

# **@advocate**

Volume 28 Spring no. 2 2017

[www.GCadvocate.com](http://www.GCadvocate.com)

[advocate@cunydisc.org](mailto:advocate@cunydisc.org)

**Resurrecting the  
Ghost: Emotional  
Labor in the  
Classroom**  
pg. 29

**In Defense  
of the White  
Working-Class Man**  
pg. 20

**Where Do We Go From Here?**  
pg. 12



<b>Editor in Chief</b>	Bhargav Rani
<b>Managing Editor</b>	Nandini Ramachandran
<b>Layout Editor</b>	Alessandro Zammataro

**Publication Information**  
The *Advocate* is the student publication of the Graduate Center, CUNY. It is published six times a year. Publication is subsidized by student activity fees and the Doctoral Students' Council.

**Contributions**  
The *Advocate* accepts contributions of articles, illustrations, photos and letters to the editor. See the website for contribution guidelines.

Articles selected for publication will be subjected to editorial revision. We pay for all contributions with the exception of letters to the editor.



# Contents

**EDITORIAL**

*“In these times”*  
Bhargav Rani  
**pg. 3**

**FEATURES**

*The Excelsior Scholarship Program Will Not Make CUNY Free for Most Students*  
Joseph van der Naald  
**pg. 7**

*“Where Do We Go From Here?”*  
Rachel J. Chapman  
**pg. 12**

*The Tragedy at Pulse Gay Nightclub and the LGBT Community Leadership for Gun Control*  
Chuck Stewart  
**pg. 18**

**DEBATE**

*In Defense of the White Working-Class Man*  
Gordon Barnes  
**pg. 20**

**CUNY LIFE**

*Pronouns, Privilege, and Pedagogy (Oh My)*  
Jenn Polish  
**pg. 25**

*Resurrecting the Ghost: Emotional Labor in the Classroom*  
Sarah Hildebrand  
**pg. 29**

**POETRY**

*Askew*  
Patricia Brody  
**pg. 24**

*Parts from a Normalized Apocalyptic Time: Just Come Over at 9pm*  
Miriam Gabriel / Maryam Imam  
**pg. 40**

**REVIEW**

*Dance Exhibition as Retrospective, as Pilgrimage: A Review of Work/Travail/Arbeid*  
Eylül Fidan Akıncı  
**pg. 35**

*A Pacific Revival: A Review of Pacific Overtures*  
Curtis Russell  
**pg. 42**

## “In these times”

Bhargav Rani

*“There has never been an epoch that did not feel itself to be “modern” in the sense of eccentric, and did not believe itself to be standing directly before an abyss. The desperately clear consciousness of being in the middle of a crisis is something chronic in humanity. Every age unavoidably seems to itself a new age.”*  
Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

There seems to have emerged a shared consensus of crisis around the now endemic use of the phrase “in these times.” Appended to the most diverse of proclamations, it is deployed in conversations as a self-evident suffix that can explain away the fear and precarity of the present. Any casual exchange on politics is doused with a generous dose of the phrase, most often in the context of the present regime in the United States or the rightward shift in global politics. “In these times” is not merely the innocuous invocation of an abstract present, but an estimation of the present as being an epochal turn from the past and characterized by an urgent sense of crisis. There seems to be a pervasive sense that we now live in a “new age,” one that is as terrifying as it is bleak, with the world “standing directly before an abyss.” How then do we *now* understand Benjamin’s provocation that the “desperately clear consciousness of being in the middle of a crisis is something chronic in humanity”?

For the *Advocate*, a newspaper that strives to represent the needs and concerns of the CUNY community, understanding the distinctive tenor of our times is not only its *raison d’etre* but also the source of its political efficacy. What does “in these times” mean for the students, faculty and staff at CUNY? What pre-

cisely has brought us to the brink of this abyss and what is the nature of this abyss? And more importantly, what utopian visions must we articulate that can translate into revolutionary practice and help us leap across this abyss? To produce a paper that truly reflects the needs and aspirations of the community it represents is to grapple with these questions. It is to appraise the particular nature of the crisis of the neoliberal university, and locate it in the context of the larger social and political crises within society.

The estimation of the present lived moment as a crisis has had a long history in modernity, so much so that modernity itself has been variously construed as a crisis; at the most elementary level, as a crisis of tradition. Marx, for instance, theorizes capitalism as a crisis-phenomena, as a social formation that reproduces itself only through crises. However, this promulgation of crises in Marx is marked by a distinctive lack of a telos, where capitalism perpetuates itself through the eternal recurrence of a crisis that is always fundamentally the same. The postmodern turn inaugurated a conception of crisis as chronic to the human condition, with the crisis of modernity manifesting as a crisis of meaning or a crisis of subjectivity. The 2008 economic meltdown and the material consequences that it produced dislodged the concept of chronic crisis from that symbolic register and located it within the context of political and economic struc-



Source: <http://probotx.blogspot.com>

tures once again.

There has been a fundamental change in the understanding of crisis through modernity. Crisis, derived from the Greek *krisis*, meaning decision, originally signified, even till the time of Rousseau, a diagnostic juncture that inaugurated a new revolutionary era and a new consciousness. That is, while it was a destabilization of extant structures and a subversive threat to the status quo, crisis also impelled revolutionary action by signaling the possibility of an epochal change in the structures of society. Our present understanding of crisis has lost this connotation of incipient change. On the contrary, contemporary use of the term crisis, in its signification of a disorderly state of affairs, calls for a return to the status quo and a stabilization of the disruption. Crisis has moved from its original roots in “decision” to denote instead the refusal to take a decision.

It is for this reason perhaps that Benjamin’s provocation still holds force in our time. At one level, Benjamin dislodges the “modern” from its historical context of modernity and applies it to the entire span of human history. More importantly, for Benjamin to proclaim that every epoch perceives itself as enmeshed in the state of crisis is not to trivialize these claims to crisis. He was writing this in one of the darkest periods of modern history, probably even as he was trying to escape cap-

ture by the Nazis. To universalize the consciousness of crisis to all epochs is to deploy a concept of crisis that harks back to its radical roots—it is to posit crisis not just as a rupture that needs suturing in the perpetual preservation of the status quo, but as a site of revolutionary possibility that is always palpably close at hand. To paraphrase Benjamin, a crisis is fundamentally a ‘wish image’ for it integrates an affirmative critique of the status quo with the impulse to break decisively from it, thus nurturing a messianic spark that can awaken society from its dream state.

Against such invocations of “in these times” in a tone of fear and resignation—as if the temporal quality of an age manifests independent of human action—there is an urgent need to revive a concept of crisis that places human agency squarely in the center of revolutionary politics. As Willem Schinkel, a sociologist, argues through his reading of Benjamin’s image of crisis, we must move beyond the estimation of the present political climate as a crisis that calls for recovery, and embrace the idea that crisis proffers an opportunity for transformation. The persistent diagnosis of crisis as a call for recovery lacks political imagination insofar as it construes politics as a mere return to the status quo through a management of the problem. On the contrary, Benjamin’s idea of crisis as a ‘wish image’ pushes us to con-

ceive of possibilities beyond crisis and crisis recovery, so as to strike a utopian spark that can translate into a new politics of possibility.

It is this more radical conception of crisis that the *Advocate* hopes to propagate “in these times,” as it evaluates its own political and ethical commitments to the community it represents. For CUNY stands at a critical juncture in this crisis of the neoliberal university. It was at this same juncture last year, and for six years before that, when the crisis, exemplified by the issue of adjunct labor, was “averted” through a contract that only served to reinforce the status quo. Poised on the brink of militant action (if only for a moment) once 92 per cent of us voted in favor of a strike, the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) leadership ultimately balked and pushed to ratify a contract that betrayed the interests of a majority of its rank-and-file, the adjuncts and graduate assistants. That was crisis as recovery, as a reaffirmation of the existing structures that produced the crisis in the first place, through a superficial management of the “problem.” With negotiations for a new labor contract around the corner again, there is now a pressing need to embrace this crisis as a ‘wish image,’ as an opportunity to break decisively with the status quo in order to inaugurate a new epoch of labor relations in which the interests of the most marginalized and exploited take center-stage.



Source: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/58/00/df/5800df54db8d5f922e4b78775c923ad0.jpg>

And it is through this lens of crisis as possibility that we entreat our readers to approach the various articles in this issue. As Rachel Chapman succinctly puts it in her aptly titled essay – “Where do we go from here?” Chapman’s article is a broad survey of the various social movements in CUNY that have been organizing the rank-and-file “in these times” in order to articulate and realize new possibilities out of this crisis – CUNY Struggle, CUNY CLEAR, Sanctuary Campus, among others. Similarly, Joseph van der Naald’s

critique of Governor Cuomo’s recently announced, “Excelsior Scholarship Program,” demonstrates how the state’s program for public education proposes tuition hikes on the neediest students in the system in order to pay for the education of middle-income students. Against this state’s perverse vision of education reform, the article also outlines what a radical utopian vision of a free CUNY looks like, along with an articulation of the means and political will necessary for its realization. At the level of the everyday labors of graduate life and teaching, the articles under “CUNY Life” explore through personal narratives the ways in which identities and subjectivities complicate our pedagogical practice even as they open possibilities of conceiving a truly egalitarian and democratic pedagogy.

Finally, insofar as the political efficacy of the *Advocate* hinges entirely on the strength of its writing, it is imperative that we question the role of writing in the larger project of rethinking crisis in the neoliberal university. For the *Advocate*, the labor of writing is not only the labor of unpacking the structural inequalities of the neoliberal university in a capitalist state but also the labor entailed in the conceptualization and realization of utopian possibilities, in the articulation of the ways beyond the iniquities of the here-and-now. It is, in essence, the labor of political imagination. Drawing its life force from the effervescent social movements in CUNY, with many student-activists and leaders contributing regularly to the paper, the *Advocate* strives to in turn inform and enrich these movements. “In these times” of 140-character discourses, the *Advocate* is committed to positioning itself as a nerve center of a strong community of writers. This editorial, thus, is both an appeal and an open invitation to the Graduate Center community to engage in the labor of writing for the paper as a means to translate radical political imaginations into revolutionary practice for a new present.

# The Excelsior Scholarship Program Will Not Make CUNY Free for Most Students (And Wasn’t Designed To)

Joseph van der Naald, writing for Free CUNY

On April 7, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that an agreement had been reached in Albany over the content of the state’s budget, which had been highly contested and was then nine days overdue. While New York’s new budget of \$153.1 billion was touted by Cuomo as progressive, and indeed certain aspects such as the ‘raise the age’ criminal justice reforms are encouraging, numerous critics have rightly characterized the budget as anything but progressive. Cuomo’s proposed Excelsior Scholarship Program is a case in point.

At first glance, the Excelsior Scholarship sounds both remarkable and unprecedented, a welcome dose of higher education reform after a long descent into unaffordability. Cuomo unveiled his signature proposal, which was first announced at a press conference on 3 January at LaGuardia Community College, and claims to provide a tuition-free education to “middle-class New Yorkers” at all public institutions. The proposed plan will allegedly apply to 940,000 people, all of whom come from families making less than \$125,000 annually. “A college education is not a luxury,” Cuomo argued, “it is an absolute necessity

for any chance at economic mobility.”

That much we agree with. Under the surface, however, the Excelsior Scholarship Program leaves much to be desired, and will actually apply to far fewer potential recipients than Cuomo claims. The holes in Excelsior begin with Cuomo’s characterization of potential beneficiaries — namely, the middle-class. In his article, “Cuomo’s Tuition-Free Plan Must Be More Inclusive,” Kevin Smith eloquently lays out many of the scholarship’s limitations. For public institutions where students are considered residents (in-state), the demographic that Excelsior applies to, tuition makes up less than half of student costs. Transportation, books, and room and board involve equally significant outlays; in New York City, rent likely makes up an even larger portion of total student expenses.

One of the most problematic aspects of the Excelsior Scholarship is that it applies almost exclusively to traditional full-time students at the expense of everyone else. Excelsior excludes, as Smith notes, the 84,000 CUNY students who attend part-time and work to support themselves and their families. The *New York Times* reports that Excelsior would not apply to 90 percent of New York’s community college students, and as many as 60 percent of those who



attend its four-year colleges. Excelsior also excludes the 8,300 undocumented students presently attending SUNY and CUNY schools. If Cuomo is serious about fighting for immigrant justice in New York, let it begin with a true commitment to equal access to education.

In addition to mandating full-time attendance, Excelsior will only be available to those who graduate in four years, imposing unrealistic expectations on students to finish as soon as possible. Excelsior further requires recipients to continue residing in New York after their education for as many years as they have received the scholarship, ideally to work. For those unable to satisfy either of these requirements, all the money that Excelsior provides is retroactively converted into loans, only making those non-traditional student recipients *more likely* to become indebted.

As critics have rightfully pointed out, Excelsior is really just a “last dollar award,” which supports students’ tuition expenses where student aid like the Pell Grant and the Tuition Access Program leave off. This means that low-income students who already have tuition covered through these programs won’t benefit from Excelsior, and will continue to struggle to afford the numerous other expenses accrued in the process of getting a degree.

The budget also mandates a tuition *increase* of \$200 every year over a period of five years for all SUNY and CUNY schools. At current rates of enrollment, this means that a \$1,000 tuition hike will raise \$274 million in addition-

that Cuomo claims Excelsior will only cost \$163 million. This leads to a net revenue *increase* for the state, to be paid for by students who don’t qualify for Excelsior — namely, New York’s neediest students.

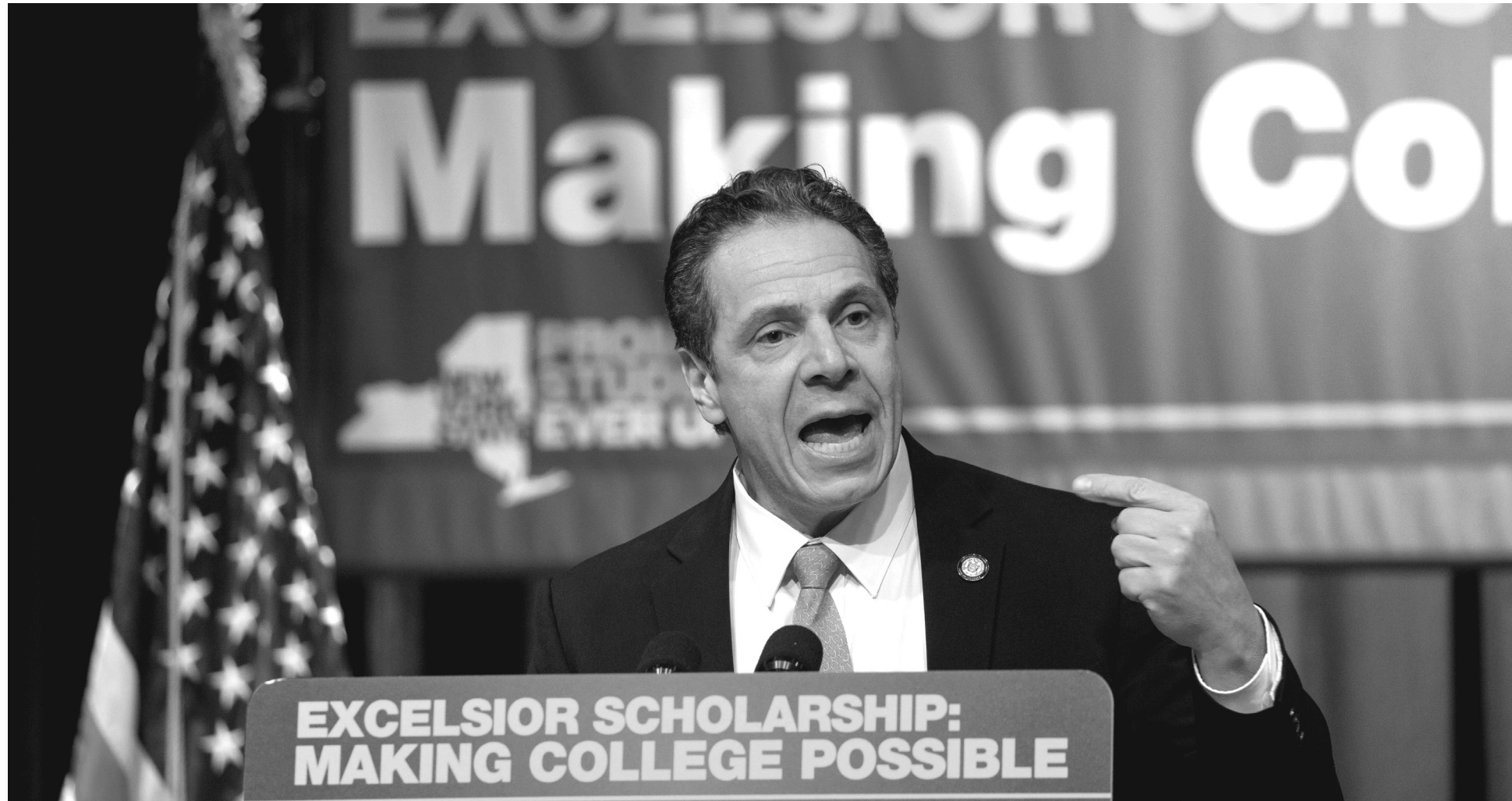
residents until the city’s financial crisis in 1976. This allowed generations of Southern and Eastern European immigrants in New York City to attend institutions like City College and achieve a better life. The first year that the incom-

largely due to pressure from the financial and banking community as well as the federal government. Today 85 percent of those attending New York City K-12 schools are students of color. We believe that students of color

panied as it is by an overall rise in tuition costs for those who don’t apply for Excelsior. We thus reject the Excelsior Scholarship Program and are advocating an alternative plan: to make CUNY free again for all students and lower barriers to a college education in New York for all prospective students. *We believe that higher education is a public good*, one that happens to be provided to people for free in countries that are far less wealthy than the United States. New York’s budget alone, the eleventh largest in the world in 2015, is more sizeable than the budgets of many countries who currently provide tuition-free public higher education to all of their citizens. The money is certainly available; what is lacking is the political will to spend it equitably.

As part of the campaign to Make CUNY Free Again, we are gathering 30,000 petition signatures to place the “Make CUNY Free Again Law” on the ballot in November’s election. This law will seek to amend the city charter to do what Governor Cuomo would not: end separate and unequal in New York City’s higher education system. The “Make CUNY Free Again Law” seeks increased public funding for CUNY, stipends for low-income students, equity in compensation for CUNY faculty and staff, and parity between part-time and full-time workers.

In 2016, the city projected a



al revenue at CUNY alone, given its 274,000 full-time students. At SUNY schools, the increase will raise an additional \$400 million from its 400,000 undergraduates. What is peculiar, though, is

Although Cuomo has claimed that the Excelsior Scholarship Program is ‘bold’ and ‘ground-breaking,’ it is certainly not unprecedented. CUNY was relatively free to a vast majority of New York

ing class was primarily composed of students of color, however, the tuition-free policies that once made CUNY an engine of economic mobility for generations of white students were abolished,

deserve the same opportunities that the city offered earlier and whiter generations of students.

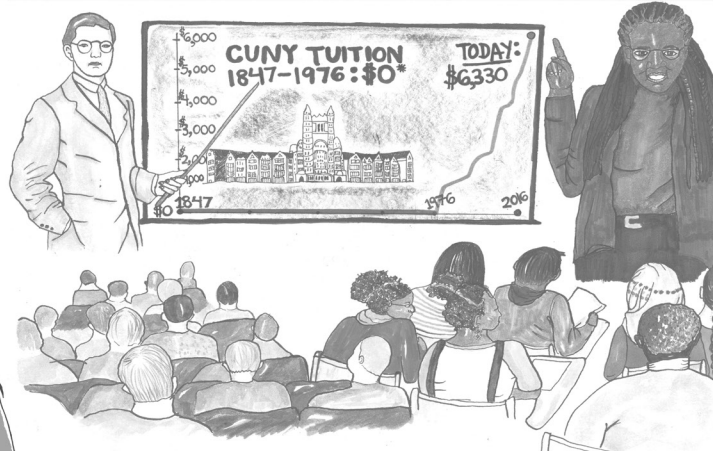
We find Cuomo’s lackluster scholarship program to be both cynical and duplicitous, accom-

<http://buffalonews.com/2017/04/10/tuition-free-scholarship-program-changes-higher-ed-landscape/>

The case for a tuition-free City University of New York

# FREE CUNY!

**1** For over 100 years, CUNY was free. From 1847-1975, a free CUNY helped generations of immigrants get a better life. The City imposed tuition in 1976—the first year the student body was majority people of color. Today's students deserve the same opportunities as those who came before us.



**2** A college degree is the new high school diploma. A B.A. is the minimum needed to get a decent job. Education should be a human right, not a luxury just for those who can afford it.



**3** The government has the money to make CUNY free again. The city and state governments have a combined budget surplus of \$1.9 billion. A free CUNY would only cost \$812 million. Let's put our tax dollars to work to create equal opportunity for all.

\*Cost of replacing net tuition revenue, as calculated in CUNY's FY2015-2016 Audited Financial Statement



**4** A free CUNY lets students focus on their studies instead of hustling to pay tuition. Over 50% of CUNY students are not able to finish their degrees\* because of the high cost of living in New York and lack of financial aid. CUNY needs to be free so students can succeed.

\*Based on data available from the CUNY Office of Institutional Research.

**5** Dozens of countries offer free higher education—so can New York. New York City is the richest city in the richest country in the world. If all these other countries can make higher education free—so can we.

Countries with Free College Education	
✓ Argentina	✓ Malaysia
✓ Austria	✓ Morocco
✓ Brazil	✓ New York City
✓ Cuba	✓ Norway
✓ Czech Rep.	✓ Panama
✓ Denmark	✓ Peru
✓ Ecuador	✓ Poland
✓ Egypt	✓ Russia
✓ Finland	✓ Scotland
✓ France	✓ Slovakia
✓ Germany	✓ Slovenia
✓ Greece	✓ Spain
✓ Hungary	✓ Sweden
✓ Iceland	✓ Turkey
✓ Ireland	✓ Uruguay
✓ Kenya	✓ Venezuela
✓ Luxembourg	

Education is a Human Right!

Get involved: [free-cuny.org](http://free-cuny.org) | [fb.com/freecuny](https://fb.com/freecuny) | [makecunyfreeagain@gmail.com](mailto:makecunyfreeagain@gmail.com)

Artwork by Becca Glaser



## "STUDENTS UNITED FOR A FREE CUNY. EDUCATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT, NOT A PRIVILEGE"

budget surplus of \$963 million in a budget of \$78 billion, and the state reported a budget surplus of nearly \$1 billion in a budget of \$156 billion. We anticipate that a tuition-free CUNY alone would *only* cost \$812 million. But how could the rest of what we are proposing be funded sustainably year after year? We are proposing that New York City issue a request to the state government for a supplemental income tax on the top one percent of earners or through normal local budgetary processes. This would tax all New Yorkers earning more than six hundred thousand annually. Instead of asking low-income students to fund the educations of the middle-class, we advocate that the very wealthy subsidize education *for all*. Additionally, Free CUNY is proposing a monthly stipend of no less than 25 percent of the amount required to bring each student's household income to no less than 120 percent of the poverty line in New York City, so that students can also help pay for the costs of an education that free tuition would not cover.

The "Make CUNY Free Again Law" further seeks economic justice for adjunct faculty members. The starting salary for adjuncts in the CUNY system teaching three classes a semester is less than

\$19,000 a year before taxes. We see this as an untenable situation for educators at any point in their career, and are demanding pay parity between adjunct and full-time faculty. Students at the Graduate Center would benefit immensely from this proposal. Of the approximately 13,000 adjuncts that CUNY employs, a large portion are either enrolled at the Graduate Center presently or are alumni. Additionally, Graduate Center Fellowships presently only cover tuition for five years. The "Make CUNY Free Again Law" would apply to all students in the CUNY system, including removing tuition fees for Graduate Center students as well.

In sum, we recognize that any legislation that proposes lowering tuition costs for students is a step in the right direction; the Excelsior Scholarship Program, however, does not go far enough and surreptitiously deepens the existing inequalities in higher education while parading as progressive. To truly give all New Yorkers a fair shot at a good job, a good education, and a good life, we need a proposal that removes tuition entirely and addresses the economic realities of the entire student body. New York did it once before, we believe that we can do it again - let's make CUNY free again.

Credit: Christian Pardo Herrera

# Where Do We Go From Here?

Rachel J. Chapman



The year so far has been marked by racist and nationalist regimes, including those initiated by the Trump administration. The Muslim ban, the proposal to expand the border wall, heightened police brutality, immigrant deportations, injustice at Standing Rock, the dismantling of environmental and economic regulations, and the push to defund healthcare—all these disparate policies suggest an increasing assault on working and immigrant communities. The attacks are an extension of what the globalizing world has endured for decades: forced separation and migration;



separation and migration; rising neoliberal cuts and war spending; increased police violence; human and economic exploitation. We've seen revolutions abroad and increased waves of resistance in the United States. A social movement is brewing: Where do we go from here?

### El Pueblo Lucha: CUNY Fights

CUNY serves over 500,000 students, and many of them are primarily working class and immigrant students from communities around the world. More than half come from low-income families that earn less than \$30,000 a year. Many come from economically flailing or war-torn regions, fleeing to this country for survival and the need for a new life. 62 percent of CUNY faculty teach over half of CUNY courses (70,000 per academic year) and earn \$3,500 for each three-credit course, making an average yearly salary of \$30,000. They work as highly educated and skilled precarious labor, without adequate support for professional and research development and with little respect or recognition from their tenured-track peers. This is the army of adjunct professors teaching our next generation of youth on how to solve the problems of climate change, war, disease and disaster torn areas, religious and ethnic conflict, as

well as increasing uncertainty and economic instability. This is the adjunct nation, whose administrative counterparts at CUNY command a yearly salary anywhere between \$300,000 and \$700,000, in addition to stipends for lavish living.

From 2000 to 2015, the number of adjunct faculty increased by 73 percent. Marc Edelman, Anthropology professor at Hunter College writes that CUNY's "top administrators' salaries continue to climb. The budget is balanced on the backs of faculty, workers, and students, who pay rising tuition for an education that is ever harder to deliver." Edelman cites the \$51 million shortfall last year and three percent across-the-board cuts at senior colleges, with per pupil funding 17.4 percent below 2008, inflation adjusted. For years, the *New York Post* has covered a number of corruption cases in the CUNY system. Baruch College athletic director and basketball coach, Machli Joseph, was found stealing more than \$500,000 from the school. Former City College President Lisa Coico resigned last year after being found guilty for stealing research-foundation funds for personal use. Kingsborough faces a federal discrimination lawsuit for accusations of racial slurs towards the Jewish community, with questions being raised about the misuse of cam-

pus grant funds and rental fees. City Tech was similarly accused of racial discrimination and the misuse of administrative funds. Two top CUNY officials left their posts after a November investigation by the State Inspector General for "waste, fraud and abuse and any unethical or illegal activities." Frederick Schaffer, CUNY's general counsel, announced his retirement after the investigation went public. Jay Hershenson, the vice chancellor of university relations and the secretary to the board of trustees, stepped down from his post to assume a new role at Queens College. The list goes on.

Meanwhile, the Professional Staff Congress' New "Progressive" Caucus, who've enjoyed union leadership power since 1995, failed miserably at a six-year long contract battle, negotiating a poor annual contract, even after 92 percent of members voted to strike. With union elections taking place at several campuses this month, the New Caucus is likely to return to power, but with hope for representation from a movement seeking a more genuine grass roots and militant approach to labor organizing.

### CUNY Struggle

For the past two years CUNY Struggle (CS) has been organizing a more militant and democratic

union that is run by its members, with adjunct issues central to its organizing. On 5 April, the eve of the GC chapter elections, the CS Caucus slate successfully debated the Graduate Center's New Caucus slate, also known as the New Caucus and Fusion Independents (NCFI). CS presented its resolution for open bargaining sessions, which is to be proposed at the PSC May Delegate Assembly. The resolution would make bargaining sessions open to any PSC member, with frequent, detailed reports after every session. It would also ensure proportional representation for all work titles on the bargaining team. For example, if adjuncts make up 55 percent of union membership, then 55 percent of the bargaining team will be adjuncts. At the debate, both slates urged for the immediate need to engage members around the upcoming Supreme Court *Janus v. AFSCME* case, a right to work ruling, which might eliminate agency fees and allow individuals to benefit from collective bargaining without contributing to the union. Both slates pressed for the immediate need to organize around a new contract, one that would include a remuneration of 7000 per course for adjuncts. Members of the audience and the CS slate pushed NCFI to justify their alliance with the New Caucus, which has consistently failed to act on



behalf of adjuncts and is disconnected from its vast worker base.

Despite their differences, both slates, along with long-time adjunct organizers, successfully created the Committee for Adjuncts and Part Timers (CAP) in February. CAP evolved from "First Fridays," a PSC committee that advocated for adjuncts within PSC's governing body for over twenty years. The newly formed CAP continues this adjunct advocacy with an emphasis on connecting adjuncts and part-time workers across the CUNY system. The goal is to create adjunct committees on each CUNY campus in order to expand adjunct membership and representation in the PSC leadership and the bargaining team. Additionally, it seeks to initiate a CUNY-wide campaign for improved job security, pay parity,

and working conditions. In conjunction with members from both CUNY Struggle and the New Caucus and Fusion Independents, CAP has successfully worked with new and existing adjunct committees at Lehman, La Guardia, Hunter, Baruch, Bronx Community College, School for Professional Studies, and Medgar Evers.

Both slates criticized the 2017 New York State Budget and Governor Cuomo's Excelsior Scholarship, which would keep state funding for CUNY senior colleges essentially flat. With no renewal for Maintenance of Effort to cover rising operating costs, the majority of new funds for CUNY will come from tuition increases over the next five years, which will be paid by the students who do not qualify for the Excelsior Scholarship. Additionally, undocumented

*Chris Natoli, delegate candidate from CUNY Struggle Caucus slate, explains an open bargaining resolution at the Chapter Election Debate.*



ed students will remain excluded from financial aid.

The immigration bans, raids and deportations under the Trump administration have also spurred many people across CUNY into organizing the CUNY as Sanctuary campaign. With the help of CUNY CLEAR (Creating Law Enforcement Accountability and Responsibility), CUNY Citizenship Now and the PSC, students and faculty across CUNY campuses have organized “Know Your Rights” workshops and discussions on how to address ICE raids, student data concerns and police presence on campuses. The ACLU, the NYCLU, and

CUNY CLEAR filed *Raza v. City of New York* in June 2013, challenging the New York City Police Department for discriminatory and unjustified surveillance of CUNY Muslim students. The proposed settlement establishes reforms to protect Muslims and others from discriminatory and unjustified surveillance by NYPD. Students and faculty from various groups including Students Without Borders and CUNY Resists Trump, continue to seek cross-campus coalition building towards protecting CUNY students from future attacks and making CUNY a Sanctuary campus.



Urban Ed PhD Students successfully petition their department to shut down for March 8 to organize GC rally for International Women's Strike. Photo Credit: Marisa Holmes

### A Day Without Immigrants

The increase in immigrant raids and forced deportations led SEIU United Service Workers and numerous immigrant organizations, including Movimiento Cosecha, to call for “A Day Without Immigrants,” in commemoration of this year’s May Day. Coalitions across the country call on all workers, particularly immigrants, to strike and reveal the nation’s fundamental dependence on immigrant labor, especially undocumented labor. Maria Fernanda Cabello, spokesperson from Movimiento Cosecha, says the 400,000 committed strikers on May Day demand “permanent protection from deportation for the eleven million undocumented immigrants, the right to travel freely to visit our loved ones abroad, and the right to be treated with dignity and respect.”

In solidarity with immigrant activists, students and faculty, including Nancy Fraser, David Harvey, Judith Butler, Cornell West, Etienne Balibar and others, call for a May Day moratorium on all normal university operations across the United States. The pledge calls for teach-ins, demonstrations, marches and protests in lieu of regular coursework: “We call on university administrators and faculty to cancel classes, close offices, and postpone maintenance to demonstrate our solidarity with immigrant workers and our sup-

port for thoughtful strategies of resistance.” While the PSC encourages its members to participate by including May Day in-class discussions, it has not yet endorsed the nation-wide moratorium to cancel classes and shut down university operations.

### International Women’s Strike

Building on the momentum of the Women’s March on Washington, women around the world called for an International Women’s Strike or “A Day Without a Woman,” on 8 March, International Women’s Day. Women around the world called off work and refused to engage in domestic labor. Prominent feminists such as Angela Davis, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Rasmea Yousef Odeh and Linda Martín Alcoff joined the strike. With inspiration from Argentine feminist coalition, *Ni Una Menos*, they work towards a feminism for the 99 percent—a feminism that is anti-capitalist and denounces violence against women through debt, discriminatory state policies, mass incarceration, abortion bans, and the lack of access to free healthcare.

Because of the hundreds of teachers and employees who refused to work, districts of Prince George’s County, Maryland; Alexandria, Virginia; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina, cancelled classes on 8 March. In Providence, Rhode

Island, the municipal court closed because of a lack of staff. In Washington, D.C., over twenty Democratic female representatives walked out of the Capitol. Urban Education PhD students successfully petitioned their department to close all operations as part of the Women’s Strike. They held a rally in front of the Graduate Center, with faculty and students sharing poetry, testaments and demands for reclaiming women and workers’ rights. Tatiana Cozzarelli, Urban Education PhD student and one of the main organizers, spoke on the importance of refusing our labor as leverage for power. The key question, she says, is: “How do working-class women who make up the movement organize a strike in their workplace?”

### Walk Out!

Inspired by the May Day Moratorium and Urban Education’s successful closure for the International Women’s Strike, Graduate Center organizers met with students from the New School, NYU and Barnard to call on faculty, staff and students for a city-wide walk out on May Day. Since the Haymarket affair in Chicago in 1886, May Day has been a day for working-class protest and workplace actions. The 2006 “Day Without an Immigrant” protests successfully pushed back Bush-

era assaults on immigrant workers. This year’s May Day and “A Day Without an Immigrants” similarly seek to mobilize thousands and garner strength towards building a movement of worker resistance. With movements and organizations as diverse as CUNY Struggle, GC Democratic Socialists of America, FREE CUNY, the Adjunct Project, CUNY Rising, the Doctoral Student Council, the First 100 Days, the New Caucus and Fusion Independents, CUNY Sanctuary and GC Resist Trump, CUNY activism is on the rise, especially at the Graduate Center. Students, faculty and staff are engaging with the question: Where do we go from here? It is pertinent now more than ever to ask: How do we come together to strengthen our efforts across organizations and campuses? The hope for May Day is to bring together our organizing efforts and demonstrate the power of workers refusing their labor and uniting for emancipation. As Assata Shakur, a City College alumnus, urges us: “It is our duty to fight for freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.” We must consider why, whom, and what we fight for, how our efforts connect with struggles around the world, and the strength and courage needed to see the ideological chains that divide us.

Credits to Tatiana Cozzarelli, Conor Tomás, Anh Tran, Juan Ferre, Andy Battle, Chris Natoli, Khanh Le, Travis Sweatte and Jarrod Shanahan.

# The Tragedy at Pulse Gay Nightclub and the LGBT Community Leadership for Gun Control

Chuck Stewart

I will never forget the morning of 12 June, 2016. I was up early, eager to drive to the Los Angeles Pride parade, when I heard the terrible news of the shooting at Pulse gay nightclub in Orlando. The contrast between my exuberance about the parade and the shock of so many deaths in Florida seemed otherworldly. I was in a daze. I wanted to speak to friends but it was too early to call or text anyone. Not until I arrived at the festival and experienced the increased security did the reality of the situation set in. Cops were everywhere. Everyone was on edge. It was surreal.

Over the next few weeks, I read endless articles and news reports about the massacre. When dancing with friends that week, I was aware how we all looked around our favorite bar with an eye for anything out of place. Anxiety set in. It was unnerving; looking over

our shoulders anticipating a gun shot or worse.

One of the articles I read suggested that the LGBT community could be leaders in the call for gun control. I had been indifferent about guns. I knew the U.S. had too many guns and that violent shootouts like at Sandy Hook and elsewhere occurred all too often, but progress was stymied. I personally never owned a gun nor ever shot one. I had no interest in guns.

The deaths of so many gay people and families and friends hit my consciousness. I educated myself about guns and the incident at Pulse. What an education!

There was much speculation about the shooter—Omar Mateen. Was he a terrorist? Was he a self-loathing gay? The FBI investigation was ultimately inconclusive and motive was not established. What is known is that he entered a gay nightclub with the intention to specifically kill the people

in the bar. This was an anti-gay hate crime. Yet, much of the media, especially from conservative outlets, began to “straight-wash” the event to claim that it was an Islamic “terrorist” attack—regardless that there was no direct evidence to support that claim. Even the Republican National Committee used the term “terrorist” but failed to mention the word gay in describing the nightclub in their press releases. Groups were cashing in on the event to promote their own agenda. A couple of Christian pastors applauded the shooting and called for more gays to be killed. They even recorded their sermons on YouTube to spread their hate.

LGBT people are very aware how much anti-gay hate permeates our culture. Religious and political conservatives, the Republican Party, Fox News, NRA, televangelists, and others continue to spew their anti-gay propaganda. A quick online search

presented direct quotes from fourteen “leaders” that denied our existence, referred to us as second-hand citizens, or outright advocated for our deaths. There is nothing new here but it is disconcerting to see such vitriol even in 2017.

Unfortunately, hate crimes are on the rise, with crimes against transgenders leading the way. Gay suicides are up. Guns play a major part in this violence. It is common to hear about gun rights being expressed as “second amendment” rights. Even President Trump used this coded language to predict that Hillary Clinton could be killed by Second Amendment zealots to stop her from gutting the law. But what does the Second Amendment say?

“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.”

After reviewing many legal articles, court documents, and legal histories, this is what I learned: the Second Amendment has nothing to say about personal ownership of guns. Rather, it defines the relationship between the federal government and state militias. For over 220 years, the courts were very clear about this understanding with no dissention. Furthermore, the Second Amendment is a vestige of slavery. If runaway slaves made it to the North and joined a militia, they were

Source: <http://www.csi.cuny.edu/verrazanoschool/index1.html>

often granted freedom. The newly constructed Constitution of 1789 accorded federal control over state militias. This led the southern states to fear that the North would simply make their militias ineffective (in the south, militias were known as “slave patrols”) and declare slaves to be free. By including the Second Amendment, states maintained control over their slave patrols.

In the 1970s, the NRA tried consistently to push for policy that would alter the understanding of the Second Amendment to advocate for unfettered access to all kinds of weapons. By 2008, a conservative majority on the U.S. Supreme Court expanded the Second Amendment to include personal ownership of guns, but within limits. This confusion spawned thousands of lawsuits across the country. If pro-gun people were earnest in their argument for gun-ownership, they would have crafted an independent Constitutional amendment and processed it through the steps necessary to ratify amendments. Instead, they manipulated the Second Amendment to meet their goals. Unfortunately, this has now become the common yet utterly misplaced understanding of the law.

There has always been gun control in the U.S. at local, state, and federal levels, and it is important to have a rational discussion about gun ownership that dispels all myths and misinformation.

## GUN VIOLENCE AND LGBT HEALTH



And this is where the LGBT community can have an impact. At an elementary level, coming out gay gives us strength to stand up to bullies. Also, the LGBT community has, through the many social struggles and victories against oppression in history, shown great ability at organizing. As gay people, we need to stand up against all the falsehoods perpetrated by the pro-gun lobby. For example, gun violence is a real problem; a “good guy” with a gun is not an effective way to stop a “bad guy” with a gun; dictators have not used the confiscation of weapons as an effective means to consolidate power. Don’t let the gun bullies push us around. Our LGBT support organizations need to encourage academic research into gun violence and push for comprehensive gun control legislation. LGBT people have both the temperament and organizational skill to lead the fight to end gun violence.

# In Defense of the White Working-Class Man

Gordon Barnes

**T**he idea that white working-class men are in any way important to “progressive,” “radical,” or otherwise substantive social change in the United States is anathema to the majority of people who profess to fight for so-called social justice. Since the 1980s, and in increasing intensity over the past decade, a form of identity politics has taken root amongst American liberals and leftists. It simultaneously stresses the inherent socio-political backwardness of white working-class men as well as the progressive nature of oppressed identities (non-whites to vary degrees, women and transgendered, non-heterosexuals, the disabled, and so on). While one can point to correlations between a group’s willingness to fight for certain social gains, say affirmative action, and their collective identity, there remains a general malaise amongst American leftists in their approach towards the white working class, and working-class men in particular.

The white working-class is often portrayed, by liberals and leftists alike, as one of the most problematic social strata within American society, rife with racism and misogyny. For the past three decades, the reaction to this view has been to organize minority and otherwise oppressed communities into discrete groups that fight for the needs of that specific group. This segmentation, despite the rhetoric of intersectionality, forces white working-class men’s

whiteness-cum-manhood to the forefront, and their class position is often elided when considering their role in society. With non-whites, the obverse is more often the case, with an attempt to engage all possible identities, such as the stalwart organizing initiated by black working-class trans-women that has received so much rightful praise within leftist circles. The latter are seen in their entirety, with their class central to understanding their politics, whereas the former are de-classed, and more often than not just seen as “white men.”

All of this is not to say there is no validity in observing and appreciating the myriad identities which compose an individual or group, but rather that in the current political climate, white working-class men’s class position is dismissed, such that they are rarely seen as being at odds with the dominant social structure. This view has changed a little since the election of Donald Trump, with the common assumption that it was the disgruntled white working class who voted him into power. This fallacy notwithstanding (it was the white petty bourgeoisie who backed Trump), the white working class is diametrically opposed, in a social sense, to the dominant ordering of society. This remains the case, despite the “privileges” afforded to them as whites and the further privileges granted to men within the community. The United States is a white supremacist and deeply misogynistic society, but it is only in conjunction with the white working class that it can be changed. If one truly believes that



cohesive social justice is achievable under the auspices of bourgeois society, then it may be worth it to plod along with the new political paradigm of the Left. If, however, we believe that to achieve any sustainable and lasting social justice—that is, reparatory justice in conjunction with social power—capitalism needs to be abolished, then the white working class is integral to any and all social struggles against oppression, and the Left must shed its recent desire for insular “safe spaces.” We must be prepared to fight for a different society and imagine a revolutionary course that transforms, rather than merely ameliorates, extant reality.

A failure to win over the white working class, and men in particular, will only lead to defeat. While white working-class men have more racialized and gendered social privileges in society, the foundational tenet of capitalism in the United States is class-based

social organization. The imbricated nature of class, race, and gender in capitalist societies indicates a distinction between oppression and privilege, two terms that are conventionally presented as antonyms. If one has access to white or male privilege, contemporary political dialogue on the Left tends to suggest that oppression ceases to exist. White working-class men are deeply oppressed in capitalist society, if perhaps not as deeply as working class men and women of varied other identities, and it is upon that shared oppression and exploitation that contemporary capitalism rests. White working-class men must thus be included in the innumerable struggles against the capricious and noxious continuity of dominant social relations. It is only by joining with those who are already dually class and politically conscious that the broader Left and social justice movements can win over others and mount a challenge against those

Mats Eriksson, *The Thinker*

Strike of truck drivers in Minneapolis in 1934, in which strikers beat police off the streets - Source: <https://libcom.org/history/minneapolis-teamsters-strike-1934-jeremy-brecher>

who hold the reins of society.

Are white working-class men misogynistic? Some, if not most, in the United States, harbor at least a modicum of such sentiments. This is not by virtue of their class status, nor is it inherently because of their gender. Rather, it is due to social structures and processes that have historically subjugated women and continue to do so. From the *paterfamilias* and its retooling under capitalism to the current struggle for equal pay for equal labor, the elite have often pitted the oppressed against each other in an effort to control labor, and this obviously affects the relations between oppressed women and oppressed men. It is important, however, to realize that male chauvinism is not the product of a person's manhood, but rather of what it means to be a man under capitalism. Consequently, if the social order is transformed, gendered sociability can likewise be transfigured beyond the current confines of gender relations. Identity activists may very well balk at this formulation, but only a cohesive and inclusive social struggle will galvanize wholesale changes in gendered social relations. The current tactic of "calling out" problematic behavior, while fine in an individual sense, does very little to combat the

masculine domination of society. And the option of not engaging white working-class men, as many on the Left have seemingly been doing over the past decades (instead focusing their efforts on racial minorities and petty-bourgeois radicals), is not really a viable one beyond merely carving out fragile spaces for marginalized communities. So how then do we tackle the sexism, even misogyny, amongst white working-class men?

The 1934 Minneapolis Teamster's strike is an instance of white working-class men understanding that their sexist attitudes served only the elite and were opposed to their own interests. An active women's auxiliary unit participated in the strike (initially against the wishes of the male workers) as well as in several violent confrontations with the police and hired company thugs. It was through this experience that the men on strike began to see women as equal participants in the struggle against their (in this case direct) oppression. Similarly, the "coal wars" during the first two decades of the twentieth century saw the rise of working-class women to prominent positions in the labor movement and struggles against exploitation and oppression (Mary "Mother" Jones for example). These were merely

drops in the bucket, and many more such struggles are needed. It is only through struggle, not by pedantically explaining problematic behavior and certainly not divestment, that the white male working class will begin to shed their sexism and misogyny. And only with the overthrow of capitalist society, under which the subjugation of women is a fundamental component in the United States, can the vestiges of such social relations be replaced with more just and egalitarian relationships.

What about the alleged racism of the white working-class man? Most of us know the stereotype—the redoubtable "redneck," uneducated, intoxicated, violent, virulently anti-black, thoughtless, beyond all redemption. This ridiculous view is the result of vulgar and classist ideas about proletarians perpetuated by the petty-bourgeoisie and the elite strata of society. There are certainly some overtly racist white men; others are less blatant but hold antiquated or flawed views on the question of race. As with gender, however, the race issue as it relates to white working-class men can be overcome, unless they are organized racists like the Ku Klux Klan, Neo-Nazis, National Frontists, or are otherwise involved in fascist or fascistic organizations.

The only solution for such organizations is their obliteration, for their members cannot be redeemed; while the majority of people who join these groups are disaffected members of the middle class, white workers do sometimes join as well. Apart from this qualification, white working-class men, and the white working class more generally, can be won over to the side of anti-racism via social struggle, as has been evident on a small scale over the course of American history. From the joint struggles of indentured white labor and African slave labor on early agricultural ventures in the North American colonies, to the union of yeoman farmers and freed slaves who took up arms against the confederacy, to the relatively more recent struggles of the Communist Party in organizing sharecroppers in the black belt, to the work of the Black Panthers (specifically Fred Hampton), in linking black and white workers into a singular struggle, examples abound. This list can go on, citing examples from the struggle to allow blacks into labor unions, white laborers organizing in defense of the Scottsboro boys rape frame-up, and so on.

It is through joint struggle against anti-black racism that the entirety of the working class

can begin to extricate itself from the jackboot of bourgeois democracy, and the white working class is necessary in such struggles. Again, if these social battles are to be for more than small spaces for communities to flourish whilst dominant society remains unchallenged on the outside, the white working class, and white working class men, are a fundamental component to any strategic alliance.

The conundrum of the white working-class men and how they might relate to broader layers of oppressed members of society is ultimately a question of comfort versus power. The present political reality has led the Left to try and provide oppressed people some space away from dominant society. Yet that isn't a challenge to dominant power structures, it is a retreat. It is only through the multi-ethnic and multi-gendered unity of the working class that social power can be wrested from the elite, and society can be reorganized to serve the interests of a vast and oppressed majority. If eight years of Barak Obama proved anything, it is that mainstream avenues for political change offer little by way of ameliorating the conditions of racial minorities (as four or eight years of Clinton would have done in the context of gender).

The Left must discard identity politics, because when social contradictions are laid bare, it matters little whether an employer is a woman, is black, is transgender. It matters that they are the owner, and their social role is to reap the profit from their employees. The white working class is currently neither class nor politically conscious. But this should not dissuade those interested in fermenting radical social change; without widespread proletarian support, the longevity of any substantial social advance would only be characterized by its brevity. The Left need not orient itself to the white male working class in particular, but it must be engaged as an integral part of a class that has the social power to challenge the status quo. Abjuring such interaction, or worse, denigrating those who are white working-class men for the fact that they are white and men is a disservice to the liberation struggles of non-whites and non-men. The white working-class man isn't lost to the contemporary Left, he is merely lacking the class consciousness that would propel him alongside like-minded comrades of divergent identities in order to participate in the conquest of state power and the subsequent reorganization of society.



# ASKEW

By Patricia Brody

“Yet will I show one sight”  
That I saw in my time.  
From *Lines In Prison*, Anne Askew, 1546

That dank year in chains, she would not cry out,  
her wrists and ankles stretched on Newgate’s rack.  
She chose her fate:  
“Not to dispraise God, but to love hys Word.”  
Judged Divinely,  
  
she burned in July. I saw the Bishop dive  
for my living heart. The Duke of Norfolk, the Lord Mayor, decried  
my crimes. In clear agony, I saw their fear. The rack’s  
  
work dragged, dragged, done, the flames crackled  
and rose: knees, belly, chest.  
Would Divine  
law save her now, another child of God, or hear the mother’s  
animal cry?  
  
Your child, for instance, mine -- her cries  
stone-muffled, her eyes open, bones racked  
with her Endurance and soon, soft skin used  
for a lampshade. . . Divine  
  
light pours like honey on the children -- in stripes,  
beside the heaped bodies, raked  
for shoes, love-tokens, gold fillings. Not a soul leaves  
the site: Sunset bird-cry Night Divine.

# Pronouns, Privilege, and Pedagogy (Oh My)

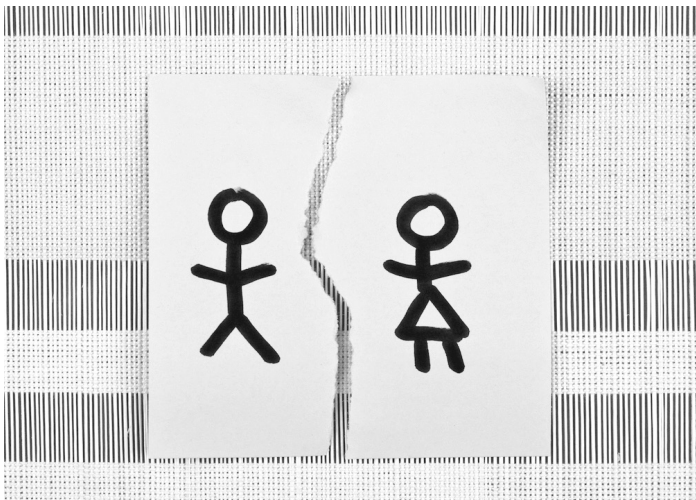
Jenn Polish

We often write and talk over beers and coffee about watching our students grow over the course of the term. As writers, as students. As people. But there isn’t a one-way observation glass between us and our students, even if we sometimes think of our classrooms that way. Our students watch us too. They watch us grow throughout the course of the term. And this term my students have watched a lot happen for me. Makeup (not a lot, but enough to be noticed) and form-fitting clothes in the beginning of term—complete with long, curly hair, sometimes down, sometimes kept up somewhat clumsily in a pen-made bun—and a femmey style of presentation marked my first few classes. And then my clothes started shifting: looser pants, collared shirts. And then my voice started dropping. And then I came back from a weekend in Providence with my hair chopped off, a boy haircut so dramatic that my mentor at LaGuardia Community College, who was observing me that Monday morning—I have the pleasure of knowing him quite well—backed out of the classroom to confirm the room number because he did not immediately recognize the person teaching. A boy haircut so drastic—so, well, boyish, that my fiancée insists I’m the long-lost sixth member of ‘Nsync. (She says it with a smile,

but I never quite know whether to be complemented or teased. Probably both.) And then I started binding. And then I told them. After spring break, I told my students that I’m transitioning into using they and them pronouns, and that when they’re talking to their friends about their English class, the proper way to do so is, “aw man, I hate my English class, my professor gives me so much work, they’re so annoying, instead of ‘she’s’ so annoying.”

“My students? They nodded, and they laughed good naturedly at the self-deprecation. And that was that.”

I don’t know their thoughts on the subject of my



Source: <http://www.ravishly.com/sites/default/files/field/image/ThinkstockPhotos-156402000.jpg>

nonbinary transition and the qualms they might have about their professor coming out smack in the middle of the term as being on the trans spectrum. But I do know that I now feel more uncomfortable talking about queerness in class.

I know that I feel more uncomfortable pointing out textual references about one of the characters in the play we’re reading being gay; I know I’m more nervous about asking for my students’ preferred gender pronouns on their index cards at the beginning of next term than I was at the beginning of this term. Because next term, on the first day, I’ll be telling them my own gender pronouns, and they (no pun intended) won’t be the expected ones.

And that makes it feel harder, for me, to create a trans-affirmative classroom. Because identity impacts pedagogy, and being a white professor with all my white privilege makes my white students challenge me less when we slam white supremacy in the classroom. Similarly, being cis (or at least, cis-passing) makes it feel easier and safer to affirm my trans and GNC (gender non-conforming) students with policies, practices, and content (aka, pedagogy).

“Welp, there goes my cis privilege.”

And that’s okay. I think. I think

it’s okay because it’s me, and it’s real (though cissexist logic, combined with my own borderline personality dis/order, which makes me question my own realness on a second-by-second basis, also makes me question the reality of my genderqueerness daily). And it’s okay because it feels like what I’ve needed; what I’ve been, my whole life, sans the vocabulary to articulate myself. To compose myself.

“So. To the title. Pronouns, privilege, and pedagogy.”

Pedagogically, it’s always been my practice to try to ensure that each lesson plan, each assignment design, each piece of assessment criteria, is inclusive of actively-solicited student feedback; that it affirms and welcomes as many learning styles as it can.

And my pronouns shouldn’t affect that, I suppose. Women professors get lower ratings than men do from students, so I guess pronouns already actively impact my teaching anyway. Now, just... differently.

I’m not sure how yet. But I am sure that teaching while binding, teaching while trying to keep my pen in my hair like I used to and having it fall out because there’s no longer enough hair to keep it in place, is an intimate experience. Explicitly intimate.

Because it’s intimate when I chuckle, looking for my pen, and say, “hmm, I have to get used to it

not staying [behind my ear] anymore”, and my students chuckle along with me. And it’s intimate when my students blink and cock their heads and maybe smile a little bit, but say nothing, when I walk in with a newsboy cap and a boy haircut, breasts bound tight to my chest and a henley that never fit me right before that trip to Babeland changed my life (and my wardrobe).

And I suppose what I’m asserting, pedagogically, is what I study in my academic work: an openness, a welcoming, an embrace, of that intimacy, instead of pretending that it wasn’t always, already, there.

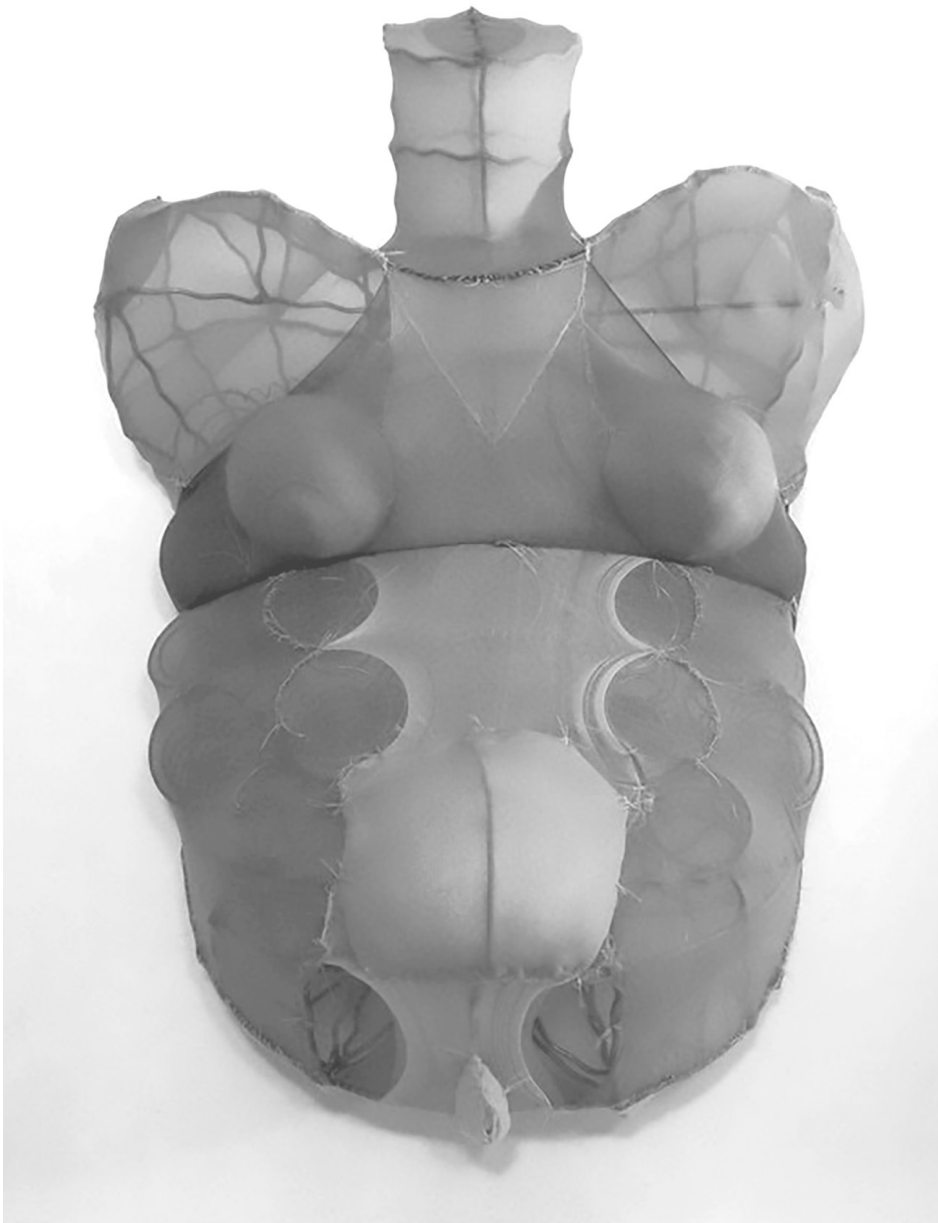
Emotions in the classroom—fear, risk, exposure, reward, relief, excitement—are what we invite from our students each time we ask them to raise their hands and answer a question, each time we ask them to submit assignments to us by a certain date, each time we set them into group work and hope it doesn’t spiral any students into a panic attack (as it often does to me). But we’re trained not to think of it that way; we’re trained to be used to it, and so are our students.

But maybe these emotions shouldn’t be so normalized that they’re invisible: maybe it would be helpful to bring them to the fore, to acknowledge them, to integrate an understanding of them into our pedagogies, into our assignment designs, into our as-

**RESPECTING PEOPLE'S SELF-IDENTIFICATION MEANS USING THE GENDER PRONOUN THAT THEY MOST IDENTIFY WITH. HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT SOMEONE PREFERS? ASK THEM (POLITELY)!**

<b>HE</b>	he laughs	i called him	his eyes	that is his	he likes himself
<b>SHE</b>	she laughs	i called her	her eyes	that is hers	she likes herself
<b>THERE ARE MORE THAN TWO. HAVE YOU HEARD OF THESE?</b>					
<b>ZE</b>	ze laughs	i called hir	hir eyes	that is hirs	ze likes hirsself
<b>SINGULAR THEY</b>	they laugh	i called them	their eyes	that is theirs	they like themselves
<b>ZIE</b>	zie laughs	i called zir	zir eyes	that is zirs	zie likes zirsself
<b>XE</b>	xe laughs	i called xem	xyr eyes	that is xyrs	xe likes xemself

Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/407435097512081294/>



assessment practices. Maybe coming out as genderqueer— not just sexually— is as important to the development of my pedagogy as researching and writing academi-

cally about emotions in the classroom are.

I've been coming out as sexually queer for over a decade, so much so that I don't think about

it anymore. But genderqueer? It forces my body back into the classroom in a way that white privilege, cis privilege, had previously allowed it to be invisible (even when I didn't want it to be).

Pedagogically, my body has become what I encourage my students to write towards: it's okay if you don't have a neat answer, a neat thesis, a cookie-cutter argument. It's okay if you submit an incomplete draft, because no draft is ever complete. It's okay if your project is not structured the way you were taught it should be structured; form reflects content, form shapes content, content seizes back on form and gives it a different flavor. (All this, of course, involves contract grading — determining together with your students what they need, what they expect, from their time put into your class — because without said contracts, there is no structure by which to give students what, ultimately, they need to keep their financial aid and such: grades.)

So what has coming out as nonbinary taught me about my pedagogy? I'm still figuring it out: but I think it has something to do with the constancy of growth, the power of vulnerability in the classroom, the risks we daily expect our students to take, and our (un)willingness to take similar risks ourselves. I'm still figuring it out: and, pedagogically, that's a decent place to be.

Louise Bourgeois. Untitled 1998. Fabric and steel, 10 x 25 1/2 x 18 inches — Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/308989224406718974/>

# Resurrecting the Ghost: Emotional Labor in the Classroom

Sarah Hildebrand

A friend of mine has a term for students who attend the first few weeks of a college-level course before abruptly disappearing. She calls them “ghosts,” an accurate metaphor for the student who is no longer a physical presence in your classroom, yet continues to haunt your attendance records.

As a first-year English Composition instructor, my biggest concern was attempting to meaningfully plan two lessons per week for the students who *did* show up. The ones who failed to make an appearance registered little more to me than a series of red boxes on my color-coded Excel sheet. When I finally realized that I had acquired my first “ghost” student, she had already been absent for several weeks. And although I considered reaching out via email, my good intentions were quickly vanquished by the distractions of my own academic career and social life.

When she suddenly reappeared in class almost a month later, I was a bit surprised to see her and gently commented that we should talk after class. While the rest of the students filed out of the room, she somewhat timidly approached my desk as I dusted chalk off my dark-wash jeans. I jokingly remarked that I hadn't seen her in a while and she immediately

began to ramble off nervous apologies about her attendance, with some broken sentences about “things at home.” She appeared to think I was angry or disappointed in her. Viscerally cognizant of her distress, I began to ramble myself, trying to explain that while it's important to show up to class and stay on top of school work, the larger concern was that she needed to take care of herself.

Soon, students began to arrive for the next class, and we moved our conversation to the hallway where we both leaned against the wall for support. As we discussed campus resources and the many obstacles we face in our attempts to get help, I quickly realized that I had been completely untrained for this particular aspect of being a Graduate Teaching Fellow. While I had been exposed to more or less formal conversations regarding pedagogy, syllabus design, technological resources, and lesson-planning, never had anyone hinted that my students' needs might not always be strictly academic in nature.

As my student began to cry and apologize for getting emotional, I told her it was okay and that it was a completely normal reaction to stress. I reminded her that everyone needs help sometimes and it doesn't make them “crazy.” Yet, even as I tried to validate her emotional response, I felt uncharacteristically aware of the masses of people flocking by us between class-





The interior of the school house in the Ghosttown of Bodie, California. Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/353391901988638306/>



es. Although most of them were surely absorbed in their cellphones, caring little about the world around them, I felt an instinctive urge to shield my student from the possibility of exposure. While I think it's important to share the most vulnerable parts of ourselves, it seems equally important that we do so of our own volition. I wasn't sure where to bring her. Even my adjunct office was sure to be packed with other people. We quickly brainstormed some ways for her to make up missed work, and I promised to

send her a follow-up email with information about the campus counseling center. We hugged and she thanked me for listening. As a rather new professor (and one who certainly looks too young to play the part), I initially wanted to establish firm boundaries between myself and my students in order to gain their respect and hold their attention. I was afraid that showing too much compassion would somehow negate my authority. But I quickly realized that walls do little to build trust, and

Credit: Erin Watson, Abandoned Exploration – Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lonebluelady/9195317184/in/photolist-f1yprs->



that the more I got to know my students individually, the better they performed as a group in the classroom.

After our conversation, my ghost student started attending class again. I watched as she reengaged herself with the course material, and began establishing friendships with her peers. In the remaining weeks of the semester, I shifted my syllabus in order to better address the relationship between trauma and what might be called the “ethics of care,” or perhaps lack thereof, in the contemporary United States. We discussed the stigma associated with getting help, and how culture often pressures us to make it on our own. My students made astute observations about how little we expect others to actively listen to and care about us, even those we consider our closest friends. They brought up how many times “How are you?” is used as an exit from, rather than an entrance into, a conversation.

It saddened me that many of my students seemed to think that their professors, in particular, do not care about them. Or that our willingness to help extends only so far as the classroom and course material. I realize now that my own willingness to listen is something worth reiterating to students throughout the semester, especially as a certain level of comfort naturally develops within the classroom. While I certainly don’t need or want to know every detail of my students’ personal lives, I do hope they feel comfortable enough to notify me of serious issues.

Society teaches us that few people are willing to listen to us, and even fewer are capable of responding in the ways we need. We come to view silence as a form of self-care, even as it traps trauma inside of us. While the act of caring for someone else is not difficult, it’s often forgotten. Although I’d still consider myself a



Credit: Erin Watson, Abandoned School – Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lonebluelady/8580818834/sizes/lecjgcy-ebiEt4->

novice in the classroom, I’ve learned a lot since that first semester of teaching. I’ve interacted with over 200 students and become more comfortable with where the boundary between my students and myself should be. My courses often offer units on trauma and mental health, an overarching theme of empathy, and an openness about my own research interests related to both trauma theory and spaces and ethics of care. Perhaps this is partly why I am so often approached by students seeking advice on their personal lives.

While I’m far from being a medical professional, I’d like to think I’ve learned how to handle these situations with grace. I’ve made myself an expert on campus resources available to my students, and grown comfortable in navigating those conversations—in holding space for my students so that their voices might be heard, which is possibly the biggest impact I can make. However, this brings up the underdiscussed issue of emotional labor that many graduate students (and other faculty members) face, while also calling into question the training we’re provided to handle such sensitive issues. While many news outlets are currently calling attention to the rise of mental health issues on college campuses, CUNY appears to be lagging behind when it comes to getting our students the care they need. While there *are* campus counseling centers, many students are unaware of these resources or afraid to seek them out unless prodded. And many full and part-time professors are untrained in ways to identify and speak with students in need of crisis intervention.

Knowing that our undergraduate demographic is often made up of vulnerable populations, especially in the current political climate, I’m surprised that so few resources are in place to assist faculty in navigating these conversa-



tions. We're all well-aware that our students' identities are multifaceted and that they're often attempting to juggle many roles at once. In order to ensure their academic success, we face an obligation to acknowledge the many obstacles to achievement that exist outside the institution rather than simply chalking it up to poor work ethic or a lack of desire to engage with more difficult course material.

And professors need more resources too. Training in crisis intervention would be a good start, but it should also be acknowledged that the most energy-draining portions of our work sometimes take place outside the classroom. In just two years of teaching, I've had private conversations with almost a dozen students that led to the disclosure of trauma and often to tears. Yet, what's in place to help professors succeed in their

own roles as teachers, mentors, or simply as human beings who might absorb vicarious trauma through these interactions? While this might be some of the most emotionally—and perhaps intellectually—laborious work we do on our undergraduate campuses, it is also the most undervalued.

Of course, the concept of emotional labor is itself enmeshed in a problematic politics of gender. When I discuss ideas of emotional labor with my male colleagues, they're often perplexed, claiming that they rarely have intimate conversations with students who are facing moments of crisis. This type of emotional labor is considered "women's work," despite our institution's generally progressive and liberal leanings on issues of identity.

I fully acknowledge that not all faculty—from graduate students to those with tenure—might be

willing to take on this role with their undergraduates. Some may even have strong feelings that we should be doing the opposite—that our role should remain strictly academic in nature and be confined to the content of our degrees. And, to be clear, I'm not arguing that everyone needs to maintain this level of involvement with their students' personal lives. We all need to find where our own boundaries lie, and there are many other ways in which faculty help care for their students, whether it be through more traditional office hours or through supervising student organizations. But if we don't feel comfortable or well-equipped to handle certain discussions, we should at least know how to responsibly redirect our students to other resources. We should be able to identify signs of distress and be supported by the university in addressing them.

At CUNY, we take pride in our intellectual and often political labor. We consider ourselves a force for change within New York City. Our activism makes headlines, as it should. But we must also take into consideration the underpinnings of those efforts—the emotional labor that goes into teaching and everything else that we do—and call for the resources we deserve to equip ourselves and our students with the tools necessary to succeed both within and without the academy.

## Dance Exhibition as Retrospective, as Pilgrimage: A Review of *Work/Travail/Arbeid*

Eylül Fidan Akıncı

Retrospectives in dance and choreography are fashionable now, partly because of the increasing numbers of visual arts institutions presenting dance. While the exodus of dance from the stage to the gallery is related to economic concerns for both artists and institutions, the presentation modes of retrospectives have more to do with increasing the vantage points from which dance and dance artists' trajectories can be viewed. Since the museums invite well-established figures, retrospectives for choreographers can move beyond simply canonizing them. They offer these artists opportunities to develop new channels of receiving dance and choreography in expanded time and space. While I am brutally simplifying the complexity of discussions around this trend, experimentation with presenting dance was very much informing Belgian choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's *Work/Travail/Arbeid*, presented at MoMA's Marron Atrium for five days between March 29th and April 2nd, 2017.

*Work/Travail/Arbeid*, based on the choreographer's 2013 piece *Vortex Temporum*, is not a retrospective per se, yet ATDK mentioned seeing it in that way in

her lecture at the Graduate Center on 30 March. *Vortex Temporum*, which was also presented in New York last October at BAM, is a stage performance based on Gerard Grisey's composition by the same name. *Work/Travail/Arbeid* emerged when ATDK was invited by the WIELS Contemporary Arts Center to showcase her work. Dismantling *Vortex Temporum* into hourly cycles, *Work/Travail/Arbeid* shows different layers of the choreography and musical composition in the duration of gallery hours.

Grisey's *Vortex Temporum* (1996), an exceptional piece of contemporary music, is a forty-minute score for piano, flute, clarinet, violin, viola, and cello. ATDK's choreography to the score investigates the choreographic counterparts of the various temporalities and tonalities that Grisey experiments with. Although the movement does not mimic or describe the sound directly, the choreographer assigns one dancer/movement score to each musician/instrument, in order to investigate closely how Grisey's composition combines the idiosyncratic rhythms and timbres of the sextet. Such close correspondence with music is ATDK's artistic signature. Her *Fase: Four Movements to the Music of Steve Reich* is the definitive example of this relationship, which she developed as early as 1982 when she was a student at the Tisch school in

Credit: Erin Watson, Abandoned School – Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lonebluelady/8600257905/sizes/l>

New York. Grisey's experiments with spectralism, a compositional approach that uses divergent harmonies based on mathematics and computation, align with ATDK's interest in sacred geometry and ritualistic spatial patterns. What bridges the two are the elemental gestures embodied by the unique movement qualities of the members of Rosas, ATDK's company.

*Work/Travail/Arbeid* layers several music-movement combinations, extracting different instruments and movement scores from

the original compositions each hour, such that different details from the same compositions become available for closer scrutiny. Although seeing *Vortex Temporum's* choreography in the museum offers a performance experience in itself, *Work/Arbeid/Travail* gains an analytical valence as one stays with the piece for longer. This is the exuberant opportunity that ATDK galvanizes in the visual art context: the luxury to see the "work" over and over in one go, witnessing different layers of it, from multiple vertical or horizon-

tal points in space. The pedagogical value of this is incomparable to any other attempt to increase dance literacy.

In my reading, the "work" in the title referred to the working of a performer/performance as well as the effort involved in navigating the complexity of other bodies and noises in the space, both on the performers' and the audience's part. From WIELS to Centre Pompidou to Tate Modern, *Work/Arbeid/Travail* took different shapes in relation to visitors and the available space. At MoMA, it

was challenging to focus on these pared-down choreographies on a Saturday afternoon, with the irregular flows of museum visitors and various noises from the upper and lower levels flooding the dubious acoustics of the atrium. An atrium is a reservoir, not a vortex, and for quite a while my sight was arrested by anyone but the dancers. Attuning oneself to ATDK's work takes some work in any case; here, it required deliberate labor. Once I accepted staying with this sense of cacophony—racing strollers, hyperactive children, count-

less selfies, endless gossip—I started to view the dancers as big human erasers. They moved in big sweeping circles in their white costumes, almost as if they were clearing this visual mess. With sound, it took more time to take in. Maybe in time I began to take in the work synaesthetically, as it is intended in the choreography, or maybe the combination of all the layers and the ensemble at the final hour presided over the disorder. Perhaps, for the audience, it wasn't only a learning experience of this particular score (or

ATDK's choreographic principles), but learning, through repetition, how to watch any choreography in such a context.

Dancers are trained to negotiate sudden and random changes in space, mass, and movement. Rosas dancers seemed to be in a trance, even as they were simultaneously highly aware of the hurdles around them. The musicians, however, must have had to learn to move along the interlacing circles on the floor and to avoid bumping into the audience members sitting inside those paths. Technically ev-



Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. *Work/Travail/Arbeid*. 2015. Installation view, The Museum of Modern Art, March 29, 2017. © 2017 Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. Photo: Anne Van Aerschot



Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. *Work/Travail/Arbeid*. 2015. Installation view, The Museum of Modern Art, March 29, 2017. © 2017 Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. Photo: Anne Van Aerschot

everyone is free to move around, but there were some audience members who took the invitation to take a closer look a bit too literally—adamantly rooting themselves at the centre of the action, presumably because they saw something others didn't. Or perhaps there was some narcissism involved, a desire to be visible to others in the audience. Unlike other "performance art" shows, however, ATDK's choreography is never about banking on the "experience" of proximity to the charismatic performers, though Rosas has a huge roster of them. Bringing a black-box piece into the midst of visitors offers them the chance to see and listen to it more closely, yet the geometric ideas ATDK is working with demands that the audience actively experiment with how they position themselves as viewers, within each cycle as well as across them. Watching the last quarter of a cycle with four dancers from the passageways on the third floor, for instance, delivered the sense of "working in the fields together" that ATDK was talking about in her lecture. The difference between sitting and standing in the same spot was vast. Unquestionably, we had to work our body to gain a sense of *Work*.

What better intervention at MoMA—a marketplace of art and a tourist spot—than a swarm of movements that don't have anything to do with aesthetics? The morning of the last day was a sort of pilgrimage: similar faces in the audience from the days before, smiling knowingly, habituated to sitting or standing for long durations, focusing, clearing the space, warning the newcomers about the lines they were encroaching. Were we drawn there again to "retro-spect" the piece? Watching the dancers in their collective motion, or in motions of collectivity like walking and running together, in synchrony and in sequence, trained us to watch them as a collective ourselves. For better or worse, watching *Work/Travail/Arbeid* es-

entially meant watching and tuning in to other bodies; bodies graceful, untrained, disoriented, supple, firm, generous, curious, hesitant, open, energetic, fatigued, calm.

These different senses of collectivity form an interesting counterpoint to *Vortex Temporum's* dramaturgical resonances. The black-box piece, which ends in the darker and prolonged notes of the musical composition, gave me the impression of something collapsing or drowning, sinking deeper into a vortex. I could not help but feel the political reality we inhabit as a backdrop. But *Work/Travail/Arbeid* still "works" and breathes when the force that held all the musical and choreographic elements together is removed. The ending of each cycle is a release of energy, rather than its exhaustion. It heralds the renewal to come, very uncathartically, but very connected to the cyclical nature of life. I would even say, risking a cliché, that *Work/Travail/Arbeid* reveals the feminine energy that informed the original choreography, with its evocations of agricultural rituals, lunar phases, and "touching" relations between bodies that are rarely in direct contact. It evokes the femininity that one can always find subtly placed at the core of ATDK's work.

*Work/Travail/Arbeid* establishes a new protocol in how choreography can be presented as an exhibition and retrospective. It was an absolute privilege for New Yorkers to watch these two pieces within months of one another, and those who couldn't enjoy the opportunity are in for a treat with another ATDK piece no later than next season, when ATDK will be sculpting movement to John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* in collaboration with the Spanish dancer and choreographer, Salva Sanchis. Legendary music thus meets legendary choreography.



# ***Parts from a Normalized Apocalyptic Time: Just Come Over at 9pm***

By Miriam Gabriel / Maryam Imam

*(Written a day after the third debate between Clinton and Trump,  
after which it was reported that the candidates did not shake each other's hands)*

*What do I know of the life of a scholar  
Watching eyes like cameras reading me back  
The laundromat TV opens two faces like a book  
I can't avoid the perfect hairdos and blue eyes  
Duck behind book defer intention, an entanglement  
that might as well be silent until war's declared.  
Prepare for silenced with silence and scholarly  
license/labor. Prepare for past revolutionary lyrics  
whose time has passed. Prepare for the  
ticking bomb of a reframing, mourning's afterbirth.*

*Speaking makes for a scepter of a story:  
say Mosul, and all stories are more self than referential.  
The limits of a body as movement of movements,  
a moving autopsy carrying laundry, pampered  
of bookstores. Fold me, screen-gazers, and  
spit me out running, book-pumping, an  
exuberant failure, a moving image that  
thinks: I can help or end you so much.*

*Rab'a, Protective Edge, Pulse: my I colonizes me.  
I don't want to see anti-hairdo in the mirror.  
Survive: the people I disagree with who stretch me,  
naming "backward" all whom he sees backwards;*

*and how many ways can she intersectionally graph  
a drone? Is this the nasty woman I fall short of becoming,  
family? Is he the pout into whose descend/t I fail to nest,  
gripping book worms wringing beneath my sweaty brow?  
When did a book of faces become my questions? (: a genealogy)*

*Read my anxieties: my ID's out and my cunt's bearded,  
wide open. Are these the limits of the scepter as  
co-author of its monsters? A mortar dress outgrown by a  
heavier "soul" or something. A deferred pie-in-the-face,  
a terrorist wish, on a playing-card face so unworthy of  
the service-industry labor. So I leave my desk like dew  
dissenting. Bed and iPhone applications too.  
I forget my wallet to buy booze. I carry the  
close reading of a closed book in my left lung.  
I knock on a neighbor to (finally) visit and (finally)  
watch one of the debates. I watch blue eyes with  
my eternal failure to watch from beneath an Aleppo crack.  
(as if that's something). (it silently always is).*

*White suit, red tie, Colbert's still funny, beef stew with  
charred lemons, and champagne, all over Arab(ophile)  
queers: a miracle so ridiculously mundane,  
and for all the wrong reasons,  
we laugh at how two liberations  
never made it right. Go to sleep  
with a silently shattering mirror  
in the right lung for imagined  
bodies that dare/don't sleep to  
bomb dubstep, don't/dare sleep  
on folded photograph. They didn't  
shake hands at the(ir) end.*

# A Pacific Revival: A Review of *Pacific Overtures*

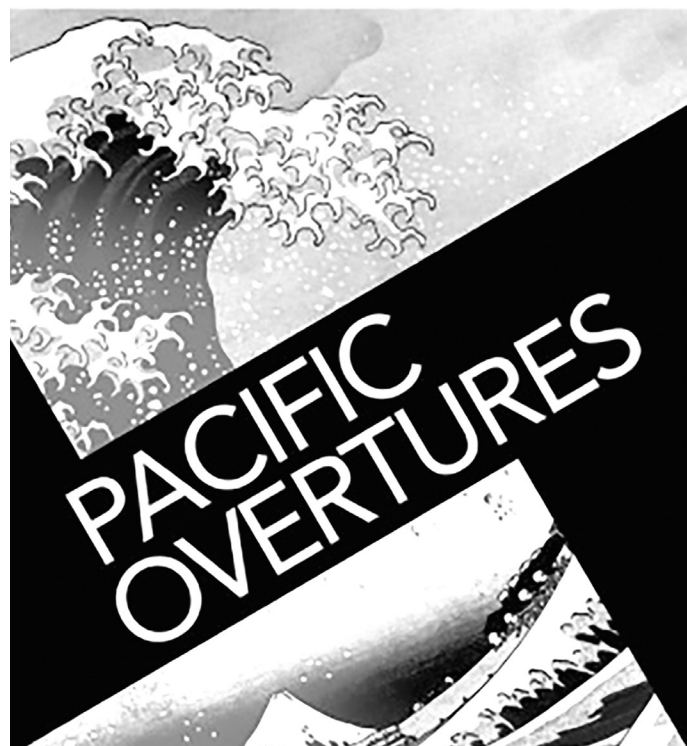
Curtis Russell

In the 1970s, the creative partnership of composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim and director Hal Prince revolutionized the Broadway musical. Both of them were mentored by the leading lights of Broadway's Golden Age: Sondheim by lyricist/librettist Oscar Hammerstein II (*Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *The Sound of Music*) and Prince by director George Abbott (*On the Town*, *The Pajama Game*, *Damn Yankees*). Sondheim inherited Hammerstein's rigorous craft and narrative precision, which he deepened with inventive compositions that were clear enough to clock on first listen and yet demonstrated an intricate complexity that rewarded repeated exposure. Prince combined the showmanship he gleaned from Abbott with a social engagement and radical staging techniques inspired by the twentieth-century Russian Symbolist Vsevolod Meyerhold to create a unique theatrical alchemy. While Sondheim and Prince's work was too distinctive to engender a new trend in musical theatre production, it expanded the artistic and thematic limits of the form.

The boldest formal experiment of Sondheim and Prince's astonishing decade was 1976's *Pacific Overtures*, which endeavored to tell the tale of the westernization of Japan in a hybrid Broadway/kabuki staging. Questioning Usonian Interventionism in the bicentennial year with an uneasy mix of East and West, the elaborate production, which featured

PLAYBILL®

CLASSIC STAGE COMPANY



a kabuki-appropriate all-male cast of Asian descent, struggled to find enough of an audience to fill the massive Winter Garden Theatre on Broadway between 50th and 51st Streets (currently home to Andrew Lloyd Webber's rather less inventive *School of Rock*) and limped to a close after only six months of performances. The show's musical complexity and casting requirements have made it less revivable than others in the Sondheim canon, but a lush original cast recording ensured its place in the pantheon.

Following a high profile but

short-lived Broadway re-staging at Studio 54 in late 2004, *Pacific Overtures* is being given a lean revival downtown at the Classic Stage Company through May 27, directed by John Doyle. Our current troubled moment seems apposite for this politicized work, and while Doyle's production makes a strong case for Sondheim's continued musical theatre supremacy, it never quite manages to answer the key question undergirding every theatrical venture: why this play now?

*Pacific Overtures*, with a libretto by John Weidman (who also wrote

Sondheim's other overtly political musical, 1990's *Assassins*) narrates its mid-nineteenth century story from a multiplicity of viewpoints, including a Reciter (*Star Trek* legend and internet meme guru, George Takei), Shogun Lord Abe (Thom Sesma), a Kanagawa madam (comedy queen, Ann Harada, importing her *Avenue Q* snark by the truckload), a thief (Marc Oka), and a warrior (Kelvin Moon Loh, pulling quadruple duty as a sailor, a Russian admiral, and a prostitute—most of the cast play multiple roles).

The closest thing the play has

Source: <http://www.broadway.com/shows/pacific-overtures-csc/photos/gallery/297/show-photos-pacific-overtures/90721>

to a protagonist is Kayama (Steven Eng), who develops a friendship with Manjiro (Orville Mendoza), a fisherman who has spent time in America. Kayama, a minor samurai, enlists Manjiro's help when he is promoted to Prefect of Police by an inert Lord Abe and tasked to repel Commodore Perry's naval squadron when they float into Edo Bay and demand an audience. Manjiro's advice to Kayama is simple: "Americans are easy. They shout, you shout louder." Though Kayama fails in his mission, he concocts an ingenious plan to allow the foreigners to come ashore without actually touching Japanese soil, which would be a gross violation of Japan's isolationist laws: covering the beach with mats. This is seen as a resounding success and Kayama is further promoted.

The Americans (and British, French, Dutch, and Russians) inevitably return, but Kayama's brilliant ascent through the ranks of government continues. His friendship with Manjiro is the play's emotional core and an ironic expression of its thematic thrust; as the Western influence increases, Kayama progresses from ingenuous traditionalist to worldly capitalist while Manjiro hardens from American apologist to reactionary nationalist.

British director/designer John Doyle (last season's hit revival of

*The Color Purple*) made his name in the United States over the last decade with innovative Sondheim revivals, including equally stripped-down stagings of Sondheim-Prince collaborations, *Sweeney Todd* (1979) and *Company* (1970) in which the actors played their own instruments, and an intimate reimagining of Sondheim's 1994 romantic weepie *Passion* in 2013, also at the Classic Stage Company. As in those mountings, Doyle has reduced the scenography to a single, bold image; in this case the stage, a combination scroll and hanamichi (the platform that connects the back of the auditorium to the stage in traditional kabuki), cuts right through the middle of the room. Costume designer Ann Hould-Ward has dressed her actors in simple modern clothing as well, suggesting the ongoing nature of Japan's cultural integration.

Combined, the simple set and costumes return focus to where it should be in a Sondheim show: the score. In interviews, Sondheim tirelessly asserts that his shows only succeed because he successfully integrates his songs into his cowriters' librettos, but in almost all of his musicals (excepting *Company*, *Assassins*, and maybe *Sweeney Todd*), the score far outshines the book.

This is even more true than usual in this production of *Pacific*

*Overtures*. The first act has always been the more engaging of the two, but Doyle has cut large portions of the book and two important musical numbers. This gives the evening a slender, audience-friendly running time of 90 minutes, but nudges the play even more toward the nonsensical. It begins to feel like the *Reader's Digest* edition of the story, in which songs and scenes pile on each other without any provocation or narrative logic.

Sondheim is right in that sense: the works are so intricately constructed, the musical numbers so artfully integrated into the framework of the play, that any cuts or changes must be performed with immense care and craft to keep the whole structure from collapsing. The production also suffers from the strange preference accorded to the text in contemporary revivals. Hal Prince's directorial and dramaturgical contributions were as much a part of the complex fabric of the show (a PBS recording of which is available on YouTube) as Weidman's libretto and Sondheim's score; without his grand unifying vision, the musical feels small and incomplete.

Perhaps the greatest casualty of the reckless cutting is Takei's Reciter, a role embodied by Mako in the original production and B.D. Wong in the 2004 revival. A playful raconteur who moves in

and out of the story, the Reciter is the connective tissue that gives the play the façade of a narrative through-line; here, his role has been condensed to the point of irrelevance (which may in part be due to his difficulty remembering lines). Doyle's conceit of having the actors relate the story to actor Megan Masako Haley, who becomes a bemused but not entirely unwilling participant in the story briefly as well when she portrays Tamate, Kayama's wife, is a nice touch that allows for a greater female presence in an overwhelmingly male piece, but makes the Reciter even more redundant.

The score remains one of Sondheim's richest, and his gifts as a melodist have never manifested as clearly as in the melancholy, "There Is No Other Way," which communicates both the thoughts and the words of the terrified Tamate as Kayama is about to leave to face the warships and foreshadows her seppuku, and "Poems," in which Kayama and Manjiro build their friendship by trading lyrical lines as they travel. Beautiful, haunting melodies become sharp rhetorical weapons in Sondheim's hands, as in the seductive "Pretty Lady," which precedes a rape and murder. "Someone in a Tree," a memory piece and Sondheim's personal favorite of his songs, remains as trenchant and moving as ever.

Source: <http://www.broadway.com/shows/pacific-overtures-csc/photos/gallery/297/show-photos-pacific-overtures/90721>





*Pacific Overtures* has certainly never been funnier. Ann Harada's red-heeled Madam prepares her new recruits for the foreigners' arrival in "Welcome to Kanagawa." It's one of Sondheim's dirtiest songs, but he has expressed frustration in the past at never being able to make the sections in which the Madam explains sex positions painted on fans to her neophytes funny enough. He rewrites the song with every major new production, and has finally hit on the winning formula with this revival; the number inspires belly laughs. It helps that he has such winning comedic performers in Harada and breakout performer Loh, whose flustered novice is one for the ages. Loh brings the same performative acuity to all his roles here, and the play is richer for it.

The play comes to life, in fact, any time he or Harada are given free rein to be funny or expressive. Doyle has directed the proceedings with a stateliness drawn from classical Japanese performance, which is appropriate. Yet, without the ultra-disciplined, precise technique garnered from a lifetime of dedicated training that characterizes traditional kabuki practice, that stateliness becomes stolid, staid, and sedate. Not only has the play been gutted into near-triviality, it has been tamed into a delicate artifact, almost too pacific to even make a ripple.

Source: <http://www.broadway.com/shows/pacific-overtures-csc/photos/gallery/297/show-photos-pacific-overtures/90721>

# **Advocate**

## **NEVER SUBMIT, CONTRIBUTE!**

*The Advocate is currently soliciting articles and essays from the student body for its forthcoming issue. The Advocate serves as the newspaper for the Graduate Center community. It is published six times per academic year, and reaches thousands of readers both within and beyond the GC community.*

*We accept contributions in the form of articles, reviews, illustrations, and photos from freelance writers, artists, and photographers who are CUNY students, faculty, and staff. We also publish contributions from freelance writers, artists, and photographers not affiliated with CUNY.*

*Please send all queries and contributions to our Editor-in-Chief, Bhargav Rani, at:*

*[brani@gradcenter.cuny.edu](mailto:brani@gradcenter.cuny.edu).*

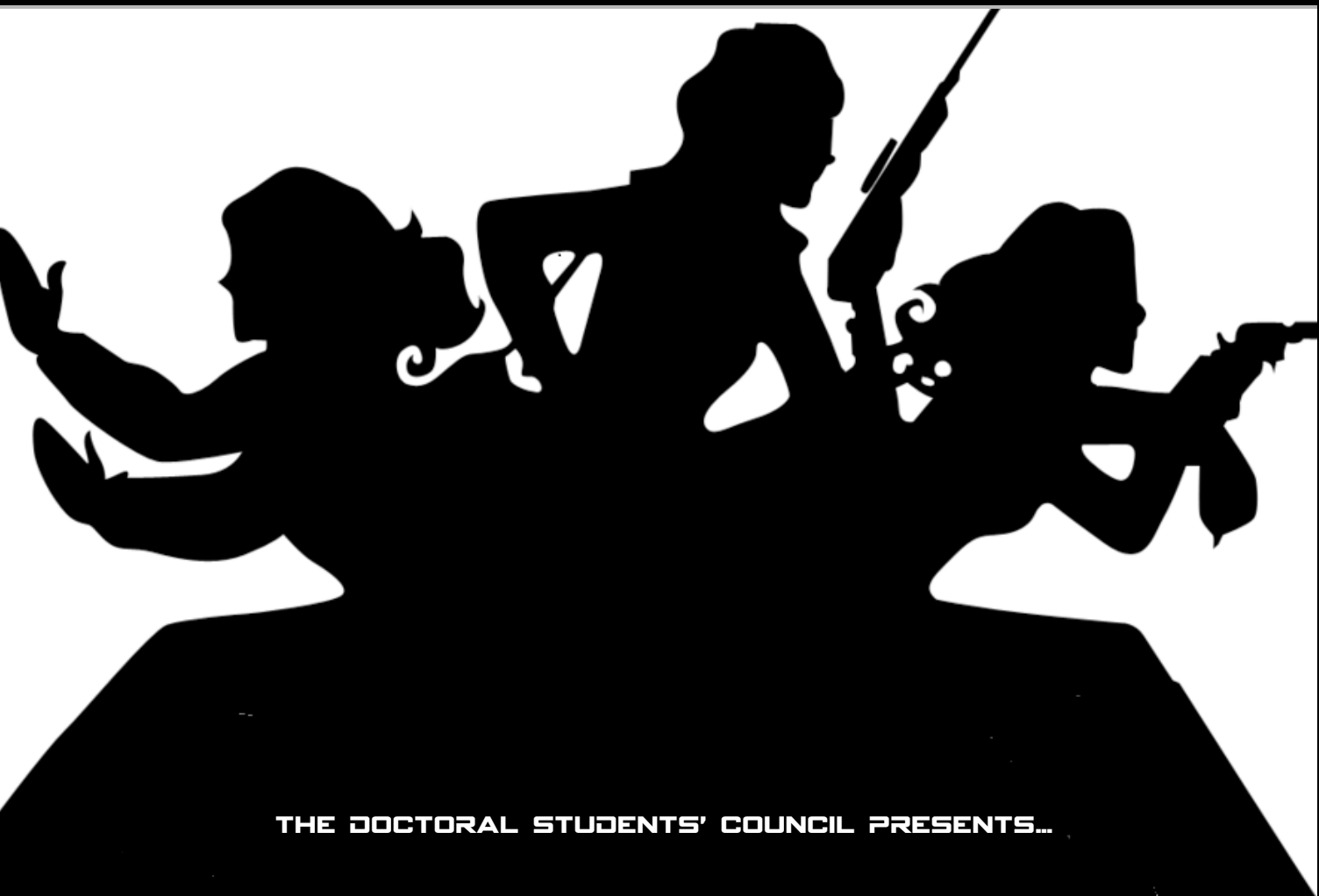
*Also, 'cc' to [advocate@cunydisc.org](mailto:advocate@cunydisc.org).*

## **AND YES, WE PAY FOR ARTICLES!**

*We pay \$120 for articles between 1500-2000 words and about \$150-\$250 for longer essays that entail more research and labor. Other contributions like reviews and photo essays will also be compensated for at competitive rates determined by the Editor-in-Chief.*

*The deadline for contributions to the next issue is May 15.*





THE DOCTORAL STUDENTS' COUNCIL PRESENTS...

# ***ESPIONAGE***

***ANNUAL END-OF-THE YEAR PARTY***

***FRIDAY***

***MAY 19 @ 8:30 PM***

***RM. 5409/14***

***(AFTER MAY PLENARY)***