness programs and workshops. Students are seen by appointment. However, students with urgent problems will be seen on a walk-in basis as available. There is no charge for visits to the Health Service. Laboratory costs for blood and urine tests are substantially reduced through an arrangement with Mount Sinai Medical Center and then reduced further through partial subsidies through the Graduate Center.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dadland Maye

When there is good news, I'm the first to call for the champagne. So where di bottles dem deh! Yes, hiring faculty of color happens so rarely 'round yah that this is in fact a Merry Christmas moment. Word is that Charles W. Mills is on his way. His CV exceeded the hiring tests, and he is now packing up his belongings at Northwestern University. He should arrive in our Philosophy department in January 2016. In addition to considering his distinguished academic profile, I'm elated because Mills is Jamaican. Certainly, there are a handful of scholars at the Graduate Center who are experts on the Caribbean, but when one comes from the region, one has an intimate perspective to add to the corpus of knowledge. Additionally, I take account of trending fashions that conceptualize the Caribbean as merely a minority population in America's backyard—viewpoints that ignore the region's ethnic, linguistic, geographical, and political diversities.

These misreadings circulate

with ease because many who claim Caribbean-scholar status within and outside CUNY, while knowledgeable about the region, lack the passion needed to protest prevailing misconceptions, which consequently multiply. Such academics engage the Caribbean as a bread-and-butter gig—a means to an end—because the Caribbean is not home. But the Caribbean is home to more than 39 million people. It is therefore important that more of us continue to agitate popular consciousness with reminders that imaginations of the Caribbean should indeed draw from and yet exceed the boundaries of discourse around popular writers such as V.S. Naipaul, Edwidge Danticat, Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, Junot Díaz, Jean Rhys, Audre Lorde, and Stuart Hall. There is no word yet as to whether Mills will be teaching anything on the Caribbean. And we also have to be careful not to lock up Mills in a Caribbean box and throw away the American key, given the geographical range and

interdisciplinary methodologies grounding his scholarship. But to speculate based on the body of his research, he could be resourceful in mentoring students focusing on African, American, and indeed Caribbean geographies.

While we say a healthy Howdy doo to Mills, the tune changes when we turn to the departed Jerry Watts. Christine Pinnock's article, "The Enduring Legacy of Dr. Jerry Gafio Watts," records Watt's accomplishments as a professor, mentor, and past director of the Institute for Research in the African Diaspora and Caribbean (IRADAC). Beyond Pinnock's article, exclamations and sweet memories flooded the list-serv of the Africana Studies Group (ASG) Lists-serv—a group committed to affirming Afro-diasporic scholarships and solidarities engaged by students, scholars, and wider communities. At an event hosted by the English Department, testimonies recalled moments of Watt's brilliance, collegiality, and humanness. IRADAC had an afternoon in which persons

EDITOR'S NOTE


hugged and wept with the weight of conviction that a giant had gone too soon.

As our own editorial team acknowledge Watt's gift to the Graduate Center community, we thought it important to republish a powerful letter he wrote to "My Students and Anyone Else" and sent out on the ASG list-serv in 2009. The *Advocate* published this letter in December 2010; but the letter's tone and soul remain so fierce with love and life that it must again be granted another long space. The letter is a must-read for students struggling to graduate, write, and obtain the confidence needed to define and position themselves as brilliant scholars. The letter, but more so, my own interactions with Watts, reminded me that students of color need to understand their gifts; their tongues and body codes; their blessings in baggages of history; their luxurious imaginations birthed from their marginal positions; and their discontent that agitates and animates American consciousness of its moral borderlines. Indeed Watts reminds many of us that, to be successful in spaces controlled by dominant cultural politics, institutional poli-tricks, and poisoned sensibilities of the intelligentsia, we must decode our own privilege and use it as leverage, inspiration, affirmation, mobilization, and

revolutionary self-care.

Not to be reductionist—but one faculty is gone and another is on the way. We are therefore right where we were a month ago. The Graduate Center still suffers from a gender and racial diversity disease—an institution trying to heal the world's problems when it needs to fix itself first. Though medically undiagnosed, the Graduate Center remains afflicted with an ole-White boys disease; for what indeed is "normal" about a postcolonial institution that, despite housing some of the most brilliant minds in the world, still utilizes neo-colonial, sexist and racialized faculty hiring practices? The statistics on this issue's cover highlight the extent of this epidemic: 61.7 percent male faculty and 38.3 percent female faculty. Outright disgraceful! How can anyone market this higher education institution with any moral integrity to prospective students that we are diverse? And from year to year, students and faculty have confronted this institutional disease, yet things remain the same.

One cannot deny hearing the administration's echoes that so often claim to be pioneering strategies that will enable institutional diversification. How should we therefore respond to President Chase Robinson's recent memorandum, which is also published in this paper?

Titled, "Reaffirmation of Commitment to Diversity/Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action," the President's memo restated his commitment to diversity representation. A widely circulated response, "GC Diversity Initiative Response," is published in this month's issue. Having the support of more than 350 signatories, it raises concerns and makes recommendations. I will quote one of its concerns: "Last year the Graduate Center Diversity Task Force, chaired by Robert Reid-Pharr, submitted a final report to the President's Office in January. To date, the full GC community has yet to receive and review that report." If we were to make sense of this, we would assume that the GC invested some amount of money to put this task force together—even if it was just enough to buy the members a piece of bread while they were doing the research. And with a person like Reid-Pharr, who is very meticulous and dedicated with whatever he is working on, we can assume that a lot of passion and labor was expended into this project. But from January 2014 to now—almost two years later—money spent and energies invested—and nothing has been done!? Has this diversity report been buried—assassinated? Shouldn't we know what is in this report? 



letters

Responses to letters published by
the Advocate.

An open letter to Chancellor Milliken, dated 4 November 2015, authored by Todd Fine and signed by over five hundred students and faculty was published in the Advocate's last issue and website. The letter raised concerns about the presence of a suspected undercover NYPD officer on CUNY campuses infiltrating Muslim organizations, reported by the Gothamist on 29 October 2015.

On 12 November 2015, the Gothamist reported that NYPD Deputy Commissioner of Intelligence and Counter-terrorism John Miller told WNYC "There's truth in the Gothamist story, if you pick out certain facts you can say, 'Well, this is true,' or 'That's true,' but it's wrapped around this narrative that there was this overarching blanket surveillance, which is not the case."

Fine received a response to the open letter from General Counsel and Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs, Frederick P. Schaffer, on 16 November 2015. The letter details the 1992 Memorandum of Understanding between the NYPD and CUNY (the "MOU"), but it did not substantially respond to the concerns voiced in the open letter.

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On 21 November 2015, in response to queries, Schaffer sent a letter to the Gothamist and to the Advocate stating that "The City University of New York has no knowledge of any undercover operations by the NYPD at Brooklyn College, or any of its campuses, targeting Muslim groups or any other groups."

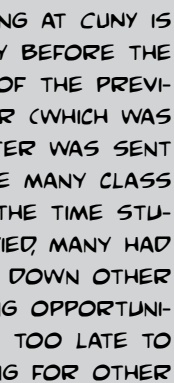
To the Advocate, Fine wrote that the letters from Schaffer "failed to address the core issues involving NYPD surveillance." He questioned if CUNY has inquired whether a valid investigatory reason existed. Further, he wrote:

"Does the university have any intention or desire to try and prevent on-campus surveillance operations that appear on face to be illegal and discriminatory? Given recent court decisions that confirm consistent NYPD disregard of the Handschu guidelines, CUNY must not be so timid in the face of an NYPD that refuses to justify itself. CUNY should assert itself as an institution and attempt to protect its students from unlawful surveillance. If Brooklyn College President Karen L. Gould could condemn these broad surveillance practices when they were first revealed in 2011, calling the alleged activities "a violation of freedom of expression and constitutional rights of our students, faculty, and staff," the Chancellor should be able to do the same now that they have been confirmed to be continuing through the identification of one of the undercover officers."

Defunding Dean K. Harris Award Recipients?

Provost Lennihan Responds

This letter from Interim Provost Lennihan is in response to the open letter by Naomi Podber, published in the *Advocate* in October 2015, regarding the change in disbursement of funds for the Dean K. Harrison Awards. Lennihan's response to the letter is published in full with a gloss by Podber. The original open letter can be found on the *Advocate's* website.



MUCH FALL FUNDING AT CUNY IS WORKED OUT WAY BEFORE THE LAST 4 WEEKS OF THE PREVIOUS SEMESTER (WHICH WAS WHEN THIS LETTER WAS SENT OUT), AS ARE MANY CLASS SCHEDULES. BY THE TIME STUDENTS WERE NOTIFIED, MANY HAD ALREADY TURNED DOWN OTHER POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES (OR WERE TOO LATE TO START ADVOCATING FOR OTHER OPPORTUNITIES). ALSO, THIS IS THE WORST TIME OF SEMESTER TO STRESS OUT STUDENTS AND ASK THEM TO FILL OUT LENGTHY AND HIGH-STAKES APPLICATIONS WITH LITTLE NOTICE.

The *Advocate* recently published an "Open Letter to the President and Provost" expressing concerns about the changes in the disbursement of the Dean K. Harrison Awards, which are used to support students from under-represented groups. The Open Letter describes hardships faced by some students affected by the change in Dean K. Harrison funding that took effect in fall 2014. I recognize the effects that the change in the funding model had on some students, and I regret that students were not given more advance notice. An announcement of this new policy change was sent to all Executive Officers and Assistant Program Officers in April 2014, providing about five months' notice of the new policy. I would like to take this opportunity to explain the rationale behind the changes.

First, a brief history of the Harrison Fellowship funding: In an effort to recruit under-represented students to the Graduate Center, Harrison Fellowships were annually awarded to students who had been nominated for one of the eight MAGNET

Fellowships but did not receive one. The Harrison Funds were initially offered as one-time awards to incoming students only, though continuing students could apply for additional years of Harrison funding, after the initial award.

In the 2010, the method for allocation of funds was modified to grant a flat amount to as many students as possible across all levels—I, II and III, with the size of the award graduated to cover in-state tuition costs at the particular level the student was. The aim was to cover tuition costs of as many students as possible, irrespective of their level. Under this system, the number of students receiving awards increased from approximately 60 in 2009 to nearly 100 students in 2012, meeting the then goal of essentially covering the tuition costs of all students who had applied for Harrisons.

In 2013-2014, the Office of Educational Opportunity & Diversity Programs (OEODP) decided to reconfigure the selection/award process using a new method of allocating awards. The aim now is to help students who had completed their course and examination requirements but were finding it difficult to begin or complete their dissertation research or writing. Therefore the decision was made to focus on advanced students (level III or those about to become level III), and to increase the value of these awards to a standard \$10,000. In addition, those incoming students who had been nominated for MAGNETS but failed to receive one, were also granted funding.

OEODP ceased offering Harrison Fellowships to most Level I and Level II students with the aim of improving dissertation and graduation completion rates. OEODP also

AS FAR AS I KNOW, ALL MINORITY STUDENTS WHO DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO OTHER GC FUNDING WERE GIVEN HARRISONS, NOW, IT'S BEEN PULLED OUT FROM UNDER THEM. THIS IS SYSTEMATICALLY DEFUNDING MINORITY STUDENTS).

MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT ALL STUDENTS WHO WERE GETTING HARRISON AWARDS KEPT GETTING THEM EVERY YEAR, AND IT WAS ASSUMED BY ALL (PROFESSORS, STUDENTS, AND EOS) THAT THIS WAS A RELIABLE STREAM OF FUNDING, AND THAT THERE WAS NO NEED TO PUT THIS IN WRITING.

THERE'S A KEY ELEMENT MISSING HERE. BECAUSE HARRISON AWARD WINNERS HAD NOT RECEIVED OTHER MEANS OF FUNDING, THE HARRISON AWARD EFFECTIVELY PAID TUITION. AND SOME EXTRA. PREVIOUS TO THE CHANGE, IF A STUDENT TAUGHT FOR A SEMESTER, EVEN ONE CREDIT, TUITION WAS WAIVED, SO THE FULL AMOUNT OF THE AWARD WAS GIVEN TO THE STUDENT. NOW, THAT IS NOT THE CASE. FOR FORMER AWARD WINNERS, THAT CAN BE A NET LOSS OF UP TO \$6,000.

standardized the process whereby Executive Officers assessed, justified and ranked students from their respective programs; and then required the Harrison Fellows to attend grant-writing professional workshops. In 2014-2015, the first year of the new method of making awards, OEODP made over 50 awards and last year, nearly 40.

I want to stress that, at the introduction of the new system, an exception was made for students that had a written assurance from their Executive Officer that their award was renewable. Those students did receive the continuation of funding they had expected to receive.

As a result of these changes in the nomination/award process, including a required letter from the advisor, and a year-end report by the students, the OEODP has fostered a greater degree of institutional accountability between the student, their programs and their advisor. And the increased amount of the individual awards to \$10,000 has freed up a significant amount of time from the student workload for level III students, especially teaching. This has resulted in a number of defenses in the last two years and significant progress for others in progress to degree completion.

As is the norm, we will be reviewing the effects of these changes as more data becomes available.

Sincerely,

Louise D. Lennihan



IN A MEETING WITH LENNIHAN, SHE AGREED THAT THERE IS NO WAY THAT EXECUTIVE OFFICERS KNEW THAT THEY WOULD EVER HAVE TO PUT THIS IN WRITING, OTHERWISE, THEY WOULD HAVE DONE IT IMMEDIATELY TO MAINTAIN FUNDING. THIS DOES NOT REFLECT THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION. IT IS A TECHNICALITY THE EXECUTIVE OFFICERS ASSUMED, ALONG WITH EVERYONE, THAT STUDENTS WOULD HAVE CONTINUED ACCESS TO HARRISON AWARDS.

An Honest Commitment to Diversity

Paul L. Hebert

The Graduate Center's informational brochure, distributed by Admissions representatives at college fairs, colorfully highlights notable faculty and students. Nobel Laureate and Distinguished Scholar Paul Krugman is pictured, as is Distinguished Professor Cathy Davidson. The achievements of students are touted, also. Pulitzer Prize-winner Gregory Pardlo from the English Program and fashion designer Min Hur from the Liberal Studies Program are both pictured. Alongside these notable names are pictures of professors with recent accomplishments and photos of smiling, unnamed African American and Muslim women. There is also, mysteriously, a picture of a humpback whale mid-breach.

Since President Chase Robinson's introductory

message on the brochure emphasizes that the Graduate Center "draws upon the widest possible range of experience—of race and ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity," the pictures make an easy kind of sense. Well, except the whale.

Prospective applicants are obviously supposed to think of the Graduate Center as an incredibly diverse and exciting place to study. It is an ideal vision of the Graduate Center.

That Krugman does not teach any courses or chair any dissertation committees and that Cathy Davidson's most recent course required an application is irrelevant to that vision. So too is the fact that Pardlo and Hur were successful in their fields before enrolling at the Graduate Center and that most biographies of

them, including those on their personal websites, make no mention of the Graduate Center.

Unlike the carefully-chosen and sometimes staged photos included in the brochure, random photos of students and faculty would likely be less diverse. As noted in the open letter featured in this issue, eighty-six percent of full-time faculty at the Graduate Center are White and less than forty percent are women. The student body is more diverse: nearly sixty-eight percent of students are female and thirty percent are students of color. Yet that is hardly representative of New York City and is far from the ideal described by President Robinson.

The Graduate Center administration has prioritized increasing diversity among incoming students and established an institution-wide

committee to investigate strategies for achieving this. A report by that same committee has not been made public—another issue highlighted in the open letter published in this issue. It is a crucial example of the ways meaningful discussion about diversity in higher education is often institutionally silenced.

It seems that “drawing from diverse experiences” is quite different from actually representing those experiences in the student-body or the faculty.

Notably this semester, the Graduate Center announced that it would no longer award MAGNET fellowships, a fellowship awarded to students from “traditionally underrepresented groups” in higher education. The definition of which students meet this criteria is absent from the Graduate Center’s website, but because the rules conform to state definitions, the fellowships have been available only to African-American and Hispanic-American students. United States Citizenship is a requirement for the award.

Instead of offering MAGNET fellowships, which previously equalled Chancellor’s Fellowships and included service in the CUNY Pipeline Program, the Graduate Center plans to use the same guidelines to award “top-up” money to the base fellowship, making the new award worth roughly \$35,000.

The justification for the change is that promising minority

“the Graduate Center’s historic and stated mission is to be representative of the people of New York and to be an institution that advocates for the diversification of the scholarly profession.”

applicants often choose other institutions because the awards are higher. Increasing the award, the thinking goes, makes the Graduate Center more competitive against elite private institutions.

While the plan may increase enrollment of African-American and Hispanic-American students, by focusing on competitively attracting minority applicants, the plan fails to address the more significant problem

that the number of minority applicants is woefully small and the pool of accepted applicants is even smaller. This is a real problem for the Graduate Center and doctoral programs across the country.

The Graduate Center, and specifically each program, need to address our lack of diversity urgently. CUNY’s and the Graduate Center’s historic and stated mission is to be representative of the people of the city of New York and to be an institution that advocates for the diversification of the scholarly profession based on those people. Each program needs to make specific, goal-oriented plans to address the root causes of our lack of diversity, especially focusing on preparing minority students to successfully apply. Programs cannot simply aim to be more attractive to the students who are already successful.

Put simply, it’s our job to work to make the ideal presented in the Graduate Center brochure a reality.

Perhaps the most significant obstacle to increasing diversity at the Graduate Center is that “diversity” is a slippery word. It is the ambiguity of the word, as it is often used institutionally, that makes it useful. We all seem to have agreed that “diversity” is something good and something we should have, although the reasons for that have become murky in recent years.

In the 1978 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Regents of the University of California v.*

Bakke, the court rejected the notion that affirmative action corrects historical injustices, instead accepting only that diversity has educational benefits for all students. Currently, the U.S. Supreme court is hearing a third challenge to the case and the comments by Justice Scalia are not promising. Divorced of its history, the calls for diversity become disarticulated. College administrators, like President Robinson, can apply the term nearly anywhere.

Because I am enrolled in the English program and have the most familiarity with that program, I use it below as an example, but it is by no means the only program at the Graduate Center which has grappled with this issue or needs to continue aggressively questioning its practices.

The English program is diverse in many ways. By liberally appointing college faculty instead of relying solely on central-line hiring, the English program curriculum is remarkably wide-ranging. The program prioritizes courses about research focused on traditionally underrepresented groups in academia: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer Studies, African-American Studies, Disability Studies, and Trans-Atlantic approaches to American Studies, to name a few.

Few of these diverse research specialties, and the personal experiences of students and

faculty they often reflect, are acknowledged by the Graduate Center's definition of MAGNET-eligible students. There have been calls within the English Program to redefine diversity in the program to counter these institutional definitions, but there has been no significant progress in doing so.

One possible reason for the lack of change is because even if the English program began to highlight the ways it is already diverse, it would not produce significant institutional change. The English program can nominate someone who identifies as trans or someone who is undocumented for a top-up fellowship, but only at the cost of giving up an opportunity to fund another student in need who meets institutional criteria.

Further, there is a danger in simply redefining diversity to fit targets the English program already meets. A commitment to diversity requires a definition of diversity that has political and ethical teeth, so to speak, and actually advocates for someone who needs recognition.

"Diversity" cannot be watered down so that it is equivalent to something as reactionary as #AllLivesMatter. All Lives matter, but not all lives are systematically and institutionally ignored. Providing support and resources to specific underrepresented groups needs to be the focus of attention. In some cases that can mean advocating for expanding the definition of diversity, but in

others it can mean making use of every avenue possible for helping underrepresented students receive the support they need to graduate and be successful in their academic careers.

Students and faculty in each program need to precisely define the type of diversity they actually seek. The definitions will always be problematic. That is why programs should make commitments to reassessing diversity goals regularly and identifying ways to hold the people running programs accountable for meeting, or failing to meet, set goals.

The English Program website states that the program is "committed to fostering a culturally diverse environment informed by CUNY's historic mission to educate 'the whole people,' not just 'the privileged few,' and by the Graduate Center's mission to 'enhance access to doctoral education for traditionally underrepresented groups.'" The site also lists specific actions the program takes to increase the diversity of its students and faculty. Yet the results of these actions, such as indications of improvement, are absent. This is an example of the way faculty, administrators and students often do not hold themselves accountable for their commitments.

I would like to return to the admissions process, however. It is clear that the traditional admissions process disadvantages students who

have less experience with the culture of academia and this results in a lack of diversity at the Graduate Center. Students who attend large state or city institutions are less likely to have faculty mentors or small classes in which faculty can help students learn the unique genres of academic writing or even mount compelling arguments for why academic jobs are desirable.

Further, nearly anyone who sits on an admissions committee will tell you that a personal statement must demonstrate that a student has a significant knowledge of the discipline and that the applicant is already engaging in the academic community. This does not help those who have been denied opportunities to develop this knowledge or gain this experience.

Perhaps in recognition of these short-comings, the English Program has, for the past three years, held Admissions Workshops specifically for students who meet state criteria for underrepresented groups (but welcoming of all students). For the past two years, this annual event has included a personal statement workshop component. The event implicitly acknowledges that the personal statement is a specific genre which requires a unique literacy. Yet, instead of implementing a system that would require less demonstrated ability in this type of literacy and increasing institutional support to students once they are accepted, the

program implements a band-aid fix that is wholly inadequate.

Many of the questions students ask at these events reflect a fundamental ignorance of how doctoral study works. Students routinely ask, for example, if it is possible to work while pursuing a doctoral degree. Faculty and students on the panel answer truthfully: no, it is not reasonable to do doctoral study part-time. The commitments of the fellowship largely preclude it because of research assistant or adjunct instructor responsibilities. Faculty and students also argue that spare time should be used to read, reflect, and write.

What these answers do not acknowledge is that there is a fundamental misunderstanding of what academic work looks like that is being expressed. Academia is a career that requires unique forms of work that are largely unrecognized by a corporatized culture, often instilled in CUNY students, which values specific work hours, production quotas, distributed work spaces, and obvious channels for advancement. That entering academia as a career also requires accepting near or below poverty-level wages during the years of training and “professionalization” is offered only as something fixed-in-stone or part of a moral sacrifice to “the life of the mind.”

You cannot correct these misconceptions at an admissions event in October. It is unreasonable to assume that students will somehow develop

the skills necessary to produce a successful personal statement in the next two months.

There is important information that can be gleaned from these types of events, though. Intervention needs to happen earlier in a student’s educational career and these interventions need to be designed to address the actual misconceptions and knowledge gaps students have.

What would happen, for instance, if the English program routinely held workshops as a part of 300 or 400 level English classes about doctoral study? What would happen if informational meetings and personal statement workshops were held routinely on college campuses over the course of the year instead of annually at the Graduate Center? What if all Graduate Center students were required to perform this service instead of teaching or being a research assistant? What if successful personal statements and CVs were made available online so that these workshops could be designed around developing the literacy that matters to being a successful applicant? The English Student Association has prepared guides for the required exams that include sample essays, orals lists and prospectuses. Why can’t this be done for applications?

It is important to acknowledge that some of this work is already being undertaken by the senior-level colleges. The English Department at Queens College, for example, gives one presentation a semester to

“It would be a truly radical change to admit students who do not meet traditional criteria for admission, as programs such as SEEK and EOP already do for undergraduate education.”

honors students. The Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge Program (SEEK) and the CUNY Pipeline program address some of these needs for students of color who may not otherwise be able to attend college as a result of educational or financial circumstances, but these programs are sorely underfunded and cannot help all of the students who need these resources. These patch-work solutions again fail to address real injustices of the system.

The Graduate Center administration, certainly more than faculty and students,


seems particularly mindful of how programs perform based on a preciously small number of statistics such as Time-to-Degree or Job Placement Rate, for example. Yet by focusing on “improving” these particular metrics often results in cutting programs such as SEEK which, for many reasons, have lower graduation rates.

For four years, I worked for the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) at the University at Buffalo, a state-funded program similar to SEEK. EOP is an avenue of admission for educationally and economically disadvantaged students. To meet that criteria, students had to be below the admission requirements of the school and prove that their family income was significantly below the poverty line. Because of the education and financial circumstances these students faced, they were often the least likely to graduate. The EOP program was always the target of budget cuts by administrators seeking to improve their graduation rates in spite of the fact that, more than most programs, at a state-funded university, it served the needs of the underprivileged students.

For those enrolled and teaching at the Graduate Center, the questions regarding how to increase diversity here should not end with how we can increase the number of underrepresented minority students who apply to the Graduate Center, but also how we can increase the number of

students from underrepresented groups who are accepted and who graduate. It would be a truly radical change to admit students who do not seem to meet traditional criteria for admission, as programs such as SEEK and EOP already do for undergraduate education, and commit significant resources to supporting those students. To do so would acknowledge that the process of diversifying the professoriate is an on-going one and cannot be done in four years of undergraduate education.

I have focused on the admissions process because it is so rarely questioned—not because other factors contributing to the lack of diversity among doctoral graduates are less important. The significant gap between the number of male and female graduates, for example, is equally troubling, as are the ways a largely homogenous faculty discourages students who do not share the same histories and backgrounds as those faculty. Additionally, the underfunding of students by CUNY and the state and the unfairness of the adjunct pay schedules advocated by the PSC CUNY also contribute to the lack of diversity at CUNY.

We can only address the pervasive problem with diversity at the Graduate Center when everything is on the table and demand an honest commitment to diversity. 

Open Letter to My Students

And anyone else...

Jerry Gafio Watts

After numerous conversations with my advisees and other graduate student buddies, I have come to the conclusion that an open letter to all of you might be in order. If what I say does not apply to you then please ignore this or send it to someone who might want to read it. If some of it is pertinent to your situation, please think about that part of the letter and ignore the other parts. I am hoping to generate an open dialogue via the internet using the Africana list-serv. Therefore, the success or failure of this open letter will be determined by the degree to which it raises significant issues and the quality of the responses generated from you.

There are several reasons why I am sending this open letter. First, a large number of you seem to be drifting. You seem to be caught in psychological/intellectual cruise-control in which you are passively and routinely going through the motions of graduate study. You tend to treat your program of study as something other than an intellectual project that has to be continually engaged, re-thought and revised. Instead, your program of study has become a fixed set of hurdles corresponding to a certain



Jerry Gafio Watts, professor in the English program, Sociology program, and American Studies program, originally sent this letter to the CUNY Graduate Center's Africana Studies list-serv in the early morning hours of 8 November 2010—an illustration of his remarkable dedication to his students.

With the permission of Dr. Watts, the *Advocate* published the letter in December 2010. We republish the letter here, in its entirety, as a testament to his memory.

The letter is an example of Dr. Watts' wisdom, wit, and humor. More than anything, it encapsulates the way he mentored students and his always compassionate voice.

On the *Advocate's* website, you will find links to some of Dr. Watts' published articles and links to videos of some of his public appearances.

number of completed courses and a requisite tally of course credits necessary to advance to the next level of hurdles (ie. oral exams). Now, academic requirements are hurdles but to fixate on them at the expense of substantive learning is to waste your graduate education. It should go without saying that I would never tell you to ignore course credits. However, the goal, I would think, is to take courses that not only allow you to academically advance towards your Ph.D but courses that allow you to intellectually grow in your particular arena of study. Fulfilling academic requirements need not be divorced from intellectual exploration though it often is. Certainly you have met or will meet students who excel academically but who are completely anti-intellectual. Such individuals know how to get "good grades" but do not necessarily know how to think creatively. They can thrive in courses without being the least bit curious about the substantive subject matter. It goes without saying that all of you who are reading this letter fall into the category of "the creative." However, creative talent alone will not produce path-breaking scholarship or any other kind of major artistic/scientific breakthrough. Simply put, the productive/creative scholar must immerse himself/herself in a body of literature and master that body of knowledge before he or she can go forth and creatively engage a discipline. Otherwise, one runs the risk of reinventing the wheel! Any rigorous program of study requires commitment and intellectual self-discipline. Yet, speaking to students about intellectual self-discipline can appear ludicrous. Everyone claims to be self-disciplined... "otherwise professor Watts, I would not have gotten into graduate school!" Actually, I have come to believe that self-discipline of any kind, intellectual or otherwise, is thoroughly un-American. Our psyches are saturated with

consumerist enticements coupled with our culture's celebration of "fastness," "quickness," and "immediacy." Embodied in the iPhone, Blackberry, and twittering, our cultural addiction to "fastness" steam rolls us away from extended periods of solitude and concentration, two preconditions for creative outputs.

Even if you are grinding your way through a serious program of study in a disciplined manner, there may come a time when you become "stuck." The reasons why we become stuck are numerous and vary in complexities. Moreover, not being a shrink, I cannot pretend to diagnose why some of us are stuck. Periods of being stuck may be natural by-products of the life of the mind. Being stuck is a problem that can be addressed. One frequent form of being stuck is a writer's block. There are many excellent books published on writer's blocks which contain numerous strategies for minimizing their impact. Yes, therapy may help us arrive at an understanding as to why we engage in certain

behaviors. IN THE MEANTIME HOWEVER, WE NEED TO GET SOME WORK DONE! We need not wait until we have resolved all of our personal issues and neuroses before we can get out of a writing rut. Keep in mind—writing can be and is often quite difficult! Even the most prolific of writers go through periods of draught. If you doubt, just read the diaries of famous novelists a la Andre Gide or even Fyodor Dostoevsky. Even for lesser talents, writing creates stress and anxiety. Worse, the emotionally intense demands of writing often lead to bouts of depression, however short-lived. According to numerous studies on the psychology of creativity, there is a high correlation between creative people and depression. Again for the sake of argument, let us consider ourselves creative. Let us also recognize that depression is often difficult to diagnose and perhaps more difficult to sense in ourselves. Individuals

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who have been depressed for prolonged periods may not know that they are depressed or they may develop the belief that depression is normal. Such individuals might think that everyone has as much difficulty as they do in completing mundane tasks. By the way, a typical manifestation of depression is the feeling of being overwhelmed by very simple tasks—one is overwhelmed because simple tasks cease to exist . . . everything is deemed complicated! Think about the angst cycles that some of you repeatedly enter. I have been witness to these on various occasions. First—in the initial days of the new semester, you make a pledge to yourself to change your study habits . . . you enthusiastically create an unrealistic class-work-exercise-schedule. One would have to be a robot to sustain this level of organization. By making unrealistic demands on yourself, you set yourself up for an inevitable letdown and thus a sense of failure . . . this overbearing schedule could happen by teaching or TA'ing too many classes; enrolling in too many courses; or enrolling in a class that is beyond your preparation . . . you fall behind in your class work and a sense of failure creeps in . . . but you will not drop this course because you are scared of how a withdrawal would look on your transcript . . . so you do nothing to lighten the course load—nothing to make it more manageable. The end of the semester arrives and you have incompletes to finish . . . the longer it takes for you to finish the incomplete the more pressure you put on yourself to prove to the professor that you are a serious student and not a fuck-up. The professor's original assignment of a twelve page paper is filtered through your guilt-ridden insecure psyche and becomes imagined as

“Let’s call [it] the ‘battered graduate student syndrome.’ That is, the less supportive, more abusive the professor becomes, the more you try anything and everything to please him or her just to quiet the abuse.”

a thirty-five page treatise. Yes, you will show that professor that you are not a fuck-up. How many times have I heard students profess to me that they would one day show me and other faculty members that they had become major intellectual figures? “All of you think that I am a clown now but wait . . . you’ll see.” When I hear versions of this I do my best to use humor to counter it, but I fear that there is a deeper hidden issue.

There are few things more debilitating of your finite energy than the deep-seated need to prove yourself worthy to another person even if, no, particularly if, that other person is your professor. First, this need gives that professor too much authority over your psyche. Suppose the professor is an undiluted ass. You can easily end up relating to that professor much like a traumatized spouse caught in what is popularly called the battered women’s syndrome. Let’s call ours the “battered graduate student syndrome.” That is, the less supportive, more abusive the professor becomes, the more

you try anything and everything to please him or her just to quiet the abuse. You cannot win this battle. But this is not the only form of professorial abuse. It is also abuse when the professor steals your research and publishes it under his or her name. More frequently, they “coauthor” work that you alone researched. Then they have the audacity to list you as second author. Amazingly, they can do this and utterly believe that you should feel honored to have your name listed beneath theirs. I repeat, no professor has the right to exploit you; steal your research; or psychologically undermine your intellectual self-confidence. Should you find yourself in an abusive relationship with a faculty mentor, etc. please respect yourself enough to drop that person from your life and/or removing

that person from any position of authority over you. Easier said than done! Hopefully, we have graduate school peers and friends who will not turn a blind eye to our abusive relationship and help us to see a way out of it.

Any professor, in any graduate program of study, at any time, in any place, however high and mighty his or her status, can be eliminated from your life without undermining your chances of success in graduate school and later. If Professor X undermines your sense of well being or is otherwise a vexation on your spirit, get rid of him or her. Never get caught in the belief that you have to study with Professor X if you are going to teach in Professor's X's area. Fortunately, the United States is a big country with many colleges and universities and dozens in academic fields come and go weekly. Always keep in mind that professors are as flawed, crazy, neurotic, petty, generous, supportive and sane as anyone else. Professors might be (and I think we are) more socially inept than most professionals for many of us spent large parts of our lives relating better to books than people. Being socially awkward if not frequently abrupt and rude is not synonymous with being abusive. Be careful not to confuse the two.

Keep in mind that many of the most arrogant professors are volcanoes of insecurity ready to erupt at any minute. Insecurity can be an occupational hazard of the life of the mind. I repeat, we are in a profession that judges everything we write against all writings on the subject that have come before. One of the best ways for professors and graduate students to reduce insecurity is to relinquish and/or reduce crass competitiveness with each other. There will always be people who are smarter than us and people who are less smart. There will always be people who have read more than we have and people who have read less. There will always be people who write and publish more than we write and

those who produce less writing. If we could really get a handle on competitiveness, we would eliminate so much of the bad karma associated with academic life.

Certainly, it seems appropriate to want your professors to respect you as a student in much the same way that they probably expect you to respect them as faculty. Instead of viewing your professors as a source for validating your personhood, think of the professor as a conduit or guide through which you can navigate and understand a body of knowledge. The professor should be viewed as a resource for your learning process. As you will discover or have discovered, some professors are better at some things than others. Some are better at one on one dialogue than classroom exchanges. Do your homework when choosing advisors, mentors, etc. For instance, Jerry Watts is not the most organized person in the world (a big understatement). So, if you are working with me and you need someone to keep you on a rigid writing deadline, you should

also probably get an additional professor to help you who is very organized and demanding of organization. One of the worse things that happened to me in graduate school was to have a dissertation director who felt that I needed no supervision (or at least that is what he told me). I remember him saying, "Watts, come see me when you are done...you know what you want to do and you know more about it than anyone I know..." Initially I was elated to hear this for I thought that he was affirming me in granting me intellectual autonomy. I would later realize that because I was writing on a subject of marginal interest to him, he did not want to be too involved with my dissertation. In any case, his approach to supervising my dissertation was a terrible approach for me. I needed supervision if only to place limits upon what I wanted to write. The longer it took

“Keep in mind that many of the most arrogant professors are volcanoes of insecurity ready to erupt at any minute. Insecurity can be an occupational hazard of the life of the mind.”

me to complete the dissertation, the longer the work became in order to justify the time it was taking. In many respects, I wrote my dissertation in a manner similar to the ways that many of you write your papers to satisfy course incompletes. Without supervision I wrote a dissertation that was far too lengthy (about 700 pages) and far too time consuming. It was torturous. The Graduate Center periodically offers workshops on how to get the most out of your dissertation advisor. This is perhaps worth a look!!!!

A second and somewhat scarier reason that I wrote this open letter is that from my vantage point, more than a few of you are suffering from significant intellectual self-doubt, that is, intellectual doubt beyond “normal” graduate student doubt. Self-doubt can lead to incompletes which ultimately feed back into self-doubt when the incompletes drag on...Intellectual self-doubt leads to pedestrian intellectual ambitions. Some of you doubt that you can excel intellectually and ultimately restrict your intellectual ambitions so as not to set yourselves up for failure. This is probably academically smart but it can be intellectually damaging. It is alright to have intellectual ambitions that you never realize, as long as these ambitions propel you forward as opposed to stifling you. If your intellectual/artistic ambitions are too grand, they function to silence you. In effect, you arrive at the belief that you cannot write anything worthy of publication. This is what happened to the novelist Ralph Ellison and explains in part why he was unable to complete his second novel. First of all, Ellison was cursed by the success of his first novel, *Invisible Man*. The success of his first effort placed a burden on Ellison insofar as he felt that he had to exceed it in his next work. But as the writing for the second novel dragged on, Ellison’s ambitions grew immensely almost as if he was reliving a version of your problems with course incompletes and my dissertation problem. At some point in the writing of his second novel, Ellison’s ambitions became uncontrollable. He wanted to write the grandest novel ever written by an American. Setting the bar this high, it is no surprise that he was unable to finish his second novel despite working on it for forty years.

Establishing a range of intellectual ambitions is a highly subjective enterprise. In many ways, ambitions are created and revised as you do your

work. Ambitions certainly come into play when you begin to think about the range and quality of scholarly debates that you want to participate in. Herein lies the benefit of reading widely. In some respects, our intellectual ambitions cannot supersede our familiarity with the intellectual horizons. Exposure to ambitious scholarship is the best way to familiarize ourselves with differing levels of intellectual ambitions. All of us need scholars and scholarly works that we admire and desire to emulate. In graduate school, I discovered the work of Barrington Moore. (I wonder if Moore is read today!!!) I remember being thoroughly impressed by his work, particularly the *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Reading Moore led me to Charles Tilly’s various works on revolution in Europe; Skocpol’s *States and Social Revolutions*; and Wallerstein’s *Modern World System*. I was thoroughly impressed with the ways in which these historical sociologists worked through theory. Though I did not become a historical sociologist, these works established for me an understanding of ambitious social science scholarship. Yet, all of these works were flawed in various ways. What we may discover is that some of the “tightest” scholarship is not ambitious while some of the most ambitious scholarship is highly flawed. I say this while recognizing that ambitious scholarship to one person is pedestrian scholarship to another. For instance, one arena of study in political science is in the study of the United States Congress. I for one cannot imagine a scholarly work on the United States congress (and I have read a few) that would hit my fancy as constituting ambitious scholarship. I think that the subject matter limits the range of ambitions of its scholarship but I know some very smart people who have committed their lives to the study of the United States congress. In another instance, I am aware of a political scientist who used various arcane mathematical equations, to prove that conflict of interest leads to conflicting behavior. My response was “duh.” This “scientific” minded political scientist would later win a MacArthur award, popularly known as the genius award. Evidently, he was a wiz with the use of math to delineate various limitations on choice, etc. Such examples have led me to realize that there is no single criterion for determining intellectually ambitious scholarship. The point is that we

have to set our own sense of intellectual ambition and then use that sense of ambition to inspire our work. I could not have entertained Barrington Moore as a scholarly inspiration had it not been for a group of graduate student peers who helped me to read it critically. These buddies helped me to navigate a body of literature that was in dialogue with Moore's work and in so doing, Moore's work became part of my working intellectual arsenal, for want of a better term. Note here that I am not equating ambitious scholarship with theoretically arcane works that are written in hyper-polysyllabic prose intent of being difficult to read. Some of these arcane works are quite ambitious. Most are not! I think that Judith Butler is quite brilliant. But for every one Butler there are ten charlatan ersatz Butlers cranking out "brilliant" studies after "brilliant" studies. With finite time on earth, we need to be thoughtful about what we choose to read.

Graduate student reading groups are quite helpful for allowing students to tackle ambitious works that they might find too imposing to tackle alone. I encourage you to create these groups and engage them diligently. As a professor at the Graduate Center, one of my major goals is to convince students that there is probably nothing intellectually going on at the Graduate Center that is innately "over their heads." Fear of the inability to engage the best of the Graduate Center channels steers too many students (particularly too many minority students) away from taking intellectual risks. Graduate study at the CUNY Graduate Center provides you with a chance to hear lectures, etc. far outside of your established arena of study. In fact, on any given day, there are too many damn events at the Grad Center. Attend some of these and you may discover that there are scholarly worlds out there that can enrich your own work or better still, scholarly

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worlds that will interest you that have nothing to do with your own scholarly project. Make the Graduate Center work for you.

Finally a crucial admission! Graduate Study can be infantilizing. It should not be but it often is. I vividly remember walking to a coffee shop in New Haven and spotting one of my professors walking towards me. This guy was not thinking about me at all and yet when I saw him I freaked out. I had taken an incomplete in his class a year ago and still owed him a paper. I did not have a viable excuse for not having submitted a completed paper a year after the class. And though he was singing a song to himself, I imagined the professor coming up to me and inquiring about that paper... and I imagined myself trying to come up with a reasonable dishonest excuse all the while knowing that he knew I was lying. SOOOO what did I do? I jumped in a doorway and hid from this man. But in so doing,

I came face to face with the realization that I, Jerry Watts, a twenty-four-year old man, was hiding from a professor in much the way that a six year old would hide from his first grade teacher if he thought the teacher knew what he had secretly done. Here I was, a grown person hiding from some damn professor who probably did not even remember my name. After this, I decided that I would never duck into doorways again. So rest assured that I do understand various ways that graduate students can feel infantilized. We are adults who are systematically placed in positions of deference and dependence – that is deference to and dependence on faculty who are but other adults like ourselves.

A few graduate students thrive in dependent and deferential relationships with faculty but most of you view these relationships as problematic. Moreover, these interactions are out of sync with the ways in which you otherwise live outside of

graduate school. It was not that long ago that many of you were enthused by your graduation from your dependencies of undergraduate college. Graduate school was supposed to be different. It was supposed to be a space where you could assert your intellectual autonomy and creatively explore agendas of your own determination. And in some ways it is! Perhaps, it is better to view graduate study as an academic apprenticeship. In crucial respects, graduate study is a process by which you acquire certain skills and habits that allow you to function in an academic world. The academic world becomes the site where you perform various tasks such as teaching, etc. that subsidize your study of a topic of your own choosing. ORRR, it could be the other way- that graduate school gives you the skills and habits necessary to succeed in the world of research, etc...and thus ultimately subsidizes your love of teaching. In my particular case, I think my academic life helps to give me the resources, etc. necessary to sustain my intellectual life all the while knowing that the intellectual world is primary.

Any and all graduate students need support communities- a group of peers or friends that one can turn to whenever one needs emotional or intellectual support. You will continue to need support communities when you complete graduate school, etc. and for the rest of your lives. A support community can keep you moving along and what's more, a support community can give you a sense of perspective as you confront various problems. Your emotional support community often cannot be the community you go to for unbridled criticism of your work. Readers of your work who function as critics need only be people you trust to be honest and thorough in their evaluations. You need not be close friends with them.

In addition to the normal intellectual/academic demands of graduate study, attending graduate school at CUNY can be stressful due to the financial burdens of living in New York

City. Certainly, New York is a very expensive town, particularly in regards to housing. Many of you are barely making ends meet. I have no suggestions for navigating this mine field but I would always suggest to graduate students that living alone may be a luxury while you are in school. Given the typical financial precariousness of many CUNY graduate students, many of you have to spend an inordinate amount of time teaching classes at various branches of CUNY. (And for the record let me state that graduate students who teach, etc. are ripped off grandly... not only at CUNY but at most universities in the United States.) Some of you teach two or three courses a semester--each with a fairly large enrollment. Certainly teaching loads of this magnitude infringe on the time you can commit to concentrated study. Herein lies my concerns. I have encouraged many of you to think of your teaching as a chore that has to be managed. Some of you have come to me with elaborate course syllabi, etc. only to hear me respond that "you are doing too much." From the vantage point of the university, graduate student instructors are wonderful because graduate students will tend to commit much more time to teaching than their pay justifies. I am not trying to stem your pedagogical creativity but I am trying to say that you need to always recognize that when TA'ing you

are teaching for instrumental reasons (ie. to pay your tuition), that is, you are teaching in order to facilitate the completion of your graduate work. I am not trying to undermine your enthusiasm for teaching but I am trying to convince you not to let this enthusiasm in the classroom overwhelm your limited time at present. When you are finished with your dissertation and situated in a tenure track job, teaching can and perhaps should become a priority.

In graduate school, I discovered that TA'ing was far more time consuming than working at a job off campus. Eventually I found a job at the local phone company (Southern

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New England Bell) that began at 6:30 am and ended five hours later. I was no longer enrolled in classes so I could go to work, come home, nap and then study. I found that I had much more time on my hand because this outside job ended at a finite time. Unlike teaching, I did not have any work to take home. When I left work it was over. Moreover, I found that it was less taxing on my studying to work in an area outside of the world of scholarship. With the economy in such bad shape, I am sure that it is not easy obtaining a viable off campus job. Moreover, many of you teach in order to obtain a tuition waiver. I think that it is fair to assume that the demands of living in New York City add time to your graduate career.

Nevertheless, far too many of you (of those I know) have yet to develop strategies for maximizing study time within your limited free time. Unfortunately, graduate study at CUNY places demands on your discipline far beyond that which were placed on me during my graduate student days. Regardless, we have to deal with the reality of our situations as they now exist. Simply put, I have talked to many of you who tell me that you cannot effectively study, etc. unless you have a certain blocs of uninterrupted time. You tell me that two hours here and three hours there are not conducive to studying because they are too short in duration. I have been told "No sooner than I become focused, I have to return to my class and teach or grade papers." Graduate Center students need to develop strategies that allow you to maximize the limited stretches of time that you now have. Again, it might be useful to attend those Graduate Center workshops that deal with time management. Let us keep in mind that serious studying and research demands the ability and willingness to engage in a very isolating and solitary activity. Writing can be lonely. It is just you and the blank screen or you and the blank note pad. A dissertation demands a substantial commitment to solitary work. There is no way around that.

Moreover, writing a dissertation or even a serious research paper demands that you stick with it even when it is not cathartic. Many of us, me included, find it easiest to write when we experience catharsis, excitement, etc. Yet, no one who writes a substantial thesis or book can do so without going through massive periods of tedium if not moments of boredom and despair. If we put down our project every time we felt bored,

we would never complete any substantial writing project.

Though I am no expert, I have read that concentrated study stimulates the mind even in instances when we seem like we are getting nowhere. We must fight through the boredom, etc. I have been amazed at the number of my students who find ways to schedule their lives so as not to give themselves enough time to work on substantial projects. More than a few of you take frequent breaks, family vacations, etc. and spend great deals of time with friends etc. when you should be studying. Nevertheless, you are quick to inform me that if you did not take that vacation - you would "lose your mind." Of course, I know that such claims are utter nonsense but... Yes, I am implying that some of you do not work as hard as you should ...and certainly not sufficiently hard to maximize your chances of producing first rate scholarship. THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR STUDY! READING WIDELY CAN NEVER HURT YOU! Certainly we all have private lives to navigate. But, how many of us can really claim that we center our lives AROUND our study schedule and not vice versa. Some of you have personal responsibilities that cannot be given secondary importance- such as those of you with children. I am not suggesting that anyone neglect their responsibilities. However, it is reasonable to demand of our friends , spouses, partners, lovers, etc. some realization of the costs to US AND TO THEM of the choices we have made to pursue the life of the mind. Simply put, we are not working in a 9 to 5 occupation in which we can leave everything at the office when we go home. Ironically, those of you who teach, TA, etc, the weekend is probably your best potential time for study...and yet, many of you view the weekend as a moment to escape from the world of study.

Well, I have certainly rambled far more extensively than I had planned to when I began this open letter. I hope that this letter is both encouraging and thought provoking. Do not hesitate to offer your comments. Again, I am hoping that this letter will stimulate an open discussion on the Africana list-serv.

Thanks...

Jerry 

The Enduring **LEGACY**

of **Dr. Jerry G. Watts**

Christine A. Pinnock

I was sitting on a bus when I received a text message informing me that Jerry Watts had passed. I burst into tears and started sobbing uncontrollably. People got off and on the bus, and when it came to my stop five minutes later, I leapt off the bus anxious to put my feet on solid ground. All I could think was, "I can't imagine my world without Jerry." What kind of Graduate Center will it be without Jerry Watts? Jerry is the reason I stayed in my doctoral program; he's the reason I had decided to enter academia. He told me I was

needed in these spaces.

He was right.

The Graduate Center, like any other academic institution, is filled with pretentious scholars. Jerry Watts was, on the other hand, the real deal who couldn't be pretentious even if he tried. He lit up any room he entered, and his authentic presence ensured that you noticed him, simply because as one of his students or mentees walked through the door, Jerry, despite efforts to whisper quietly, would whisper loudly in his gravelly tone, catching your attention: "Oh Lawd! I KNEW there was

gonna be trouble!" Laughter would erupt reminding you of the joy of life, and depending on your day, it would remind you that you were still human. Jerry would then say, "Good God! What you been up to?" You always knew that Jerry's concern for your well-being and progress in life was sincere, because it was. That was Jerry.

Jerry had the unique ability to connect with people from all walks of life. I cannot recall a time during all my years as a student at the Graduate Center, when he did not greet the security guards, inquire

about their lives and their families. He did the same for all the Graduate Center staff—especially the staff from Restaurant Associates (from many quick stops on the way to an evening class). He always knew which staff member had a new grandchild or whose mother had passed away. Jerry could catch-up with you briefly and make you feel like you were all right with the world, that your sanity was indeed intact.

I was never fortunate enough to take a class with Jerry. But he was my mentor, friend, and sometimes a father-figure. He had a wonderful way of correcting you and keeping you focused on your larger goals in life.

When Jerry penned the open letter to students, re-published in this issue, it was a result of listening to me and other students talk about the challenges we faced in our doctoral programs. It was also a result of Jerry's intimate understanding of the deep psychological toll doctoral study takes on students—especially students of color.

When we would complain to Jerry about the racial micro-aggressions we encountered daily as students and instructors, Jerry would remind us that our goal was not to be life-long adjuncts or doctoral students; our goal was to get our degrees and move on with our lives. He couldn't have been wiser when he chided us for thinking so much about how much time we'd spent getting into our doctoral programs that we forgot that our goal was to finish. "Y'all so damn happy to be here," he'd say, "y'all keep

forgetting that the goal is to get out!"

As a person who applied to doctoral programs three years in a row and received over a dozen rejection letters, I knew Jerry was speaking to me, but also so many others.

Jerry was the first scholar who really made me aware of the power of my presence in the classroom as an Afro-Caribbean woman. He told me not to take for granted my politics or my contributions to African diasporic studies and anthropology, but also to the students I encounter. As a woman of color, I enter academic spaces not as a token, but rather as an anomaly and exception to the typical pedagogical experiences offered to most undergraduate students.

He also made me aware of how extremely difficult it is to write and complete a dissertation and teach multiple courses. He assured me it was okay to take non-teaching jobs in order to finish. That is what he had to do when he was at Yale.

Jerry was the consummate mentor, not just to students of color but also to all students who had the privilege of being around him. He provided practical strategies to completion during the times when you fall out of love with getting a PhD, writing your dissertation, or just grappling with institutional hurdles.

When one of Jerry's students would complain that they weren't finished because he was taking too long to respond to chapters, I would always laugh. I recognized that the student wasn't serious about finishing,

“Jerry Watts was the first scholar who really made me aware of the power of my presence in the classroom as an Afro-Caribbean woman.”

that it was easier to pass the buck and attribute a lack of progress to Jerry's laid-back demeanor. When one of his students was truly focused on getting to the finish line and successfully defending their dissertation, Jerry was there. He was equally, if not more committed, to helping students succeed. Having attended and taught at other prestigious institutions, Jerry had seen it all and was determined not to be a gatekeeper. He facilitated growth and progress of students in every way he could.

I remember spending many late night hours with friends, colleagues and Jerry, talking in his office about our research projects. Jerry was one of the most well read, insightful scholars I ever knew. His ability to intellectually engage theory across disciplines was truly amazing. He helped so many of us untangle, clarify, and accurately apply theories



ABOVE: Dr. Watts and Novelist Bernardine Evaristo. Photo courtesy of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

BELOW: English alum Dr. Simone White, one of Dr. Watts' students, after successfully defending her dissertation, along with Dr. Alcalay and Dr. Lott



to our research in order to help us move forward. At the same time, he encouraged and supported our own theoretical creations when we couldn't find a suitable theory to engage our work. I am truly grateful to his wife and partner, Dr. Traci West, for sharing Jerry with us. Memories of those late night intellectual jam sessions will remain with me forever.

Many professors work their entire lives and never have a loyal and sincere following of students who admire and support them—not because the students want to be like them and capitalize on their rock star status, but because they

find them to be kind, generous human beings. Jerry was a scholar in whose footsteps so many others and I will gladly walk, mainly because of his kindness, generosity and compassionate spirit. Jerry looked out for everyone, even when no one was looking out for him. He always ensured that those around him were taken care of. When I didn't receive funding to conduct preliminary fieldwork, Jerry Watts, as Director of the Institute for Research in the African Diaspora and Caribbean, gave me funds so I could conduct research and so that I could eat. Jerry looked out for students in ways that most professors didn't even think of. He did not coddle or leave us to slack off, but gave us the necessary resources so we could finish our degrees. As students of color, from the moment many of us enter spaces like the Graduate Center, we are lambasted with the constant refrain, "You don't know theory, you don't know how to write." We internalize these micro-aggressions, sometimes to the point of paralysis that we listen when our departments tell us to wait a year to take our first and second-year exams and we consequently fall behind our colleagues and peers in the timeline to completion. Jerry Watts made sure that we didn't lose focus and whenever he called or checked on us, he made sure that we remain in the game. Many times, he even recommended we seek therapy to deal with the emotional and psychological rigors of the doctoral process.

Indeed, Jerry not only looked out for students, he also looked out for the common individual. Over the years, it was not unusual to see Jerry entering the building with paper bags filled with books. If you saw Jerry very early in the day, you knew that he'd be making a trip uptown to donate books to street vendors in Harlem. When he was director of IRADAC, he had books set aside to donate to the Mina Rees Library at the Graduate Center, Harlem street vendors, and for students. He was an avid reader and loved books, so much that there was hardly any place to sit in his office when he was director, and even less when he left IRADAC and moved to an office less than half its size. Jerry was a force to be reckoned with, and he did things his own way and in his own time. He might not have been the most diligent in returning phone calls or responding to emails, but if you needed him, you could be sure that he would be there for you.

Jerry leaves behind an enduring legacy that highlights

“Jerry Watts leaves behind an enduring legacy that highlights how mentorship is integral to surviving the doctoral process...”

how mentorship is integral to surviving the doctoral process, especially for students of color and other marginalized students. I began writing this reflective piece wondering what kind of place the Graduate Center will be without Jerry. As I close, I am filled with a conviction that it is a better place just because of Jerry. I know that the kind of mentorship that Jerry offered takes a toll on an individual, and while Jerry carried a lot for all of us, he gave a lot to us too. He gave us valuable lessons on self-care—always reminding us, “Hug Yourself!” Self-love=self-care=love.

Jerry loved candy, cigarettes, Doritos, soda, and large iced-coffees, all of which are the ideal recipe for the massive stroke he suffered. He'd been struggling to attend to his health for years, but Jerry did things his way. And while none of us who truly knew him are shocked at his death, we are reeling from the absence of his wonderful presence.

Many scholars are not advocates for students at the Graduate Center, Jerry was. My last conversation with him was two weeks before he had his stroke. Jerry called me to see how I was doing, and we laughed and talked about how many students of color, many of them his former students and mentees, were graduating this academic year. I invited him to my defense and threatened bodily harm if he wasn't there. He said he would definitely make it. Jerry then wondered if “there was going to be a cosmic shift in the universe with so many Negroes getting their PhDs and descending on the planet all at the same time?!” I laughed

and asked if Jerry was coming to the graduation ceremony, and he replied, “Of course! I'm gonna have to be waving flags at graduation at the sight of so many Black PhDs in one place!” We laughed and then Jerry told me he loved me and I told him that I loved him more, and we ended with Jerry telling me to take care of myself, and reminding me, “Hug yourself woman! You almost there girl, the finish line is in sight!”

This lengthy reflection barely captures the extent of Jerry's beautiful soul. May the ancestors from the highest realms welcome Jerry home to the resounding sound of ten thousand drums and bells, waving banners and flags, shouting, “Job well done!” He leaves behind an important legacy of friendship, mentorship, and excellent academic scholarship. It was an honor to have been taught in the School of Watts, and an even bigger honor to pay it forward. We cannot be in these spaces of higher learning and not think of those who follow behind us. We cannot continue to walk through these spaces without compassion and care for those who maintain it. For the students who are struggling to finish, please know that you could have no better cheerleader in the ancestral realm than Jerry Watts. Finish your degree and take pride in your work, and know that if we all take a leaf from Jerry Watts' book, “what a wonderful world this would be!” @

DISGRACE!

This collaboratively written letter is a response by the Graduate Center central-line faculty and students to President Robinson and Provost Lennihan after their recent announcement of the Graduate Center's diversity initiative. It raises serious questions about the lack of diversity at the Graduate Center, backed by data reported in the CUNY Workforce Demographics. The letter was delivered to President Robinson and Provost Lennihan on 3 December, 2015.

December 1, 2015

Dear President Robinson and Provost Lennihan:

We write as Central Line faculty and doctoral students at the Graduate Center in response to your diversity memo, and who are frankly alarmed about the lack of racial/ethnic diversity among our faculty. Below we outline our multiple concerns, and suggest a path forward.

Concerns:

1. Under-representation of faculty of color, particularly women. Compared to the rest of CUNY, the Graduate Center faculty is disproportionately White and male [see charts below].
2. Diversity Task Force recommendations: Last year the Graduate Center Diversity Task Force, chaired by Robert Reid-Pharr, submitted a final report to the President's Office in January. To date, the full GC community has yet to receive and review that report.
3. Recent hires: gender/race imbalance. Last year there were six new hires: five men and one woman. None was Black or Latino.
4. Three women of color have been recommended to the President for offers. In Earth and Environmental Sciences and Urban Education, three internationally recognized scholars have been recommended to the President by their respective faculties and search committees. In the Urban Education case, the search committee has been told that the searches

Continued on next page...

were closed due to austerity. In the EES case, we were pleased to learn that you are now in the process of making an offer to Professor Katherine McKittrick, which if successful will be an important and thrilling addition to our faculty.

5. Selective searches continue "despite" the soft freeze. In the current soft freeze environment, a number of searches have been canceled or suspended. Nevertheless, three searches are underway in Theoretical Biology/Physics and two in Philosophy.

At present, to our best estimates, the central line Graduate Center faculty includes only two African American women, one Latina and one Asian American. With the tragic loss of Jerry Watts, and the impending departure of Rod Watts, we have a shrinking set of African American men and Latinos on the Central Line faculty.

We are dismayed that the Graduate Center has historically been, and is becoming more, disproportionately White and male within the Central Line GC faculty. We are further dismayed that faculty of color, and women in particular, are not being hired and that those faculty of color, and White women, employed primarily at the campuses have less opportunity to teach and mentor graduate students than in the past due to reductions in the course cap. Given the extraordinary efforts made by GC faculty to identify and recruit outstanding doctoral candidates of color, it is unacceptable that these students are unable to gain the quality training required of twenty-first century scholarship afforded by a diverse faculty.

Recommendations:

1. Hire the outstanding, interdisciplinary candidates: We ask that the candidates who have been recommended by their faculties and their search committees in Urban Education be offered positions with resources from the GC or, if necessary, that a request be made of CUNY central.
2. Public forum before break: We ask that the President hold a community wide meeting about Diversity in Hiring, Student Support, and Consortial faculty before the end of the semester.
3. Release the Diversity Report: We ask that the President release to the full community the report of the 2014

Continued on next page...

Diversity Task Force.

4. Provost Search: We expect that the Provost search will explicitly recruit and interview a diverse sample of candidates for the purpose of desegregating senior administration.

We are a premier institution of doctoral education, well known for critical public scholarship on questions of race, gender, class, disability, sexuality and immigration. The current imbalance in the faculty is intolerable, and frankly an embarrassment. The lack of dedicated resources for students of color is shameful compared to NYU and Columbia. We deserve a faculty that reflects the full diversity of our student body, and the city; our students deserve full support.

We thank you for the invitation to respond to your diversity initiative.

This letter was signed by more than 350 people

Fall 2014: Full Time Faculty by Race/Ethnicity and CUNY College*

	% Black	Puerto Rican	Hispanic/Latino	Asian/Nat Hawaiian	American Indian/Alaska	White	Italian
University Wide	11.9	2	6.8	12.1	.2	61.6	5.4
Senior Colleges	10.6	1.7	6.1	12.2	.2	64.2	4.9
Graduate School and University Center	6.7	0	4.7	2.7	0	83.9	2.0
Law School	16.3	4.1	2.0	20.4	0	49	8.2

Fall 2014: Full Time Faculty by Gender and CUNY College

	Male	Female
University Wide	51.5	48.5
Senior Colleges	53.9	46.1
Graduate School and University Center	61.7	38.3
Law School	34.7	65.3

* Data and categories extracted from CUNY Workforce Demographics, Fall 2014



Need Some Relief?

Overwhelmed by the end-of-semester madness? We've got your back (for massages, at least). The DSC is sponsoring Finals Comfort Stations to help you rest, relax, and refresh while studying, writing, and grading.

Finals Comfort Stations with free 10-minute chair massages, earplugs, napping/meditation stations, and handouts on chair yoga and aromatherapy.

When the Right is **RIGHT!**

A Left-Wing Case Against Gun Control

**Gordon Barnes
and Robert Hadley**

In the wake of the most recent mass shootings in California and Colorado, once again there is a reflexive push for national gun control legislation. Unlike the now quite common school shootings, these most recent acts were directly political – an attack on an abortion clinic and a coordinated attack on random civilians at a disability center, purportedly inspired by the Islamic State. Because these recent attacks have significant political ramifications, gun control advocates appear to sense that by connecting their advocacy to other discourses – the desire to defeat “terrorism” and to protect women’s reproductive rights – they can expand the popular base for gun control, and overwhelm the right-wing argument for gun ownership as the right of a “free” people. Only a few days after

the San Bernardino shooting, the *New York Times* printed its first front-page editorial in ninety years, advocating gun control as a way to check “spree killings,” which “are all, in their own ways, acts of terrorism.” This new discourse for gun control – preventing forms of political violence that both the Left and the Right abhor – indirectly reveals the strongest argument against gun control: an armed population serves as the only political check against the greatest purveyor of violence and terrorism of all, the bourgeois state itself. Leftists, who claim to be distrustful of the present state which is constantly engaged in class warfare, must not be carried away by this line of argument. Rather, they should embrace widespread gun ownership, especially by proletarians and

sectors of the working poor, as a necessary condition for social revolution.

The current debate around gun control in the United States has been framed in terms of juxtaposing the desire to mitigate wanton acts of gun violence with the democratic rights won during the American Revolutionary War. On the one hand, the center-left, represented politically by the Democratic Party, have frequently called for stricter gun control measures. After the recent mass killings in Colorado and California, they quickly renewed past proposals to ban automatic weapons and to install tighter regulations on ammunition sales. At the same time, the right-wing in this country, typified by the Republican Party and buttressed by even more unsavory political

Two members of the Black Panther Party are met on the steps of the California State Capitol in Sacramento, May 2, 1967, by Police Lt. Ernest Holloway

actors, have consistently upheld the apparent rights granted to US citizenry in the Second Amendment to the Constitution. However, the ratified version of the amendment, “A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed,” is arguably devoid of any notion of individual rights to bear arms.

Although an honest review of American history shows that this provision was intended to support a collective militia under the guidance of elite political power, the US Supreme Court has ruled that this right does in fact extend to individuals. When the amendment was adopted on 15 December 1791, the logic of the measure was not, as conservative positions often espouse, to check against the power of a potentially tyrannical state. Rather, the amendment was put in place to bolster the state’s propensity for proactive violence. Indeed, the “militia” was theorized as a tool to help supplement the military regulars in times of war and social strife. This is most effectively evidenced when one considers the brutal and genocidal westward expansion of the fledgling US state in the aftermath of independence.

Yet, with the Supreme Court ruling that the right to bear arms extends beyond the formation of militias to individuals, the original purpose of the Second Amendment has become irrelevant. The individual right to arms is an enfranchisement that opens up a reinterpretation of the Second Amendment, grounded in a logic that stresses



gun ownership as a means to check the potential tyranny of the state. This formulation is ubiquitous in Republican and right-wing political discourse. Most rightists either support the status quo in the United States or have a reactionary ideal that they wish would come to fruition, and they consciously support the individual right to bear arms as a political means to establish their coercive power as a group. The Left, particularly the radical and revolutionary Left, must eschew any liberal notion that the right to bear arms is anathema. On the contrary, the right-wing embrace of individual rights to armaments should likewise be championed by the Left, albeit for dissimilar reasons and for a distinctly different end.

Historically, the right-wing argument for popular gun

ownership has been almost entirely reactionary and racist, for example, enabling genocide against Indians or White supremacy under Reconstruction. In spite of this history, there is a potential for the radical Left to win over portions of pro-gun right-wingers. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and bank bailouts, many, mostly White, working-class and lumpenized right-wingers organized Tea Party gatherings in protest that blended outrage at Wall Street with strong defenses of gun ownership. Frequently, they showed up to rallies with loaded guns in hand, and they were ridiculed by liberals as a dangerous reactionary force. But where was the left-wing reaction to the abuses of Wall Street? Why didn't the Left see this defense of violence,

exemplified through the American mythology of the “Tea Party,” as a viable option or as a route to challenging the power of the superordinate elite? Certain layers from the Right, typified by the archetypal “redneck,” can and must be won over to the Left if viable social transformation is to be achieved. What we are talking about here is organization along class lines, permitted that White rightists are not involved in organized racism (such as the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Brotherhood, or any of the myriad White-pride and racist political groups in the United States).

Certainly, the discursive threads around the Second Amendment at present do have a racist core, and it would be naive to think that these widespread White gun owners are a revolutionary vanguard in waiting. But how would new gun control legislation restrict gun ownership by these feared sections of the populace? In practice, any new legislation is likely to grandfather the present-day distribution of gun ownership. Rural and suburban

“The Left... engages in racism when it implies that gun ownership in urban areas would only embolden gangs.”

populations will have a vast arsenal for the foreseeable future, and the urban poor would be locked out forever. Thus, the Black proletariat, inevitably an integral part to any revolutionary struggle in this country, will be put at a severe tactical disadvantage. The only logical strategy for the Left then is to politicize White working-class gun owners, whilst simultaneously encouraging the urban poor to be armed in conjunction.

The Left, typified by centrist liberals, but also by purportedly radical elements, engages in racism when it implies that gun ownership in urban areas would only embolden gangs. In reality, gangs are essentially commercial enterprises that enable the poor to survive by exploiting unfulfilled markets. The illicit drug trade is the most commonplace example. The popular television show *The Wire* humanized gang members by showing how, in the end, they are not that different from other organized institutions like the police, corporations, and the mafia. Gang members are well aware that they are only at the bottom of the extant economic system, fighting for the scraps, and we cannot assume that their armed power will always remain politically irrelevant and counter-productive. On the contrary, looking at the historical formations of Black and Latino gangs in urban quarters in the mid-twentieth century reveals quasi-Leftist associations for self-defense against racists and the police.

The right-wing itself is increasingly attempting to align itself with non-gang-affiliated

racial minorities in the urban poor by suggesting that they too have the right to gun ownership in order to protect themselves against gang and inner-city violence. This argument is especially pronounced in cities like Chicago, New York City, and Washington, D.C., where gun control laws are particularly draconian. While liberals remain largely patronizing and obtuse on this question, the radical and revolutionary Left must recognize this popular desire for gun ownership and struggle to expand access to weapons. They should not abuse the rightist logic of self-defense from some nebulous, racialized boogeyman, but should advance gun ownership as a form of self-defense against the capitalist state and its arbiters of power, categorized most concretely in the form of the police.

Therefore, the Right would be wise to be more careful in its push to expand gun ownership in urban areas. Given the recent prominent cases of police killings of young Black men, Black activists are increasingly stressing how many Blacks feel as though they must be armed to deter an openly racist police force that minimizes their lives and has no compunction about killing them. The leadership of the largely liberal Black Lives Matter movement, of course, is attempting to co-opt these voices back into the traditional Democratic Party platform, but it may be too late. Black gun ownership is becoming politicized again, and this is an important development in American politics. Politicized Black gun ownership is by no means new. Liberals have

essentially attempted to curtail any justification for gun ownership in Black communities in order to prop up and bolster the gun control agenda.

To be clear, gun culture in the United States lends itself to extreme paranoia and is often inflected with overt racism. The National Rifle Association's political line is a prime example of this. For the NRA, gun ownership should be provided for the White working- and middle-classes, and their rhetoric is suffused with a division of "good" and "evil," constructing fears of brutish non-White criminals who would invade the homes of White families and kill them. This is, of course, nonsense and an implicitly racist formulation, and it is understandable why such politics would be rejected and mocked. Therefore, the Left, and especially liberals, are seemingly content with the established dichotomy of gun ownership as backwards and reactionary, and they support gun control measures as some sort of "progressive" position. Yet, if we consider the history of politicized gun ownership from a left-wing vantage point, it is abundantly clear that access to arms is integral to rapid social transformation, particularly in regard to Black political mobilization.

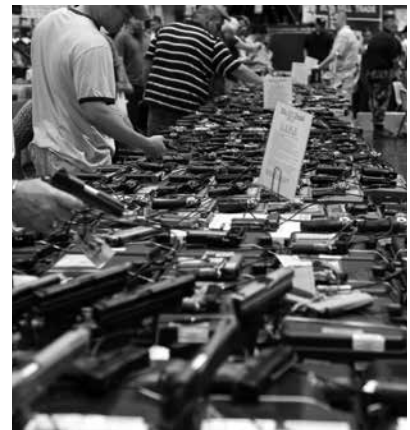
Although it did not begin with the conflagration over slavery in the United States, Afro-American adoption of arms as a form of politics reached its apogee in the years just prior to the outbreak of war, and during the Civil War itself. Free Afro-Americans as well as slaves swelled the Union ranks (either as a direct force



ABOVE: President Obama at Camp David. Photo courtesy of the White House.

within the Northern army, or as a supplementary/non-aligned force independent of it) and engaged in the military struggles that brought about a crushing end to chattel slavery and the social power of Southern slavocracy. After the conclusion of this Second American Revolution, Black men attained suffrage via the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868. During this period of contention and at the apex of Radical Reconstruction in the US South, newly enfranchised ex-slaves armed themselves as they travelled to polling stations to protect their newly-won citizenship. Within a decade or so of the defeat of Radical Reconstruction in 1877, the question of Black gun ownership was answered with Jim Crow legislation. Blacks consistently lost their right to bear arms, and this process coincided with the meteoric rise of organized racism with the second wave of Ku Klux Klan organization in the early 1900s. Without access to guns, Southern Blacks were terrorized, lynched, and murdered in

BELOW: A Houston Gun show.



record numbers.

Access to arms was one of the main ways in which Afro-Americans in the U.S. South were able to defend themselves against the pervasive lynch-mob terror of the early and mid-twentieth century. It is pure liberal fiction that it was simply peaceful civil disobedience that was able to advance the civil rights struggle. Rather, it was

the militant action of various groupings of Afro-Americans alongside mass mobilization and, at times, violent self-defense. The most concrete example of this was the formation of the Deacons for Defense and Justice in Bogalusa, Louisiana, in 1964. The Deacons for Defense were an armed group of Blacks, organized out of the church, that had the direct aim of counteracting the state-sanctioned terror of the Klan as well as elements of the police (often involved with the KKK when not on the clock). Made up of various individuals from the surrounding area, many of whom had served in the Korean War, one of the first tasks of the Deacons was to disrupt the practice of “nigger knocking,” a fairly innocuous form of racial intimidation practiced by the Klan. But of course, as one would expect, the Klan, the police, and other racists deployed many other violent methods in order to intimidate Southern Blacks as well as

those allied with the wider civil rights struggle. Another of the originating tasks of the Deacons was to defend the Freedom House run by the Congress On Racial Equality. CORE, like many liberal civil rights organizations, was devoted to the precepts of peaceful protest and civil disobedience. After a multitude of attacks on their offices, however, CORE acquiesced to the Deacons’ insistence that they provide armed protection from the incessant racist assaults. The Deacons would eventually drive out the Klan and help bring about equal hiring practices at the paper mill in Bogalusa (where many of their original members worked). This was successful only because the Deacons had access to arms. Without such access, the quick and decisive defeat of the Klan and the state apparatus that supported them would not have been achievable.

Examples of Afro-American gun ownership as a means of self-defense against organized

racism as well as the state are abundant. Robert F. Williams’ NAACP chapter in Monroe, North Carolina, organized a gun club in order to train members in armed self-defense in the face of increasingly violent attacks waged by the forces of reaction, specifically KKK nightriders. Going against the NAACP national leadership, Williams advocated armed self-defense in the face of violence as a logical solution to the problem of organized racism in the U.S. South. Other civil rights leaders such as Fannie Lou Hamer and Malcolm X also advocated armed self-defense and Black gun ownership as a way for those engaged in transformative social activism to protect themselves from individuals and groups from reactionary social stratas. Without guns, the victories of these stalwarts of the civil rights movement would likely have been truncated, if in fact they were to have any success at all. Furthermore, the possession of arms to defend and expand



Malcolm X at an outdoor rally.

basic democratic rights has been deployed by other oppressed groups. The American Indian Movement is another prime example, as is the Lumbee Tribe in 1958. At the Battle of Hayes Pond, in North Carolina, some 500 members of the Lumbees defeated a contingent of Klansmen who had begun meetings in the Maxton area. Again, if guns were unavailable to these people, the Klan would likely not have ceased activity in the area.

The left-wing political defense of gun ownership has historically not only been grounded in race. There is also an authentic class-based defense of gun ownership that liberals ignore. The White working class has also deployed firearms in socially progressive ways in the past. And while the current stereotype of the politically backwards “redneck” persists in liberal and broader Leftist discourses, this is an important history to remember. In the great labor struggles in the North and Midwest between the 1880s and the start of the Second World War, various union struggles implemented something akin to workers’ defense guards. These armed guards would prevent scab labor from undermining union struggles, and more importantly, would physically protect union members and cadres from the attacks of the police, company thugs, and the various security firms (most notably the Pinkertons). This pseudo-revolutionary usage of arms for progressive social gains and in labor struggles was a common tactic. Some of the highlights include the Haymarket Affair, the 1892 Homestead strike, and

“It is essential that the working class, specifically the doubly oppressed Afro-American section of this class have access to arms.

the 1934 Minneapolis general strike. It is essential that the working class, specifically the doubly oppressed Afro-American section of this class, have access to arms. Revolutionary minded folks must be able to adequately defend their gains and themselves against racist thuggery, conservative/ reactionary political movements, and anti-labor tactics. In addition, the marriage of the capitalist state with many of these unsavory forces further underscores the necessity that the working class and revolutionary-minded allies be armed and prepared to defend themselves from the aggressive actions of state actors and reactionary forces alike.

Curtailment of gun ownership is a fetter to radical self-defense, and this seems completely lost on large swaths of the Left in this country. In fact, the origins of contemporary gun control legislation came from a “bipartisan” effort to disenfranchise Afro-American

gun owners in California. When Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California, in 1966, they recognized that an armed membership was central to their organizational operation. The Panthers adopted a political position, similarly to some of their ideological predecessors, wherein access to arms was central to the struggle for progressive social gains, both in achieving them and in defending those that were already won. The fear of armed Black men and women in government buildings, in public spaces, and at political events across California led the then Republican Governor Ronald Reagan to endorse stricter gun control laws. In an early attempt to eviscerate the Panthers’ access to guns, the California State Legislature began to enact stricter gun control laws, prohibiting them from being brought into public buildings and challenging existing statutes that allowed for open-carry. This last point is particularly salient as the Panthers utilized guns in their self-defense patrols, wherein they monitored police actions against the oppressed sectors of the Black community in Oakland. The federal government went so far as to implement the notorious COINTELPRO (Counterintelligence Program) as a means to disrupt and negate the influence of the Panthers once they had expanded nationwide. Granted, the COINTELPRO program of spying, misinformation, and using agent-provocateurs did not singularly target the

Panthers, but its existence and implementation was the direct result of the organization's growing socio-political influence, particularly amongst lumpenized and working-class Blacks in urban centers. The centrality of armed self-defense for the Panthers' political program was a direct threat to the status quo in this country. The combined liberal-conservative fears of a Black organization, formed mostly from the working poor and lumpenized and utilizing arms to achieve their political ends, have morphed into a wholesale attempt to enact draconian gun control legislation. Gun ownership for the Panthers was at times fetishized to the point that it became the organizing principle of politics for some of the cadre. Despite this issue, and other internal problems within the organization, namely the rampant sexism, the Fanonian and quasi-Maoist political programmes, and the Newton-Cleaver split, the Panthers' use of guns as a tool to confront the egregious actions of the state is something that was integral to challenging elite politics and ideology in this country, even if incipiently. Unfortunately, large portions of the Left, particularly liberals, fail to see this history as part of the socially "progressive" aspect of struggles for and by oppressed peoples.

In response to these well-founded justifications for gun ownership by minorities and the working poor, liberal defenders of gun control will often argue that the times have changed. They affirm the bourgeoisie state's propaganda that "resistance is futile." They

see how even their rather timid, non-violent protests like Occupy Wall Street or at the 2004 Republican Convention in New York City were infiltrated by undercovers and were met by massive militarized shows of force, and they cannot possibly comprehend how some assorted collection of small arms could have any relevance against such state power. Looking at the weaponry possessed by the modern state – extensive electronic surveillance, sophisticated "non-lethal" weapons of area control, precision-guided weapons, unmanned aerial drones, and weaponized robots – they assume that any violent resistance to the state would be easily crushed. As a result, even if they concede that violent protest was necessary in the past, nonviolent mass movement appears as the only possibility now. Such an outlook, however, does not understand the dynamics of political uprisings. In situations of chaos, the state cannot necessarily rely on the loyalty of its own forces, and controlling large urban centers becomes a challenge even for elite units.

At the beginning of the current revolution in Syria, for example, the state was unable to control many of its cities, despite possessing a modern military and sophisticated intelligence apparatus. Once there were defections from the military and theft of weapons from government armories, revolutionaries were able to seize large swathes of the country with small arms alone. Even the US military, with all of its technological superiority, had

difficulty in urban combat and insurgency fighting in Iraq. In urban combat, for example, a single sniper can lock down and protect large areas. We cannot know exactly how resistance to the overwhelming inequality and political oppression in the United States will emerge, and there are a number of scenarios where all of the weaponry advantages of the state will be muted.

An armed populace also creates conditions that can protect social movements and radical political organizing outside of full revolution. The American state is now accustomed to using overwhelming force to break up protests against banks and against other corporate entities. While the Occupy gathering were disbanded by force, many people remarked at how the Tea Party rallies, despite the open carrying of weapons, were much more respected. If police had to fear that their violence against Occupy would have risked a shooting, they might be a bit more cautious in beating and arresting protesters en masse.

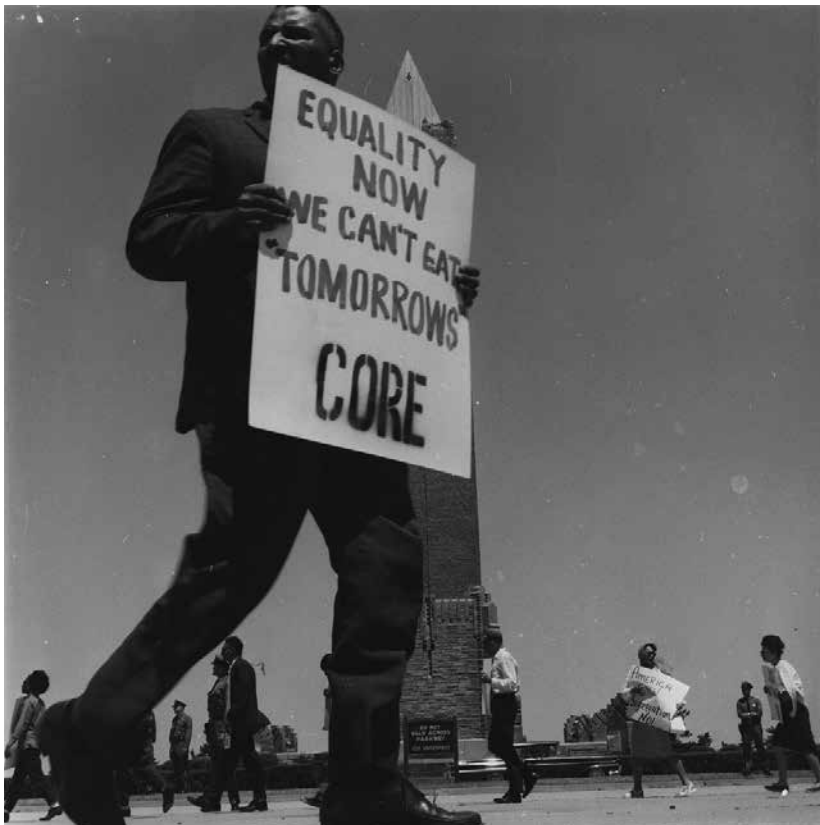
Liberals and even some radicals would articulate that social change should and can be accomplished via peaceful change. They invoke the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. But they often elide the legacies of Bhagat Singh and Malcolm X, both of whom respectively led contemporary movements at the times of Gandhi and King, but who recognized and advanced the case for armed self-defense. It is increasingly typical of gun control advocates to simply assume that agitating

for laxer gun laws is the sole position of the right-wing. This is patently false as there is a rich history, both “at home” and internationally, of the Left using arms to defend its socio-political gains. It must be recognized that all drastic social changes are accompanied by violent episodes, even most dramatically by war, as for instance in the case of the end to chattel slavery in this country. The argument we are making here is not for a culture of revolutionary violence or for an aggressive politics of violence or assassination that utilizes guns to achieve its aims. Rather, we must recognize that in response to mass mobilizations that press against the status quo or entrenched political norms, the state will crack down. This

was highly evident during the struggles in Ferguson, Missouri, and in the many protests against recent police killings in cities across the country. The Left should shed any notion that guns are an inherently reactionary tool. Social change accompanies violence in most cases, and the Left must be prepared to defend social gains. The attendant ethical concerns around gun usage and ownership, exaggerating the chances of being the victims of mass shootings, for example, are those of the elite (specifically liberal elites) forced upon the lower echelons of society. So, we must ask ourselves, can significant social change occur in our lifetime without violence, and is it ethical to consider armed self-defense when

engaging in such a process?

When something progressive is achieved without violence, then the forces that the movement(s) were struggling against will remain in position to continually attack the social gains, without any fears of personal injury. For example, the Women’s Suffrage movement (which linked to broader struggles in feminism, that is to have equality between men and women) was victorious, but women, particularly non-White women, still represent a subordinate position in society. They can vote all they like, as can men, but it makes no substantial social difference. Abortion rights for women are under constant attack and have been since the landmark decision of *Roe v. Wade* (which was only piecemeal in nature since it did not protect women from state encroachment on their bodies after the third trimester). The near constant attack on a woman’s right to choose what she can do with her body persists precisely because the forces that oppose women’s rights are not intimidated, and were not destroyed. The (mounting) restrictions across various states are evidence of this, from minors having to get consent, fetal “personhood” laws, mandatory waiting periods, mandatory ultrasounds, bans on late-term abortions. The list goes on and on. Gay rights and gay marriage are still not universal, nor will they be anytime soon with such piecemeal reformism. Where there is success, there will be pushback and defeat, again and again, unless the powers prohibiting such advances are



Protest in Atlanta, GA, 1963.

destroyed. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Black folks have been categorically better off after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The lynch mob now just wears blue, beige, or green instead of white. The success (if we can even call it that) of Lyndon Johnson signing the act came out of militant and violent struggle (of course, in addition, there was non-violent civil disobedience, but make no mistake, violence was a part of the movement and formed its threatening power). The exaggerated vision of a nonviolent Civil Rights movement is deployed by White liberals (and conservatives too) to elide the militant and violent struggles that were integral to the project of Black, Chicano, and women's liberation.

Universalizing ethical standards about violence lacks coherence and is devoid of any relation to temporal or spatial realities. There is a domineering logic that is forced upon people and endorsed by many to be sure, which posits that right or wrong is based upon the ruling elite's preferences and that individuals as well as groups that go against the dominant logic should be castigated. It is no accident that the current gun control push is being bankrolled by billionaire New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who has set up "Moms Demand Action," "Mayors Against Illegal Guns," and "Every Town for Gun Safety," as Astroturf social organizations. Money and power are trying to shape the terms of the gun control debate. And yes, drastic social transformation will be categorized as "wrong" and "violent" if it involves guns,

but this is due to the prevailing logic established by the powerful. Simply put, the point of social change, particularly revolutionary change, is to strip the prevailing ideologies around how social relations, politics, and economics should be manifest and replace them with something new, something better, something that is more equitable and demonstrates parity for all. So yes, social change (particularly radical metamorphosis) is always "wrong," and particularly so when the use of guns is involved, but it is only always "wrong" for a specific group, namely those individuals and groups that maintain power. Until we can collectively create a society that is truly egalitarian,


"The choice remains to restrict access to arms in order to treat a symptom of a sick culture or employ a difference, more radical and egalitarian rhetoric in order to secure gun rights for the oppressed."

progressive social change will always be "wrong."

Gun culture in the United States is, of course, disgusting and largely reactionary in nature. Not many on the Left, even those who endorse gun rights, would argue against this. However, the problem that is becoming increasingly commonplace – the phenomenon of mass shootings – is not a product of access to arms, but a result of the conjuncture between a flawed understanding of how guns should be used socially (individual and familial defense, rather than radical, class-based self-defense) and a broader cultural degradation that includes social isolation and a flailing mental health apparatus. These issues should rightly be addressed by the Left, but in such a way that it does not treat the right to guns as something antiquated. One need look only at Switzerland, France, Norway, Sweden or Canada as examples of countries with widespread gun ownership that do not suffer from daily mass shootings. The issue is not the gun, but the culture. And culture, at least the dominant culture, will not change except through the transformation of material realities. So the choice remains to restrict access to arms in order to treat a symptom of a sick culture or to employ a different, more radical and egalitarian rhetoric in order to secure gun rights for the oppressed in their struggles against the daily aggression of the capitalist state. The latter is what the Left needs to do. And even if guns prove to be only an infinitesimal advantage

in the struggle to transform society (this, of course, is highly unlikely), they will be necessary in defending any gains the broad swath of “progressive” political actions may conquer, particularly as US society and politics becomes increasingly polarized.

So what is at stake with this renewed push for gun control? Quite a bit actually. Honestly, one of the few socially progressive measures to come out of the first bourgeois revolution in this country was the Second Amendment to the Constitution and its now legal extension from militia to individual. We, on the Left, must use this circumstance as a strategic advantage in our struggles to transform society. This is not to say that rightist arguments are “correct” in their support and agitation for expanded access to guns. Indeed, as mentioned earlier in this article, they often advance racist and contrived views about selective “liberties” and about

the protection of the (White) family from racialized social menaces. But, the basic tenets of rightist discourse around gun control are something that the Left should consider, albeit in a different fashion, for a vastly divergent set of end goals. The liberal position, which upholds guns and gun ownership as something inherently reactionary and politically backwards, implicitly assumes that the general populace should and can trust the state to be beneficent and just. If the post-9/11 security and militarized order is anything to go by, it would be laughable to assume that the US is such a trustworthy state. And, to be clear, it never was. Past social activists and revolutionaries have recognized the need to promote gun ownership; we should as well. In the final analysis, the Right is indeed right, but for the wrong reasons. 

We have

Representation!



USS delegate, Cecilia Salvi now serves as the student member on the Board of Trustees Fiscal Affairs Committee.

PUSHBACK
against fee and
tuition increases



The DSC is collecting narratives of students’ mental health experiences. These narratives, which can be submitted anonymously, will be used to communicate to CUNY administrators about the resources and support still needed.

Narratives can be about anything that affects mental health and well being—including substance abuse problems—and can include stories about having access or lacking access to appropriate health care services.

Submissions can be sent through the contact form at opencuny.org/healthdsc, or can be sent to wellness@cunydsdsc.org; we will also not use your name in your story, whatever document we create, unless you want your name published

More information can be found here: <http://opencuny.org/healthdsc/?p=2823>

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Peripheral Vision

Review of Okwui Okpokwasili's Dance Performance *Bronx Gothic*

Eylul Fidan Akinci

“Okwui Okpokwasili’s dance performance *Bronx Gothic* was presented at New York Live Arts in late October, returning after its sold-out run at COIL Festival 2014. This 2014 Bessie award-winner piece, composed in collaboration with designer and director Peter Born, will tour the US through 2016, while Okpokwasili has been selected the resident commissioned artist for 2015-2017 at New York Live Arts.”

I suppose writing the description to the left is how I postpone the inglorious rush of adjectives that I feel about this performance—by resorting to a list of surface facts, a linear narrative, a rational sight. And yet, it certainly does not come close to describing Okpokwasili’s performance and the airtight composition of the whole piece, which stands as one of the most successful dramaturgies I have seen in a long while. The kinesthetic power of her movements collides with the violence of the story she shares and embodies on stage, in a way that constantly suspends the audience between a longing for and denial of revelation. Precisely living up to its name, *Bronx Gothic* at first promises a personal, confessional story, turning into a quest for the past, but ends up in a collapse of

identity. But does it really end there?

As the audience takes its seats, placed on the stage, it is invited into the intimacy of a dreamscape, encircled by off-white curtains and punctuated with traces of schoolyard green, bedside lamps, and empty plastic bags suspended in the air. Okpokwasili is already at upstage corner, twitching and shaking with her back turned and foot firmly on the ground. I smell carnations and sea salt in the air, which strangely attunes me to this twenty-five minute endurance solo accompanied by a repetitive tune that has the sound of something between a violin and a siren. The vibrations from her core and hips set Okpokwasili’s whole body and the violet dress in motion, yet it is never clear if this is a shake of orgasmic pleasure

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or electroshock. As her body starts to shine with sweat, with the sudden intervention of an upbeat, industrial riff, I cannot help but feel the resonation and radiation of this shake, this wave, engulf the whole space and invade our motionless bodies. We are dancing with her, passively and submissively, to the imposing volume of the

strong beat. We go with her rushing flow, we feel our body projected onto hers, we feel almost united... until she breaks into a deep pause.

Okpokwasili's whole score is punched with these breaks into silence, into song, into storytelling, down to the ground. Punch, or slaps in our face. After the long dance fragment, her

first words are that of intimacy, and yet we cannot see her face as she tantalizingly utters, "I want to share something with you." Who is the "I" here? The voice from this wet body, lit from below the shoulders under a very faint white light, goes on: "notes passed between two girls at the tender age of eleven, one of which was me." The tenderness reveals its tough and sore sides in an instant as Okpokwasili speaks through the microphone in the voices of a shrill, naive girl and her tougher, more "experienced" best-friend: "What is an orgasm?" "Waves, like waves inside of you." Their exchange goes on about having periods, pubic hair, sucking dick, swallowing cum, always underlined by the tough girl's fake street wisdom.

And I think, "Ah, the waves again." During the rest of the exchanges between these two characters, whose love for each other turns into hate and longing, whose queer desire triggers a quest for the uncanny, I constantly fixate on the waves that are exuded from the stage. Okpokwasili's oral expositions are broken with movement sequences, where she breaks her body in joints, her limbs dropping to the floor in each attempt to get up. The seismic wave of her clash blends with her acapella songs that strangely urge us to connect the story through the bits she reads from yellow note pad papers. The tough girl, channeling maturity in her voice, plays with the key

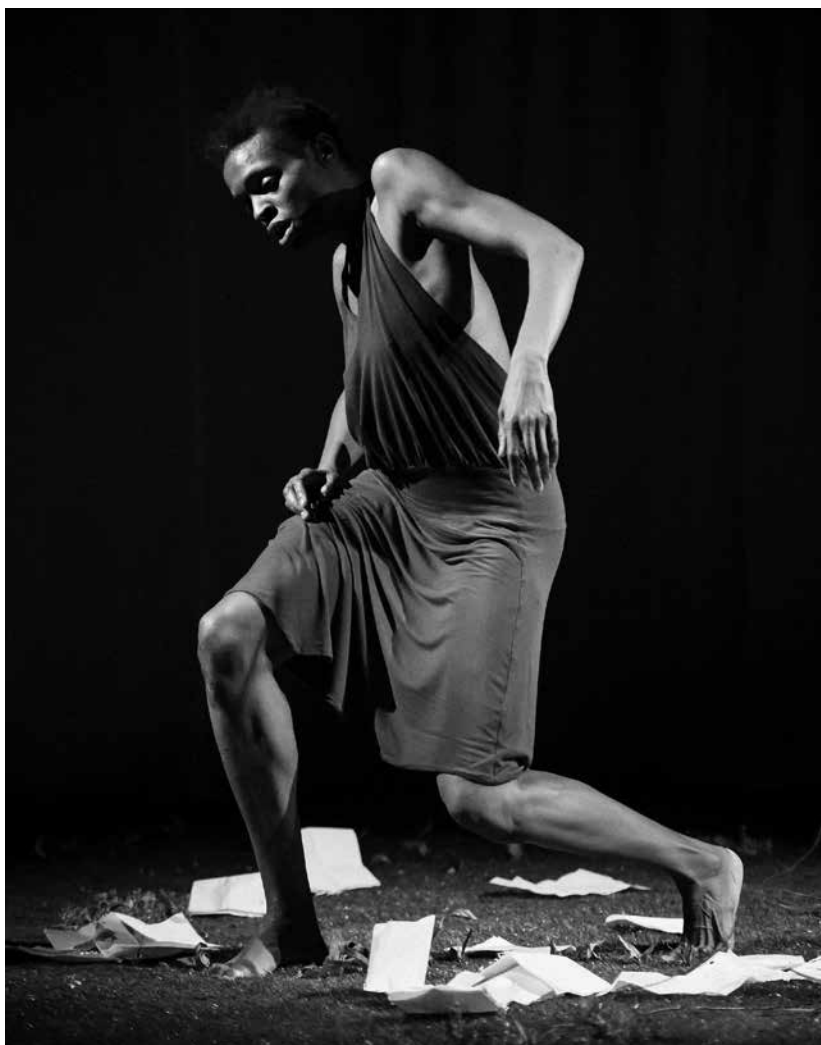


Photo courtesy of the Village Voice



Photo courtesy of New York Live Arts

of knowledge of the adult world as she insults her best friend for her ugliness. She suffers from a repeating nightmare, however, and the latter in turn offers her the key to controlling her dreams: "look at your thighs, look at your fingers... touch your thighs, touch your titties, touch your lips . . . now ask yourself, am I awake?" And then, yet another slap in our face as Okpokwasili breaks into a song.

It is possible to watch this spiral of narrating and breaking as a personal (that is, Okpokwasili's) walk down the memory lane. Yet I feel that the dramaturgy, strongly supported by Born's set and audiovisual design, emits a subliminal signal to the audience by virtue of the gothic movement of her

piece. Yes, it starts as a quest to recapture the painful, violent, desirous relationship with her friend (if we suppose that she is one of the two eleven-year-olds); yes, this at-times rapping dialogue shows the terror of the early adolescent life and sexuality in the outskirts (of city, of class, of gender, of race, of adulthood). However, like the peripheral vision that one of the characters proposes she use to see the other, Okpokwasili beckons the spectator to see in the corner of his/her eye that the actual correspondence and search, the vain love-hate relationship, is between her and her audience. As she breaks from the dialogic form into a more narrative one when the house lights fully open, as

she starts directly looking at and addressing the audience, as she assumes and stays in the character of the grown-up version of the more naive girl, Okpokwasili shouts at not only the memory of her old best friend but at us: "I want to slap your face! Get off me! In your face! In your face! In your face!"

At the narrative level, hers is a futile quest to find her friend as the difference between the two characters cracks up; just like the hallmark Victorian gothic, it ends with tears reflected in the shattered glass of a mirror in which one only sees oneself, albeit distortedly. At the performative level, however, this is a quest to confront the gaze, a White gaze that desires and consumes the breaking of

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a Black body. Such was the gaze that scanned Josephine Baker, for example, whose shakes Okpokwasili mis/quotes at the very beginning. The obscene extremes of sexuality, talks between these pubescent girls, first turn into the obscenity of the bodily fluids that Okpokwasili sheds on stage, and then into the obscenity of our desire to know the end of the story, revealing which character Okpokwasili is in this very intimate confessional.

While she explodes the whole interiority of the characters or the story, what makes her performance uniquely dismantling and affective is her dedicated and exhausting labor on stage, even when she very critically shows and shoves it in our face. Her magnetic

movement quality, her sonorous voice, her performative strength washes us down with the fragments, between which our constantly rekindled desire is torn to pieces. Okpokwasili definitely knows how to arouse that fixed gaze and curiosity, and how to abolish it and leave us naked in our pull towards her. She denies the heavily White audience the fulfillment of being on top of what was promised to be a true and personal story, one that would reveal the rough experience of race and sexuality in the Bronx. She denies a climactic satisfaction in which we could forget our own bodies and positions, hence becoming strangely one with ourselves in scopic pleasure. Against the danger of creating a personality cult out of a solo, she makes

bold gestures (which at times feel quite Brechtian) to break down a facilitating structure where we could easily read her, as Okwui-the-character and as choreographer. As the characters of her narrative collide, Okpokwasili's and our positions collide too.

In that sense, when I use my peripheral vision, I see Bronx Gothic as a synecdoche of spectatorial desire for meaning (which is not independent from the desire to capture) and of the Black female body that takes issue with that. The sharp edge of the periphery, in whatever sense you read the word, truly cuts once you ask and shake yourself, as the addressee of all the questions in these exchanged notes, "am I awake?"



Photo courtesy of the L.A. Times

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printing helps purchase
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student technology fund**

What You Need to Know About Program Governance

Every program at the Graduate Center operates under a governance document which explains how the program should run and how students and faculty should participate in the operations, policy-making and decision-making processes of the program. This document outlines the structure of the program, describes the committees it should have, and may contain an enumerated list of rights and responsibilities for students and faculty. The document holds the program's Executive Officer (EO) accountable to a clear and open process.

In the 1960s, students fought for the right to participate in the governance of their school and these rights should be protected in governance documents. If students are unable to participate in governance, the

policies that get approved can be misguided or detrimental to student progress. For some programs, this document has not been updated since the 1980s and does not adequately protect students rights and responsibilities to help make program decisions.

As students, we need to demand that our programs follow their governance documents and, if they are outdated, update them immediately.

A good, frequently updated program governance document, for example, states that the Executive Committee must hold a meeting open to all students in the program every semester (i.e. an "open meeting"). This meeting is one way students can voice their grievances, make suggestions, or ask questions of faculty and the program's EO.



How to Update Your Program's Governance Document

- ▼ Raise the issue with the program Executive Officer;
- ▼ Raise the issue with members of the program's Executive Committee;
- ▼ Raise the issue with your program's student association;
- ▼ Raise the issue at your program's open meetings;
- ▼ Contact the DSC's Governance Task Force. Communication is confidential;
- ▼ Contact the Graduate Council Structure Committee.

More Information: Links

Program Governance Documents

<http://bit.ly/GCgovdoc>

List of when Governance Documents were Last Updated

<http://bit.ly/govdocdates>

Rights of Student Representation

<http://bit.ly/GCstudentrights>

DSC Governance Task Force

<http://bit.ly/DSCgovtaskforce>

Template for Program Governance Documents

<http://bit.ly/gcgovtemplate>

Graduate Council Website

<http://bit.ly/gcgradcouncil>

Graduate Center Bylaws

<http://bit.ly/gcbylaws>

Sample Pro-student Governance Document

<http://bit.ly/gcenglishgov>



Eylul Fidan Akinci is a PhD student in the Theatre Program. Her interests are dance and poetry. She strives to resist learned helplessness through her work.



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Paul L. Hebert is a PhD candidate in the English Program focusing on nineteenth-century American and transatlantic literature. He teaches at Queens College and is the Layout Editor of the Advocate.



Dadland Maye is a political asylee from Jamaica, a queer activist, unpublished novelist, and a PhD student in the English Program focusing on queer postcolonial movements.



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Bhargav Rani is a PhD student in the Theatre Program, a teaching fellow at Hunter College, and the Managing Editor of the Advocate.



Jerry Gafio Watts, died on 16 November 2015. He was a prominent scholar of African American political thought, a Graduate Center professor and the former director of IRADAC.

also:

Robert Hadley is a pseudonym for a PhD student currently enrolled at the Graduate Center.

WANT TO NAIL THE CAMPUS VISIT?

Finding an academic job in this age of austerity is an increasingly difficult task. So, if you've made it to the campus visit stage, take some time to reflect upon your achievements and acknowledge that your work is good and that people are taking an active interest in it. With the right amount of preparation, level-headedness, and confidence, a campus visit can be an enjoyable experience wherein you get a sense of the program, introduce yourself to potential colleagues, and ultimately show them that you'd be a good fit on their faculty.

People often ask me, "Is there a particular secret that will help me nab a job in the final stages of interviewing?" I wish that were the case. So much goes into branding yourself as a candidate that it is difficult to point to one particular aspect of your application as the primary selling point. To be sure, a friendly, generous persona and a smart look can give you an edge over other competitive candidates; showing a genuine and well-informed interest in their program helps, too. However, there is one piece of advice that I have told all my successful advisees that may tip the scales in your favor if it is prepared and deployed confidently and with style: **Sweep the leg, Johnny.**

Before meeting with the hiring committee, tailor your interview outfit so that it is flexible for the widest array of aggressive attacks. Be sure to practice on trusted friends and mentors. Recognize that there is no fear in this university! **There is no pain in this university! Do you have a problem with that? I didn't think so.** The job market is a merciless netherworld of terror, malice, and misdirection. Down is up! Horror is ennui! A man stands at your door, head of a tiger, body of a wildebeest. Do you let him in? Will he grant you the position you seek? Have you timed your job talk and prepared a comprehensive teaching portfolio?

Upon entering the room where the interview is to be held, shake hands with each member of the hiring committee. Remove your briefcase and bow, as is custom. Then bellow, "Strike first! Strike hard!" and take the leg out!

I repeat: sweep the leg, Johnny. **A man confronts you? He is the enemy. We show no mercy toward our enemies.**

You will be nervous: it's only natural, but if you avoid stressing-out with last minute preparations, you'll look calm, happy, and healthy when you meet with your future colleagues. Remember: if your work alone was enough to get you a job, the campus visit would be unnecessary. They want to meet and get to know you. Quite simply, they want to make sure you're pleasant to be around and a good fit with the program culture.

This is why the element of surprise is so important. By swiftly and accurately applying a clockwise sweep with the right leg, you convey your readiness to embrace this job and your ardor for its many challenges. I would say your interviewees will stand shocked, but not if you are merciless and unforgiving in the punishment you hand out. **You are a cobra waiting in the tall grass to pounce, to anesthetize your combatant and slowly digest him.** Visualize the job as you windmill your leg around in a perfect curl. Do not force it! Center yourself and push down through the pelvic floor, using your leg's natural weight to uproot your opponent from his or her moorings. Then, when you stand over them, triumphant in your domination, you can look down from the heights of victory and shout, "My way is the way of the fist! Defeat does not exist in this university! I am Johnny! Here are some additional teaching materials!" It's the surest way to let them know that you really want this job. With enough practice, you can knock an entire hiring committee off its feet.

I can't guarantee that if you sweep the leg, Johnny, that you'll get an offer, but if you're looking for a way to separate yourself from the pack, **I can guarantee you that they'll never forget the time they met Johnny, master of the first, lithe yet strong, pivoting gracefully from the ball of his left foot and leading from the hip on the follow through.**



Sensei
John Kreese
Cobra Kai
University

SWEEP THE LEG, JOHNNY!