A New Form of Segregation Causes Havoc in the 21st Century

BY MEREDITH CARBONELL

Arizona has tried to emphasize that racial profiling will not be used many civil rights activists and the federal government are concerned.

People all over the country have called for protesting and boycotting everything that has to do with Arizona. According to the New York Times article “Diamondbacks Face Backlash Over Immigration Law,” people have begun protesting in areas such as sports. Representative Jose E. Serrano, a democrat of New York, has pleaded with Major League Baseball to change the location of the 2011 All-Star Game which is set to take place in Phoenix, Arizona. In the same New York Times article Mark Ganis, a consultant at the New York Times on marketing matters in sports such as baseball and football, does not think the call for boycotting will have an impact. Ganis states, “People oftentime have already purchased their tickets and are not going to throw them away because in another state they have passed a law they have no say over.” It appears as though Ganis might be right. An official from the Chicago Cubs stated that attendance at a game against the Diamondbacks provided no indication that people were skipping the game and attendance at the game met expectations.

Sylvia Allen, an Arizona State Senator, provides her explanation as to why she supports Senate Bill 1070 in the article “Arizona’s immigration law called necessary.” in the San Francisco Chronicle. Senator Allen shares stories of people who live by the borders who have been heavily effected by illegal immigrants in a negative way. According to Allen, several American citizens have been killed by illegal immigrants crossing the borders. In addition, property owners have had property stolen and vandalized on numerous occasions. Senator Allen believes the media never displays these stories of the negative side of illegal immigration due to its idealization of illegal immigrants being law-abiding day laborers when there are many illegal immigrants in federal and state prisons who have committed serious crimes.

In the Chronicle article Senator Allen states: “This has to stop. The border can be secured. We have the technology, we have the ability to stop this invasion. We must know who is coming into the country.”

Facebook Can Get You Fired!

BY OLIVIA HAND

Pictures, posts, blogs and tweets. All of these activities are associated with popular sites Facebook and Twitter, the latest craze to sweep the internet. Although these social networks may be a convenient way to keep in touch with friends and family, they may not be the best way to land a job.

Facebook launched in 2004 and was designed strictly for Harvard University students. Within the year students from other colleges and universities caught on and wanted to join. Today, facebook has over 400 million active users, ranging from high school students to business moguls. People use these sites to upload recent pictures, update their status and interact with friends and family. There’s no denying that facebook is a fun and easy way to reconnect with people, however these websites have quickly turned into online diaries. People post blogs and tweets that in some cases have a shock factor at how personal they can get. These days, people are just inviting anyone and everyone into their private lives. “It’s amazing how many things people just put out there.” says Sue Murphy, Director of National Resources. Many people assume that by making their accounts private, their pictures and posts will only been seen by their facebook friends. But when it comes to the internet, how private is private?

According to Facebook’s Privacy Policy, most recently revised April 22, 2010, “We cannot guarantee that only authorized persons will view your information. We cannot ensure that information you share on Facebook will not become publicly available.” The policy also states, “Information set to “everyone” is publicly available.”

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Why Does he Smile?

By Johnathan Melendez

Is it possible that the attempted car bombing in Times Square is connected with recent developments in Iraq? According to an article in the New York Times by Steven Lee Myers and Duraid Adnan, two Al-Qaeda leaders were killed in a raid in Baghdad, Iraq, within the same article, it states that a few days later, specifically April 23rd, a series of bombings occurred. They reported that the targets were hotels housing foreign journalists in town for a recount in their recent election. The New York Post stated two of their journalists were injured, but reported only minor injuries.

A car bomb shows up in Times Square, NYC. According to an article in the New York Times by Mark Mazzetti, Sabrina Tavernise and Jack Healy, the bomb was made from crude materials and a faulty detonator; it is nonetheless an item meant to end life. Does this also mean that terrorism is once again border jumping? According to a follow up by the New York Times, Pakistani authorities had arrested suspects connected to Faisal Shahzad, the suspect to the Times Square incident. Wasn’t the new “state of emergency” instilled after 9/11 supposed to stop this from happening?

In Iraq, security officer Abu Haider who works at the Harmar Hotel had told the New York Times of gunshots being fired at a security check point for the hotel and then a car speeding through. It then exploded fifty feet from the hotel. This and other attacks have sparked a sense of skepticism in the security of Iraq. Also causing turmoil is political strife, in which hardly anyone seems to have direct power in the failing Iraq government.

Yet in my opinion, the Iraqi government is not the only government that should be blamed. According to CNN, Shahzad was able to purchase a ticket even though his name was on the no-fly list. Why? JFK airport did not refresh its information. He was caught only minutes before take off because of protocol checks going on at airlines, did Faisal Shahzad, a man with “possible” ties to al-Qaeda leaders, have the detonator not failed, flash backs to 9/11 would have came to the American public in a fiery explosion, causing death and chaos. The police had shut down the blocks on 45th between 8th and 7th avenue, and the amount of people that had to be shepherded to safety was enormous.

And though Obama had sworn to withdraw American soldiers from Iraq, we found the need to station soldiers in Baghdad, where by the way, the bombings had occurred. The madness will never end until one side is gone, or both sides kill each other. America has a massive front of security, but how with all of our presence in the region were these bombs able to do severe damage to hotels that housed foreign journalists? And how, even after 9/11, with all of the “random” checks going on at airlines, did Faisal Shahzad, a man with “possible” ties to terrorists overseas, almost commit this atrocity?

According to speculation by William Bratton, a former police commissioner in an article for the NY Daily News, terrorists are embracing globalization and checking all flight manifests by U.S. border patrol and Customs. According to FOX NY, the Wall street Journal reported he had admitted to have received bomb making training during a previous five month long stay in Pakistan. Yet the fact of the matter is, another security breach has been conducted, and had the detonator not failed, flash backs to 9/11 would have came to the American public in a fiery explosion, causing death and chaos. The police had shut down the blocks on 45th between 8th and 7th avenue, and the amount of people that had to be shepherded to safety was enormous.

The Second Great Depression?

By Michael Berndt

Looking for a job? Join the club. In the land of opportunity we have seen nothing but despair and desperation lately. The economy has been in a recession that has lead to a depression, people are getting fired, companies are going bankrupt, and everyone is left with the question “How am I going to make money?” According to Gina Arnott of the New York Times, things look like they are going to get even worse before they get better.

Although the rate of unemployment has gotten a little better, that is not saying much. Still, the unemployment level in New York is currently at its highest point. According to Jamie Pritscher of the New York Times in his article “America’s Mess” the overall U-6 measurement of unemployment, which is a measure of the unemployment situation in the United States, stands at 16.5 percent. Pritscher further reports that these numbers differ in favor of gender. Men seem to fare substantially worse than women: The unemployment rate for adult men remains 10 percent, while the rate for women is now at 7.9 percent.

For all the students who attend QCC that don’t know whether or not school is for them; maybe they should take the following consideration. According to the US Census Bureau, people who earn a Bachelor’s degree on average will earn twice as much as a person who only graduates high school. People who only graduate high school will on average earn $30,000 dollars a year, while a
New Yorkers like everyone else have to cope with a stagnant economy, increasing unemployment, and adding salt to these wounds, budget cuts coming from the state and city governments. Governor Paterson and Mayor Bloomberg are both proposing cuts across the board from health care, transportation, homeless aid and much more. CUNY is looking at cuts that could total to more than $100 million dollars. Students and faculty alike are looking for ways to cope.

According to a press release from Gov. Paterson’s office, the state deficit for the next fiscal year is expected to be $7.4 billion dollars. This is causing mayhem in Albany as the Senate and Governor work out ways to deal with such an enormous deficit. One way is cuts to the city and state university systems. Paterson plans to cut money from the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) awards while also making the requirements for eligibility a lot stricter, such as eliminating TAP for graduate students, reducing awards for children of retired workers, and many others. This is on top of reduced funding from the state to the public universities that will drive the cut to $81 millions dollars.

At the very same time Mayor Bloomberg plans to cut $43 million from CUNY’s community college budget for the 2011 Fiscal Year, and stop funding Vallone, Safety Net and other scholarship programs according to the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) CUNY’s faculty union’s website. The cuts imposed on CUNY will authorize a tuition hike that students will pay for while having less available financial aid. According to College Board’s Trends in College Pricing, textbook prices are increasing at twice the rate of inflation, while financial aid covers only a fraction of what students are paying for supplies and books. The MTA budget is increasingly fragile and could see service cuts and fare hikes in 2011 making transportation to and from school more expensive. The lack of funding students will receive and the increases in expenses they will have to deal with means an increasingly heavy burden will be carried by college students in the coming years.

Cuts in other areas of the government’s budget will no doubt bring a higher unemployment rate, which according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is already over 10% in New York City as of February. As people find themselves unemployed and unable to afford private education, large numbers of people are making their way to community colleges. A Feb. 2009 article in Community College Times states that community college enrollment is increasing nationwide, while the cuts imposed by state governments are stretching the programs and services such colleges provide very thin. The article also noted that low tuition and vocational oriented education community colleges help students find jobs that are resilient to a bad economy; other states like Missouri and Michigan are trying to avoid cuts to their community colleges because of their contributions to the state economy.

Paterson agrees that the cuts he is proposing do not paint a pretty picture for New York, but he feels they are a necessary evil. At a Nov. 2009 town hall meeting in Liverpool, New York, he said making these cuts made him feel “pain that is indescribable . . . But it is the only way to keep this state afloat.” While the cuts will not help improve the quality of life for New Yorkers, he remains adamant that the consequences of not trying to close the deficit would be much worse. The budget is still past its deadline and has not gone through the state senate. Paterson claims he’s pulling no punches to pass it through, even planning to cut a days work from “non-essential” government employees.

Others agree that cuts need to be made, but feel that the cuts to education are too much. State Senator Own H. Johnson stated on a newsletter on the NY senate website that, “No one disputes that New York is facing difficult choices in terms of closing the budget deficit, but we have to make smart cuts that won’t jeopardize New York’s ability to sustain an economic recovery... The Governor’s latest proposal to cut an additional $114 million from New York’s higher education funding will only compound the system’s financial problems and hurt efforts to create new jobs and keep our youth in New York State.”

Students and Faculty alike who agree with Senator Johnson’s position are standing together in opposition to these cuts. NYPIRG through their Higher Education, Mass Transit, and Book Exchange projects are looking to help students cope and fight back against the difficulties facing them. NYPIRG recruits students to sign petitions, lobby politicians and rally for change. The Straphangers campaign helps lobby for lower fares and better service for New York City residents. They have invited students to voice their opinions on the MTA budget cuts at public hearings. They have also created the Book Exchange

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The Basic Skills Writing Contest

Cameras flashed, music played in the background and glasses of bubbly cider clinked as twenty proud students, accompanied by family and friends, gathered on April 21st to receive prizes and certificates for winning the Basic Skills Writing Contest. The Contest honors achievement in all categories of writing, from essays to stories to journal entries to poetry. Students in every course and level of the Basic Skills Department, both native English speakers and students of English as a Second Language, are invited to participate in the annual competition. “We’re always delighted by the talent we discover in our students,” said

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The Sixth Queensborough Honors Conference

BY PARIS SVORONOS

On Saturday April 23 the Sixth Queensborough (and second CUNY-wide community college) Honors Conference was held from 12:30pm to roughly 4:30pm in the Medical Arts first floor and basement/Science lobby area. More than 170 abstracts were submitted involving more than 200 students concurrently presenting in 17 different rooms plus the Science Building lobby area. We were also honored with participants from LaGuardia, New York City Tech and Borough of Manhattan Community Colleges.

We were privileged to have the whole administration attend. President Marti, Provost Call and Dean Cuomo made introductory remarks that provided a wonderful feeling to all attendees that included a lot of full time faculty as well as more than a half dozen adjucnts and another half dozen of college lab technicians. We were also happy to see Dr. Brenda Henry-Offor, CUNY Pipeline Coordinator, Office of Educational Opportunity and Diversity Programs (OEODP), also provide introductory remarks praising the participation of our Queensborough students at the CUNY Pipeline Conference that was held at the Graduate Center on Friday February 19. Brenda’s comments echoed what appeared on page 3 of the latest CUNY Matters issue (Spring 2010).

The students were in their best attire confidently presenting their findings, outlining projects and interpreting their research results proving to themselves and all of us that they are no different than any senior college students. Several parents were also in attendance witnessing the quality education Queensborough faculty offers their kids.

The QCC Honors program is currently in its 10th year. Despite the initial problems which included skepticism, indifference and lack of confidence by both faculty and students the program has made great strides in getting where it is today. More than half of the academic departments offer either Honors classes or Honors contracts. This has been achieved by providing opportunities to motivated students who want events such as this to showcase what they can achieve. We hope that this will also have a ripple effect among students who may be unsure of their abilities and hesitant about taking a challenge. I am grateful to my fellow chairs whose integrity, vision of academic excellence and pride to chip in this effort make such a conference a success. I am also proud of all faculty and CLTs who consider the grooming of raw incoming students to ready-for-transfer graduates as part of their educational involvement.

The following links offer a first glimpse of the conference. Phillip Roncoroni created the link below:

Honors Conference 2010: Introductory Remarks
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7ZH14BXQos

Our own Dr. Jun Shin has compiled photos from various rooms that can be seen in http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/Chemistry/QCC_Honor_2010.asp

We invite you to contact him at JSHIN@QCC.CUNY.EDU if you have any more photos that you would like to see posted on the QCC website.

Thank you all for your support. There are even many more better days ahead of us at Queensborough!
On Tuesday, April 13, 2010 the city of New York in its frivolous attempt to bridge the gap in its budget is now contemplating charging the homeless rent for the shelter they provide for them, but, can they pay?

The poor being vulnerable and at a disadvantage to the existing political system, are now being stripped of one of their basic necessities. Families faced with job displacements and foreclosures are now at the mercy of politicians who refuse to see that some of these people cannot pay. And that the current state of the economy is what has forced them into becoming homeless.

According to Women In Need, one of the largest providers of both shelter and supportive housing to homeless families throughout New York City, 80% of the homeless in New York City are women and children.

Daily Homeless Census, on March 24, 2010 tallied 35,107 New Yorkers without home. This number included 8,092 families with children and 6,865 single adults. The city states, 2,328 individuals living in New York City are without shelter, a drop from 3,306 a year ago and 4,395 individuals in 2005.

On March 19, 2010, the New York Times published an article “Number of People Living on New York Streets Soars”. The article states that the city’s annual tally conducted on January 2009 indicates an additional 783 homeless people on the streets and in the subway system increasing the total to 3,111 with an additional 38,000 people living in shelters. The Times states that, more homeless people were found on the streets in every borough, the largest increase was in Brooklyn, where an additional 228 people were counted, more than double the total in January 2009. Manhattan had a 47 percent increase, Staten Island 45 percent, Queens a 14 percent and in Bronx 6 percent.

These homeless statistics are staggering, and these numbers will increase as the city now wants to charge for shelters that were once free. The Daily News, Tuesday, April 13, 2010 published an article “City to charge rent to homeless shelter residents with jobs” The Daily News states, that the new policy is based on a 1997 state law that required the city to charge rent to the homeless who can afford it, but the city never did, until pressed to do so since a state audit last year. Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs said “open-ended handouts, we know, don’t work” she went on to say “this is not a money maker. We’re not doing this to close budget gaps. It’s really the principle involved.”

But, what type of principle teaches us to get someone while they are down? What Deputy Mayor Gibbs refuses to see is that some people don’t like handouts and would prefer to work if given the opportunity. And with the present state of the economy an exception needs to be made. These exceptions would facilitate factors such as unemployment which is now at an all time high, reduced working hours or layoffs. Without aids like free shelters the homeless will be left with no alternative but to hit the street. This will only create a plague throughout the five boroughs of New York.

Rather than trying to capitalize off the number of people living on the streets, the city should look for other solutions to the problem. And charging rent is not one of them, it just does not make sense. If these families could pay rent then why are they living on the streets? First, the city should find the cause of the problem. Then, address it, if it is job loss, the city should provide these families with jobs. Provide skill training, basic money management skills which includes saving options and making a monthly budget along with other educational opportunities. In the long run, these homeless families would be able to save and move out of these shelters and become independent and productive citizens. Ultimately, the city will benefit from their taxes.

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The declining rate of marriage today is crippling the American family, injuring the well-being of children and triggering social crises within society as a whole. In 1980, the US Census Bureau reported that an average fifty million of Americans, age fifteen and over, were married and living with their spouses. However, in 2009 the Census Bureau reported that the above has declined to an average of twenty-five million couples who were married and living together.

The living arrangements of family members have been changing overtime. In 1980, the Census report revealed that seventy-seven percent of children lived with two married parents. In 2008’s report, only sixty-seven percent of children were living with two married parents. Changes from the 1980s can also be viewed among racial groups. In the Hispanic community, seventy-five percent of children lived with two married parents. In 2008, however, only sixty-four percent of children were found living in homes with married parents.

In an online article by Sharon Jayson titled, “Marriage Benefits Men Economically Too;” last updated January 19th 2010 for USA Today, a new study shows that marriage benefits men economically. More women are earning college degrees than men. This indicates their ability to combat the financial constraints men have often faced alone in the past. The study showed that in the year 1970, sixty-four percent of graduates were men and thirty-six percent were women; in 2007, an average fifty-three percent were women and forty-six percent were men. Sharon also indicates, however, that, “more parents share the workload when mom learns to let go.” As equality between man and woman evolve into the modern era, compromise becomes a major issue.

According to an article Daily News reported on January 16th, President Sarkozy first opened the door to a possible ban last year in June when he told a parliament session in Versailles that such dress is “not welcome in France” as it is a sign of oppression upon women. Luc Chatal, spokesman of the French government says that, “the ban on veils covering the whole face should be general, in every public space, because the dignity of women cannot be put in doubt.”

While those opposing the veil consider it a symbol which attacks gender equality, many women who wear it say that they do so voluntarily to express their faith. The entire argument has made many Muslims uncomfortable as well as angry. Several scholars from among the Sunni sect of Islam say that to define a liberated Muslim woman would be hard to explain because of the commandments in the Shariah, set of Islamic laws, followed by Muslims taken from the Quran, which states for women to cover themselves. However, when identification is necessary in some public accommodations, women are allowed to show their faces if they are asked to.

On Wednesday, March 31th, an article in the Guardian, a newspaper in the U.K., reported in an article, “Belgium Moves Towards Public Ban on Burqa and Niqab,” and that the home affairs committee of Brussels federal government unanimously voted to ban both partial and full face covering, leaving Belgium on its way to become the first country to outlaw the niqab in public. It then quotes Daniel Bacquéalune, the liberal MP, and member of the parliament, who proclaimed that it is wrong to allow someone to claim the right to look at others without being seen. “It is necessary that the law forbids the wearing of clothes that totally mask and enclose an individual. Wearing the burqa in public is not compatible with an open, liberal, tolerant society.”

Though the Belgian legislators have previously claimed that they are motivated both by security and morality, here it seems to be an issue of socialization. According to CNN news, when a census was taken on how many Muslims reside in Belgium, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life estimates that the country is home to about 281,000 Muslims, 3 percent of the country’s population. And of those 3 percent, only about 300 to 400 women wear the niqab or burqa. How much social harm can this small percentage cause? THROUGH THE LENS

On January 28th, the New York Times published an article, “Face-Veil Issue in France Shifts to Parliament for Debate”, which reports that various polls show a varying majority of French favoring a ban on the full veil. Though it is estimated that no more than 2,000 Muslim women cover their face and the Muslim leaders in France have declared that Islam does not require women to cover their faces, the niqab is widely viewed in France as a gateway to extremism, an insult to women as well as an offense against the country’s secular values. While the passing of a bill outlawing the face veil is in discussion in France and Belgium, similar conflicts are occurring and are under consideration in neighboring countries such as Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, as well as the province of Quebec in Canada.
century there is a current female Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton who was the first lady of the United States of America and a New York Senator for over 5 years. Nancy Pelosi is the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Yet, gender discrimination in the workplace with regard to salaries persists.

On June 10th of 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law. Women’s and men’s salaries still haven’t reached uniformity almost four decades later. The Wage Gap, a history of Pay Iniquity, and the Equal Pay Act is a geometric indicator often used as an index of the status of women’s earnings relative to men’s. The Wage Gap is expressed as a percentage and is calculated by dividing the median annual earnings for women by median annual earnings for men. The closings of the Wage Gap between men and women have been at a rate of about half a penny a year since 1963 when the Equal Pay Act was signed.

A range of explanations for the constant Wage Gap have been obtained. One explanation is that older workers have factored into Wage Gap equation, and many of these women from an older generation work in jobs still subject to the attitudes and atmosphere of the past. Women under 25 working full time earn 93.2% of men’s salaries compared to those 25 and older, who earned 79.4% of what men made.

In 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act which allows victims to file a discrimination complaint with the government against their employer within 1890 days of their last pay check. Beforehand, victims were only allowed 180 days of the first unreasonable paycheck. This act is named after Lilly Ledbetter who worked at Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. for 19 years before she discovered that she was being paid 30 percent to 40 percent less for the same work as her male peers.

President Obama has vowed to reduce the Wage Gap between the genders. Women currently make approximately 80 cents for every dollar that men earn. Sarah Standiford an executive director of the Maine Women’s Lobby, a nonprofit membership organization stated, “Are women workers really worth less than men? Any American of good conscience would say ‘no.’ We must ensure that our laws and workplace practices say ‘no’ as well.”

More than 12 million families with children rely for the most part on women’s earnings. More than a third of mothers in working families in every state but Wyoming and Utah are the family’s primary breadwinner—these women provide at least half of a couple’s earnings or are single working mothers. The District of Columbia has the highest share of breadwinner mothers, with 65.8 percent of mothers in working families bringing home at least half of their family’s earnings.

In the midst of this unprecedented recession, pay equity is more than a question of fairness; it’s a question of survival. It’s time to end the wage gap once and for all. Women have gained vast improvements in the workforce since the Equal Pay Act, but the obstinate fact remains that four and a half decades later the basic goal of the act has not been realized.

The Second Great Depression?

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person who graduates college will earn approximately $52,000. Low education levels are a reason why our economy is suffering and our unemployment is so high. Many people are not qualified for the positions that are available. Many people don’t see the need for an education, but many uneducated people leads to a horrible economy.

A reason our economy can’t seem to shake the depression that we have entered is because of the number of people filing for unemployment. People who have lost their jobs have been avoiding looking for work and are living with the money received from unemployment. If people do not work, the economy will never be boosted. One problem may be that many people tend to think, if you could get paid without having to work, why would you? The constant number of people taking advantage of unemployment benefits, while helping themselves, is steadily helping America slip deeper and deeper into depression.

There are a few more key reasons that our unemployment rate is so high; for example, the great influx of people that are immigrating to our country, legally and illegally. With so many companies going under and people striving for jobs, the amount of people that live here double to the amount of jobs available. Technology is also crippling us in some ways. We are building machines that will triple the output that people produce manually and for half of the price. Although technology is needed, the cost it imposes via employment should be more seriously considered.

Many people are left feeling hopeless while the economy seems to be in a downward spiral. If plans of how to greatly increase the strength of the American economy does not start soon, we will be headed the same way we were in 1929 with the Great Depression. We have to be very careful and very smart with whatever it is we decide to do next, or America might be in a worse place than ever.

Looming Budget Cuts Spells Trouble for CUNY Students

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where students can buy and sell their books to and from other students online at www.nyprig.org. This helps keep students expenses on books at a minimum.

NYPIRG and the PSC organized Action Days where students and faculty came together in protest of cuts to education. On a trip to Albany on March 9th there were around 200 students and faculty from campuses across CUNY who came together and rallied against the Governor’s cuts. On May 5th another lobbying day took place at City Hall against Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s budget plan. Students of CUNY came early in the morning to share their stories and experiences with about 20 City Council members and to ask them to avoid making the cuts at all cost. Many council members were moved by the personal statements and said they stood in solidarity with CUNY, noting the importance the institution has for so many New Yorkers.

Queensborough’s NYPIRG Project Coordinator, Lindsay Bernard, urges students to get involved to make a real change. She believes it’s the students who can make a difference if enough take action, and they have plenty reason to because the state and city cuts affect student’s education and taxes. As the students who lobbied demonstrated at the Action Days there’s no substitute for personal action. Whereas New York appears to be moving toward a foggy future one thing is clear, if people take a stand we can make that future brighter.
Local, National & International News

Stupid Americans

BY TASHA TOMLINSO

Are Americans really stupid when compared to the rest of the world? There have been many debates over the last decade about the quality of American education compared to that of other industrialized countries.

According to an article titled “U.S. Education Falling behind Those of Other Countries” on the Saratoga Falcon.org, October 29, 2009, American students have the shortest school day when compared to European countries and East Asia. For example, American students on average attend school for 180 days per year compared to 195 days for Germans, and 200 for East Asians. In addition, American students have an average of two to three hours of homework each night (and many parents complain that this is too much). But when compared to Europe 2-3 hours is very little homework in countries where attending after school programs is a requirement for students.

Not only do American students have the shortest school year they also have the shortest school days. On average American students attend school for about six and a half hours each day and academic lessons are crammed into the morning and early afternoon. Other countries such as Sweden and Denmark have an average of about eight hours each day of school.

The six and a half hours schedule is good in a sense because it allows students to engage in other activities such as football, dance, and art. However, the benefits that the students get from these activities do not always help them academically. Many education experts recommend that to make sure American students are not falling behind students from other countries that we should extend the school day and make after school programs a requirement for all students from first to twelfth grade. As they point out, when summer months come around there is no doubt that much of the material that was learned throughout the year will be forgotten due to lack of practice. However this is not true for all American students. Students that come from families that put an emphasis on education are typically placed in summer camps and other educational programs that are designed to help them academically. Of course, many of these programs are privately run, and not every family can afford their services.

According to The New York Times article “Study Compares States’ Math and Science Scores with Other Countries,” published on November 14, 2007, American students perform very poorly on international mathematics and science tests compared to countries such as Singapore and several other Asian countries. Even students from the highest achieving American schools are out performed by these students.

However, all hope is not lost for our country. Over the past several years there have been reforms made to hundreds of schools across the nation. These schools are a part of the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), and they start the school day at 7:30am and end at 5pm. These schools have more instructional days than the average American school and the students get 60% more class time than the average American student.

According to the article at Saratoga falcon.org, President Barrack Obama has stated that school administrators should “rethink the school day.” He also said that “we can no longer afford an academic calendar designed for when America was a nation of farmers who needed their children at home plowing the land at the end of each day.” In other words, we need to improve our education system if we want to remain the most powerful and influential country in the world. Our students are the future of America and need to match the academic levels of students from European and East Asian countries.

According to my grandmother, “We should labor for learning before we grow old because learning is better than silver and gold; silver and gold will vanish away but a good education will never decay.”

America’s Debt Reduced by a Video Game?

BY JANIER JAVIER

The ballooning debt in the U.S. has become a huge issue for everyone. The country is in debt for 12.8 trillion dollars and now the government wants to leave it to the people to help with this huge deficit. According to The Hill’s ‘Obama debt panel co-chairman working on deficit-reduction video game’, by Walter Alarkon, the co-chairman of President Barack Obama’s fiscal commission “is working on a video game to make plain what it would take to eliminate soaring deficits.” And in USA Today’s ‘Nation’s soaring deficit calls for painful choices’, by Richard Wolf, we learn that Erskine Bowles has discussed with Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer a new game “that would enable anyone with a computer to take a stab at balancing the budget.”

Not much has been said about how Microsoft plans to execute this project, will it be anything like the Sims? One thing is for sure, it will need to have the success a video game called “America’s Army” had in sales, which is highly unlikely considering the different platform.

This game won’t be the first government issued video game to ever be made; according to www.GameSpot.com, games like “America’s Army” were created to help the government. “America’s Army” was used as a recruiting tool for the army; apparently, the debt reducing game will be marketed to recruit help in solving the federal deficit. In the article ‘Latest Recruiting Tool Winning Over Hearts, Minds Of Teens’, CBS News’ Jaime Holguin states that “America’s Army” had surpassed even the Pentagon’s expectations becoming the number one online action game in the country. The Army hasn’t seen a recruiting tool this effective since the slogan ‘Be all that you can be.’” Co-chairman of President Barack Obama’s fiscal commissions can only hope this debt reducing video game will have the success “America’s Army” did.

The Sims, although not government issued, has also been a huge success as a video game. There have been numerous Sims games from SimCity to The Sims 3. These games allow you to create your own world which you have to maintain. The Sims is a great tool to teach someone how to maintain a budget in a virtual world that you create. Most games already have a solution programmed within the game; it’s just your job to find it. How will this game soon to be created by Microsoft be any different and help with the real world deficit?

USA Today’s Richard Wolf talks about solutions being “Sacrifices and hard choices.” They throw numbers out and see how they work out in the long run, for example, raising gas taxes 50 cents. If this is Microsoft’s intention, it seems bad. It will have a hard time selling the game; when someone buys a video game they want to be entertained. Still, will this project be a total waste of money? 12.8 trillion dollars is a huge hole to dig out of; will America dig itself out of its own debt with a computer game, or dig itself a deeper sinkhole?

The country is in debt for 12.8 trillion dollars and now the government wants to leave it to the people to help with this huge deficit. According to The Hill’s ‘Obama debt panel co-chairman working on deficit-reduction video game’, by Walter Alarkon, the co-chairman of President Barack Obama’s fiscal commission “is working on a video game to make plain what it would take to eliminate soaring deficits.” And in USA Today’s ‘Nation’s soaring deficit calls for painful choices’, by Richard Wolf, we learn that Erskine Bowles has discussed with Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer a new game “that would enable anyone with a computer to take a stab at balancing the budget.”

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Health Care Reform
And The Potential Effects On the Country

BY LUIS CANALS

Since President Barack Obama was sworn into office, he has pledged change. On March 21, 2010, with almost 30 minutes left till midnight, the House of Representatives voted in favor of health care reform. This will cost the country 940 billion dollars over the next 10 years and could be what Obama’s administration is remembered for, or it could be what finally sent this country into complete financial turmoil. There are positives and negatives to this bill, although the positives of health care for all are hard to deny.

The health care reform bill was passed by the Democratic Party, literally. It was passed without bipartisan support as it failed to gain one vote from a Republican. It passed 219-212 in favor of reform. The lack of Republican voting directly shows the strict belief by most Republicans that capitalism will suffer with government involvement in the economy. With the passing of this bill, the government is very much involved in the economy on micro and macro levels. According to TheWhiteHouse.com, there is a penalty for those who decide they do not want health care, either a fine of 750 per person, 2250 per household or a 2% tax increase. People should have the freedom to choose to pay for health care or not. In 2009, the average cost of health care for individuals was almost 5000 dollars and for a family, almost 13,500. Health care will be cheaper now but will still be a substantial amount. We will have to pay for health care or pay the fine.

The health care reform bill will cost the country 940 billion dollars over the next 10 years. This will not impact individuals making below $200,000 per year as much as it will impact individuals making over that amount. Businesses will also feel the financial strain. Costs for large companies will go up. According to an article written by John Garcia on abclocal.go.com, Companies like Caterpillar, best known for their mechanical equipment, say that costs for them will go up 100 million dollars. To stay out of bankruptcy, the companies will have to lay off more people, as they have been doing for the past two years, or pay the fine per employee. Either way, if there are more costs to a company, there will possibly be more layoffs.

The White House website states that the federal deficit will decrease thanks to this bill. The major financial problem that is apparent is for big companies. These are hard economic times and costs resulting from the health care reform could push some companies towards bankruptcy. Ford and GM, two of the biggest American automakers, were already very close to bankruptcy and were bailed out by the government. The effect of this bill on these companies could be significant.

If all goes as planned, this bill will have a positive effect. People will one day have free or cheap health care and the country as a whole will improve because of it. It is obvious that health care for all will help the people, the problem lies within the costs to business owners and the wealthy. House minority leader John Boehner stated “If we pass this bill, there will be no turning back.” The United States has one of the worst health care systems among developed countries, according to a study done by the World Health Organization, so this can only make our health care system better.

So far, it is hard to point out the major affects of Obama’s presidency. The health care reform could make or break his reputation and cement him in history as a president who used his time adequately. This was one of his goals during his campaigning for the presidency. Now that he has reached one of his goals, he can focus on the rest of them.

Too Good to be True

BY TIFFANY GIANNONE

Struggling to maintain a healthy lifestyle and image of the “perfect body,” magazine covers and tabloids scream diet pills, steroids, and fat burners across the internet and television every day. To some these advertisements are obnoxious and senseless, but many fall for their promises as the easy “quick fix” for spring break or summer.

Supplements, growth hormones, fat burners, and diuretics are used to help express exaggerated physiques. With dehydration to the body and the buildup of high concentrated muscle mass and lean muscle tissue, stress is pushed onto the body, organs, and mind. Invested in showing a healthy lifestyle, diet, and exercise regime consumers of these products explain that they are simply preparing for bathing suit season, and they deny that such practices are dangerous.

According to Katie Thomas’s article “Bodybuilders See Kidney Damage with Steroids,” the damage that bodybuilders impose on their bodies through steroids and diuretics is linked to an advancing kidney disease known as focal segmental glomerulosclerosis, based on a study by pathologists at the Colombia University Medical Center. With a high body mass index, too much stress is put on the body “as if the lifter was obese.” According to her research, at least eight body builders died at young ages during the 90’s alone. “The risk-taking has been made worse by a trend toward even larger physiques among the sport’s top competitors.” After stopping the use of such supplements, conditions improved until participants became depressed from not being able to maintain their physiques and return to the pills.

Unfortunately to the other extreme, many supplements labeled “weight loss” or “fat burners” attract thousands every single day. By putting the face of a top notch celebrity trainer and TV host on Fox Five, over the past 10 years “several third-party organizations have emerged offering certification and verification programs to supplement ingredient and product manufacturers.” "With research based on the American Botanical Council’s peer-reviewed journal HerbalGram, such verification programs fall into two categories, facility certification and product/ingredient verification. Third parties inspect and approve the company’s factory and verify the product’s label through testing of the material inside the package. Once approved, permission is granted to use the group’s “mark” or “seal” on its product in hope of increasing consumer confidence in the brand. ConsumerLab.com, the Natural Products Association, NSF International, and the United States Pharmacopoeia are the four main groups currently offering such certification. Consumers should educate themselves on the facts and issues surrounding herbal and other dietary supplements. Many use dietary supplements to help maintain desired lifestyles and for self-medication. “They forget self-medication requires self-education,” states Dr. Oz.

Many supplements labeled diet drugs and herbal pills contain illegal ingredients such as amphetamines, tranquilizers and antidepressants, “which could literally stop your heart or cause severe heart palpitations” according to Dr Oz’s recent show on April 27th 2010. These supplements have been known to cause kidney failure, liver failure, heart attacks and dependence. "Manufacturers of supplements do not need to inform consumers about side effects even when the ingredients are known to cause effects. People" (continued on page 14)
Think Before you Drink

By SHAVON ZAMBRANO

What would you do if I told you the most precious resource on Earth, water, was inundated with poison? If you didn’t know, there is fluoride added to 90% of our drinking water. You might be asking yourself, fluoride? Isn’t that the harmless chemical in my toothpaste? Wrong! The “harmless chemical” in our drinking water is hydrofluoric acid, which is a compound of fluorine.

Hydrofluoric acid is a chemical byproduct of aluminum, steel, and cement, which doesn’t sound like something you would want to be ingesting on a daily basis. Take a look at the back of any household toothpaste tube, and you will see the warning “if swallowed, contact poison control immediately”. In addition, fluoride is a key chemical in rat poison and cockroach spray, which is ironic because it is deliberately placed in our drinking water. When fluoride is added to the reservoir, it is known as water fluoridation, which the Center of disease control (C.D.C) claims is done to protect against tooth decay.

The recommended level of fluoride in the U.S public water system should be in the range of 0.7 parts per million to 1.2 ppm, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In each state and county, there are different amounts of fluoride in the water system. In New York it varies, Albany has .20 mg/L while Jamaica and Queens has 1.00 mg/L. Artificial fluoridation of water supplies is practiced in many parts of the world to battle tooth decay. But is it worth saving your teeth over losing your mind? Many accredited researchers have claimed to link water fluoridation with the onslaught of ADD, ADHD, and other disorders, which have recently been on the rise. Since water fluoridation started in the United States, there has been an overwhelming amount of evidence that overexposure to fluoride may cause serious toxic effects to the body. Do the negative effects of water fluoridation outweigh the benefits?

According to the CDC, two thirds of Americans receive fluoridated water. Since fluoride was put into the U.S. public water system, there has been a prevalence of an increasing number of cases involving dental fluorosis in children who ingest excessive amounts of fluoride. Research has shown that it can be detrimental to the forming of cells in the gums. Dental fluorosis leaves a visible discoloration, from white spots to brown and black stains (a more severe stage). According to the CDC, 32% of American children now have some form of dental fluorosis, with a 2-4% of children having moderate to severe stages.

While proponents of water fluoridation dismiss dental fluorosis as being a “cosmetic effect,” recent research indicates the rate of bone fracture among children with dental fluorosis (even with milder forms) is higher than the bone fracture rates among children with no dental fluorosis. When fluoride enters the body, it accumulates in our bones and makes them more brittle and prone to fracture. There has been much evidence from animal studies to human studies showing a lifetime of exposure to fluoride that will contribute to higher rates of hip fractures in the elderly, stated in “The Absurdities of Water Fluoridation” by Paul Connett who holds a Ph.D in chemistry and has received numerous awards and citation for his work.

Austrian researchers proved in the 1970s that as little as 1ppm of fluoride concentration can disrupt DNA repair enzymes by 50%. Fluoride prematurely ages the body, because of the distortion of the enzyme shapes, and all of the systems in the body are dependent on enzymes. When fluoride changes the enzymes, this can damage the immune system, kidney function, thyroid glands, blood circulation, brain function, and central nervous system.

Moreover, adults with chronic fluorosis and the IQ of children born and raised in the areas with endemic dental fluorosis were found to be lower.

(continued on page 14)

Why Not Make a Change?

By Kenneth Newman

In 2004, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ranked obesity as the number one health risk facing America. According to www.obesityamerica.org 400,000 people die in America each year from obesity. From 1980-2000 obesity rates doubled among adults, with 60 million adults considered obese. Obesity does not only kill, it leaves an impact on people’s lives forever. It can cause disease and death. In 2009, the United States had the percentile of obesity in the World at 30.6% of the total population.

How can Americans prevent obesity? The number one way is to STAY ACTIVE! This does not mean that you have to go to the gym everyday of the week. Staying active means a change in your lifestyle. Instead of taking an elevator, walk the stairs, or even walk to a close store instead of driving or ordering in. Eating healthy is the next big step in preventing this disease. The average person should consume 2,000 calories per day with foods such as dairy, meats, fruits, vegetables, and bread. If you watch what you are eating, the calories will not exceed the amount that your body needs. Another way of preventing obesity is replacing your soda and juices with water. This would change a 180 calorie soda to 0 calories.

“Childhood obesity is best tackled at home through improved parental involvement, increased physical exercise, better diet and restraint from eating,” said Congressman Bob Filner, as reported during Filner’s effort to change a 180 calorie soda to 0 calories. Eating healthy is the next big step in preventing this disease. The average American should consume 2,000 calories per day with foods such as wheat bread and fruits all day. A delicious 2000 calorie meal plan with food that the average American would love to have in their diet can be found at dietbites.com:

* Breakfast: Scrambled Eggs, Toast, Bacon, Jam, Skim Chocolate Milk.
* Morning Snack: 100 Calories of your Choice.
* Lunch: Taco Bell Tacos w/ Water or 0 Calorie beverages.
* Afternoon Snack: Enjoy any food housed within the healthy Dairy Food Group up to 100 calories.
* Dinner: Steak, Baked Potato, Beans, and Side Salad.
* Snack: Slimming Shake.

More than 50% of American adults do not get the recommended amount of physical activity to help their health. Adults should think about the impact of their diet on their children. Type 2 diabetes which was once believed to affect only adults is now being diagnosed among young children. Strong risk factors of diabetes 2 are family history and being overweight. A way to prevent diabetes 2 is to lose weight and be active.

Obesity is a very dangerous disease that can be prevented, but people will have to become more proactive in order to improve their health and their life.
A Day at the Museum

By Scott Raimowitz

The American Museum of Natural History, located at 79th Street and Central Park West in Manhattan, has been portrayed as a site of fantasy and adventure in films, novels, and games. Unfortunately, this is the only way some people perceive this venerable institution. In reality, it is possibly the most famous museum in the world. Built in 1869, it contains four huge floors of amazing collections and exhibits. Spring is a great time to spend a fascinating day exploring this New York City landmark.

As one approaches the American Museum of Natural History, it is impossible not to be impressed by the architecture of the building itself. The museum stretches four city blocks and covers the entire distance from Central Park West to Columbus Avenue. The building is an interesting mix of design styles. The main entrance features an impressive, series of stairs leading up to towering columns and a bronze statue of Theodore Roosevelt on horseback. From some viewpoints, the museum resembles a medieval castle. This contrasts with the Rose Center and Planetarium, also part of the museum, which is ultra-modern.

Because of the vastness of The American Museum of Natural History, visitors need to be prepared to do a great deal of walking. There are 46 permanent exhibitions and a variety of state-of-the-art temporary exhibitions that cover periods from the beginning of time to the present. The disciplines examined include biology, zoology, geology, astronomy, ecology, and anthropology. The museum also contains a tremendous collection of artifacts with detailed information about each.

Because of the grand size and scope of the museum, planning your trip is advisable. One great way to plan for your visit is to go to the museum’s website, www.amnh.org. It is full of useful information about the museum and its displays that will help you to make the most of your day.

Of the permanent exhibitions, the Dinosaur Halls are probably the most well known. This series of enormous rooms presents the largest collection of dinosaur fossils in the world. This entire exhibit has recently been completely renovated, and thus features the most up-to-date information available.

Several exhibits make it possible to learn about the history and heritage of the human race. The Hall of Human Origins, the newest of the permanent exhibition halls, explores the evolution of humankind. There are sections about DNA, human fossils, the history of human evolution, and human creativity. Other halls tell the stories of African peoples, South American peoples, and Asian peoples.

Other exhibits have amazing displays of minerals and gems. The Morgan Hall of Gems and the Guggenheim Hall of Minerals feature over 100,000 samples of minerals and gems from around the world. Possibly the most famous is the 563-carat Star of India, the most famous star sapphire in the world. Now, the museum is offering a dazzling display of 25 diamonds. The most famous is the 563-carat Star of India, the most famous star sapphire in the world. The Hall of Meteorites includes a wide selection of meteorites including moon rocks and the world’s largest meteorite, a 34 ton, 4.5 billion year old specimen.

The Milstein Hall of Ocean Life is dominated by a 94-foot long model of a blue whale, the largest creature to ever exist on our planet. The hall also displays creatures and ocean environments from all over the globe. The wide varieties of habitat group dioramas, found throughout the museum, are possibly its most beloved feature. These specimens show the wide range of nature’s creatures shown in their own environments in exacting detail. In some cases, these exhibits are a window into the past, since, sadly, these wonderful habitats have been degraded by humanity.

Currently, The American Museum of Natural History is showing several fascinating temporary exhibits. They are especially satisfying because there is always a surprise waiting around every corner.

Traveling the Silk Road, sponsored by The Metlife Foundation guides you on a journey exploring the greatest trading route in history. Museum visitors can visit ancient cities of Asia and the Middle East between the years of AD 60 and 1200. The varied displays make it possible to investigate spectacular sights and sounds of the period, and to learn about and see the creation of fabulous silks. There are displays that highlight the crafts, scholarship, and commerce that were a part of this ancient trade route. There is a wealth of information about the four major cities on the route, and the visitor feels transported back in time by the clever detail of the exhibit.

Snakes and Lizards: Alive! gives museum visitors the chance to get up close and personal with more than 60 live lizards and snakes representing more than 20 different species, all shown in re-created habitats. It is possible to learn about many aspects of these fascinating creatures at a series of interactive stations.

The Butterfly Conservatory is a kid favorite. This exhibit is so popular that it has returned several times. Visitors have the captivating experience of experiencing more than 500 butterflies in a colorful, flower-filled environment. Displays make it possible to learn about butterflies’ behavior, life cycle, defense mechanisms and evolution. If you are lucky, a butterfly may even land on your shoulder as you walk through this fascinating environment.

No day at the museum is complete without a stop at the connected Rose Center for Earth and Space. This high-tech building replaced the former planetarium in 2000. It is filled with amazing exhibits about the universe and our place in it. The centerpiece of this fantastic attraction is the new Hayden planetarium and it’s Space Theater, the most technologically advanced facility of its kind. Other highlights include exhibits of the origin of the universe, and scale models that illustrate the relative size of cosmic and human objects.

The American Museum of Natural History is easy to access via public transportation. Complete admission and ticketing information, as well as directions are all available on the museum’s website, www.amnh.org. Prepare to be dazzled by your day at the museum.
Imagine yourself being a foot away from the stage. Big lights go on as the band starts and hundreds of people begin jumping haphazardly, pushing into each other. The crowd becomes a sea of fists held high in the air as others behind you have been tossed up over your head to surf towards the stage. A big circle forms in the middle of the crowd as fans flail their arms and kick their legs to the beat of the music.

The intoxicating feeling of standing in the middle of a crowd at a concert is without a doubt incomparable. Jay Azaria, Queensborough student and concert attendee, states, “Watching a band play with everyone is unity. You and everyone watching are connecting with the lyrics.” Strangers become like family, helping each other up when they fall down or get hurt.

Moshing and crowd surfing are commonly associated with rock concerts. It is sometimes considered a form of aggressive dancing to aggressive music. Contrary to popular belief, those in a mosh pit are not trying to hurt each other. Most injuries from mosh pits aren’t actually by the moshers but by innocent bystanders. Those standing by the pit are paying more attention to the band than to those being pushed into them, resulting in them being tackled to the ground.

More than 30 years of bands have played at the famous CBGB from 1973 until it closed in 2006 from a rent dispute, according to CBGB.com. Richard Hell, who played CBGB with his band “Richard Hell and the Voidoids,” wrote in the New York Times that CBGB “housed the most influential cluster of bands ever to grow up — or to implicitly reject the concept of growing up — under one roof.” Many bands, including the Ramones, opened the doors there to New York punk.

The true punk culture existed over 30 years ago was that of anarchy and a distrust of authority, non-conformity, and a strong belief in “DIY” - do it yourself. Mohawks, unnaturally dyed hair, and ripped self-made clothing united those with a similar belief to make a statement.

Of course, all things change over time. The punk scene isn’t what it was years ago. It became a fashion trend as media eventually picked it up and exploited it. DIY fashion can now be store bought in popular stores such as Hot Topic and YRB NYC, which takes out the sole purpose of doing it yourself. Teens rebel without a cause against anything they could - mostly their parents - for their sense of freedom and “originality.” Punks are often depicted in movies and on TV as teens that cause trouble and drink or do drugs.

The popularity of the punk culture amongst teens took a turn as new trends took height. Popular social-networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook have allowed teens to connect and exchange their music culture’s fashion and music.

Highly popular amongst distraught teens, “Emo music,” which is emotional music characterized by melodic musicianship and expressive lyrics, has pioneered in the 80’s and broke into mainstream culture in the early 2000s with bands such as Taking Back Sunday and Fall Out Boy. “Emo” is often used today to signify related aspects of fashion, culture, and behavior. The scene generally consists of depressive music, hair covering one eye, tight jeans and band t-shirts, but also ranting about how “unfair” life is, and for some self-mutilation. Many of Emo fans show off their cuts as a way to gain attention or acceptance within the clique. Bands that fall under this genre, such as My Chemical Romance, are often criticized and quickly blamed for teen suicide, though none of them actually support such behavior.

Deriving from Emo is the newer sub-set “Scene” or “Scenester.” They are the high-fashioned Emo kids with multi-colored hair and the sullen teenage lethargy. They listen to Screamo, a subgenre which like Emo evolved from hardcore punk. In just a few short years, the scene’s popularity has evolved and skyrocketed.

Hardcore punk band H2O's song “What Happened?” states, “When it began, for those who don’t know, it didn’t matter how you looked or what you wore to a show.” It argues that “the biggest part is all about the image and not the art. Fashion before passion!” Today’s society puts the image before the music.

Music culture has moved away from music and a social cause to fashion and popularity contests thanks to how today’s youth interpret music trends. The behavior of the crowd at a concert is decreasing in social and musical unity when those outside of the scene’s “dress code” are criticized and often targeted and ganged up on in a mosh pit. It is quite obvious to see when one goes to a show – the older crowd doesn’t conform to the younger crowd’s trends and is more busy paying attention to the music and having fun, instead of worrying about fitting in.

Music should be about the art, not the fashion.
“He Talks Just Like His Father”:
A “Poor-Jew Special” Education in Language, and the rule of King David

By Bruce Grossman

Herb taught me how to talk. He had his own language. Words for everything. Herb’s crowning achievement was the word “Poor-Jew Special” (noun, universal), which he applied to anything and everything: our Rent-A-Center furniture (owed payments), the filth-covered flooring, David (the family therapist), the stained broken blinds, the stacks of canned food I’d refuse to eat (given to us by a Jewish Survivor organization), the cat (found in a garbage bag outside), the television (thirteen inches with black lines in the screen), and lastly, us. Everything that the Grossman family owned, or what was on loan from a creditor who months later would harass us via telephone, was a “Poor-Jew Special”; and what wasn’t would become one soon enough. Herb’s clumsiness, his three-hundred-twenty pound frame and Marci’s Multiple Sclerosis shook hands, made sure of that.

You may find it odd that I refer to Herb and Marci (my parents) by their first names. However, this was commonplace in Herb’s dialect around low-syllable words. He had respiratory problems. He needed all the breath he had for “Poor-Jew Special” (four syllables) and his mauldin bellow. Moreover, my full first name, Bruce-Micheal (the E and A switched in Herb’s version of the spelling – he thought it looked “right”) was simply too much. I became Bruce. And Mar-Ci-Yah (Marcia) became Marci. And since Herb felt he was immune to this bullshit, I decided around the age of five or so that “Herbert the Pervert, Rhymes with Sherbert,” the first part Marci’s clever moniker for him, the ‘rhymes with’ my own (it’s actually Sherbert, but I didn’t know that then), would simply be Herb. That was how I learned both abbreviation and the concept of formality – the latter a concept I felt we weren’t good enough for, so why the hell use it?

Our middle-sized Bronx apartment was filled with definitions and concepts. I just cleverly had to realize them. For example, I couldn’t tell you as a child what coarse (adjective) meant, but if you explained it to me, I’d simply point to the living room’s centerpiece: Herb’s reclining chair. Positioned right in front of our shitty “Poor-Jew Special” (can also be used as an adjective) television, Herb’s reclining chair was bought from Rent-A-Center one afternoon after Marci ran off and didn’t tell us where she was going. The end result was a bunch of blue furniture that Herb stopped paying off a year later – deciding to save money and simply tolerate the nagging collection calls. ("BRUCE, DON’T FUCKING ANSWER IT! Through this I learned discretion.) The blue fabric of Herb’s recliner was a frequent victim of Marci’s constantly shaking hands, which due to her M.S. resulted in spills of stale black soda at a rate of about one or two cups per hour.

Adjacent to the stale black soda stained recliner was a tall brown wooden dresser missing all of its drawers, bearing the apartment’s scotch-taped paper constitution on its side. It read, ‘NO SODA FOR BRUCE ON WEDNESDAYS AND MONDAYS AS PUNISHMENT! DAVID (our family therapist) TOOK IT OUT SO MARCI, DR. TAFERA CALLED, PICK UP YOUR FUCKING PRESCRIPTION.’ It was here that I learned the concept of Herb’s External Locus of Control: Medications (totaled twelve between the two of them) and orders from therapists half his age named David. I started to understand the diction in Herb’s routine onslaught against Marci (assimilation, noun), backed by his Masters Degree in Psychology – the only thing they had in common. I’d come into the living room, post-argument, sometimes post-beating, and ask Marci, “How come Herb says you’re going through yet another transference from your old therapist?” I was six. I more or less knew that Marci had apparently done something wrong.

My journey to understanding culminated in David’s office. David was a nice late-twenties Jewish boy (didn’t look a day over sixteen) who always parted his hair a bit before agreeing in generics. This behavior, by the way: jumping on the bed, a fight at school with a kid who took my football, laughing at the therapist, the stained broken blinds, the stained recliner was a frequent victim of Marcia’s constantly shaking hands, which due to her M.S. resulted in spills of stale black soda at a rate of about one or two cups per hour.

After all, the therapy was a “Poor-Jew Special,” handed to us by an organization, The Jewish Family Services of New York City. Despite the insurance listing me as the actual patient, Herb mainly used the sessions to play the diagnosis’s game with Marci’s “post-traumatic bullshit”: “David, David listen to me. Ya listenin’? I think she’s going through another fucking transference (noun) from that dipshit she had an affair with. Huh? Whaddya think of that?” Herb would say. David ruffled his hair a bit before agreeing in generics. Herb would send me out of the office sometimes to play in the waiting room. “We need to talk about you, grown up stuff!” Herb would say. The receptionist at the counter would turn to me from her chair.

“How’s the appointment going Bruce-Micheal?” She’d say.

“Good! Herb’s in there projecting (noun) again!” I’d reply.
Facebook Can Get You Fired!

(continued from cover page)

35% of hiring managers use Google to do online background checks on job candidates, and 23% look people up on social networking sites. About one-third of those Web searches lead to rejections. The article also states that studies show more than 60% of Generation Y respondents were not aware that the information they put online could be factored into hiring decisions…65% said they think the practice is unfair.

Whether or not you agree with these tactics, the reality is that many jobs believe how you conduct yourself outside the office, is just as important as how you conduct yourself inside the office. Facebook and Twitter accounts are becoming the new background check for many businesses. “Companies really look for a high level of integrity,” companies care about how employees present themselves to clients and look for clues in how applicants present themselves online.” In the August 2007 article on msnbc.com, Director of National Resources, Sue Murphy, points out “Nothing on the internet is private. Period”

According to Facebook do’s and don’ts for college students, an article on helium.com, facebook prevented one student from a potential job. Twenty-three year old Lindsay Carpenter, a student attending Susquehanna University, was a highly qualified candidate for an internship at the Borgota in Atlantic City. She had no criminal records, passed her drug test and had a great interview. However once looking her up on Facebook, employers found Lindsay “participating in activities that were unbecoming of a Borgota intern.” The Borgota felt that they couldn’t have someone behaving irresponsibly in their personal life representing their company.

In a similar incident involving Twitter, twenty-two year old Connor Riley was attending University of California, to obtain her master’s degree in information management. According to an April 2009 article on crosstown. com, titled Fired for Facebook: Don’t let it happen to you, she posted a tweet on her twitter account saying “Cisco just offered me a job! Now I have to weigh the utility of a fatty paycheck against the daily commute to San Jose and hating the work.” Shortly thereafter, an employee of Cisco saw her tweet and replied “Who is the hiring manager? I’m sure they would love to know that you will hate the work. We here at Cisco are versed in the Web.” Needless to say, Connor didn’t get the job.

Students and professionals are finding out the hard way that facebook could be detrimental to their future goals. As stated in msnbc’s article, “New college graduates, the most active social networkers, are most likely to be the target of Web research.” Think of it this way, if you wouldn’t want your mother to see it, than you probably shouldn’t put it online. As multimedia business reporter, Niala Boodhoo, points out in the msnbc article, “When it’s online, it’s online. And there’s a chance someone you don’t want to see it will see it.”

Think Before You Drink

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than normal. Researchers Zhao LB, Liang GH, Zhang DN and Wu XR have stated the effect of high fluoride in the water supply has an adverse effect on children’s intelligence. Also, based on data from Robert E. Gosselin, the Clinical Toxicology of commercial products 5th edition shows fluoride is more toxic than lead. Fluoride in the public water supply is raising many questions. No physician would prescribe someone medicine which is intended to create bodily change if they don’t know any medical history or the person, stated Dr. Peter Mansfield, a physician from the U.K. and advisory board member of the recent government review of fluoridation.

Lately, there has been much research on the topic and new evidence. Why hasn’t there been any change? Written to the Lee foundation for nutritional research in Wisconsin on October 2, 1954 , Scientist Charles Eliot Perkins, a biochemist who worked in the Farben chemical plants in Germany after World War 2 stated:

Repeated doses of infinitesimal amounts of fluoride will in time reduce an individual’s power to resist domination by slowly poisoning and narcotizing a certain area of the brain and will thus make him submissive to the will of those who wish to govern him. Both the Germans and the Russians added sodium fluoride to the drinking water of prisoners of war to make them stupid and docile.

Conspiracy theorists claim that this is proof that our government is manipulating our minds, which ultimately leads to exploitation of our freedoms.

Many people aren’t aware of fluoride in our water system. Even a little amount of fluoride, administered incorrectly, can be harmful. Americans have the right to know what we are putting into our bodies. Maybe our sinks should come with warning labels.

“Too Good to be True”

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forget ingredients in supplements that have positive effects on the body can also have potential negative effects. But even when it is established that an ingredient in a supplement causes side effects, the manufacturer does not need to inform the consumer.

In 2009, the Food and Drug Administration recalled 14 Hydroxycut products after the liver failure and death of a 19-year-old boy. According to an article published by Kathleen Doheny from WebMD Health News on May 1, 2009, Hydroxycut was a well known weight loss supplement which was recalled after “23 other reports of liver problems ranging from jaundice to liver failure were reported after his death.” “It’s further proof that weight loss doesn’t come in a pill,” stated Linda Katz, MD, interim chief medical officer of the FDA’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. “The death occurred in 2007,” Katz says, “but was only reported to the agency at the end of March 2009, in which the product wasn’t recalled until May. Shouldn’t that speak for itself?” Hydroxycut products contain a variety of ingredients and herbal extracts. Unfortunately, the FDA has not yet determined which ingredients or doses are associated with the liver problems, cardiovascular problems, seizures, and serious muscle damage (glomerulosclerosis) which is causing kidney failure.

There are simple strategies and lifestyle changes for shedding excess weight, building muscle, and staying healthy. According to Women’s Health Magazine, most weight loss supplements often lead to the dangerous cycle of “yo-yo dieting.” In Gretchen Voss’s article “When the Fat Comes Back,” published in April 2010’s issue, the National Institutes of Health states to reduce your weight by approximately 10 percent over six months. Voss emphasizes on “reconsidering the whole notion of dieting as a temporary fix” and pushes for a “permanent lifestyle shift.”

Lisa Drayer is a registered dietitian working with both Men’s and Women’s Health magazine and explains how most weight loss pills and dietary supplements affecting our bodies are all mostly amphetamines. The few that do not contain harmful ingredients haven’t proved to be effective. Some contain stimulants that may give your metabolism a short-term boost, but they can come with unwanted side effects, like high blood pressure. Instead, find an exercise program and diet regimen that works and begin restricting your calories if you want results,” states Drayer. “There is no quick fix solution and many of these supplements may show immediate results but they all come with side affects either years down the line or weeks after beginning.” As we have all been told by our parents growing up, if something is too good to be true, it probably is.

The Basic Skills Writing Contest

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Professor Manette Berlinger who directs the contest along with Professor David Rothman. “Our students don’t realize how good their writing can be, so winning this prize is a special thrill for them and for us.” Professor Rothman noted that there were many applicants entered into the contest, but “these were real gems and we are proud to honor these exemplary pieces of writing.

First Prize winner Sylvana Atkins, whose essay “Once Upon a Time” described a profound life-lesson she learned from her grandmother, said that “Winning this award is an inspiration for me to continuing writing. I actually enjoy writing more than I thought!” Sylvana’s essay is being submitted to Queenzine, the College’s on-line literary magazine produced by the English Department.

Other winning entries demonstrated the diversity of topics that characterize the contest each year. Among this year’s winners were essays entitled “Success and Money,” “My First Solo Flight,” and “I Left the Pearl of the Orient! Why!”

Professors Berlinger and Rothman plan to expand the Contest to include new categories and to increase the possibilities of publication in the future.
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Baseball Fans Losing Interest

BY LUKE FALCI

The sport that has been nicknamed America’s pastime may be taking a new shape in the very near future. Baseball has been known for several things, the big hit, a great catch, the perfect pitch and taking too long. With modern technology, the game has taken on a whole new era. Scouting reports has allowed managers of opposing sides to take baseball and turn it into a time-consuming game of chess and fans are simply fed up and bored with how long it takes to finish a baseball game. The chess game begins when managers make substitutions during the game. The changes are made because the player brought in as a distinct advantage over another player, or so his statistics show. These changes take time, and with the changes being made more often and with games reaching the 3 hour mark, fans are changing the channel or not buying a ticket. Baseball commissioner Bud Selig and Major League Baseball (MLB) is currently working on a plan on keeping the fans interested.

Strategic pitching changes and pinch-hitter’s brought into the game tend to slow down the pace of the game projected to finish around 2 1/2 hours, often tend to put the time of that game over 3 hours. In an interview with Ralph Rufrano who was a visitor at Citi Field on April 28 during the Mets and Dodgers series said “It’s hard enough to keep a child interested in something and in one spot at home for one or two hours, but to keep a child confined to one seat staring in one direction waiting for something to happen is just not possible. Baseball needs to speed the game up”. Often pitchers and catchers tend to cross signals and can’t get on the same page when communicating on the field, the catcher will go out to the mound, talk to the pitcher on a strategic approach to get the hitter out. Lately visits to the mound by catchers and managers have become a lot more common and it’s not just the fans were expressing frustration, it is also the umpires. Major league umpire Joe West expresses frustration to the daily news after the first series of the season on April 4 to April 7 between the Yankees and Red Sox describing the frequent visits from Jorge Posada to AJ Burnett as “pathetic and embarrassing”. www.dailynews.com/sports/joewest. One of the rules baseball is trying to add is to limit catchers to only one visit per inning. Combine that with coaches and managers sprinting out from the dugout instead of taking a slow stroll to the mound will contribute to speeding up the game.

Another problem bringing baseball to a slow and steady crawl is the amount of time it takes to make a pitching change. When a manager makes a substitution and a new pitcher is coming to the mound from the bullpen, he tends to jog at his own pace to the mound and walk the remainder of this distance once reaching the infield dirt. The pitcher then takes anywhere between 8 to 15 throws to warm up before play resumes. Major league baseball has enforced pitchers to jog the entire way to the mound and limit the warm-up tosses to 6 to 8 warm-up pitches overall reducing a pitching change down from 6 or 7 minutes to 2 1/2 minutes. This was incorporated into MLB in 2008 where the average game took 3 hours and 6 minutes, thus reducing game time to 2 hours and 54 minutes, pending on how many changes needed to be made. www.usatoday.com/speeduprulesenforced.

Batters are guilty of this as well and tend to have a routine from one pitch to the next. Stepping out of the batter’s box, taking several practice swings between pitches and adjusting their batting gloves have become a time-consuming religion by hitters. A batter who was notorious for this routine was former Boston Red Sox and Chicago Cubs shortstop Nomar Garciaparra. After every pitch he would adjust his batting gloves several times, step...
the country, and they must come in an organized manner - legally, so that we can assimilate them into our population and protect the sovereignty of our country.” Senator Allen also emphasized that Senate Bill 1070 is a state law and it makes being here illegally a crime since the federal government has failed to take action on this issue.

United States Senate Democratic leaders released an outline of a U.S. immigration law on April 29, 2010 according to the article “Democratic Draft of Immigration Bill Emphasizes Border Security,” also in The San Francisco Chronicle. The democratic draft includes a plan that would increase funds to boost security at the U.S. borders and to provide for an increase of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. Creating more resources to prosecute drug smugglers from crossing into this country illegally is also mentioned in this proposal. This bill will eventually give U.S. citizenship to the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants who are presently residing in the U.S. It could, however, take up to eight years to become a U.S. citizen but illegal immigrants can get what is being called “lawful immigration status” in the meantime which would allow them to not only work in the U.S. but to leave and come back to the U.S. This bill is being proposed by democratic senators Majority Leader Harry Reid from Nevada, Charles Schumer from New York, and Robert Menendez from New Jersey. These Senators are in the process of trying to gain more support and are calling for Republicans to consider their proposal. “Democrats and Republicans agree on one thing: Our immigration system is broken and needs to be fixed,” Senator Reid stated at a news conference in Washington.

It is apparent that people are tired of the problem of immigration and a call for reform has been long overdue. The question Arizona’s law raises, as well as the Democratic draft, is will either of these plans resolve the problem of the borders and is either the route American wants to take? One positive result that has come about in response to Arizona’s SB1070 is that the federal government has been roused into taking action on immigration reform.

CAN THEY PAY?

(continued from page 5)

which will contribute to the re-building of the economy.

Colleen K. Jackson, the executive director of the West End Intergenerational Residence, a shelter for young mothers tells the Times on April 14, 2010 that “Jobs are not easy to come by.” So, how can the city expect the homeless to pay rent, when many of these homeless people don’t even have a job, or is only working for minimum wages? Steven Banks, the attorney in chief of the Legal Aid Society tells the Times, on April 14, 2010 that the city’s approach “seems to elevate ideology or philosophy over reality.”

According to a New York Times article on May 8, 2009 “New York Charges Rent for Working Homeless” by Julie Bosman and Andy Newman, Vanessa Dacosta, who earns $8.40 an hour as cashier at Sbarro, said she received a notice under her door several weeks ago informing her that she had to give $336 of her approximately $800 per month wages to the Clinton Family Inn, a shelter she has been living at since March. Ms. Dacosta, is a single mother of a 2 year-old, she pays nearly $100 per week for child care. She says, “It’s not right…I pay my baby sitter, I buy diapers, and I’m trying to save money so I can get out of here. I don’t want to be in the shelter forever.”

On May 09, 2009 Patrick Markee, the senior policy analyst of the Coalition for the Homeless, told the New York Times that the policy is “impractical,” he argued that most working people who live in homeless shelters earn low wages and would be better off saving for a place of their own. Markee says, “It’s going to make families stay in shelters longer because they’ll have fewer financial resources.”

Is Society Losing its Traditional Nuclear Family?

(continued from page 6)

factor. But it sometimes undermines the holistic well being of a single parent household and even a same sex marriage household when the care of children are involved.

The official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics published a special online article July 3rd 2006 on “The Effects of Marriage, Civil Union and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well Being of Children.” It reads that in 2005, AAP’s core philosophy holds “that the family is the principal caregiver and the center of strength and support for children.” This statement qualifies that children can be profoundly influenced by the choices parents make.

Merriam Webster’s online dictionary defines home as “a social unit formed by a family living together.” Marriage is the building block for the procreation of a nuclear family. The values, morals, practices and experiences embedded within the structure of a nuclear family cannot be compensated by any other family structure. If our society continues to lose this precious piece of structure, it will lose the essence of what society was initially founded upon. Future generations will be robbed of the intricate experiences nuclear families bring to our society.

Baseball Fans Losing Interest

(continued from page 16)

into the batter’s box, twist his bat around while tapping the tips of his shoes into the ground several times making the average at-bat of 1 1/2 minutes extending it to anywhere between 3 and 4 minutes. A rule looking to be enforced at this time but not yet incorporated into MLB would be to have the batter step into the batter’s box and one he’s in, there is no stepping out until the chance at the plate is completely over. If he steps out he would be penalized one strike during the at-bat.

Considering these variables that slow the game down has resulted in a lack of interest in baseball by today’s youth and turning them to other forms of entertainment. Stuff like computers and video games to peak their interest keeping these would be athletes cooped up indoors. Baseball needs to gain the interest of young fans with a product that does not take over three hours to get results. In an interview with Jessica Pen a of Longwood Florida who was visiting Citi field with her children said “These games take forever. My second oldest son Johnny is interested in playing baseball but it’s a long time to watch a game and is losing interest.

The Communiqué staff wishes everyone a great Summer!
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Amanda Kaju

Harold Stolerman Award (101 Essays):
John-Anthony Forde
Dwaynn Leake
Tania Trivino

Hedy Jacobowitz Award (journalist/non-fiction):
Meredith Carbonell
Luke Falci
Leosa Yvonne Imasuen
Stanislav Mykahylichenko
Elma Rahman
David Suarez

Tony Pipolo Film and Literature Award:
Julius Baltonado

Arnold Asrelsky Award:
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