


# advocate

Volume 28 Fall no. 1 2016

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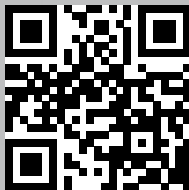
Gil Bruvel, *Dichotomy*, Stainless Steel sculpture

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**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.



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## The Difficulty of Making a Voting Decision

Who to vote for in the upcoming election? That is the question. In past elections, the most important things that influenced how I vetted presidential candidates included their positions on wars, national security, economy, the LGBTQ community, and their plans for developing regions like the Caribbean, where I am from. In this election, I would love to consider all those things with equal weight, but it has really come down to the vulnerability of my body. When will I be stopped and frisked? Will I be beaten by the police and charged with a felony if they allow me to live? When will this inevitable encounter with a corrupt police occur? What mood will I be in when it happens? Will I

be able to keep calm as most of us have been doing? Or will I punch back if I am hit—sweetly punch back in the tradition of the ancestors who recognized the need to deploy counter strategies that have given me the liberties I cherish today. Indeed, how powerfully will I punch back with fists, body, talk, and silence until I die a death that will be forgotten by you who love me dearly.

For you have your own lives to supervise. And after all, my body will be just another of tens of thousands of black bones, blood, and muscles that will fall and stink and become a ritual of earth to earth and dust to dust, of bible scriptures and lighted candles. Of course



Source: <http://samwhiteout.com/2015/08/03/baltimore-riots/>





Source: [http://www.publicseminar.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/14899170156\\_575325b6dd\\_o.jpg](http://www.publicseminar.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/14899170156_575325b6dd_o.jpg)

you will forget me. And you should! Because my wish will never be that you must keep mourning for all of us. There is too much agony in that task, and too many more of us will continue to fall so frequently. And you need to hold your tears, at least so that you can cry for other things apart from fallen bodies of color. My only wish is that you tell the mourners not to pray for me. Lobby so that they will not light a candle for me. Convince them I need no damn Christianized memorial. Tell them I have been an atheist for a long time and I want to be remembered as such.

In this imagination of the inevitability of my death, my election vetting process therefore contends with the question of—what is Hillary and Donald going to go do to ensure that American consciousness locates more respectable means to manage bodies like mine? I doubt you would disagree that bodies like ours are

theoretically, administratively, politically, culturally, psychologically, and globally managed. Where we might disagree is my contention that the best of U.S. responses to our predicament will automatically lead to more management of our bodies rather than allow us the liberations ascribed to white lives from birth.

I am a trying to be realistic, folks. Which means that I am incapable of accessing the luxury of imagination that the saving of blacks lives will be highly prioritized. Please understand that the best I can reasonably expect is that Hillary and Donald will ensure that our bodies are managed with more respect as part of a long-term plan towards full liberation of black bodies. Is this what I desire—more reasonable management of my body versus full-body liberation? Of course not. But this option is something the dominant class will be willing to agree to.

For deep in America's consciousness, even manifest in our Graduate Center, black bodies are normally given freedom, as long as there is some form of administrative patrolling. This fact points to the very whiteness of the Graduate Center. The hallways are white. The dining clientele in the cafeteria is white. The elevators are white if there is no one delivering a package or pushing a sanitation cart, or hurrying back from a smoke break to the lowest paying jobs in their departments. The faculty is so white that some people of color seem uncomfortable engaging with other persons of color out of fear that their "colorfulness" will be equivocated with radicalism and potential disruption. To this latter note, I guess that a few persons of color will jump up into ego mode and on to the self-denial train, and say that they are unaware this happens. I dare say, these persons of color are very often the beloved by the marginalizing frameworks of white institutionalism. Frankly, they are very dangerous! Because they lie. Because their lies are very big. Because traditionally, they are among the few who hold big executive positions as they kill pieces of themselves and others in order to get to the top of the food chain. And this is true of many people of color, not just black persons.

But let me get right back to the point about white American consciousness as being responsible for the mass execution of black lives. No need for us to turn to distant history or cite a few authors to support this observation. Indeed there are too many recent accounts of police brutality on black bodies. When black hands are lifted in submission, black bodies are shot. When black backs are lying in the streets with unthreatening aggression, black bodies are shot. When black teeth are trembling to articulate their harmlessness, black are shot.

What has long been occurring in this country, the mass slaughtering of black lives, a terroristic process authored and authorized by white American consciousness is now amplified by the new video technologies of our day. Even in the face of camera

evidence, police continue to narrow down black lives because they know that the nation's conscience grants them permission. I am not referring to the actions of a small number of white Americans. I am talking about the endemic apathy of the masses that sanctions the racial violence perpetrated by a handful. All my life, I have witnessed the globalization of U.S. images that communicate that there is a genetics of black criminality. The violence of this knowledge production and dissemination has forced even me to try to convince myself repeatedly that black people are not dangerous—that black people are not threats to communities wherever they live. Remember this is why, to this date, many black persons have to chant self-love with lines like, "I love my black skin," "Black and Beautiful," "Black Power," and now "Black Lives Matter."

Of course knowledge (misinformation) can be terror—something that educated, moral, ethnic, and marginalized consciousness have to resist daily in order that it does not pollute the possessions of truth and self-love. As a black person, I have no option than to struggle against the globally circulated misperceptions of blackness in order that I can maintain the ability to love myself and not fear other black people. In my recent visits to Brazil, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Guatemala, Colombia, Puerto Rico, and Costa Rica, I saw that there is indeed a global assault on blackness that is constantly reinforced by knowledge circulation from the U.S. In all of these spaces, I learned that black bodies are among the underclasses. I was also informed that these cultural persecutions were largely influenced by racial occurrences in the U.S. I was warned, in several of these places, not to visit black communities or else I would be robbed. And yes, I didn't visit some of those communities, because I didn't have anyone to accompany me.

What a shame that I had to stay away from spaces that had people of my own color! I hope you understand that this incident stripped away pieces of my confidence. To heal, I had to meditate and return to older experiences and postcolonial discourses. I had





A police squadron passes underneath a Michael Brown “Hands Up Don’t Shoot” display © Overpass Light Brigade | Flickr

to engage with a daily task of cultural knowledge rejection in order to acquire self-empowerment. If I am bound to do this constant task of self-interrogation and cultural reflection given my blackness, I will reasonably speculate that the majority of white persons will not endure this daily rigor. Thus, they will cling to knowledges of niggered-existence, knowledges cultivated by plantation genealogies, knowledges that are constantly rejected by the production of enlightened postcolonial discourses but perpetually remain rooted within the America consciousness as credibly invaluable because much of these knowledges articulate American exceptionalism, imperialism, and pride.

From listening to Donald’s convention speech emphasis on “law and order,” it seems clear he intends to continue the process of recirculating dangerous

knowledges that mark black bodies with an inherent criminality. This becomes further evident in the way he visits black churches and tells congregation members that they have nothing to lose by voting for him. In articulating this point, Donald is tapping into the way a significant number of white Americans think. He knows that white America will not morally examine the activisms to transform white institutionalism and secure black lives. In explicating his truth, Donald highlights the glaring fact that the Democratic Party has blatantly used black voters during each election cycle when politicians pop up and make many promises. Donald, then, correctly theorizes that Hillary will make only incremental changes that will inadvertently perpetuate the terrorism of black bodies. Understanding this conspicuous white consensus in

which both Hillary and himself are participant, Donald also assumes that Blacks are at least smart to acknowledge it. Therefore, he asks, what do you have to lose by trying me? My emphasis here—either way, you are screwed!

In response to Donald’s question, many persons naively or dishonestly express outrage. They suggest that such a line of questioning represents one of the peaks of Donald’s racist declarations. Critics have attacked Donald without basically answering his question. To answer Donald’s question, we want to know what is Hillary going to do to ensure that my death will be delayed a bit longer. From what I remember of Hillary, sometime last year, she had no passion about addressing black deaths. When first confronted by the Black Lives Matter movement, Hillary had basically asked them what did they want her to do. At the time, I agreed with Hillary for asking the question. But soon after, I did my daily ritual of self-introspection and cultural reflection. Automatically, I changed my mind on the premise that if Hillary is running to be president, it is her responsibility to get policy makers and leaders of the dying community together in order to hear their concerns and suggestions. She did this when addressing questions of national security, immigration, and the economy. Yet when it came to saving black lives, she wanted the Negroes to figure out the solution on their own and get back to her. Black lives are not a priority! That was what Hillary was implicitly saying. Bernie Sanders too showed a similar disdain for black lives when he was confronted by the Black Lives Matter movement and couldn’t even remember any of the many persons who had died by police terrorism. To make his disdain more evident, Bernie had a sassy attitude as he threatened to leave the event. Nevertheless, the persistence of the women in the Black Lives Matter movement forced Bernie and Hillary to frame talking points as the months went by. Unsurprisingly, Hillary is now trying to fool the dying black community that she really understands the urgency of the po-



A review of recent police killings in the U.S. © Elvert Barnes, Flickr

lice terrorism facing us. As Maya Angelou says, “when someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time.” I believe Hillary. I believe Donald. So what am I going to do? I am going to go out and vote on Election Day. If there is an option to write my name on the ballot, I will do that. I am going to vote Dadland Maye. Already I can hear some of you trying to convince me that to not vote for Clinton is to vote for Trump. Now, please accept the temperament of my honesty: I really don’t care.



# Freedom of Expression Under Threat at CUNY, Again

The CUNY Board of Trustees is, yet again, adamant on reconsidering the deeply problematic CUNY Policy on Freedom of Expression and Expressive Conduct at its upcoming general meeting. This CUNY-wide policy that the administration has been nursing for over four years now, despite repeated protestations, aims to prohibit and police what it

calls “expressive conduct” or “expressive activity” in the university. The language of the proposed policy ordains the administration with overarching powers of surveillance on students and faculty, empowering it to crackdown on demonstrations, curtail the dissemination of information, and criminalize the congregation of students in shared CUNY spaces.



[https://defendmoralesshakur.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/img\\_4999\\_small.jpg](https://defendmoralesshakur.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/img_4999_small.jpg)

The policy saw its first iteration in the draft of 27 July 2013, which was circulated to the University Faculty Senate and its committees at the end of October 2013, but was shelved due to strong opposition from students and faculty alike. The Board of Trustees proposed to float the policy again in June this year, in a calculated move to surreptitiously vote it into effect when a majority of the student community was out on summer break. Notwithstanding these underhanded measures, the Doctoral Students’ Council and other CUNY activists organized quickly to deliver a stubborn rebuttal. A petition against the proposed policy garnered over 500 signatures in less than two weeks and many CUNY members testified against the policy at the Board’s public hearing on 20 June, compelling the administration to postpone the vote.

The DSC Executive Committee, in an open letter to Senior Vice Chancellor Frederick Schaffer dated 17 June, also raised questions about the undemocratic and conspiratorial manner in which the policy was drafted and put before the Board. The central administration did not hold any public discussions on the policy at the University Faculty Senate or the University Student Senate, nor did it attempt to reach out to any oth-

er CUNY governing bodies.

Despite the recent beating the policy received from the CUNY community, the central administration remains adamant on implementing a draconian policy that not only strives to stifle any form of political dissent but also disproportionately targets students and faculty of color. The policy has been proposed for a vote again at the Board’s upcoming meeting in October, and in its build-up, the administration is hard at courting the UFS and the USS for its support.

## CUNY Application Fee Waiver for Low-Income Students

New York public school students from low-income families will no longer have to pay to apply to CUNY, according to a new city initiative announced by Mayor Bill de Blasio, Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña, and CUNY Chancellor James Milliken on 26 September. This move, which will be in effect from this fall’s application season, is part of the administration’s move to make college education more accessible for city students.

CUNY presently waives application fees for about 6500 students every year, but the new initiative is expected to affect 37,500 students. Almost sixty per cent of the city’s college-bound public school

students enroll in CUNY schools. The change will also benefit students eligible for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program, those living in federally subsidized public housing, a foster home, or who are homeless, as well as undocumented students in these categories.

The application fee for CUNY is \$65 per student, a seemingly paltry sum but a sufficient deterrent for many of the city’s students from applying to college. The fee waiver allows students to submit an application listing up to six CUNY schools free of charge. The initiative is said to cost \$2.4 million annually, with the city putting in \$2 million and CUNY continuing to fund the 6500 waivers it currently does for \$400,000.

The present move is part of the city administration’s Equity and Excellence for All agenda, which aims to ensure that, by the 2018-2019 school year, every city student will have the resources and support at their high-school to prepare them for a college education. In addition to the CUNY application fee waiver, the program also includes a SAT school day, when all 68,000 New York City high-school juniors will be able to take the SAT free of charge on a school day. The initiative is also funding new training programs at 100 high schools across the city



this year to build a school-wide culture that encourages and supports students towards enrolling for college.

The fee waiver at CUNY is a crucial measure in its historic mission of equitable access to education for all.

### **LIU Locks Out Professors for Twelve Days as Contract Expires**

In an ominous move that is possibly unprecedented in US history, Long Island University locked out its own professors from its Brooklyn campus after the administration failed to reach an agreement on a new faculty union contract. When the existing contract expired on 31 August, the faculty found themselves locked out of their offices and email accounts, and their health insurance cancelled.

The lockout is believed to have been a preemptive measure on the part of the administration, in light of the union's history. The union called for strikes in the last five of six contracts, and wields them as immense bargaining power in negotiations. In the present negotiations for a new contract, the union rejected the administration's offer that entailed a reduction in salaries for new adjuncts and eliminated a clause in place on parity pay for faculty in the university's various campuses.

The university was preparing

to staff classes with replacement faculty, many of them assigned to courses they had little experience of. As Amy Goodman reports in *Democracy Now*, "In what the school later called an error, the university's chief operating officer, formerly a professor of political science, was slated to teach yoga. The dean of students for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, a botanist by training, was tapped to teach ballet."

The lockout sparked mass protests and demonstrations by faculty and students alike, many of whom took to social media to garner solidarity. They shared their disaffection with the administration in the contract negotiations and highlighted the predicament of the professors suddenly denied pay and insurance.

After twelve days of demon-

strations, the administration was finally compelled to revoke the lockout in light of mass student walkouts from classes in protest against the replacement staffing. The lockout ended with the administration and the faculty union reaching an agreement to extend the expired contract to 31 May 2017, as negotiations for the new contract continue meanwhile.

For an academic community that has just emerged from its own long battle for a contract, the regressive attack on the faculty union at LIU should signal towards the increasingly unequal distribution of power in higher education. Boards of Trustees serve to state and corporate interests do not baulk from tactics of intimidation when interests of the workers stand in the way of their neoliberal reforms.



Brooklyn's Long Island University administration locked out faculty ahead of fall classes as a negotiating tactic. Photograph: Pacific Press/LightRocket via Getty



Source: [https://www.democracynow.org/images/blog\\_posts/61/32861/full\\_hd/liu1.jpg](https://www.democracynow.org/images/blog_posts/61/32861/full_hd/liu1.jpg)



# Where is The Money Going?

Janet Werther

On August 4 2016, CUNY’s union, the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) announced that the new contract, negotiated by union leadership through arbitration with a very resistant administration, was ratified by the union membership with a ninety-four per cent “yes” vote. Despite the seemingly overwhelming man-

date for the ratification, the negotiation was not without its detractors from within the ranks of the union membership. Specifically, the Adjunct Project ([cunyadjunct-project.org](http://cunyadjunct-project.org)), a resource and service organization for adjuncts and teaching fellows at the CUNY Graduate Center, published the article “7 Reasons We Advo-

cate a ‘No’ Vote on the Tentative Contract” that outlined a seven point refusal of the contract and highlighted particular ways in which this new contract reifies inequality in CUNY employment practices. Using adjunct labor to prop up a system that values senior level administrators (let’s call them executives), full-time



Source: <http://www.hpprintercartridges.co.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/money-printing-plates.jpg>



Source: <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/09/an-unprecedented-faculty-lockout/499016/>

tenured and tenure-track faculty, and full-time staff (including mid and lower level administrators), in that order, the new contract leaves the majority of teaching staff – adjuncts – competing for a few crumbs of potential job security and sharing fractions of the pay increases soon to be enjoyed by full-time faculty and staff. My goal in this article is not to rail against the new contract but, having voted “no” to a document

that further institutionalizes my own disposability, I can’t help but wonder what spurred so many of my adjunct and graduate fellow colleagues to vote “yes” to a contract that so thoroughly dismisses our interests - the interests of the vast majority of teaching staff. A common view shared by many within our college community is that the contract is “better than nothing.” Maybe so! Maybe those of us on adjunct “salaries”

and graduate fellowships are simply so strapped for cash that we’ve become desperate for any crumbs (e.g. half the \$1000 bonus being offered to full-time faculty and staff—if you qualify) that the university and our union deigns to toss in our general direction. Maybe we’re all still hoping that our lives as adjuncts – scraping by, depending on financial support from our partners and families, using public assistance when



needed, commuting across the city to multiple campuses – are only temporary, and that one day soon we'll be noticed for our expertise as educators and our brilliance as scholars, shepherded out of the contingent faculty hamster wheel, and folded into the tenure-track professoriate. My friends and colleagues: don't hold your breath.

I teach and research in the arts and humanities, but I believe that a bit of basic math is in order. Right now, and continuing under the new contract when it is finally implemented, rules that are intended to, as the Adjunct Project puts it, "limit our exploitation" are hamstringing our collective capacity to earn a living wage. Under the 9/6 rule, CUNY adjuncts cannot teach more than nine credit hours per semester on one campus, and can then teach a maximum of only six credit hours at other campuses. That is a total of three three-credit courses on your primary campus and two three-credit courses on across the other campuses, or a total of five three-credit courses. I am currently paid as an "Adjunct Assistant Professor" and not as an "Adjunct Lecturer" because I have an MFA, a terminal degree. This means that, unlike so many of my peers who have MA degrees, but like so many of my colleagues who have completed their PhDs and are still adjuncting, my hourly rate is \$73.53 (as compared to \$64.84). That still turns out to be only slightly over \$3000 (before

taxes) per course per semester. At \$3000 per course, a CUNY adjunct teaching five classes per semester will earn \$15,000 per semester. If that adjunct is able to maintain that very full schedule across two or more campuses each semester, they will earn \$30,000 for the year. Living in New York City, pay-

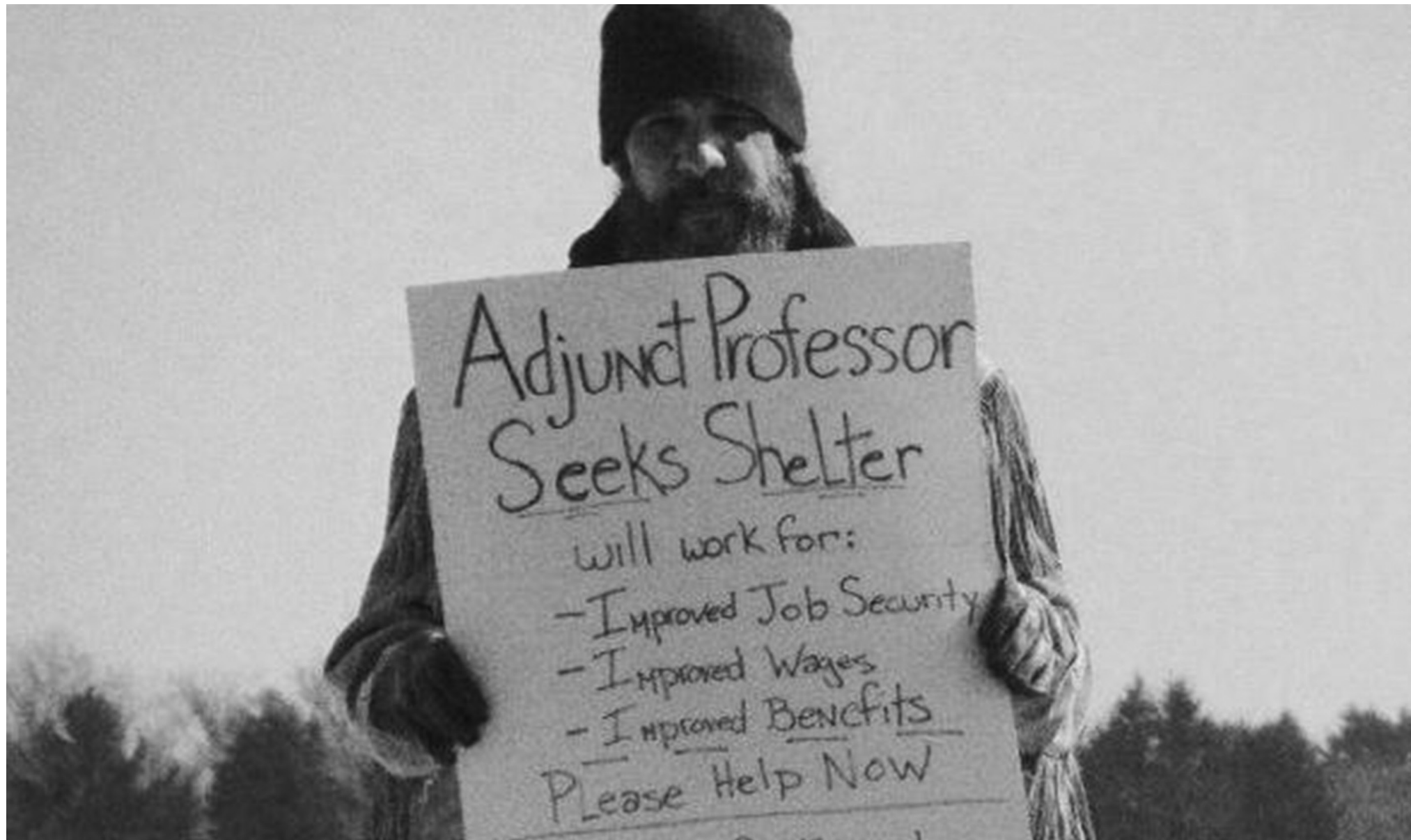
ing half the rent in an apartment that costs \$2,400 per month, this hypothetical adjunct will spend \$14,400 per year on rent alone, leaving them \$15,600 for all their other expenses: transportation to and from those classes, the technology needed to teach them and maintain their research, food,

travel to and from the conferences that might help them land a full-time job etc. In other words, an adjunct teaching the maximum number of courses at CUNY will spend approximately half their pay on rent alone to live in New York City's outer boroughs.

For comparison, a 3-4 or 4-4

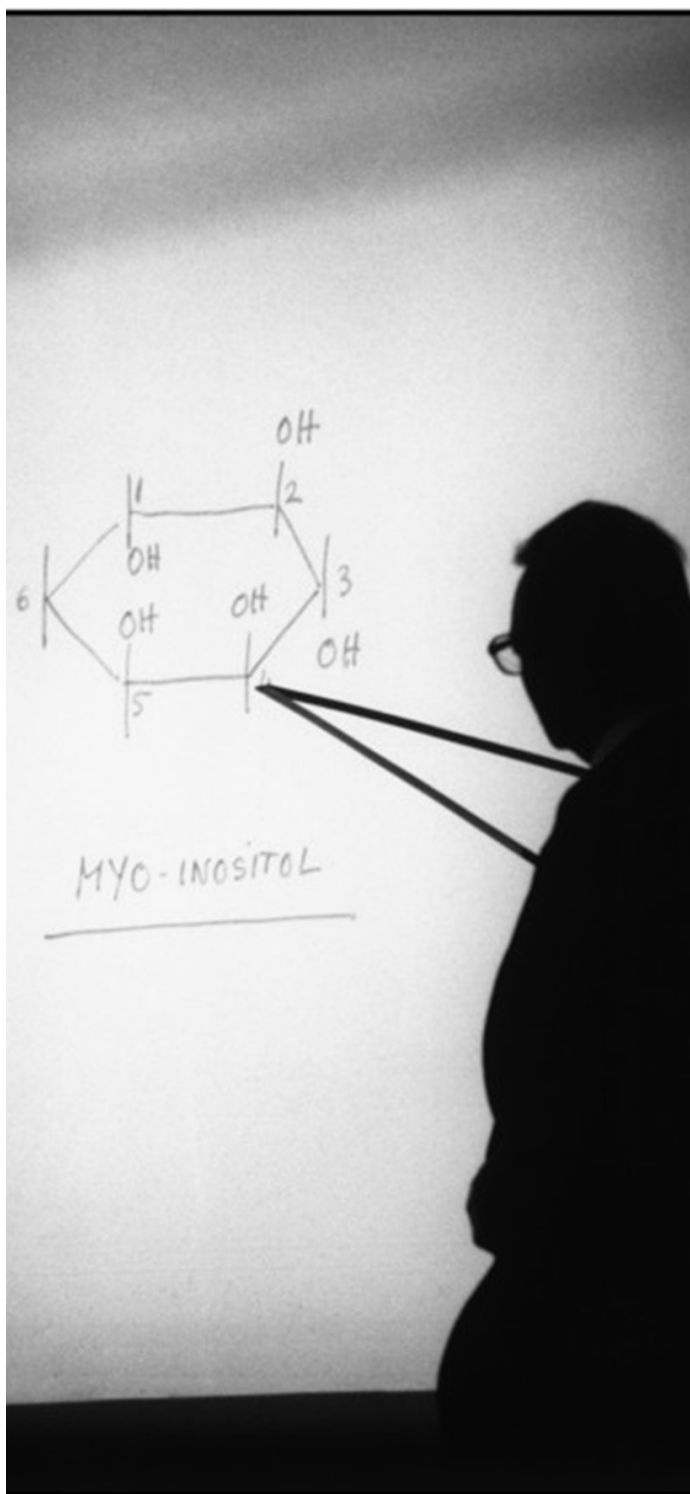
teaching load is considered "heavy" for full-time faculty. Full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty at NYU have a standard teaching load of 2-2. The lowest pay rate for full-time assistant professors at CUNY, based on the PSC documents, is currently \$42,873 annually. While this remains below a standard liv-

ing wage of \$50,000 for New York City residents, it is nonetheless significantly more than adjuncts are able to earn teaching 5-5 loads on multiple campuses. Within my own field of theatre studies, there is an annual research grant for faculty with high teaching loads awarded by the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR). While this can ostensibly be awarded to a contingent faculty member, one example of the kinds of research support it can be used for is "course release" (<http://www.athe.org/news/305136/ASTRATHE-Adjunct-Survey-Data.htm>). Adjunct instructors are not eligible for course release. ASTR recently conducted a somewhat informal survey of adjunct labor in our field, in collaboration with the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) (<http://www.athe.org/news/305136/ASTRATHE-Adjunct-Survey-Data.htm>). Based on the results of that survey, one of the suggestions offered to ATHE for the support of adjunct laborers at our annual conferences was a series of awards for teaching and research specifically targeting adjunct faculty. This kind of recognition in our broader field might help mitigate the perception of inadequacy that keeps full-time adjuncts (an oxymoron) in the bottom tier of faculty while young scholars who are able to and interested in landing post-doc positions and visiting lectureships are often more able to convert those



[http://www.slate.com/blogs/moneybox/2015/04/13/adjunct\\_pay\\_a\\_quarter\\_of\\_part\\_time\\_college\\_faculty\\_receive\\_public\\_assistance.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/moneybox/2015/04/13/adjunct_pay_a_quarter_of_part_time_college_faculty_receive_public_assistance.html)





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precarious positions and their peripatetic lifestyles into full-time work. The fact, nonetheless, remains: adjuncts are not only being paid less than full-time faculty, we are being paid less for more work.

This brings me to the crux of my complaint. When students are paying record high tuitions at a university that used to be free for New York City residents, when the majority of classes are taught by contingent faculty earning poverty wages, when budget cuts out of Albany lead to cuts in library services first and foremost, the mission of the university is no longer being served. I teach at Baruch College, where the average class size is fifty students. At \$275 per credit hour, it takes only four students to more than pay my \$3000 per course salary. Yet classes won't even run with fewer than ten students, and most require at least twenty. Just over a year ago, at the beginning of the Fall 2015 semester, all faculty in the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences received an email from the Associate Provost and Assistant Vice President for Teaching and Learning, Dennis Slavin, informing us that due to budget constraints, the library's funding was being cut. The Newman Library at Baruch, we were told, was no longer able to buy books to keep on reserve. Slavin suggested several options for those of us wishing to provide books on reserve for our students, nearly all of whom work and some of whom are on public assistance: 1) we could use old versions of the books if the library already had those available, 2) we could loan the library our personal copies, 3) we could buy a copy of the book and donate it to the library (on our adjunct "salaries"), or 4) we could scan sections of the book and upload them to Blackboard. What he failed to mention regarding the use of Blackboard, however, was that the college had recently implemented a 750 MB cap on the amount of content we are permitted to upload. In a separate email regarding this cap Slavin noted that, based on the amount of space being used by all fac-

ulty at Baruch, this seemed to be a reasonable number. All faculty, however, do not use Blackboard. "Average" faculty usage therefore includes faculty who use no space at all! Faculty needing more space than the 750 MB can petition for increased limits. Each semester. This petition requires filing a written justification and enables the kind of direct oversight of our teaching practices that might lead to censorship or non-renewal of adjunct contracts. Notably, neither in the effort to reduce spending on Blackboard storage nor in the budget cuts to the library did Slavin or his colleagues in upper level administrative and executive positions suggest cutting their own six-figure salaries to meet the educational needs of our students. Notably, Chancellor Milliken has continued to accept a \$20,000 per month apartment while failing to implement the contractual increases and back pay in a timely manner. Notably, not accepting a \$20,000 per month apartment as part of his compensation seems not to have occurred to our chancellor. Here at the Graduate Center, President Chase Robinson informs us that, in order to meet budgetary restrictions, when senior level administrators (he does not mean executives) retire, their positions are not being renewed. This means that mid-level administrators are being required to take on those tasks without pay increases or promotions. Yet when graduate students ask President Robinson what the college can do to better support a variety of student concerns – diversity, the needs of international students, pedagogical training, students with disabilities, etc. – his response is consistently that "we should hire someone for that." This cycle is untenable.

I attended a PSC union meeting for the first time last year. My goal was to draw attention to the problem of our union's slogan. "CUNY Needs a Raise" is a true statement. Yet it grossly miscommunicates the issue to city residents and especially to students and families paying those record high tuitions. This slogan makes those of us at CUNY who do desperately need a raise look like money-grubbing white collar



Source: <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/09/an-unprecedented-faculty-lockout/499016/RW=1440&RH=812#/SearchResult&VBID=2K1HZO61YZA9PF&SMLS=1&RW=1440&RH=812&PN=1>

workers, out of touch with the challenges our students face. Rather, I would suggest that our slogan as we work for an actually equitable contract in 2017 should be "Where is the Money Going?" I suggest this slogan because there is one place the money is obviously not going, and that is to teaching and learning. If we at the CUNY Graduate Center are producing and becoming the next generation of faculty, if we are invested in colleges and universities as institutions of higher education, my question for us is: what are we going to do about it?



# Jon-Christian Suggs Memorial

James de Jongh

I am James de Jongh, professor emeritus at the City College and the Graduate Center English department. I was also director of the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean (IRADAC) for about a decade. The late Professor Jerry Watts followed me as director of IRADAC, and Distinguished Professor Robert Reid-Pharr now ably occupies the position. When I was appointed to the Graduate Faculty, I knew Professor Jon-Christian

Suggs in a general way as a colleague at another City University of New York campus, and a reliable CUNY stalwart. I had run into him at faculty governance activities I attended during several terms as Chair of the City College Faculty Senate. But it was here at the Graduate Center, where we both held appointments in the Ph.D. program in English, that I had a chance to interact with him in detailed and granular ways.

Chris Suggs and I joined the Graduate Faculty at



<https://www.gc.cuny.edu/Page-Elements/Academics-Research-Centers-Initiatives/Certificate-Programs/Africana-Studies>

about the same time, roughly a quarter century ago, served on some of the same academic committees, and participated in oral comprehensive examinations and dissertation defenses together. We shared similar intellectual and cultural interests, tended to show up at the same Friday afternoon presentations and chatted afterwards over wine and cheese. After the move from the 40th floor of the Grace Building on 42nd Street, we also shared a communal office across the corridor here on the 4th floor. We collaborated most intensely on our common commitment to African-American and Africana studies, however, and so it is to the informal but very productive leadership role that he played in the collective effort to bring Africana Studies to the Graduate Center as a programmatic field of study that I want to address my brief remarks today.

The pursuit of graduate programs in Black Studies at the City University was not a new initiative. Teaching and studying the lives of people of color at the graduate as well as the undergraduate level had been one of the explicit demands of the Black and Hispanic student uprising on the City College South Campus in the late 1960s, before either Chris or I was hired as junior faculty. In the mid 1970s, the Graduate Cen-

ter had been on the verge of creating an advanced degree program in Black Studies—an MA program conceptualized by Professor Ofuatey Kojo and others. The initiative was highly controversial and the financial crisis that ended free tuition at CUNY was an easy excuse for denying the proposed MA Program.

Resistance to the postgraduate study of the lives and experiences of people of color persisted all through the 80s and 90s and into the new century. Nonetheless, because of the committed efforts of a number of faculty and students, a Certificate Program in Africana Studies exists today at the Graduate Center. As director of the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean (IRADAC), I had the privilege to witness the outstanding role Chris Suggs played in that effort over the course of more than a decade. Professor Suggs was one of the active participants at the foundational gathering of faculty and students in the late 1990s (Colin A. Palmer and the late Roscoe C. Brown, Jr. were others) that reestablished postgraduate Africana studies at City University as a strategic mission for IRADAC, which had recently been created. Chris was there again a few years later to support the creation of the Africana Studies Group (ASG), a new stu-



CUNY Scholar James De Jongh discusses *The Proud Valley* with Jerry Carlson Photo: Vincent Verdi/CUNY TV





Above: Jon-Christian Suggs; source: <http://newyork.carpediem.cd/events/737810-jon-christian-suggs-memorial-at-john-jay-college-moot-court/>

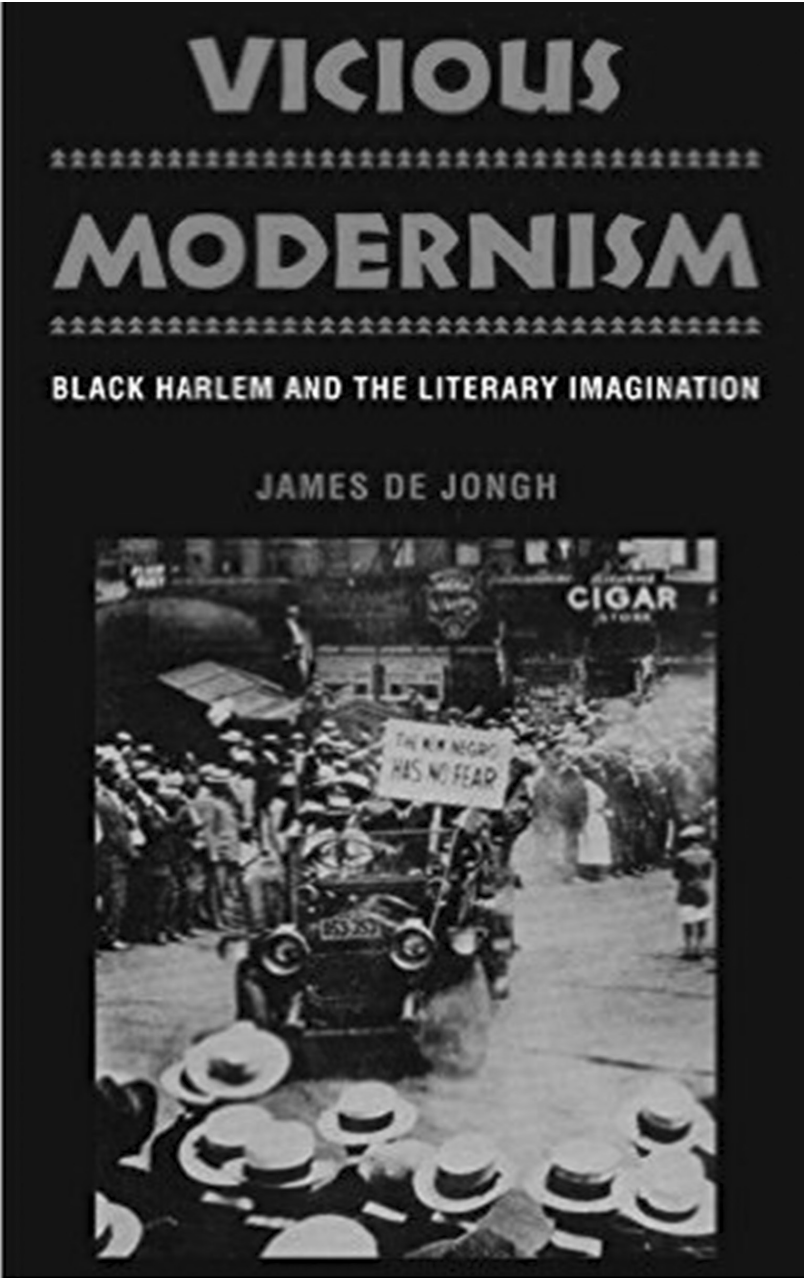
dent-led organization, along with its first co-chairs, Lise Esdaile and Jonathan Gray.

At the memorial at John Jay College a couple of weeks ago, President Travis described Chris Suggs as his “president whisperer.” It’s also an apt description of the role Chris played with IRADAC and the ASG. He never held a formal leadership office in either group but he was always there whenever he was needed as the ASG took the lead and IRADAC provided logistical support in cultivating the intellectual context on the ground, articulating a rationale, and advocating for the programmatic necessity of Africana Studies at the Graduate Center. And when it was time for ASG to navigate the parliamentary and administrative labyrinth of CUNY governance, the technical expertise he had gleaned from his time in the Office of Academic Affairs at 80th Street proved to be invaluable. ASG’s successful effort to establish the concentration in Africana Studies laid the groundwork for the current Certificate Program in Africana Studies that was established only a few years later. If our never abandoned goal of a full Ph.D. Program in Africana Studies is ever finally realized at CUNY, whether at the Graduate Center or in some other configuration, Jon-Christian Suggs will deserve a significant part of the credit.

There was a singular quality of grace about Chris Suggs. He always projected a welcoming and inviting spirit. He was always eager to do what was needed. His quiet suggestion was often just the thing to resolve an impasse. A few minutes of small talk in our shared office before a committee meeting, after class or whenever usually made me feel so much better. And I

know I was not alone in this response. Others would light up when he appeared on the scene just as I did.

Chris, we mourn the loss of your warm company but the lasting imprints of your generous spirit will be “the living record of your memory.”





# Stranger in my Skin: Racial (un)belonging in the US

Tommy Chung

Although my parents had frequently made me cognizant that I am Korean, it had always been difficult for me to fully accept that identity since I have always lived in the U.S. and did not grow up around other Koreans. Now, however, I live in an area with a large Korean population. Yet why do I feel like a stranger? I was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, years before the 1996 Summer Olympic Games helped transform it into the international city it is today. I spent my formative years growing up in a predominantly White neighborhood. The elementary, middle, and high schools I attended were composed of roughly half Black and half White students. There were only a small handful of South and East Asian students. And I had no Korean friends because there were none to speak to. After I attended a predominantly White liberal arts college in the Midwest, I lived in a few

This article was first published as a different draft, "Perpetual Stranger in the U.S.," in the first issue of a new student publication, The Korean Student Association (KSA), of the Graduate Center.

*Gil Bruvel, Flowing, Stainless Steel sculpture*





different Black neighborhoods in Atlanta. Years later when I moved up north to New York City, I lived in two different neighborhoods in Brooklyn: Park Slope — an affluent White neighborhood — and Crown Heights — a predominantly Black Caribbean neighborhood. While I largely had good experiences living in most of these places, I stuck out like a sore thumb because I was always the only or one of just a few Asians around. Throughout my life, I have been accustomed to being a racial/ethnic minority wherever I found myself, whether it was at school, work, neighborhood, or play.

Although certain northeastern suburbs of Atlanta are now home to a growing and thriving Korean community, this was not the case during my formative years in the 1980s and 1990s. After initially living in a low-income neighborhood of Atlanta called Lakewood in the 1970s, my family settled in Stone Mountain, a suburb located a few miles east of Atlanta city limits. Although Stone Mountain is home to a large memorial to the leaders of the Confederacy who condoned slavery, you may be surprised to hear that I actually did not experience much prejudice (or, at the very least, I wasn't aware of it) based on my ethnicity during my first few years as a sentient being. I was one of a few Asian students at my elementary school and I knew that I was a little different somehow and that my parents spoke a language other than English at home, but I had not yet been indoctrinated

in the race-conscious ways of the world. However, this grace period ended just a few short years later.

When I was six years old, my parents sent me to a two-week-long summer camp at Stone

targeted me every day and the attacks were verbal and physical. They shouted insults like “chink” and “ching chong,” and sang the song “Me Chinese, me play joke, me put pee-pee in your Coke.”



Source: <http://www.palo-mayombe.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/multiracial.jpg>

Mountain Park. The majority of the other kids and camp counselors were White. From the first day, a group of boys marked me as different because I was “Chinese.” They

They also told me to go back to my country, which was very confusing to me since I was pretty sure that I was already in my country. This particular line would become a re-

curring refrain throughout my life. The physical bullying ranged from kids pulling up the sides of their eyes to mimic my “chinky eyes” to boys cornering me and taking turns putting me in headlocks and

fun activities at the summer camp such as swimming, hiking, playing sports, and making crafts, but I mostly remember being bullied relentlessly, feeling alienated, and wanting to go home. I told my par-

Atlanta city limits. The majority of their customers were old, middle-class White women. However, a few years after they bought the store, there was a massive White flight, and the neighborhood transitioned into a low-income Black neighborhood. Not surprisingly, I did not comprehend the racial dynamics that I witnessed. In my young and inexperienced eyes, all I could see was Black customers calling my parents “chinks” and also telling them to go back to their country. I found it curious that Black people were using the same rhetoric as the White kids at summer camp. I could not understand why our skin color and almond-shaped eyes seemed to make other people so upset. Of course, it was not until years later that I would learn about slavery, Jim Crow, institutionalized racism, middleman minority theory, and deeply-embedded structural factors that keep the cards stacked against Black people. However, that still did not explain the animosity that I seemed to experience from all directions. And more than that, it still did not make me want to identify as Korean or Asian.

In high school, I had an epiphany when my sister and I discovered and latched on to the punk rock subculture. Although punk’s music, style, and ethos appealed to us, in hindsight, I can clearly see that it also served as a buffer for our racial difference. Instead of allowing others to impose a foreign racial identity on us, adopting the physical markers of punk

hitting me. Some of the boys asked me why I did not know Kung Fu like Bruce Lee, which was actually the first time I had ever heard of him. I know that I engaged in some

ents I never wanted to go to summer camp again.

In 1978, when I was two years old, my parents purchased a small wig store in Decatur, just outside





Source: [http://66.media.tumblr.com/a7ab299e13d565daa9b4e3599d416975/tumblr\\_o6btqsHXDu1rcf4reo1\\_540.jpg](http://66.media.tumblr.com/a7ab299e13d565daa9b4e3599d416975/tumblr_o6btqsHXDu1rcf4reo1_540.jpg)

rock, such as black leather jackets, combat boots, and crazy haircuts allowed us to choose our identity and have some sense of control over how we presented ourselves and were thus perceived by others. Instead of just being Asian or Korean kids, we became “those crazy punks” or “freaks,” which, believe it or not, was preferable. In that sense, we were able to dictate how we were Other-ed. Although I was still very much on the margins of mainstream American society, this was the first time that I felt proud of being different.

Band Name: Wire  
Song title: *Another the Letter*  
Released: 1978



Band Name: The Ramones;  
Song Title: *Judy is a Punk*  
Released: 1976



Punk rock helped broaden my perspectives. Rejecting the mainstream media that was being

shoved down everyone’s throats encouraged me to explore other genres of music, subcultures, underground cinema, fine art, street art, and literature. It made me want to travel and get outside of my comfort zone. It was like a gateway to aspects of culture and the world that I never even knew existed. Although my newfound interests led me to meet some friends who were people of color, many of these subcultures were largely composed of White people. However, I grew to feel pretty comfortable and accepted, perhaps because I identified primarily as a punk or an artist. Being Asian or Korean was secondary, and most people that I met during this period in my life rarely even brought up race.

Band Name: Minor Threat  
Song Title: *Minor Threat*  
Released: 1981



Band Name: The Sex Pistols  
Song Title: *Pretty Vacant*  
Released: 1977



After living in Brooklyn for several years, in 2015, I moved to Flushing, Queens, which is home to a large Chinese and Korean population. For the very first time in my life, I was surrounded by people who look like



Source: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/564x/6c/76/8b/6c768b5dd3be1f7bfa63391c89332029.jpg>





Source: [https://c1.staticflickr.com/3/2933/13935852051\\_0bea67d6a3\\_b.jpg](https://c1.staticflickr.com/3/2933/13935852051_0bea67d6a3_b.jpg)

me. One might assume that I would feel comfortable living among other people of Asian descent. While I must admit that I do sometimes enjoy feeling anonymous around people who are obviously not paying any attention to me based on my race, I still do not feel like I belong. Many of my neighbors are immigrants and I hear far more Mandarin, Korean, and Spanish than English in Flushing. While there are also

many U.S.-born children of immigrants who are hyphenated Americans just like me, many of these young people have grown up in this area and are accustomed to the particular brand of multiculturalism that Flushing has to offer. For the most part, people in Flushing seem to self-segregate based on nationality. The Koreans live in certain areas separate from the Chinese. This becomes even more obvious when look-

ing at the business districts. The area around downtown Flushing and the subway station is dominated by Chinese restaurants and other types of businesses, whereas the Korean business district begins east of Union Street. Even the Jo-seonjok (ethnic Koreans who were born and raised in China) have their own little residential and commercial pocket.

Although I grew up in a household where my mother mostly spoke to me in Korean, I only speak simple conversational Korean and I do not have mastery of the language or customs. Ironically, when I am surrounded by Blacks, Whites, and other non-Asians, I am very conscious of my “Asianness” or “Koreanness.” And when I am surrounded by Koreans or Chinese, I suddenly feel extremely American. When I enter a Korean establishment, I often feel like a fish out of water. Koreans instantly recognize my accent and intonation as American, and I still feel slightly awkward when engaging in conversation, tilting my head when I say hello, goodbye, or thank you, or even trying to order food or ask for the check. I feel even more awkward and self-conscious when I actually hang out with Koreans who are speaking Korean. It is difficult to describe. My Korean has improved substantially since I married a Korean international student and moved to Flushing, so I actu-

ally understand a good portion of conversations in Korean. I think some of my discomfort stems from not fully grasping the nuances of jokes, slang, Korean idioms, or subtle cultural aspects of Korean ways of interacting. While the age hierarchy, honorifics, and drinking etiquette are ingrained in Korean Koreans (which is how I refer to people who were born and raised in Korea and speak Korean as their first language), those things are not second nature to me. While I do not feel completely comfortable interacting with a group of Koreans who are speaking Korean quickly and rattling off jokes and stories, I do feel some sense of solidarity and even affection when seeing or encountering strangers that I recognize as Korean. I am not sure if this qualifies as jeong (a Korean word for the compound of affection and sympathy). In all honesty, the concept of jeong is still somewhat new to me since I did not grow up in Korean society and I just learned the term a few years ago. Since I was born and raised in the U.S., my tastes, mannerisms, and mentality are distinctly American, and I feel comfortable with American customs. However, I also feel that many people do not accept me as fully American because of my Asian features and ancestry. To borrow a term from the scholar Mia Tuan, Asians in the U.S. are seen as “forever foreign”. I



<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/474x/a7/1f/9f/a71f9f30c519c4c23a284576c5574069.jpg>

am a stranger in my own country, the land where I was born. On the other hand, when I am surrounded by other Koreans, I feel as if I will never be fully accepted as Korean because I am too American. I am also a stranger in my ancestral homeland, the country of my parents and their parents. As a result, over the years, I have cultivated a fluid and hybrid identity as a survival mechanism. I have become accustomed to living in liminality, and I think back to my teenage years when I discovered punk rock and learned that I did not have to blindly accept labels or identities that others imposed on me. I am okay with being a stranger.



# Amy Ashwood Garvey: A Bibliographic Essay

Rhone Fraser

Amy Ashwood Garvey (1897-1969) was the first wife of radical journalist Marcus Garvey (1887-1940). In a year when numerous U.S. liberals are heavily invested in promoting the first U.S. female president, the life of a political leader like Amy Ashwood Garvey deserves recognition and study like never before. She was a leader who identified as a “feminist” like Hillary Clinton. In addition, she identified herself as a “Pan Africanist” and agreed with Garvey’s mission of “awakening the Negro to his sense of racial insecurity.” Ashwood sought to “awaken the

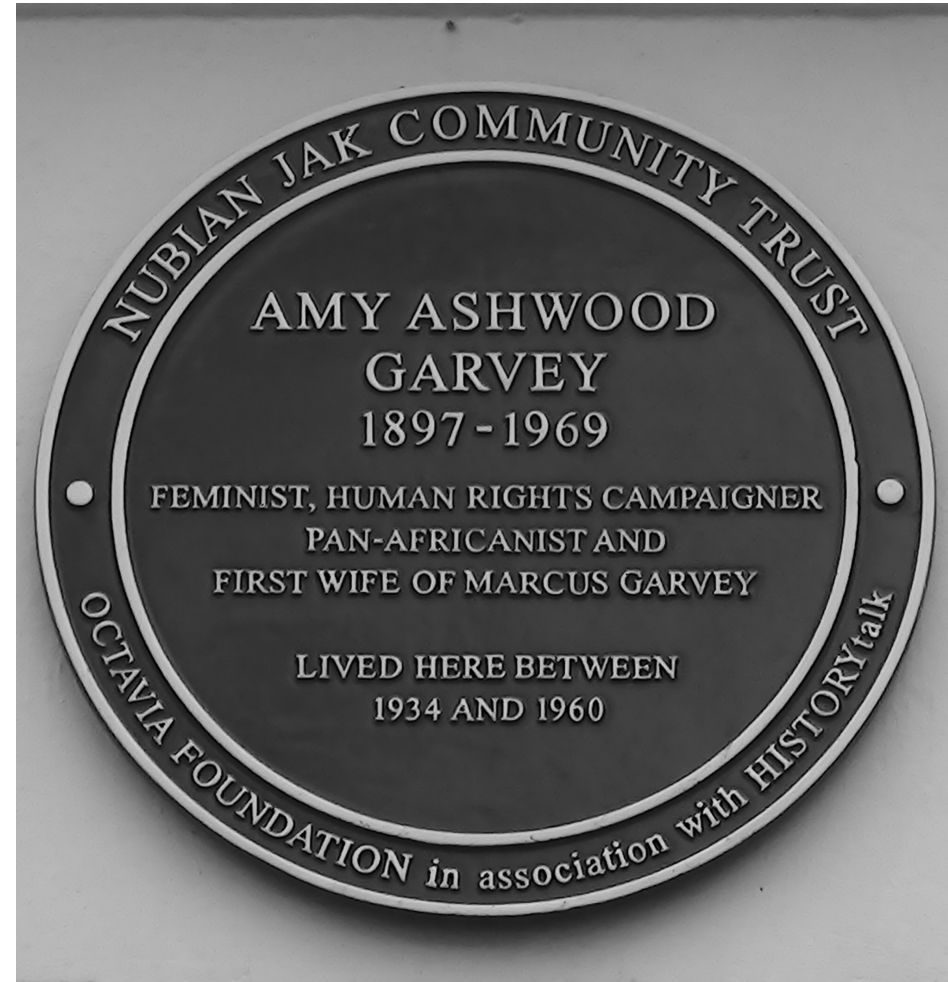
Negro” through her strategic ownership of property; her promotion of the *Negro World* paper across Latin America and the Caribbean; her creation of a safe space for radical thought; her tracing of her Ashanti heritage from Jamaica to Ghana; her promotion of Garveyism in Africa where she sought to strengthen an independent Ghana as a symbol for African independence. Her life in the twentieth century stands as a valuable lesson for our own times on how to awaken all peoples of African descent to a world that continues to promote racial injustice and prevent the realization of any substantive form of Black nationalism. This essay will look at biographical works on Amy Ashwood Garvey and historical works that can throw light on her lived experience. Much of my engagement with these works stems from my research for a biographical play that I am working on. All of these works in some way speak to the central political project informing her life which is, in her own words, “the awakening of the Negro to his sense of racial insecurity.” This awakening comprehensively deconstructs the as-

sumptions on which the current White supremacist capitalist economy depends.

Lionel Yard wrote a biography of Amy Ashwood Garvey in 1990, which was published by the Association for the Study of African American Life and Culture (ASALH). Then, in 2007, Tony Martin published another biography of her from his independent press, The Majority Press. While, Martin writes about the political history of Ashwood, Yard is more occupied with her emotional history in his book. “Awakening the Negro to his sense of racial insecurity” was Ashwood’s quote of Garvey, who approached her in Jamaica in July of 1914. His intellect appealed to her, as hers to him. According to Martin, Garvey invited Ashwood to join his then nascent Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) after hearing her win a debate by arguing that “morality does not increase with the march of civilization.” She would see the truth of this argument in different forms as her twentieth century life progressed. Marcus began a very involved courtship with Amy Ashwood. Lionel Yard describes his



[http://www.ligali.org/images/amy\\_ashwood\\_garvey.jpg](http://www.ligali.org/images/amy_ashwood_garvey.jpg)



<http://www.londonremembers.com/memorials/amy-garvey>

steadfast determination to be by her side despite her mother disapproving of him. Ashwood’s mother was so staunchly opposed to their union that she sent her to live in Panama with her father, who was a positive affirming force in her life.

When young Amy Ashwood inquired about her African past, her father introduced her to her great grandmother Grannie Dabas, who would later facilitate Amy’s journey to Ghana in 1947 to meet the descendants of her great grand-

mother’s parents. Her father was also a successful baker who owned businesses in the Panama Canal Zone and in Colombia. Here, Olive Senior’s 2014 book, *Dying to Better Themselves*, proves to be an important start in understanding life in Panama from the perspectives of Panamanians, Jamaicans, and Barbadians who emigrated there for job opportunities. Senior gives a vivid account of the labor that went into building the Panama Canal while Ashwood lived there

from 1916 to 1918. In addition, she also describes the strict color and class stratifications among the canal laborers that Marcus Garvey initially saw on his visit to Panama in 1911.

Douglas Egerton’s 2015 book, *Borderland on the Isthmus*, describes Panama Canal life but mainly from the perspective of the white, often U.S.-born citizens, known as “Zonians.” Stratifications on the Panama Canal included white Zonians at the top, who did not have to pay utilities and black laborers who did at the bottom. Julie Greene’s 2009 book, *The Canal Builders: America’s Empire at the Panama Canal*, describes only some of the numerous tensions between colors that Ashwood knew intimately during her time there. White Zonians were paid for their less menial labor in gold whereas black Panamanian, Jamaican, and Barbadian labor were paid in silver. Both Senior and Garvey describe life from the perspective of the laborer.

Tony Martin’s 1976 biography of Marcus Garvey called *Race First* mentions Garvey’s stint as a newspaper editor in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Panama before Ashwood went there. He writes that Garvey was a timekeeper for the United Fruit Company, where he organized Black laborers for a few months in order to “awaken” them to their exploitation by the Company. Aviva Chomsky’s 1995 book, *West Indian Workers and*





Source: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52b087efe4b04f67f91cbeb9/>

*the United Fruit Company*, 1870-1940, is an account of the various attempts that went into destroying the printing press in Costa Rica that Garvey depended on.

Ashwood saw the same need to “awaken” the laborers of the Pana-

ma Canal who were locked within a strict color and class hierarchy. In Panama, she learnt the importance of property ownership from her father, and would later apply Garveyite principles upholding property ownership for the benefit

of communities of color in nearly every place she lived in after Panama.

Martin writes that about a year and a half after arriving in New York and working with Garvey to build the membership of the U.N.I.A., Ashwood’s father gave her about one thousand dollars to buy a brownstone in Harlem, without the permission of Garvey. This, among other reasons, including charges of infidelity detailed in Martin’s biography, led Garvey to seek an annulment of their two-month old marriage on 6 March 1920. He sued Ashwood in August of that year on grounds of adultery. However, according to Yard, Garvey never legally divorced Ashwood because at the time of their marriage, as she wrote to Amy Jacques, there was no federal divorce law. Ashwood filed a countersuit against Garvey saying that his marriage to a second Amy, Amy Jacques, qualifies as bigamy. Yard also describes how, on several counts, Ashwood believed that Amy Jacques Garvey usurped her power and benefited from the hard work that she initiated with the U.N.I.A. in Jamaica and the United States. Ula Y. Taylor’s meticulous 2002 biography of Amy Jacques Garvey entitled *The Veiled Garvey* describes the important work Amy Jacques undertook to publish Garvey’s *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* when he was imprisoned in 1923.

At the same time, Yard’s biography also states that it was Ashwood who introduced Amy Jacques to Garvey. In Taylor’s bi-

ography of Amy Jacques, she credits Ashwood for making sure that the U.N.I.A. constitution required that each new branch have not only a president but a female co-president. Ashwood encouraged Garvey to hire Amy Jacques as secretary. Jacques was also a bridesmaid at Ashwood’s 1919 wedding to Garvey, and Yard writes about Ashwood’s betrayal most comprehensively. He writes that Garvey secretly established residence in Missouri in order to deny Ashwood due process in his annulment. After Garvey married Jacques in 1922, Ashwood sued Garvey for “absolute divorce” and Yard writes that the legal battles between them ended in a draw. Despite this, she continued the pursuit of “awakening the Negro when she toured Europe and, after a worldwide distribution of the *Negro World* newspaper, identifies publicly as “Mrs. Amy Garvey.”

Around 1923, Ashwood meets legendary Calypsonian singer Sam Manning and begins a professional and romantic relationship with him as a pioneering musical theatre producer. She and Manning write and produce several plays described by both Yard and Martin. Sandra Pouchet Paquet’s edited 2007 collection of essays on Calypso, called *Music, Memory, Resistance: Calypso and the Caribbean Literary Imagination*, shows calypso as a critique or mocking of the colonial order that Manning’s music provided in a subtle way.

Robert A. Hill edited *The Marcus Garvey Papers*, which consists

of nine volumes including key editorials of the *Negro World* newspaper and papers from Garvey’s most profitable business, Black Star Line enterprise, which was started months before he married Ashwood. Hill’s edited collection includes memos from the Bureau of Investigation, run by J. Edgar Hoover, surveilling the U.N.I.A. These memos show a narrative of a successful undermining of the Black Star Line with the help of informants who deceptively posed as U.N.I.A. members sympathetic to Garvey’s black nationalist cause. Hill’s early volumes also note the presence of Ashwood at U.N.I.A. meetings.

Jeffrey B. Perry’s edited collection called *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, includes the writings of Garvey’s newspaper editor and bibliophile Hubert Harrison, who says that the failure of the Black Star Line and the Garvey movement was not due to the trumped up charge by the government but was rather a result of Garvey trusting people who had little knowledge of ships or ship building. While Yard attributes the Garvey movement’s failure to Garvey’s mercurial temperament, Martin quotes Ashwood in a 1960 *Ebony* magazine interview with Lerone Bennett Jr., where she notes that Garvey’s failure was due to his inability to share responsibility and his being too autocratic. She also tells Bennett that as the black man attempts to erase the social impediments and psychic debilitation caused by centuries of brainwash-

ing into the belief of a basic inferiority, he arises “confident, and determined the recapture his fundamental rights as a human being, the kind of man the black woman would gladly love, honor and respect.”

Ashwood’s interview anticipated two studies that her life and experience speak to. The first study her analysis anticipated was the growing white mainstream publishing industry’s exclusive interest in black women that sparked within a year of her passing, as seen in the 1970 publication of *The Black Woman* by Random House and edited by Toni Cade Bambara. The second study her analysis speaks to is the pioneering work by Black psychologists like Kobi K.K. Kam-bon on cultivating positive Black relationships. In Kam-bon’s self-published book, *African/Black Psychology in the American Context: An African Centered Approach*, he writes that African nationhood consciousness was destroyed by Eurocentric conceptual incarceration, and that men and women who are involved in functionally relevant Africentric (Kam-bon’s term for African centered) relationships must have a strong sense of their collective African identity and cultural heritage.

When Amy and Sam moved to London in 1936, they opened a night club and restaurant called the Florence Mills Restaurant and Social Club that, Yard says, provided tribal fellowship for black immigrants in England “who needed a shelter from the stress and strain



of living in a foreign country.” This club was a testament to Ashwood’s determination to create a safe space for radical thinkers. Her Florence Mills club was a place where intellectuals like C.L.R. James organized meetings for the International African Friends Service of Abyssinia, in response, Martin writes, to the Italian fascist aggression against Ethiopia. It is likely that James worked on early drafts of his original 1938 history of the Haitian revolution called *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* in Ashwood’s club, fed by her nourishing meals, as she was also known to have been an impeccable cook.

Bryant Terry’s 2014 book called *Afro-Vegan: Farm Fresh African, Caribbean, and Southern Flavors, Remix* includes a recipe for a drink called the “Amy Ashwood” that contains ginger and cayenne. This book that James was writing while frequenting Ashwood’s club is notable for its exclusive lens that relates the struggle of the Haitian people against European propaganda to the Western propaganda against efforts at black self-determination in his own time. James writes about Toussaint L’Ouverture’s personal failures in a manner similar to how Ashwood characterized Garvey’s personal failures, as quoted in Martin. He had the space to offer a serious study of analyzing the Garvey movement in a way that would ultimately improve nationalist movements.

Hakim Adi’s 2015 book, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, also looks closely at this decade and evaluates the working class movements among Black immigrants in London at this time. In London, Ashwood met J.B. Danquah, a London student from the Gold Coast, to whom she told of her Ashanti heritage, and Danquah helps her locate descendants of her ancestry. By 1947, Ashwood begins

tracing her African heritage, anticipating by thirty years a practice made popular by Alex Haley in his television miniseries in 1977. Martin wrote a 1990 appendix where he retraces Amy Ashwood’s steps called “In the Footsteps of Amy Ashwood Garvey: To Kumasi and Darman in 1990.” He includes another appendix by Ashwood called “My Ashanti Roots” that details how her great grandmother was

sold by the Ashanti to the English.

Ashwood’s friendship with J.B. Danquah continued up to and beyond Kwame Nkrumah’s role as leader of Ghana in its independence from Great Britain (sentence doesn’t make sense). However, Danquah challenged Nkrumah’s leadership on so many levels. Yard writes Amy Ashwood tried to get Danquah to meet with Nkrumah and reconcile their political differ-

ences, but to no avail. Danquah’s consistent critique against what he saw as Nkrumah’s capitulation to British imperialists landed him in prison, on Nkrumah’s orders, where he remained until he died. Ama Biney’s 2014 book, *The Political And Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*, candidly discusses Nkrumah’s missteps that allowed C.I.A. functionaries to succeed in deposing him in 1966. Kwame Bot-

we-Asamoah’s 2004 book, *Kwame Nkrumah’s Politico-Cultural Thought and Politics*, provides a more sympathetic look at Nkrumah and shows Danquah as a die-hard traditionalist who simply wanted to replace Nkrumah’s position of privilege with British imperialists.

A close study of Amy Ashwood Garvey’s life is provided by her own papers that includes her numerous unpublished manuscripts. Her unpublished manuscripts are currently in the Lionel Yard Collection which is in the possession of his family.

More important however is the anticolonial, Pan-African, anti-Zionist lens through which Martin looks at Amy Ashwood Garvey’s life. He is particularly sensitive to the ways that, following Garvey’s independent commercial success and divorce from Amy Ashwood, white, Jewish moneyed interests like Lew Leslie employed both Sam Manning and Amy Ashwood to be part of shows that used blackface and profited from stereotypical depictions of black people. Martin writes about how Judge Julian Mack, an avowed Zionist, sentenced Garvey to prison while supporting his rival group the N.A.A.C.P. A close look at Amy Ashwood Garvey’s life shows that twenty first century scholarly attention on Garvey is not only woefully late but woefully hypocritical, because it willfully ignores the latent influence of Marcus and Amy Ashwood Garvey throughout the twentieth century.



Marriage to Marcus Gravey, source: <http://alchetron.com/Amy-Ashwood-Garvey-978301-W#->



# Donald Trump and the Death Rattle of Liberal Civility

Asher Wycoff

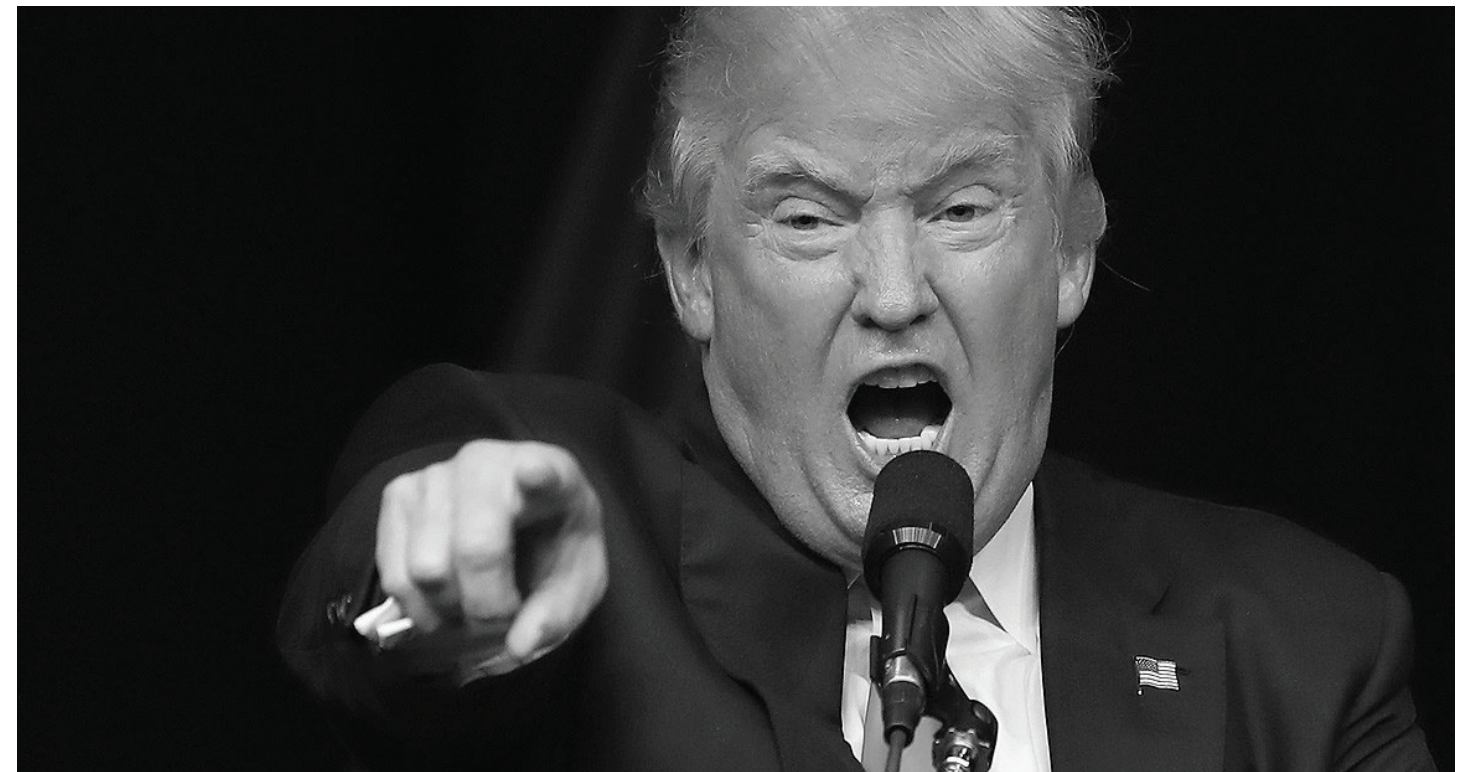


Source: <http://www.vox.com/2016/7/14/12185086/clinton-role-models-trump>

The 11 July issue of *The New Yorker* was dominated by a lengthy George Saunders piece on the Trump campaign. Saunders follows Trump from Fountain Hills to Tucson to Eau Claire and beyond, rendering the hostility that perme-

ates every rally in characteristically matter-of-fact prose. At each stop on this journey, he stands in awe of the mutual aggression between Trump supporters and anti-Trump protesters. Awe is the appropriate word here, for after a particularly

alarming clash between protesters and supporters at a Trump rally in San Jose, Saunders summarizes the scene in a glib allusion to Yeats: "The center failed the hold." In the theatrical narrative he constructs for himself, Saunders witnesses



Source: <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnnnext/dam/assets/150729145544-03-trump-quotes-super-169.jpg>

something apocalyptic. He witnesses the undoing of order in United States politics. "This, Mr. Trump," he proclaims, "is why we practice civility."

I am fascinated with Saunders's insistence on "civility." He believes firmly, and perhaps correctly, that it is not the content of Trump's proposals that enraptures or enrages people, but their presentation. Conversely, the real problem with Trump is not his racism, xenophobia, chauvinism, or his delight in the prospect of uprooting, brutalizing, or killing millions of people. No, the real problem with Trump is that he relinquishes the stoic dignity of "Goldwater and Reagan" in favor of the empty sensationalism of "Fox News and reality TV." Saunders is more concerned, for instance, about the spectacle surrounding the Wall (capital W) than the actual proposal of the wall (small w) and its probable calamitous effects. To emphasize civility, often to the exclusion of all else, is *de rigueur* in liberal election commentary. Again and again, the content of Trump's

platform is granted far less importance than the presentation of it. Pundits and talk show hosts criticize Trump for his "divisive rhetoric." A Clinton campaign ad plays an extended montage of Donald Trump saying inflammatory things before asking the viewers what kind of president they want their kids to see. Op-ed after op-ed bemoans the Republican Party's downward trajectory from the Great Communicator to a sideshow caller with a bad toupee. Although some center-left commentators pay lip service to the dangers facing Muslims and the undocumented, it is not primarily the lives of marginalized people that are at stake; it is the sense of dignity in the electoral arena.

This sense of dignity is important to liberals because it offers plausible deniability when Democratic politicians do exactly what we're supposed to be afraid of Republicans doing. It is easier to give a president the benefit of the doubt who maintains decorum, who has the decency to be surreptitious about their less



defensible actions. This has informed the mantra of the Obama presidency. Of course Obama couldn't change everything overnight, no matter how much he might have wanted to. He's practical. He takes this stuff seriously. He means business. Did he want to close Guantanamo? Did he want to pull us out of Iraq and Afghanistan earlier? Did he want single-payer healthcare? Of course he did, but his hands were tied! On the other hand, did he want to bomb twice as many countries as Bush did? Did he want to deport over two million undocumented immigrants? Did he want to continue bank bailouts, keep Bernanke as Fed chair, appoint Geithner as Treasury Secretary, and so forth? Of course not, but his hands were tied!

More important to the center-left than material change is the fantasy of change. In the 2008 campaign, we saw an unprecedented effort to raise hopes for a sweeping overhaul of the political system, and in subsequent years we saw the stoic abandonment of every hope raised. The conventional wisdom on Obama went from "He'll change everything!" to "He'll change everything, but he'll wait until his second term!" to, finally, "What, were you really so naïve as to believe that Obama could change everything?" The same field of liberal commentators who deliberately stoked anticipation of systemic change overnight steadily came to treat any note of disap-

pointment or any residual hope as a sign of immaturity. Come now, think pragmatically!

Now with Hillary Clinton, a pres-

appointment of Obama, the best president we can hope for is an experienced, dignified moderate - if that. At the Democratic National

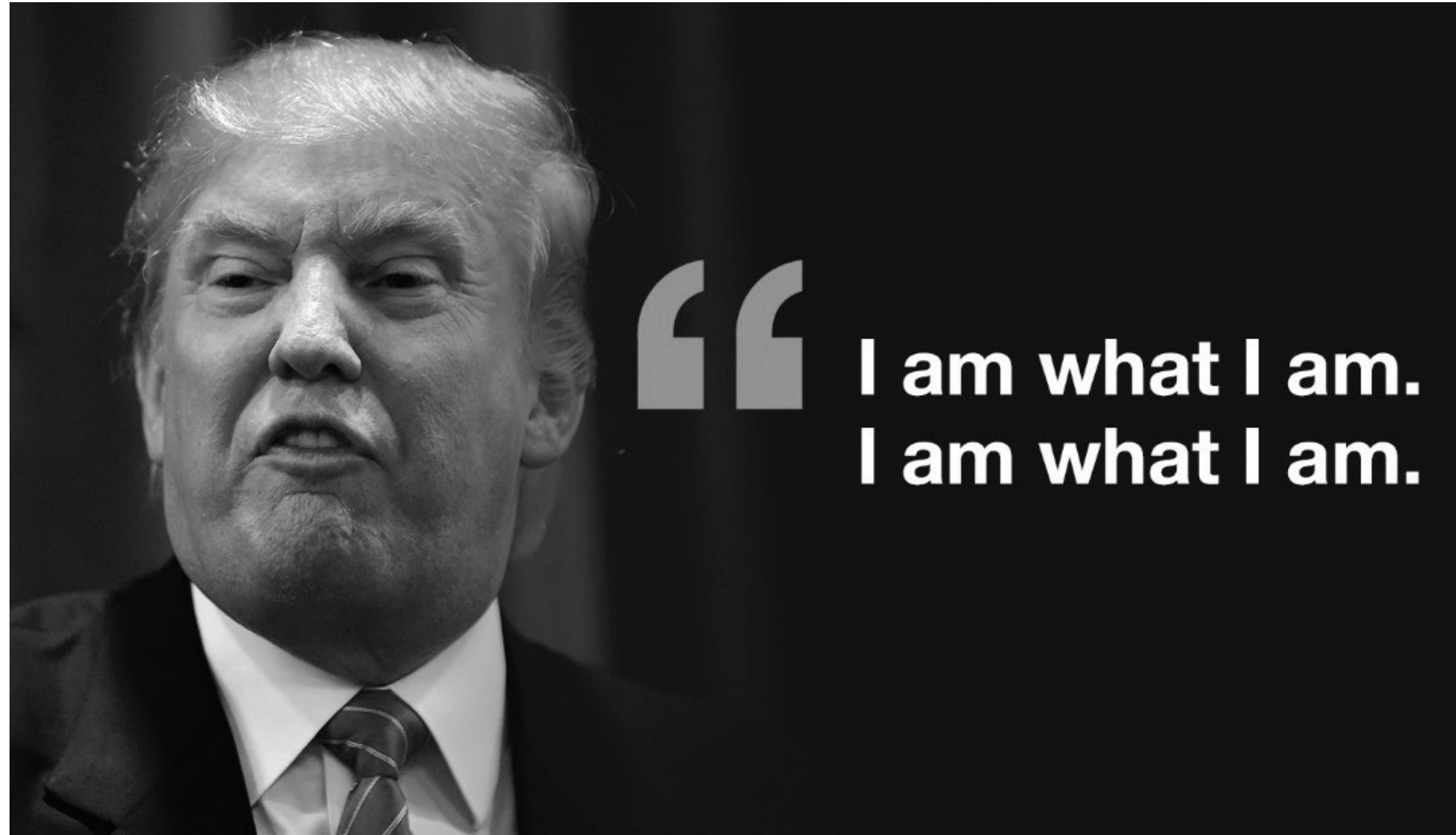
convention (a better facsimile for Reagan than the Republican nominee should be unlivable for the working class) bel-  
lowed, "Donald Trump, you are no Ronald Reagan!" The notion that the Democratic nominee would be

to an audience of ostensible progressives, it was a ringing endorsement.

For like Ronald Reagan, Hillary

to be respectful as she does them. When one points out that the things Clinton has "gotten done" in her career include the expansion of the carceral state, the destabilization of dozens of Latin American and Middle Eastern countries, the evisceration of the welfare system, and even periodic support for a Trump-style border wall, one gets the stock liberal response. "Sure, Hillary's done some distasteful things in the past, but any political career as long as hers is bound to have some blotches! Besides, do you really think Trump won't be worse?"

Of course Trump would be worse than Clinton. But I'm tempted at this juncture to side with the George Saunderses among us after all. Maybe the critical difference between the two candidates does lie more in their presentation than in their platforms. Maybe the problem is not that Trump intends to deport eleven million people, wall off the nation, administer religious tests, and the like, but that he announces these intentions, boldly and without apology. The civility for which the center-left feels such nostalgia is an integral component of the United States liberal project's ideological legitimating mechanism. This mechanism disguises the everyday violence without which the United States project could not be sustained, and condemns it where it cannot be disguised. As regards the past, this mechanism takes the form of ret-



<http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/trump-clinton-rhetoric-reality-214233>

idential candidate around whom there is precisely zero excitement, cynical pragmatism is the necessary starting position. After the dis-

Convention, a stadium of liberals cheered wildly as Michael Bloomberg (a man whose entire career centered on making New York City

a better facsimile for Reagan than the Republican nominee should be a damning condemnation of the party's shift to the right. Instead,

Clinton is civil, dignified, and practical. As we have been told countless times, she knows how to get things done, and she knows how





<https://lockerdome.com/sonsoflibertymedia/8051496051935252>

rospective self-criticism. In an appropriately Kantian fashion, the United States holds out an ideal of absolute human freedom, far beyond anything it could concretely achieve. Although it builds itself through one brutality after another, it looks back upon each brutality it completes with scorn, regarding it as an unfortunate hurdle that had to be cleared on the path to its ultimate goal. Through this teleological outlook, United States liberalism confesses to, and in so doing, absolves itself of its own crimes. When similar crimes are committed in the present, they are stifled, silenced but no less noxious, like flatulence at a funeral.

When Trump is condemned as “un-American” for his racism, xenophobia, or whatever else, the temptation is to point out that Trump’s proposals are not without precedent in United States politics. The border wall is not a novel idea, nor is a policy of mass deportation. The proposal of Muslim exclusion has been likened, not unfairly, to everything from the Chinese Exclusion Act to the refusal of Iranians during the Carter administration. But perhaps this misses the point. The remarkable thing about Trump is not the content of

his proposals, but his utter lack of shame in presenting them. Under Obama, mass deportations, border fence expansions, and remote bombings have been carried out in mortified silence. Trump has grabbed hold of the liberal establishment’s guilty secrets and turned them into rallying cries. And he has done so with astonishing success.

I believe what we see crystallized in the phenomenon of Donald Trump is the implosion of United States liberalism’s self-criticizing mechanism. The rejection of decorum is a synecdochic representation of a more fundamental rejection: that of critical thinking. Trump has no time to second-guess and no time to apologize. He has no time to interrogate the past or the present. He’s a business man. He wants to get us a good deal. He has to act fast. He has to commit. As an unnamed Trump supporter tells Morning Edition, “He’s a negotiator. Of course he takes a hardline position.” The liberal project’s internal critical mechanism must go out the window. The time is to uncritically embrace excess in all its most dreadful forms. This approach has understandably resonated with a wide swath of frustrated, white, middle-class United States citizens. The new normal post-recession has compromised their once-guaranteed future of pleasant domesticity, has introduced doubt where they have only known certainty. When all that is solid begins to melt into air, who can waste time being polite? Take the firm position. Get a good deal.

Liberal civility offers no response to Trump. Trump’s campaign is a fundamental rejection of it. It is an open celebration of the systematic expropriation and violence that forms the material basis of the United States liberal project, a refusal to cloak it in euphemistic terms. Trump’s supporters are sick of being civil. They are sick of being “politically correct.” They are sick of exercising restraint when unbridled capitalist excess has screwed them over and, more insultingly, looked so fun in the process. The frustrated petty bourgeoisie is laying claim to the excess that the bourgeoisie has so far kept to itself. And we are nowhere near prepared for that dreadful moment when they finally seize it.

## The Fetish of the Mourning Other

### Review of Taryn Simon’s *An Occupation of Loss*

Sarah Lucie

Taryn Simon’s most recent work, *An Occupation of Loss*, is billed as a sculptural installation that comes alive with the laments of professional mourners after sundown. In collaboration with Shohei Shigematsu of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Simon has built eleven concrete towers that reach forty-eight feet into the Park Avenue Armory’s Drill Hall rafters. While this sculpture is open to the public during the day, the real performance begins in the evening, when the towers’ bases transform into individual cells for the eleven groups of professional mourners from different religious or cultural traditions. The performance installation seduces with all the supposed merits of interculturalism — a study of how the world mourns that transcends lingual and cultural divides to uncover some sort of “universal” experience. The affective intensity of witnessing the mourners’ laments is undeniable. And yet, the performance also falls prey to the pitfalls that any critic of interculturalism already knows — minority cultures are exoticized and decontextualized for an artistic vision that leaves us no more connected than we were before.

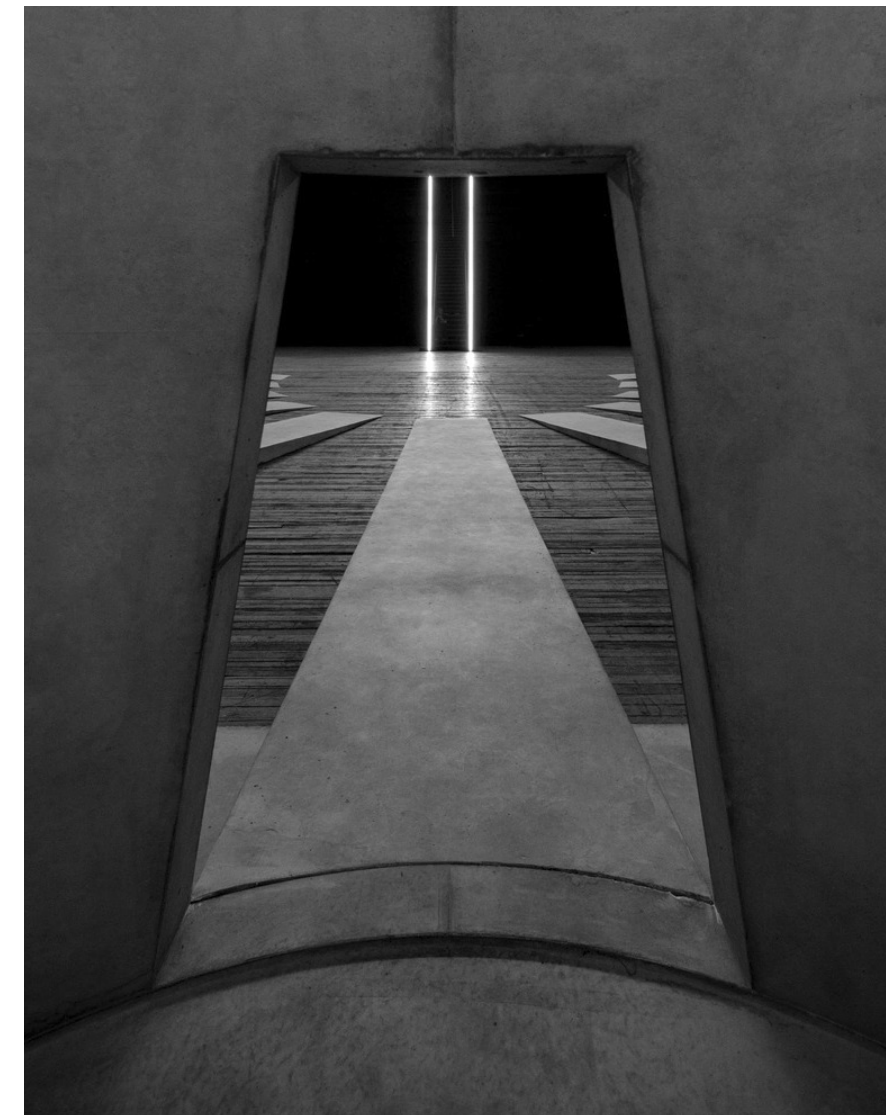


Image courtesy OMA. Image © Naho Kubota





Image courtesy OMA. Image © Naho Kubota

Upon arrival, the audience was directed to a waiting area around one side of the Armory. This area and side entrance is not commonly used in Armory performances, and while it effectively avoids the lavish mansion entrance, it is entirely theatrical in its own site-specific way. The audience then climbed a flight of stairs to enter onto a balcony within the Drill Hall, where we encountered the towering spectacle. The structure is reminiscent of grain silos or giant organ pipes, eleven gray concrete columns reaching into the air. The cavernous space is dark but for subdued white lights within each structure and around the periphery of the towers. From the balcony, the audience waited as the procession began, and one by one each tower became a chamber as the mourners moved into their cells. Some walked alone, some in groups, and some with the help of stagehands. With a ceremonial beat of a drum, the audience was ushered down the stairs off the balcony and released into the semicircle of towers. On the night that I attended, we paused, looking at each other with sheepish trepidation. What do we do now? The group came to a tacit conclusion, and dispersed into the cells. Each mourner was activated by the approach of an audience member, and one voice soon multiplied into a symphony.

The experience was both monumental and personal at the same



*An Occupation of Loss by Taryn Simon at the Park Avenue Armory*

time. The sheer size of the towers is impressive, and when observed from a distance they feel historic, even important. When the towers are activated by their human instruments within, an impossibly large atonal cacophony of voices

and instrumental sounds is created, as each voice joins with the others to create something larger than itself, larger than life. But then, each column's base is like a little hut, and the audience members within it experience something that



is more intimate. I first joined two Buddhist monks, Tashi Galay and Phurba Tshering, who had traveled from New Delhi. They played two long horns before chanting with a large drum, and my body vibrated with the proximity and intensity of the sound. In some instances like this one, all other sounds disappeared and the singular mourning experience took over. But then, I visited Hanna Koduah, who had traveled from Accra, Ghana, as she sat in silence. This quiet mourn-

ing fused with the echoes of the myriad experiences surrounding us, and I was made aware of all that took place outside my little corner. It is perhaps this duality of the local and the global that is the piece's greatest strength. Each performance of mourning is given its own equal space and attention, rather than Simon mining aspects of each for something new. But the separate traditions still combine to form a new entity, as the individual voices add to the complexity of the

final creation.

I should clarify here that when I approached the first chamber, there was no way of knowing who was inside. In fact, the audience was given no information whatsoever, and so each mourner had to be approached on an aesthetic level only as it was impossible to know where they were from, what ritual tradition they were performing, or more simply, what their names were. After a short thirty minutes in the space, a door to

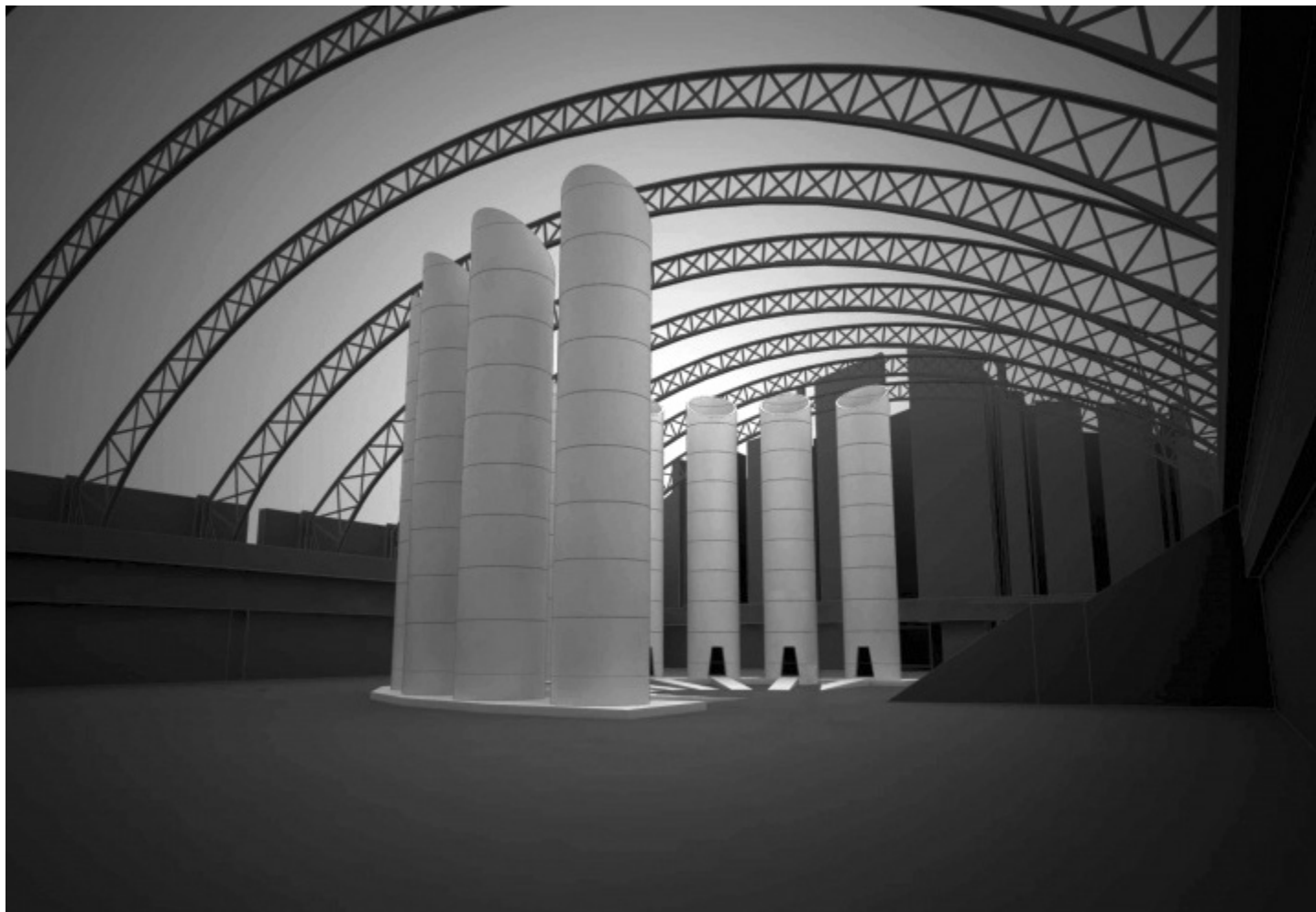
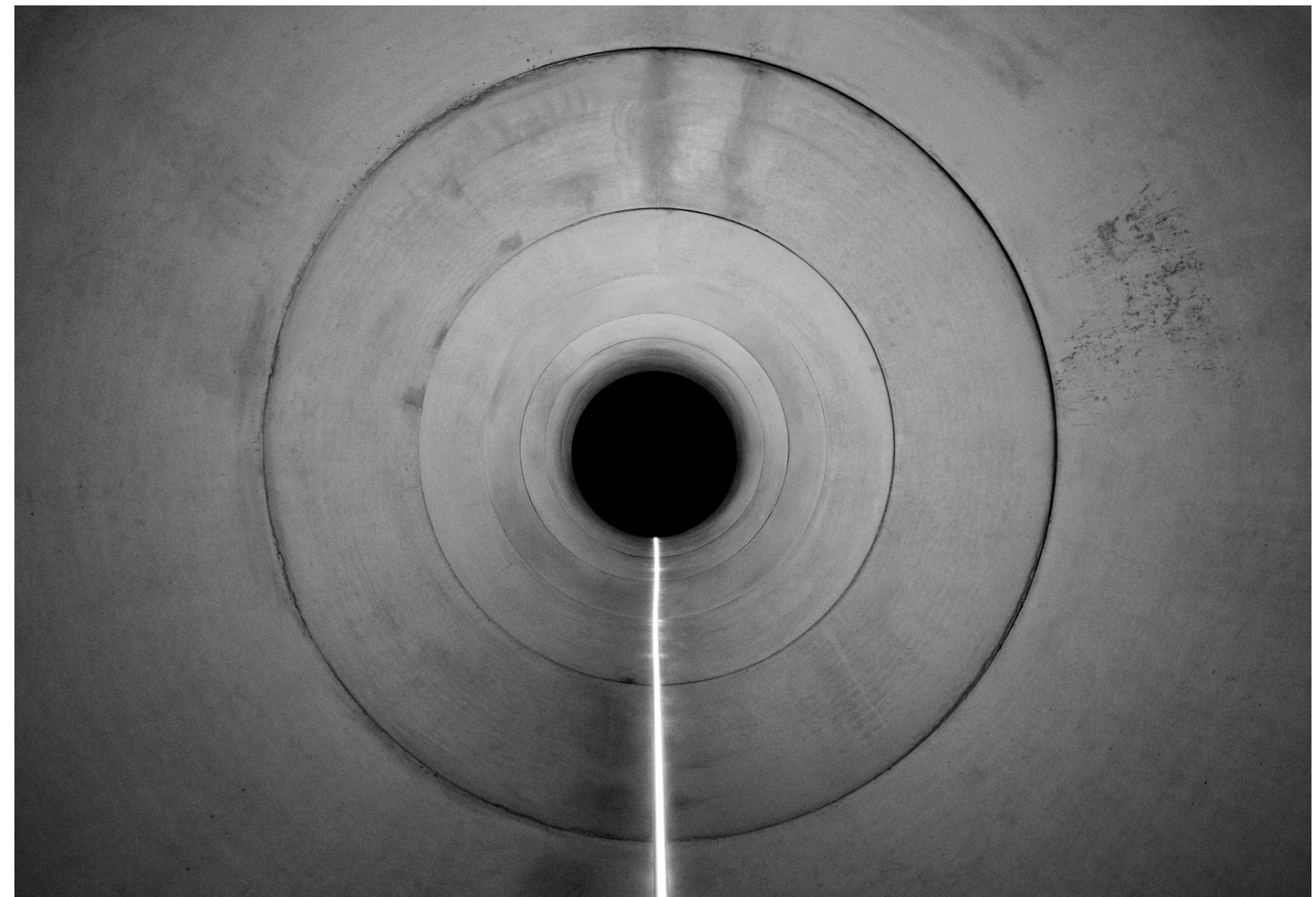


Image courtesy OMA. Image © Naho Kubota



Source: <http://oma.eu/projects/taryn-simon-an-occupation-of-loss>

the street was opened and the audience received a booklet filled with this information on their way out. It felt like too little, too late for me, as I unsuccessfully tried to match each performer with their mug shot. But this booklet is undeniably part of the performance itself, as information about each performer is relayed through their U.S. Visa applications, while more contextual information about their

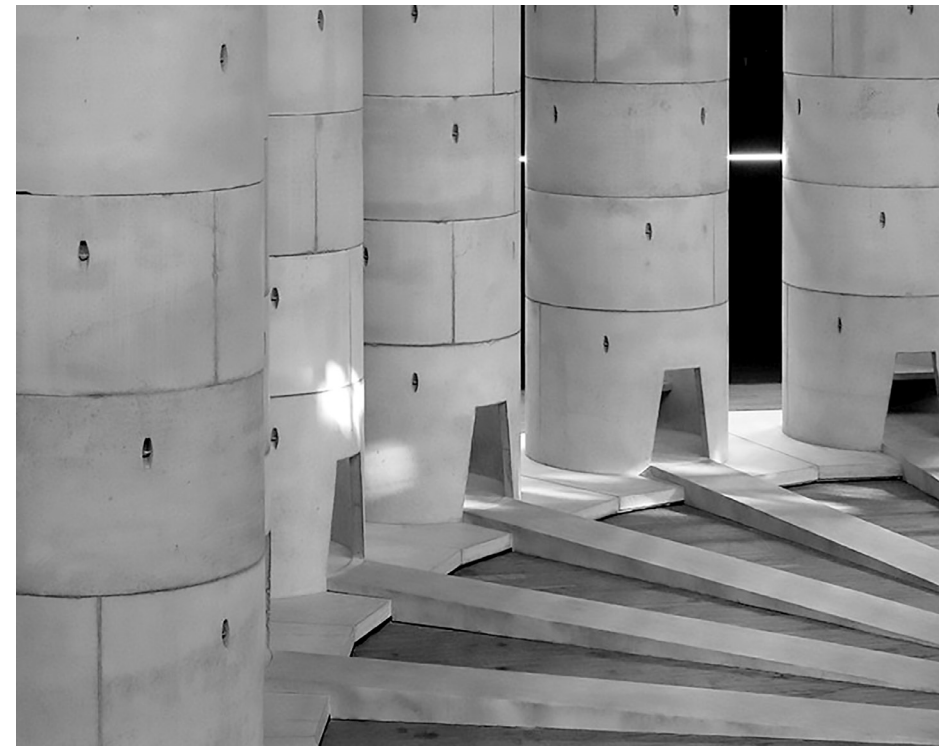
performance is delivered through excerpts from supporting documents submitted to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. It was here that I discovered that Hanna Koduah was only one of four mourners accepted to the U.S. from Accra. The other three were denied with no further information. Grieving is not so universal, then, when national borders force many to mourn alone.

The political dimension, although it always already exists, was underscored by this inclusion of immigration documents. Simon's performance installation clearly highlighted the simple fact that the ways people mourn are different, if viscerally moving and superficially relatable. Any illusion of unity, however, disturbingly approaches a sense of pre-cultural universalism. It's easy to feel as if we have





Source: <http://hyperallergic.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/occupationloss03.jpg>



much in common when we spend three minutes together engulfed by the beats of a drum. But, while the ways people mourn are different, what people are mourning for is different too. It may have been a coincidence to open the performance so close to September 11, but as any New Yorker knows, the date cannot be ignored, and I had encountered a few modes of New York City's mourning in the preceding days. For me, 9/11 images resurfaced during the performance, but I can be sure that these images were my own. After spending some time with the provided booklet, I found that the practice of Kantaomming, performed here by three men from Cambodia, nearly disappeared during the cultural destruction of the Khmer Rouge era. I also found that professional

female Shiite lamenters are at the margins of society, here represented by Lala Ismayilova and Haji Rahila Jafarova from Azerbaijan. I was able to enter their cell as a woman, but men could only listen from beyond the entrance. Indeed, we all have much to mourn. At a personal level, perhaps mourning itself is universal, but the objects being mourned are starkly different.

The ambiguity of what exactly was being mourned added to the complexities of the installation. In the absence of a personal impulse to mourn, witnessing such intensity of emotion felt, at times, uncomfortable and voyeuristic. But the authenticity of anyone's mourning was questionable as these mourners are professionals. Perhaps they themselves are not mourning anyone or anything specific to their

own lives either. Perhaps, rather than actively mourning, these performers are perfect examples of affective labor in action. But the question will remain ambiguous as the audience is not empowered to ask such questions, or indeed to interact at all with the mourners. Language barriers might be one obstacle, but there were performative barriers of the artistic space as well, with the audience instructed to remain silent. I was in a cell with the Shiite lamenters as the thirty-minute performance period ended. The women stopped, looked at me and the other woman in the space, and said, "Thank you." It took me a moment to bring myself out of the performance mindset, where the women were off-limits performers, into the reality of two women sharing an intimate space, where I could form my own "thank you" in response. The problem is that the audience was encouraged to see each performer as something separate from themselves — to watch quietly and sample these exemplars of a foreign tradition as voyeurs, rather than relate to them at any physical or metaphysical level. And so, their status as the exotic Other is never questioned. Perhaps *An Occupation of Loss* would have felt more like an honest study of the world's mourning if mourners not marked as "the Other" to a New York audience were also included. Priests and rabbis also perform professional mourning tasks, do they not?

Source: <http://afasiaarchzine.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/OMA--Simon--An-Occupation-of-Loss-1.jpg>



## WHAT IS THE DSC?

Well, the Doctoral Students' Council is the elected body of masters' and Ph.D. students that makes policy, distributes the student fee monies, and represents student concerns to the administration. Students can access their program's allocation of student fees once a program is represented on the DSC. Who are your program representatives? See [here](#) to find out. If your program does not have representation on the DSC yet, please email [membership@cunydisc.org](mailto:membership@cunydisc.org) for more info. And, be sure to drop-in during our [office-hours](#) in room 5495, located in the Robert E. Gilleece Student Center on the 5th floor. While here, you can grab free coffee (while supplies last), *buy discounted movie tickets* (\$9 each for AMC/Loews; \$8.50 for Regal; \$7.50 each for Angelika), and *stock up on free safer sex supplies*.

## CHEAP FITNESS CLASSES AT THE GC? YES. HERE'S THE DEAL:

The Graduate Center offers fitness classes facilitated by the DSC and the Student Affairs office. Registration for the second half of the Fall 2016 semester began on Monday, October 17th, but there is still space. Students must register in person at the Student Affairs office, room 7301 (be sure to bring your student ID). Yoga classes are \$15 total for 6 sessions, and Pilates classes are \$30 total for 6 sessions.

## GET TO KNOW THE DSC'S AFFILIATES:

The Affiliates are extensions of the DSC who focus on specific issues and areas. Just like the DSC, the Affiliates are also student-run organizations. Here's what they do:

## THE ADJUNCT PROJECT

[The Adjunct Project](#) (AP) organizes GC student-workers to improve their collective position by raising consciousness about academic labor issues and their solutions. In the long-term, the AP aims to challenge the individualistic, atomized, competitive atmosphere of academia. Subscribe to their listserv by sending an email to [listserv@gc.listserv.cuny.edu](mailto:listserv@gc.listserv.cuny.edu) with [SUBSCRIBE ADJUNCT-L](#) in the body of the email.

## THE ADVOCATE

[The GC Advocate](#) serves as the newspaper for the students, staff, and faculty of the Graduate Center. It publishes six issues per academic year, each featuring five cover articles and an editorial. The paper invites Graduate Center students and community members interested in writing articles for the paper to consult their [contribution guidelines](#).

## OPENGUNY

As the GC community's student-based, open-source, academic, participatory digital medium, OpenCUNY works with GC students to develop personal websites, interactive environments for chartered organizations, student associations, conferences, graduate research, and an array of other initiatives. [Become a participant today!](#)

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