Chamber Of Horrors

Last Spring, Robert Lipoyte, the man many people on the Times considered the paper’s best analytical reporter, got together with Howie Jones, the man many people consider the country’s best small-college basketball coach. The reason for their meeting was the national publicity aroused by the confessions of a number of athletes about the use of drugs in competitive sports. The result of their meeting was a Lipoyte column on the sports pages of the Times. Jones comes through as the man we know: honest, intelligent, warm and dedicated. The players too are familiar figures: talented people struggling to find themselves amid the frustrations of a racist society that would exploit their athletic ability and then cast them aside.

But the column, for all its integrity and good sense, created a storm in the administration. Taken together with the press conference called by the Puerto Rican faculty, a lot of public attention focused on the drug problem at MCC.

The administration reacted in angry panic. In public, it denied the existence of a problem. Despite evidence to the contrary, it asserted that stories of widespread drug use at the college were lies invented by “hard-core revolutionaries” (read “Student Government”) and vindictive Puerto Rican faculty trying to get even for their dismissals. There were, the administration claimed, only 15 drug addicts at MCC. It developed later, by Dean Pittman’s own admission, that the information, originally attributed to “careful investigation by reliable sources,” came as a result of bribes to campus drug pushers. The fact that the administration now cooperates in a broad and expensive drug education program is itself an admission that drugs pose a more serious problem than it will concede publicly.

Meaning, behind the scenes, the administration acted to punish the “guilty” and to create the kind of tight central control that could smother unfavorable publicity before it leaked out.

• The administration refused to accept the BMCC Student Government’s own choice for Coordinator unless its own candidate was accepted.
• The administration removed the Coordinator of Black Studies and tried unsuccessfully to dismiss him from the faculty.
• The administration sabotaged the Student Government elections in the Spring and Fall. To this day the administration maintains that the Student Government Association is illegal and functions only so long as the administration sees fit to permit it to do so, a hostage to the administration’s idea of “good behavior.”
• The administration harassed and then blackmailed Coach Howie Jones.

After the Times interview, Dean Pittman attempted to place derogatory material in Jones’ personal file. This Fall, when the Faculty Council met, Howie and Pete Fazio as its two representatives on the BMCC Association, the administration pressured Professor Mayer Rosabi, who had originally nominated them and was their department chairman, to get them to resign.

The administration advanced the argument that the two coaches were party to a “conflict of interest” since the Association paid a small part of their salaries and provided the entire athletic budget.

Since neither before nor after has the administration worried about the “conflict of interest” inherent in its own participation on the Association, and since it chooses to ignore the “conflict of interest” involved in student participation (both groups receive money from the Association in various ways), it seems clear that the effort to single out the coaches stemmed from a desire to warn others about speaking out without first getting administration clearance.

When this tactic failed, Draper, without prior consultation with the Association, simply withheld Jones’ letter of appointment as coach and, therefore, his coaching salary. This, despite the fact that the basketball season was half over and Jones had led the Panthers to a 12-1 record.

At this point the Association met and decided that, according to its right to be the first interpreter of its own Bylaws and according to its own sense of their meaning, the conduct of Jones and Fazio had been correct and that no “conflict of interest” existed. Disagreed, the Association declared, he had the right to take the matter to court. The Association would abide by the decision of the judiciary.

But the administration continued to withhold Jones’ letter of appointment. And to top things off, Pittman began coming to basketball games and hearing with a new confidence the rumors, presumably evidence of Howie’s “lack of concern for the well-being of students and the reputation of the school.” When Jones refused to crumble, and when it became clear that the Business and Professional Teachers’ Growth and Development Coalition would back him up, the administration changed tactics. On January 5, at a meeting of the faculty to examine plans for the new campus, Draper presented a resolution to fire the Faculty Council. The sole purpose of the meeting was to browbeat a resolution to fire the BMCC Association.

Unfortunately for the administration, members of the Association showed up to contest Draper’s interpretation of the situation, and Professor Norman Horowitz arose to announce that the Legislative Conference was filing a grievance over the refusal to pay Jones his salary. The administration was saved from a stunning defeat when it was “discovered” that a quorum of the Faculty Council was not present and no vote could legally be taken.

Since then the administration has partially retreated: Jones’ letter of appointment has come through, and with it his back-pay. But rumor has it that the administration still hopes to manage the removal of Jones and Fazio from the Association. They have called a Faculty Council meeting for February 16, at which the matter is expected to come up. The meeting will be at 12 Noon in room 4393. The Tiger Paper urges all members of the Faculty and student body to attend.

The English Department was forced to cancel 40 sections of Comp II. No students disappeared. But other courses had more than 50 students jammed into each classroom.

Hundreds of students were told by mail to come and register at 7:30 PM on Friday, January 28. At 7:00 PM they locked the doors.

Black woman, mother, works full time: I’d like to register.

White Secretary: It’s much too late dear. Registration was last week.

Woman: I was here last week. Every day. They told me since I wasn’t registered, I’d have to get financial aid before they’d let me register. They told me in Financial Aid that they couldn’t give me money till I registered. They sent me back and forth all day. Every day. All last week.

Secretary: I’m sorry dear. You get everything straightened out now, and everything will be fine in September. You can register then.

“...You want an English course? Sorry, all the English courses are closed. Why did they tell you to register so late if all the courses were going to be closed? You have to understand that registration is very complicated. We’re only human. Mistakes are occasionally made. You’re human too? Oh, well, yes, of course. Why don’t you register for Social Welfare Programs and Policies? You’ll love it!”
TWC Wins

All eighteen candidates of Third World Coalition swept to victory in the student government elections of November 1, 2 and 3. In taking every seat but one on the fifteen-member Student Government Association, and capturing 79% of the total vote, TWC compiled majorities ranging from three-to-one to five-to-one. Four TWC candidates running unopposed, won seats on the Student-Faculty Disciplinary Court.

Third World Coalition's election victory brought to an end six months of uncertainty as to whether students would have any voice at all on campus. The closing of Promethean Hall, the scheduling of last spring's regular SGA elections after classes ended, the constant postponement of new elections this fall, and their final scheduling to coincide with Black Solidarity Day and a College Discovery Payday, made it seem that the administration was determined to rule student affairs by itself.

In the end, the administration proved incapable of preventing the thirty percent vote required to legalize the election. The election turnout at Manhattan was the third highest of any branch of the City University in the past year.

The Children's Center Has Room

The Manhattan Community College Children's Center at 1595 Broadway and 48th Street, 2nd Floor, has room for more children. The center is open from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. If you want to bring your children (any toilet-trained child is eligible), come to the center immediately.

Who Profits From the Subways?

But this deal wasn't good enough. During the Depression, the subway companies cut maintenance to maintain their profits. By 1940, the subways were ready to fall apart, so the companies sold them to the city. To raise money to buy and rebuild the subways, the city again sold bonds to the same banks. The banks no longer had the headache of running the subways, and they were still guaranteed a profit. By 1940 the city had spent almost $1.5 billion to buy and rebuild the subways. To do this bonds were sold which committed the city to pay $2,000,000,000 in interest alone.

And it didn't stop there. In 1951 a $500 million bond issue for a Second Ave. subway was passed by the voters. But after the bonds were sold (to the same banks) the city decided not to build the new line. In 1953 the city handed management of the buses and subways over to the Transit Authority, which is a militant committee within the Communications Workers of America. This was supposed to make transit management more business-like and cut costs through business-like management. In reality, the subways never have been and aren't now self-sustaining—paying interest on the huge debt makes that impossible. The city pays for all transit bond debts out of its taxes. It also pays for capital costs, that is, new cars, and building new tracks and stations all through taxes or new bonds. Because of this the Transit Authority lets equipment deteriorate. The TA saves money and the city has to replace equipment that much sooner. Meanwhile, New York's subways are probably the worst and most dangerous in the world. It all adds up to an expensive and dangerous ride for the few cents a ticket (New York Telephone does the same thing to us.) Like the rest of us, they are struggling to keep ahead of inflation and also like the rest of us, they are losing. In real wages (what their pay can actually buy) they have lost 8% since December, 1947. It is unlikely that their current contract will cover inflation in the next two years. But in any case, it is not the raise in transit workers wages which causes the problem. The fare has gone up 700%, from 5¢ to 35¢ in the last 25 years, but wages haven't gone up that much.

It's time we stopped paying for the subways—we've bought it several times over already. The subways should be run as a public service.

The recent 29% rate increase that New York Telephone got is a similar situation. None of the new money is to be used for wages, no matter what kind of contract we get. The money is all to keep the service. The city raised the fare to raise money for the company's rate of profit so the company will have a higher credit rating and will be able to borrow more money. And of course, later there will be another rate increase to help pay that loan back. Consequently it will all be blamed on us and our strikes.

We, together with all workers, should operate the phone company's rate increase as well as the subway fare increase, and all other attempts by big business to keep up their profits at our expense. In the long run, they will have to answer to us!
The Women's Union

Sisterhood Is Powerful

No one, not even MCC's administration, denies that the function of a community college is to meet the needs of the City Fathers for hard-working, low-prestige, low-paid industrial and civil servants. So it is not surprising that MCC dutifully meets governmental and institutional needs for data processing and minimal emergency technologists, nurses and secretaries, while ignoring the needs of people--its own students, staff and faculty members.

It is for this reason that we struggled for more than a year for a children's center. And it is for this reason that a Women's Union exists at MCC. As women, we must try to reconcile with one another our needs which have been so grossly distorted for us by the media and the educational system, and we must come together to struggle with the administration to meet the special needs of MCC women.

First we must sit down together and make friends with one another. We must examine and dispel the piles of myths which have been heaped upon our heads by men (and women) from every institution in America, the myths that split us from our men, from ourselves and from one another: the myth of the blessedness of self-sacrificing servitude; the myth of the joys and rewards of passive obedience to husband, boss, priest and president; the myth of the castrating Black matriarch joining the white man in oppression of the Black--a myth exploded by Angela Davis in her examination of the role of the Black woman under slavery (The Black Scholar, Vol. 3, No. 4, Dec. '71). These are the myths which still pervade our lives and corrode our effectiveness as human beings and as participants in all liberation struggles.

But the Women's Union exists not simply for self-examination, but for action: Thus far we have defined three areas of need. The first, most far-reaching and important of the Women's Union projects is the establishment of a Health Information Center at MCC where women and men can get on-the-spot, accurate and comprehensive information about birth control, abortion, attempts at genocidal sterilization, etc. The myths that split us from our men, from ourselves and from one another must be exposed and destroyed.

Misfortune has its rewards, but only if you have friends in high places who have a need for the kind of work you do.

Last semester, the Personnel and Budget Committee of the Student Life Department, by unanimous decision, denied reappointment to Dean Sample N. Pittman. However, at appeal to the College-wide Personnel and Budget Committee, a body comprised of departmental chairmen, deans and the president, the decision was reversed. Professor Irving Wechsler, chairman of the Business Department, assumed the leading role in Pittman's defense.

In an unusual expression of concern, President Edgar Draper bestowed early retirement upon Dean Pittman so that in the future he would not have to suffer such anguish and uncertainty. Normally, Dean Pittman would not be eligible for tenure until 1975.

As a further gesture of his confidence in Pittman, Draper subsequently promoted him to the position of Acting Dean of Administration.

example, begun to struggle with the Health Ed department about the content and form of its courses. We want a Women's Studies Program. It is time that a working-class feminist perspective replaced the white, male, middle-class value system foisted on us in every class, under the name of "scholarship."

So it is the function of the Women's Union to help us recognize and define our own needs and to struggle with the MCC administration and faculty to see that they are met. Until we, as women, become full-fledged members of our community, there will never be a true struggle for liberation. As Angela Davis puts it: "According to a time-honored principle, advanced by Marx, Lenin, Fanon and numerous other theorists, the status of women in any given society is a barometer measuring the overall level of social development. As Fanon has masterfully shown, the strength and efficacy of social struggle--and especially revolutionary movements--bear an immediate relationship to the range and quality of female participation."

Pittman Victimized by Early Tenure

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Nursing Education: Teaching

The young woman just entering nursing school faces her education with great apprehension. Her most pressing questions are: Will I be able to learn how to give the best possible care for the sick? Will I be able to learn how to work well with the doctor, my fellow nurses and the non-professional workers? Will I be able to learn how to be "a good nurse" and how to change nursing to be better? After only a few short months in nursing school, however, the student nurse no longer sees these questions as relevant. Instead, the most important questions for her have become: Will I do everything exactly the "right" way, i.e., the way the supervisor wants them done? If I make any changes will I be doing something so hideously wrong that the patient will die? Will I express the right attitude toward my work so that I can stay in school?

The student nurse and the young nursing graduate have been molds through their education to see themselves not as important workers or decision makers in the health world but as minor cogs in the health system wheel. They can only do what they are told and cannot make decisions for that is the assigned task. Though the elite in nursing like to think that nurses have major responsibilities, this is largely an illusion. For the most important message communicated to potential nurses and nursing students is that nursing is the "footman" (Even in the most limited sense, individual initiative and inquiring into nursing care is out of line). Even though the school stresses the basic structures and relationships in the health system is considered a heretic by the women who dominate nursing leadership: the educators, the supervisors and the administrators.

The roots of this conformity, this passivity, this fear of change stretch back as far as the recruiting programs for potential nurses and continue through the whole educational process. This article will try to trace that development.

The recruiting process must sell women on a program: the baccalaureate (B.A.) or four-year college degree programs; the Associate Degree (A.D.) or junior college program; the Diploma or hospital school program (a three year course granting a certificate in nursing). Even though nurse educators say there are differences in the various programs (academic emphasis, the physical hospital experience, technical emphasis in the other programs, in practical terms there is not really that much difference). After all these programs perform identical duties (although opportunities for specialization and advancement vary with the program). The schools are preparing students for a specific type of patients, and the health system in similar ways.

Very few women who decide to become nurses know the differences among the various programs. They are subject to seemingly haphazard recruiting techniques. The messages "about nursing come from many different sources: books, magazines, high school guidance counselors and advertisements. Haphazard though it may seem, however, there are several underlying purposes of the messages. They serve the interests of the women to ever, there are several underlying purposes of the leaders of the existing health systems. Haphazard though it may seem, this is largely an illusion. For the most important message communicated to potential nurses and nursing students is that nursing is the "footman". Even in the most limited sense, individual initiative and inquiring into nursing care is out of line. Even though the school stresses the basic structures and relationships in the health system is considered a heretic by the women who dominate nursing leadership: the educators, the supervisors and the administrators.

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Perhaps the most blatant examples of recruiting for self-serving interests originate from hospitals and hospital schools. They try to draw women into hospital-based "diploma schools." One advantage of this to the hospitals is that students trained in hospital schools are directly "educated" to serve the hospital's needs, which, however, frequently conflict with the individual's expectations that nursing will be a way of helping people. Hospital nursing schools are also a convenient mechanism for insuring an adequate supply of nurses for hospitals. The student nurses themselves provide nursing care for patients during their education. And they often remain at the hospital at which they were trained after graduation.

At hospital schools, a prospective student is frequently told that she will be taking some courses for which she will receive college credit. This is sometimes true; more schools are linking up with colleges so that their students can go on for their bachelor's degree. In most cases this is a lie; the courses may be given by college teachers but the students receive a diploma credit for the course making it impossible to go on to higher educational levels without starting all over again. Hospital school textbooks are closely guarded, in part because of the growing unpopularity of such dead end education, and some schools sensitive to this are not too free with any method they can to attract students.

The recruiting for A.D. programs is very similar to the misleading recruiting used for the A.D. and P.N. programs. It is most similar to the misleading recruiting used for the A.D. and P.N. programs.

The conception that nursing is a woman's task has led to sexist and sex-biased recruitment for the field. Guidance counselors never suggest a nursing career for men. Any boy who might consider nursing is frequently frightened away by the oft-made association of homosexuality with the male nurse. One way in which men do get into nursing is via the army medical corps. The military tries to interest men in nursing, especially practical nursing, because it is a relatively secure, fairly high paying job for blacks who are excluded from many other skilled jobs. However, few men consider nursing itself as a career; rather it is often seen as a stepping stone to some other job, such as hospital administration. Nursing educators contribute to the perpetuation of the sex-biased image of nursing. One nurse so coyly stated, "Many students lighted the lamp in adolescence when the feminine consciousness began to awaken."

The Armed Forces, in their nurse recruiting, also take advantage of the fact that nursing is a woman's task. As you can see, the recruitment muito-coy method they utilize overly sexist propaganda to entice women into the service. Their pamphlets allude to the availability of marriageable men and illustrate their point with alluring pictures of nattily uniformed officers embracing attractive blue-eyed, blond nurses. These pamphlets also describe the excitement and glamour that awaits the prospective military nurse. To attract African American women, more attractive, the various programs, whether they are sponsored by the Army, Navy or Air Force offer to train black women for two years of school in return for two years of service.

Traditionally, the registered nurse has been white and upper-class, and on top of that, usually a woman. But now, nursing manpower needs require recruiting more black women for registered nurses and hospital positions. The current recruiting campaign has been waged by the white, professionally oriented nursing leadership, there are often racial characteristics in their recruiting drives. Major campaigns have been started in urban high schools to get black woman to train in A.D. programs. Besides school visits by nurse recruiters who explain the opportunities for black women in nursing, pamphlets and brochures have been prepared to circulate in inner city high schools.

One such pamphlet, printed by Ex-Lax Corporation and prepared with the cooperation of the American Nurses Association, is supposed to recruit black nurses and nursing students in the hospital setting. On the surface the pamphlet seems to be an honest attempt to recruit black women into nursing. But the thematic undercurrent of the pamphlet is that nursing is a good way to make it in the white world and get out of the rut of being black. On the back of the pamphlet is supposedly hip: "Think about being a nurse. It's really where the supercool action is. You'll wear a smador dress." The conclusion is clear: "When you become a R.N. you'll have guts and have it to death!"

The young woman just entering nursing school faces her education with great apprehension. Her most pressing questions are: Will I be able to learn how to give the best possible care for the sick? Will I be able to learn how to work well with the doctor, my fellow nurses and the non-professional workers? Will I be able to learn how to be "a good nurse" and how to change nursing to be better? After only a few short months in nursing school, however, the student nurse no longer sees these questions as relevant. Instead, the most important questions for her have become: Will I do everything exactly the "right" way, i.e., the way the supervisor wants them done? If I make any changes will I be doing something so hideously wrong that the patient will die? Will I express the right attitude toward my work so that I can stay in school?

The student nurse and the young nursing graduate have been molds through their education to see themselves not as important workers or decision makers in the health world but as minor cogs in the health system wheel. They can only do what they are told and cannot make decisions for that is the assigned task. Though the elite in nursing like to think that nurses have major responsibilities, this is largely an illusion. For the most important message communicated to potential nurses and nursing students is that nursing is the "footman". Even in the most limited sense, individual initiative and inquiring into nursing care is out of line. Even though the school stresses the basic structures and relationships in the health system is considered a heretic by the women who dominate nursing leadership: the educators, the supervisors and the administrators.

The roots of this conformity, this passivity, this fear of change stretch back as far as the recruiting programs for potential nurses and continue through the whole educational process. This article will try to trace that development.

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Very few women who decide to become nurses know the differences among the various programs. They are subject to seemingly haphazard recruiting techniques. The messages "about nursing come from many different sources: books, magazines, high school guidance counselors and advertisements. Haphazard though it may seem, however, there are several underlying purposes of the messages. They serve the interests of the women to ever, there are several underlying purposes of the leaders of the existing health care system. The task of the recruiting is to procure enough women to be trained for each of the types of
molded into the traditional role of a nurse: self-sacrificing, subservient, and willing to take orders without asking questions. In part, this personality screening is the recruiter's job. But self-selection also plays a role. Only women who identify with the mass image of nursing portrayed by the media are likely to want to become nurses. The prevalent image of the nurse is gleaned from books, movies, television programs that depict her in the most traditional light. The one area in which the prevalent image diverges from what women who identify with the mass media of film are the thousands of pocket books that nurses read on the job. These books are written to prove health care exists. For the student who now, for the first time, is exposed to a multiplicity of experiences which evoke feelings of adequacy, or, if the student will make the right choice, the right way may indeed be a life-or-death matter. But the use of personal judgment is discouraged in nursing school because the function of teaching is to produce a nurse with predictable, unimaginative behavior that can always be molded to fit the needs of the medical profession.

The right way is a theme that permeates all of the student's classroom and clinical experiences. Its roots, of course, lie in the many medical textbooks in which the right way may indeed be a life-or-death matter. But the use of personal judgment is discouraged in nursing school because the function of teaching is to produce a nurse with predictable, unimaginative behavior that can always be molded to fit the needs of the medical profession. A third study revealed that bonds between nurses and doctors were strongest when nurses' perception of powerlessness were also reduced by exerting power over ancillary staff—practical nurses, nurses aids, and the like. Often, the nurse is being told by her instructor: "The workers under you are the bottom of the barrel and it's your duty to teach them how to work.""Right way."  

The attitudes and work habits the student learns in school, the allegiance to the doctors and the supervisory role of non-professional personnel are all the things necessary to maintain the health system as it now exists. Baccalaureate nurses see themselves at the top of the heap in relation to other nurses. A.D. and Diploma nurses in turn see themselves as separate from and more important than the non-professional staff but still subservient to medical leadership.

The process of nursing education fails to prepare young men and women to challenge what is implied in the expectations of entering the health care system as full-time workers. They learn that it is safer to perpetuate the existing order of things rather than to challenge it. For the student, any intention of being the patient's advocate is lost somewhere in the educational process. Having had little opportunity to explore her own values or ideas or the discipline she is in, the student learns to accept about nursing and what really goes on in the ward, the student loses contact with her personal values. She learns to accept her own judgment and common sense. Compliance, dependence and lack of initiative and creativity insures survival.

Despite the elaborate efforts made to ensure their docility, more and more young men and women have learned to begin to demand a different kind of nursing education. Recently there have been several events that point to a new direction for emergent nurses. At the time of the Kent State killings, the nation nurses in turn see themselves as separate from and more important than the non-professional staff but still subservient to medical leadership.

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The Wit and Wisdom of Sample Pittman

Through the medium of a ninety-minute taped interview and a four-page statement written specially for Tiger Paper we have collected the wit and wisdom of Sample N. Pittman, associate dean of students and currently acting dean of administration. Since both the interview and the statement are much too long to reprint in their entirety, we have taken the liberty of excerpting assorted gems from both.

ON LAST SPRING'S ARRESTS

Dean Pittman was questioned about the events of last Spring. He claimed that a number of students were trying to "destroy" the school. What follows are his replies to a number of questions on the subject:

TIGER PAPER: Were you ready to deal with this "threat" by any means?

PITTMAN: The question was, was I willing to deal with this threat by any means. Yes, absolutely yes.

TIGER PAPER: Were you willing to arrest students even though the charges might be shaky?

PITTMAN: Yes!

TIGER PAPER: The whole business of criminal trespass, at least as it applies to the school, is rather vague. At least the definition of it is rather vague. And this leaves you with rather extensive discretionary powers. I assume that you were willing to use these discretionary powers if necessary to arrest radical students, arrested to get them off the campus.

PITTMAN: Yes!

TIGER PAPER: So you could say that while the charges certainly were not fabricated, they did not necessarily apply directly to times committed by the students.

PITTMAN: Yes, I agree with you on that point...

ON HIS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COURTS

TIGER PAPER: Is it true that in a number of cases you tried to intervene to get the judge to assign high bail?

PITTMAN: In all cases—in all cases—in which I participated in the criminal court, I recommended that the maximum penalty be handed out to students and I was lucky enough to get a conditional discharge on all of the students who were brought before the court, which simply means that any of the students now who are picked up for any reason after infractions by the rights of other students or disrupting the college in any way, the conditional discharges stand and not only will they be given a sentence...I mean they will not be carried to trial, they will be given a sentence right away. As a matter of fact, the judge said, if they are brought before him, in which I must bring all students—Judge Klein I believe it—he would not have a trial. He would sentence them right to Rikers Island—any of the students who are currently under the conditional discharge and I am pleased with that.

ON THE RIGHT OF FREE ASSEMBLY

TIGER PAPER: As I remember it, a number of the students who were arrested were not disrupting the activities of the school. They were simply standing in the hallway. Now it seems to me that you made an assumption, the assumption being that they were going to cause trouble. On that basis you told them to move on and they didn't. It seems to me that this raises some questions. You can assume that most any student is going to cause trouble and ask him to move on. What restraint is there on your power?

PITTMAN: That's a fair question. Whenever students congregate in masses, as many of them did, there was a danger and a hazard to not only the students themselves, but to others around. Often times mob action can trigger off behavior which under circumstances, if they weren't congregated around, would not endanger the life and limbs of students or endanger the life and limbs of faculty people. I think that a person in a position whom I occupy and faculty people have a responsibility to the young people by saying to them, especially where they congregate and they congregate in masses, they must disperse and in that sense, not only are you dispersing them for reasons of security, but to also safeguard their rights as students. What I mean by that is that sometimes students are suggestible. If other students do things, they will follow without thinking. If you can disperse that, you have a better chance to improve the situation.

ON DOUBLE JEOPARDY

Dean Pittman was asked whether or not he was subjecting students to double jeopardy by seeking to deny them work-study funds through a federal technicality whereby the college can withdraw funds from recipients who have arrest records. Since Dean Pittman was responsible for signing the complaints upon which these students were arrested, it was suggested that he was exercising unusual zeal in punishing them, particularly since he was assuming direct responsibility for cutting off their funds.

In response, he said, "The answer to that question—putting the students in double jeopardy—appears to be true. I think that if they were arrested and then we seek out a way in which these people would be denied federal funds, it seems to me does not contradict the pattern of stabilizing the institution—it is part and parcel of it.

"It would be my sole purpose to remove those persons from this institution who are committed to destroying it and I would use every weapon at my command..."

"I felt very strongly that if the activist students who had voiced an opinion that they wanted to destroy the college, if they were given work-study programs in strategic positions in the college, then they could in fact destroy, because there would not be a system. And I felt that by denying the radical students strategic positions then we would in some way safeguard the position of the college.

Pittman cautioned, however, that he "would only use the withdrawal of funds in instances where there is persistent aggressive behavior on the part of students who willfully, with malice, attempt to engage in an effort to destroy the college."

ON THE THREAT OF TWO

"...today I don't believe that there is a threat from radical students at all. I think that we have sufficiently demonstrated to the students that we do not have horns growing out of our head and that there is a channel for communication and I feel perfectly at ease and really I think that it is commendable to the students, even the activist students, that they have been guilty of "burning up" the school, "stomping" faculty, "turn[ing] on the water hoses" and "kicking the president's door down."

When pressed, he backed down on several of these accusations. He admitted that "they have not really attempted to bomb the campus in any way. I don't think that they are capable of doing that. Matter of fact, I think they are nice young people..." He also conceded that no faculty had been physically assaulted and that the president's door had not been knocked down. He still maintained, however, that there are students who are trying to burn up the school and who have turned on the water hoses and have not been able to find any corroborating witnesses to these incidents.

ON HIS MISSION

PITTMAN: In my position as a dean, if I can safeguard this precious item called education in face of adversity, at the risk of being thrown out of the college myself, at the risk
Notes on Madhatter Community College
by Alice

The Sample Pittman Award for Vigilance goes to (surprise!) Sample Pittman for tippy-toeing around the "B" Building until 4 a.m. so that he could spy on maintenance men. He claims to have found three catnapping, and he had them all suspended for five days without pay.

Freudian slip of the month, overheard at an English Department meeting: "We are all destructors of English."

Let's have faculty and student evaluations of administrators.

Worser and Worser

At York College students and teachers get free bus transportation between their widely separated buildings. What about us?

Somebody should offer a $1,000 reward for any student who requests an accurate grade transcript for last semester.

Alice hears that on Dean Pittman's desk are 100 single dollar bills entombed in lucite, a Christmas present to Sam from Dean Lester Weinberger.

Budget Crisis note: the administration had walls built in the A building auditorium so that students couldn't hold rallies there. Now they pay fortunes to New York's fancy hotels like the Americana and the City Squire to hold student conferences and faculty meetings.

These days faculty members must fill out a special form and have it signed by their chairman in order to have something stapled in the mailroom.

The biggest scandal of last semester might be the drop-out rate.

VERSUS VERSES

Solomon Grundy
Smiled on Monday.
Registered on Tuesday.
Class cancelled on Wednesday.
Hours changed Thursday.
And buildings on Friday.
Was teacherless Saturday.
Wpt all day Sunday.
Is there a class for Solomon Grundy?

A letter to Harry Hope, Assistant Registrar,
Assistant to Nobody (Since There Is No Registrar) from the students, staff and faculty of M.C.C.

Ah, think, Harry Hope,
As we tumble and grope
Through this spring registration chaotic
That you're getting ahead
And you're making good bread—
And if's who are driven psychotic.
Tiger Paper

VOLUME I, NUMBER TWO FEBRUARY, 1972

Tiger Paper is published whenever possible by an editorial collective of Manhattan Community College faculty.

Tenured members of the editorial collective: Kathy Chamberlain, Bill Friedheim, Jim Perlstein, Mike Rosenbaum, Naom Woronov.

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DRAPER SPILLS THE BEANS

Unless otherwise noted, every quotation in what follows comes directly from the President's inaugural address.

A lot of people got upset about Draper's inauguration. Once again, the rich played and the poor payed. But that was months ago. The money's been spent. Why bring the subject up now? Because few people heard, and fewer still have read, the President's inaugural address. It tells us more about what we can expect from this administration than anything else we have available.

First of all, we know that Draper is a mouthpiece for the Board of Higher Education. He doesn't even consider himself an educator, but rather an "educational manager," to use his own unhappy phrase, or a bureaucrat, to use a more honest one. He has never been an advocate of our needs; he has always been an enforcer of the Board's will. So when he speaks you're hearing not only the President of Manhattan Community College but the Board of Higher Education too.

And what are they saying? That the students at M.C.C. are enemies of society who must be pacified before they make big trouble. The value of the college resides in its ability to do the job. Let Draper tell you in his own words: "It is . . . significant that thousands of young people who would have been on welfare, in prison, or in organized revenge against what they view as a hostile society, are gainfully employed. Herein lies the great value of the urban community college . . . . If we do our job well, there will be fewer welfare recipients, far less unemployment, and the need for prisons will greatly diminish."

Now, criminals and terrorists may not be the people you see when you come to school, but these are the people Draper sees. Last year, at a meeting in his office he told us, "Quite frankly, I fear for my life when I walk the halls."

Draper thinks he knows the reason why. "They (the students) do not have the cultural sophistication and the technological skills to be integrated into the economic stream of an industrial society." Lacking Draper's eloquence, Archie Bunker might have said it more directly: "M.C.C. is full of crazy, dumb Niggers, Spics and Polaks." Different from the establishment and alienated to boot, they are a threat to the status quo.

But M.C.C. is way out:

In addition to being employed, out of prison and off the welfare rolls, the college graduate can contribute to the tax revenues of the city. As the community college expands its enrollment toward the lower level of achievement among high school graduates, it is bringing into the inner society the young people and the disadvantaged who have been on the periphery.

This will reduce the area of ideological conflict and help institutionalize democratic progress. Graduates will be more "liberal" and tolerant in their attitudes, and more satisfied with their jobs.

Now what does all this mean? From the point of view of Draper and the Board:

Thousands of people are fed up, demoralized and angry. They end up in prison, on welfare, or in "organized revenge." They're not consumers, they're not producers, they're becoming revolutionaries. That's dangerous. So . . .

We open our community colleges. We establish a "fraternity of open admissions" policy. We cram their heads full of upper-class, white, Anglo saxon protestant values.

We train them for meaningless, unsatisfying jobs that will hook them into a materialist culture and will keep the corporations happy.

We pay the bills by gouging them with taxes.

The President and the Board have it all down pat. There's nothing wrong with America, there's something wrong with people who are poor. Draper is running in his inaugural on "inflation and the periphery, the value of a satisfying life," but you know he's not talking about the poor controlling their own destinies. What he's saying is that bureaucrats know better what's good for people than the people do themselves. And what's good for people is to swallow the idea of their own inferiority, of the superiority of an elitist, W.A.S.P. culture.

Editorial

Letter To The Editor

EVALUATIONS

Where are they? Some time ago, the colleges in the City University were directed to establish a method by which students could add input to the process of "constructive criticism" of teachers so that teaching effectiveness could be improved. Students as well as faculty were to have a voice in the preparation of forms to be used toward this end. I wonder if such a form is in preparation at M.C.C. There were rumors of it during the spring semester (1971) but nothing so far this year. A task force for evaluating teacher effectiveness was created, but rumor has it that the group was far from effective itself, and despite efforts to actually find out, rumor is all that can be turned up.

Is this another case where student and faculty prerogatives have been usurped by the Administration? Will some form dictated by the Board of Higher Education be sprung upon us at the last minute with no chance for consideration or comment by the faculty at large, or are we to accept a form devised by some other unit of City University, or is the entire question being ignored completely at M.C.C.? I have little argument with the idea of "constructive criticism." I would like to pose a question to all members of the M.C.C. community. Is a student evaluation of teachers the only type of "constructive criticism" needed at our institution? Would not other members of the college community be better suited to evaluate their performance? Could not members of the Administration be evaluated by students and members of the instructional staff? Why not allow student critics and instructional staff to evaluate Department Chairmen and Division heads. The entire college experience is a learning process for teachers and students: why exempt the Administration from this experience? Shouldn't those who make decisions affecting others be the community ultimately be responsible to those whom their actions affect? Wouldn't this type of process help establish the kind of communication desperately needed at M.C.C.?

Carol Brandon

LC Grievance Chairman, M.C.C. Unit

EVALUATIONS

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Intentionally or not, the President's inaugural typifies the racism of the entire educational system. The people who run it see themsevles as missionaries bringing "The Word" to the heathen. And the word they bring is that there's a little something for you if you're humble enough.

Once upon a time, a lot of oppressed people did believe that if they "behaved" they would no longer be excluded from the capitalist harvest. Now they know better. There cannot be a capitalist harvest unless the oppressed are excluded.

And so, if people are in prison, on welfare, on the street, if they're inclined to take what Draper calls "organized revenge," it's because they've heard too many speeches like the President's. And their experience tells them that these pious speeches reek of fraud. People are not seeking "organized revenge." They have the hope and the will to create a new society. Draper and the Board, at best, want to patch the old one. The contradiction is fundamental. The conflict is intensifying.
The poet Sonia Sanchez is an Assistant Professor of English in the Black Studies Program at Manhattan Community College. She has published three books of poetry: *Homecoming* (1969), *We a BaddDDD People* (1970), and *It's a New Day* (1971). A fourth book, a long narrative poem, is coming out in March of this year. *A Blues Book for Blue Black Medical Women*. Another book she's very proud of is *Three Hundred and Thirty Degrees of Blackness Coni An Yo*; an anthology of the Black women poets' workshops shop at Countee Cullen Library. Tapes of the poet reading from her own books are available from Broadside Voices. For various years just re-leased her first recorded album called "Sonia Sanchez: A Sun Lady for all seasons reads her poetry." From this vast experience as a writer, her reputation as a poet, and her dedication as a teacher, it is astonishing that there should have been so much delay and delay recently over Sonia Sanchez' reappointment on the part of the College-Wide Personnel Board Committee. The Tiger Paper staff made inquiries about the committee's reluctance to rehire Manhattan Community College's most famous poet. Reliable sources told us that the trouble was caused by misunderstandings about her methods of handling the material she was teaching ("too emotional!") and ignorance about her work as a writer. "Most of us didn't know anything about her poetry, or even who she was," confessed one member of the august committee. Fortunately two Black members of the P. and B. Committee did know who she was and argued in her favor. Sonia Sanchez was finally reappointed by a vote of 10 to 6.

The following interview was taped between telephone calls and conferences with students in the poet's busy office in December, 1971.

**TIGER:** What is your book strategy? Do you try to sell your books? Do you order them for the library? Do you do any of these things?

**SONIA SANchez:** The strategy is this: if I think a book is important, and books are very important. And if you can control the books that young people read, you've got a whole lot going for you. That's what this whole school system is about: control. And that's why Black studies is not a wanted thing. No one can say that Black studies teaches hatred; it's about keeping a proper perspective. Black literature, Black history courses, those, since we've got all white history courses in these places and everything else is white.

**TIGER:** Another question I wanted to ask was about your writing in the classroom. The students who read the *BaddDDD Women* last semester really loved it and responded to it very favorably, very strongly, and it really spurred them on to try writing a lot of poetry of their own. However, I've heard some English teachers say that teaching poetry written in dialect is a very bad idea because we're supposed to be teaching our students standard, correct, grammatical English. What were your reasons for writing that way?

**SANchez:** Some of us call it writing the way we used to speak before we got educated. What that is about, is we spoke a certain way. We were not able to keep our language, our folkways just redistribute. In many ways, we were never taught properly. We didn't go to any schools. In slavery times it was against the law to teach anybody how to read, or write. Like, if you play a simple game with three or four correct words, there's nothing shameful about it. Now, this is when it comes back it's going to be different, right? Well, you can imagine that those differences stayed with us. And we said things like "be." You know, we never corrected it. And that's why we speak that's funny because now we use it differently, like "be." Every educated person knows you don't say, "be". But those who might be educated today, we will still say "be." Not because we're trying to be funny or smart, but because, you see, we recognize there's nothing wrong with it, that the correct people who speak correct English are not correct. There's nothing shameful about that, that was part of us, and so therefore if you say it in the classroom there's nothing incorrect about it. I write this way because a lot of people still speak certain ways. Some people say I write in slang. But that slang is as is in the Black community. The slang that we have, the slang, or the slang language, or the Black language that we have used has filtered into the white language. And it's been a powerful language, So therefore you have a verb like "rapping." That's dosp. You have it all on television now. That's very real. So people don't want to deal with the importance of that language that we're talking or this so-called language that we be speaking. They'd want to call it inferior language. It's just something Black people don't have, a language that most of the others still do it now to show the kind of heritage that's gone behind us. Not that we don't know. We don't speak properly. We don't speak properly.

You see, the young students respond to it that they have heard it. So therefore it's very real to them. And a lot of them still speak it. Those who don't speak it hear it at some time or they still hear it today. So they respond to it. That's very real. It's funny that people don't say anything about many Jewish writers who write in terms of what they be, in their own patterns. You're talking about your culture when you do that. That's all's that's about, you're English departments, to me, are one of the most racist departments going. Always will be. Because, see, they think we from the so-called ghetto can't speak properly. And if you don't believe that, just take some of the young children in elementary school who are told that they talk incorrectly. You know, they're going to teach them how to speak properly—and they do it and it's really weird.

I coined something in San Francisco called "Black English," and I used that term to Call Black English. And one of the things that the English department said was, there's such a thing as Black English. But now, today, in this year 1971, they're teaching elementary school teachers, white teachers now, Black English so they can deal with the Black children. And you understand what America's about just from that.

**TIGER:** I was wondering how you view yourself as a poet and as a teacher and as a political and religious person. Do you see these as separate categories or is it all one?
was a revolutionary film because it told people to wipe out some cops. Right? That's a revolutionary act; I mean, people been wiping out cops for years, you know, and it didn't affect any change. So just keep that bigger and better ones up. Right? And what's the difference? A cop is a cop, right? You know, long hair, no long hair. Although I had met some Black policemen recently because I have that poem in Homcoming about police- men and some people made a point to meet me. These policemen had a job but they refused to do underhanded stuff like spy, because you can refuse to do that.

But we've been trained to believe at this point in our life that Mod Squad is correct. You know, they're the ones they're flying in to just keep that bigger and better ones up. It started back in Bill Cosby's I Spy, you know, which was a fun kind of thing. There were still some people. But see, America didn't start that by chance. America started a whole series to program people to think like this. So this was the early 60's when we had I Spy, right? But that emphasis on purpose.

I think that's very important, because, you see, Black women have never had strong images to emulate. People don't understand why some of us go through the pains and problems and some- times sacrifice and a lot of work to give a person a Black woman image because America is constantly refuting that. The only time you saw someone halfway positive maybe was someone in a Hollywood movie, and then you saw someone maybe was halfway positive maybe was someone in a Hollywood movie, and then you saw someone.

TIGER: I noticed that you just kept saying, "woman" instead of "Black woman." What's the reason for that?

SANchez: No, no, no. I was just talking back, you know, follow. That's why I do that. And I wondered if you were making that emphasis on purpose.

TIGER: That's what I was going to say. It's a much more human job for a poet.

SANchez: Right. But you see, they won't do that. They still say, "produce, fool," but you have to work four classes. I was going to be free to start things like a theater group here, because I'm a playwright too, and even set up cultural things that should be in it, on the campus here. I couldn't do underhanded stuff like spy, because you can refuse to do that.

SANchez: I came to M.C.C. because I was interested in coming here, firstly as a writer-in-residence. But I was turned down on that, you know.

TIGER: Yes, but when would you go to teach.

SANchez: Creative writing is the thing I love to teach. I wasn't allowed to teach it here. They turned down a writing course, which is weird.

TIGER: I don't know why. They say something like, "The university is going to let me teach it next semester (spring '72), but they limit me now to just Black Literature. Their not allowing me to teach a course, it's unacceptable. I never thought that, you know.

I mean, away from the Panthers' super- man image.

SANchez: Not many people mentioned that image. It was Sweetback, which was a revolutionary film because it told people to wipe out some cops. Right? It's a revolutionary act; I mean, people been wiping out cops for years, you know, and it didn't affect any change. So just keep that bigger and better ones up. Right? And what's the difference? A cop is a cop, right? You know, long hair, no long hair. Although I had met some Black policemen recently because I have that poem in Homcoming about policemen and some people made a point to meet me. These policemen had a job but they refused to do underhanded stuff like spy, because you can refuse to do that.

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TIGER: In some ways I might— I'm teaching a women's studies course here and some of the things that are being published now are biographies of women, like some of the women who have been famous throughout history, and the sense that I've gotten from that has been really very helpful in my own identity. I think I have some degree of sympathy because of that.

SANCHEZ: Well, you see, America is funny in that she rules the planet, right? And then she calls people racist who do what she's done. But now read about yourselves and about educating the people who do what you've done. America is racist.

TIGER: I'm not, no I'm not, no I'm not. America's no, I'm not. That's why I'm teaching. That's why I'm teaching, you know, put that in some print.
CULTURE

socialism. In fact, that attitude and hope gave rise to and was expressed in their left-wing political action.

The guests at the party were woefully ignorant of the background of their "normal" American students. We were aware that most of them came from working-class families, though what that might mean aside from general political racial and cultural attitudes they had no idea. They had no knowledge either of Dexter's militant labor traditions. This was so for most of the faculty as well. Many of them were not even aware that questions of race or politics played any role in their education. To cite an apparently trivial instance, most of the faculty present were concerned over the way they would be ostracized by the so-called right-wingers in town. Respect for free speech and expression had an important place in the university's past, and it had tried to convey its values to its classes, using all the familiar academic examples, from HUAC witch hunts for communists to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to Stuart Mill, Milton and Sophocles. Yet that might relate the principle of free expression to the problems of Wobblies, agitators in the 1910s or of CIO organizers in the 1930s (or of white-collar workers in the 1970s). However, they never used the institutional or historical future of their own students—never occurred to them. Instead, they would tell you that people's resistance to the alien and seemingly irrelevant world of HUAC and Milton and academic freedom was not passive unconcern or active hostility.

I believe this experience successfully characterizes the great majority of faculty who behave in schools like Dexter, including, especially, the left wing of the faculty. Socialized like all their fellows into a professional role by their university, graduate school and early professional experiences, they have neither the information nor the inclination to break out of that role and relate openly and positively to the majority of their students who cannot accept the culture of the university world as their own. University professors as a group seem exceptional, at least the limited variety and values of a university education and the acculturation it represents. In their view, a student who is really open to his classroom feelings in the general culture of the university is probably an industrial life style—"normal"—and values of a university education and the public as well. What do you do: (1) be free of the more sophisticated, more interested in good literature, more sensitive morally than one who is less open or who has not had the benefit of college. The student will also be less likely to move from one city or region to another city or region.

And it would be harmless enough if it were limited in its sanction to those students who allow their university education to take, who do well at university work and will go on to graduate school and then to a place within the world of work, perhaps, into some other related profession. University attitudes and values are appropriate to that world. But what about the other cultural rednecks, the "normal" boy and girl at place like Dexter? Do they really profit from acquiring the values and values of the peculiar culture whose institutional base is the university? One way of attacking this question is to consider separately those values of the university's culture that might be useful by exchanging his own culture for that of the university. It is by far the most common experience of students.

The most obvious political characterization of university culture is that it lives by, and presents to its students, the values and attitudes that are appropriate to its own upper-middle-class life style—a style that is part of the older, slower, declining, middle-class culture. An institution like this university did promise membership in the professional classes. This meant that university graduates were not expected to engage in sociability and social independence, some measure of personal influence in local business and community, to have a significant autonomy and initiative in carrying out their daily work, and thus the possibility of enjoying that pride that follows from personal accomplishment and craftsmanship. Could it be clearer that no such life awaits the graduates of the nation's Dexters? Today a degree from a second- or third-line institution is a passport to a life style of high consumption, and by political or social influence, and by participation in rationalized work processes wherein one must try merely to get by and not step on anybody's toes. Consider, therefore, how the professionally oriented values of the university's culture might function in such an industrial environment. High on the scale of university values, now and in the past, stands the virtue of tolerance—not only personal tolerance in the face of new or differing ideas, attitudes and values but the better ability to exchange its own culture for that of the university. It is by far the most common experience of students.

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Second, the great majority of faculty are passive in their behavior and their attitudes. University attitudes allow their university education to be a means to political influence and social status. This was true at least for the faculty of the University of California. The sociological and political relations of our pluralistic, semi-industrial world. This was especially true at the University of California. The sociological and political relations of our pluralistic, semi-industrial world. This was especially true at the University of California.
culture

... TIGER PAPER...

this sort of deference is somewhat difficult to gauge and it may be tendentious on my part to believe that it influences student attitudes on the job. This is certainly not the case in all campuses, but I suspect the issue is instead that university men and women, by failing to provide a living example of the kind of behavior expected of them, are making common cause with the American people in their resistance to the hierarchical tenets implicit in the social and economic system.

A more secure case can be made against the distortion of the world (to-day) right -not with substantive but with procedural matters. Peter Gay expressed this position in the September, 1967 issue of the New Republic:

"... democracy is essentially procedural and what matters is not so much (important though it may be) what a person does as how it is arrived at ..." Persons as fortunately placed as Professor Gay, whose substantive rights are well established in easily available procedures, have an understandable tendency to overlook the fact that, for example, tenure, sabbaticals, choice of hours, and freedom of expression on the job-are virtually nonexistent in the academic world. Obviously there are other, important and thorny issues here as well. Without going into detail, I want to make two points: First, that the text of Professor Gay's remark is its fidelity to historical fact. From that point of view, it tends to confirm that the genuine libertarian and democratic turning point in postwar American political history, a turning point which has come not from the narrow defense of procedural rights by academic and other liberals against Joe McCarthy, but rather from the extensive commitment of substantive rights in the 1960s by mass movements of students, blacks, professors and lay citizens.

The students at Dexter, and a great part of their countrymen, rightly view the liberal and academic belief that, whatever can be sent to jail, the goal is not to do away with democracy, but simply to nullify or eradicate their countrymen, rightly view the liberal and academic belief that, whatever can be sent to jail, the goal is not to do away with democracy, but simply to nullify or eradicate...
Many scholars have tried to get at the question by writing about the importance of the Christian Church and religion in the lives of black people in the United States. E.-Franklin Frazier, for example, has said that "an organized religious life became the chief means by which a structured or organized social life came into existence among the Negro masses." LeRoi Jones has gone further, to point out that the Christian Church was also the house where the illusion of privilege in the midst of our oppression was made concrete:

The house servants ... were the first to accept the master's religion, and were the first black ministers and proselytizers for the new God. The Christian Church in slave times represented not only a limited way into America, but as it came to be the center of most of the slaves' limited social activities, it also produced a new ruling class among the slaves: the officials of the church.

The church officials, the house servants, and the freedmen were the beginning of the black middle class, which was represented (and represents) ... Negroes who thought that the best way for the black man to survive was to cease being black ... and wanted more than anything in life to become citizens.

We know from this and other writing that whatever the quality of religious life in Africa before the diaspora, "christianizing the heathens" was a popular activity during slavery. Religious instruction was the accepted cultural method our masters used to teach us to sing "Hail to the Lord's Army" and "Follow the Drinking Gourd" cause we were "So Tired O' Dis Miss.

In the ante-bellum South, vocabulary didn't compromise us. Our enslaved condition made both the message and the objective "clear" no matter what the medium was for conveying the Word to one another. We knew we had to find a better way to live. But we couldn't act on our knowledge very often. Today, we sometimes forget this. We are used to thinking of the way our people sang for their freedom over a hundred years ago in spectacular ways. We tend to evaluate our political use of Christian spirituals in terms of how intimately they were tied to inciting or making specific acts of insurgency. We recall, for instance, the woman who became the Moses of our people, Harriet Tubman, who partially explained her success as a conductor on the underground railroad by telling how she used spirituals like "Middle Passage" to alert parties ready to be taken North of her arrival, she would sing:

Hail, oh hale, ye happy spirits,
Death no more shall make you fear,
Grief nor sorrow, pain nor anguish
Shall no more distress you here.

Around you are ten thousand angels,
Always ready to obey the command.
They are always hovering around you,
Till you reach the heavenly land.

Dark and thorny is the desert,
Through the pilgrim makes his way,
Yet beyond this vale of sorrow
Lie the fields of endless day.

If she sang these verses twice, they knew it was safe to come out of hiding; if there was danger, she would insert the following stanza in a slower tempo:

Moses, go down in Egypt,
Tell old Pharaoh, let me go;
Hadin't been for Adam's fall,
Shouldn't have to die at all.

Her tactics were useful because they reinforced the myth of the happy, child-like, "happy slave" who had no thought of organized rebellion and then immediately moved us beyond that myth in action. Thousands of black people were literally carried to freedom by these methods.

However, our deliberate application of colonial religion as subculture, as code, cover for revolt, was only typical of the Civil War period. Before and after that time, totemic spirituality became the basis of our most sustained and elemental attempts to use religion to free ourselves from the Westerner's work. In the long stretches of our history where there was little or no opportunity for mass action against our rulers on the scale of the Civil War, we channelled our survival energies by becoming absorbed in the metaphysical reality contained. We devoted ourselves to creating a self-defensive spiritual culture which allowed us to step to a different drummer in another country. We tried to deal with our captivity in part by interpreting our experience through signs, by immersing ourselves in a metaphysical harmony to counteract the social order constraining and brutalizing us. And though the defiant consciousness we developed hasn't led us all the way to liberation, it did take us way beyond the original boundaries of religion as it was taught to us in the New World.

Slavery made us a people uprooted and dispossessed. It defined us as domesticated beasts. It put us at the mercy of the irrational greed, lust, and cruelty of rulers from an alien culture and country. Seized from our land, with death always imminent and no possibility of sustaining the institutions that sustained free people in times of crisis or of appealing to a human justice which included us, we were in a situation where survival meant enduring and, by our own struggle, struggling against them while appearing docile. We were caught between needing to lighten the yoke of captivity to live and realizing that open rebellion meant death. Under these conditions, the choices we had often involved the way we would supplicate divine powers for the justice that men denied us. We decided to sing out our grief, intense our desire for a return to harmony in the universe, our need to merge once again with nature as free spirits. And remembering our old culture, we sought deliverance through incantation:

I got a home in dat rock,
don't you see?
I got a home in dat rock,
Don't you see?
Between de earth an' sky,
Thought I heard my Saviour cry,
You got a home in dat rock,
Don't you see?


We chose to stress the fusion of ourselves with the world. Not only did we want to become part of it, but to make the spiritual force animating the world manifest through ourselves. We wanted penetration and activation, too. Deprived of the forms and essence. Early spirituals had an almost hypnotic effect. Our affirmations of "happy days" and "gwine away" took on the quality of command rather than refrain, as if, through concentrated will and repeated desire, reality would, in fact, be altered. Being possessed, we worked the stuff of our oppression out through our own bodily systems. We meant to exercise it and thus free ourselves, at least psychologically. To get relief. We chanted:

God's gonna set dis world on fire,
God's gonna set dis world on fire,
Some o' dese days ... God knows it!
God's gonna set dis world on fire,
Some o' dese days...

I'm gonna drink that healin' water,
I'm gonna drink that healin' water,
Some o' dese days ...
God knows it!
I'm gonna drink that healin' water,
Some o' dese days...

I'm gonna drink and never git thirsty,
I'm gonna drink and never git thirsty,
Some o' dese days ... God knows it!
I'm gonna drink and never git thirsty,
Some o' dese days...
Cults and all forms of recognizable tribal worship were outlawed, but as long as we were physically contained in the house of the Christian God, the Anglo-European didn’t seem to care what we did. Less sophisticated than his French counterpart, he thought controlling our physical surroundings and our bodies would be sufficient to control our minds and souls. If he had witnessed what we made of his religion, he would have found himself in the midst of a scene where the only command obeyed was the one to “break down and let it all out.” And he probably would have reacted with the same awe expressed by folklorist Clifton Furness during a visit he paid to a South Carolina plantation in 1926. The peak of a clack prayer meeting is approaching and:

Gradually moaning became audible in the shadowy corners where the women sat. Some patted their bundled babies in time to the flow of the words, and began a strange syncopation. A few men moved their feet alternately, in visible, and grow. I was gripped by a clack prayer meeting is the peak of a mass-intelligence, a self-conscious entity, gradually informing the crowd and taking possession of every mind there, including my own.

In the midst of this increasing intensity, a black man suddenly cried out “Git right—sodger! Git right—sodger! Git right—wit Gawd!” Instantly the crowd took it up, moulding a melody out of half-formed familiar phrases based upon a spiritual tune, hummed here and there among the crowd. A distinct melodic outline became more and more prominent, shaping itself around the central theme of the words, “Git right, sodger!”

Scraps of other words and tunes were flung into the medley of sound by individual singers from time to time, but the general trend was carried on by a deep undertone, which appeared to be stronger than the mind of any individual present, for it bore the mass of improvised harmony and rhythms into the most effective climax of incremental repetition that I have ever heard. It felt as if some conscious plan or purpose were carrying us along, call it mob-mind, communal composition, or what you will. However, the “purpose carrying us along” cannot be understood through its medium (communal composition) the way Furness suggests. The command is in the content. To “git right wit Gawd” prescribed that our people purge themselves, that evil had to be driven from the midst of the congregation; a belief in ourselves as conscious and active receptacles (even reservoirs) of divine power dictated that those assembled use their collectivity and “get the spirit” as a means of liberating positive spiritual force in the world.

It was called “getting happy.”

Looking back on these times, contemporary black writers like Robert MacBeth contend that the only thing about these incantations that retarded our struggle for freedom is that we were praying to “git right” with the wrong God and that if we could have focussed those same spiritual energies and perceptions on the spirits of our ancestors and the Black Gods of Africa, our ability to break colonialism’s mental bonds on us would have been greater. Actually, we tried to do just this by extending our totemic reading of the world to all activities of life and adapting African rituals to New World contexts.

"To Be Continued"

in the Next Issue

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In December, the departmental and college-wide Personnel and Budget committees considered their annual pruning of the faculty tree. If in past years the process seemed a bit haphazard, a kind of chance operation of superior administrators, now it is described as a "more objective" basis of class visitation and teacher evaluation—namely, an evaluation form that contains several dozen "fair, reliable, and valid" criteria to measure the strength or weakness of an unobserver.

Dean James admitted that precise definitions of what constitutes superior, good, average, or poor teaching have not been developed, but he is confident the matter of definition is in good hands. "Persons skilled in personnel management," he told questioners, "are a group of persons experienced in this sort of thing"—can he mean Top Administrators?

Dealing over these delicate questions, Dean James and the rest of the personnel managers won't object if the faculty does a little more of what he means by teaching, after all, is our "business," as Dean James might say. Are the new teacher observation and evaluation forms a solid objective basis for assessing ability to teach and to carry out general responsibilities in the College?

The MCC forms are based on sample forms sent out by the central CUNY administration. The several dozen items cover "personnel traits" (e.g., appearance, manners, energy, enthusiasm, adaptability, willingness to accept direction); "classroom management" (e.g., punctuality, student discipline, atmosphere conducive to learning); "subject matter and teaching techniques" (e.g., knowledge and organization of subject matter, voice and language, attitude toward bright and slow students, encouragement to learning), "teaching methods and techniques" (e.g., use of lectures, student participation in discussion, use of visual aids, homework assignments, quizzes and exams, plus other categories duplicating items under "subject matter and teaching ability").

For each item the observer checks one of six boxes: Unsatisfactory, Average, Above Average, Superior, Not Observed, Not Applicable. (Note: the observer is only the next-to-lowest of the four qualitative evaluations, actually amounts to a negative judgment. The observer's job is to leap over to say something else.) The observer is asked to leap out of the little boxes and write a few words beneath them.

The use of the forms assures that all the criteria are not only relevant to the quality of teaching; there can be enough to measure on a 4-point scale. Now, maybe personal appearance, manners, voice, willingness to accept direction, and relationship with the Administration are relevant to good teaching, though we doubt it; but it's impossible to say for sure without knowing what those bland phrases actually mean. Some of the other criteria, superficially more pertinent, are just as gauzy, particularly when coupled with a quality-control rating.

What, for example, is an "average" amount of "teaching materials"? How much "opportunity to question" is "above average"? Under "encouragement to the student," would the question be details while rejecting challenges to basic assumptions of the course or to the teacher's social outlook rate "unsatisfactory," or "superior?"

What does a check-mark under "superior" for "student discipline" signify: flexible relaxation which is good for the students, or total teacher control over the dynamic of the class? And how does all of the religious milieu and "professional development" pervade? (The conduciveness to learning of traffic and construction noise, overcrowding, overheated or freezing classrooms, lack of equipment, inadequate study space is not measured on these forms. Maybe a teacher should be rated simply for overcoming any or all of these obstacles. One begins to see how "voice" and "manners" might figure in teaching ability at MCC: if you can't shout in a dignified and unuttering way, you cannot teach effectively in the B or L buildings.)

No need to belabor the obvious. Dean James is an earnest and "good" critical observer, almost all contentless, empty; judgments based on them, far from being objective, public, changeable, are in fact dead; subjective, reflecting the observer's own attributes, abilities, and preferences for which the observer is not held accountable. One example should suffice: observer damns an observer with faint praise by marking him/her "average" for "knowledge of subject matter," he does not have to explain what that judgment means, let alone demonstrate his competence to make it in the first place. (And everybody knows how much dead wood has accumulated at the top of the faculty tree.)

But supposing the forms were as objective as Dean James claims they are: what chances? The whole process of evaluation is still a bureaucratic farce. Evaluation of a teacher's performance is almost invariably based on the basis of: one class visit per semester. (Some observers don't even stay for the whole hour.)

Most observers walk into a classroom cold, not knowing what's happened in the course prior to the visit, or what will follow. How, then, can the observer judge the lesson's "continuity with course material in other class sessions" or the "organization of subject matter"? How can he rate "reasonable assignment of homework" or "encouragement to thinking"? Not knowing the specific needs of the students in a particular class, or the dynamic of that class (and every class is different, especially in a school so diverse as MCC), how can the observer evaluate the quality of student participation, the teacher's use of materials, his/her "ability to explain," his/her "use of language," "Yes, use of language" gets graded, too. Dean Pittman, MCC's very own protector of decorum, is no doubt gratified. To be honest, an observer who hasn't bothered to confer with the teacher about the course would have to check marks in the "solicited this semester" column.

But since no observer mindful of his reputation (though unworried about his job) is going to be buried under the fiction of officially perpetuated that a cursory, 50-minute-or-less, twice-a-year, out-of-context observation is an adequate basis for deciding whether a teacher deserves to be retained, promoted, or fired.

Unofficially, of course, cynicism is rampant among tenured observers and untenured observers alike, for there are few who are too naïve not to recognize that reappointment, promotion, and firing at MCC are at best haphazard and at worst downright punitive, an exercise of the personnel department to use the "observation/evaluation forms, in fact, is to protect that power against appeal, e.g., by the unions. This is, in fact, Dean James's September 16th letter to "Chairmen of Departments and Coordinators of Programs" of the faculty, "Now, the forms as a means of "performance measurement" that could stand as legal evidence and scientific support for nonreappointment in union grievance proceedings before arbitration boards or in the courts.

According to the rhetoric, however, observation and evaluation are supposed to be used to improve the quality of teaching, not to perpetuate. The observer isn't even permitted to see the evaluation; he/she has a conference with the department chairman and a deputy, who reports what the evaluation says; the chairman then summarizes the content of the conference or another of the observer's musings to the observer of record. It's rare that this report-to-the-observer is any less of a ritual than the observation itself. More important, this kind of secrecy about the evaluation is clearly open to manipulation: while the observer can note-down data of the evaluation as the chairman reported it to him/her, he/she has no protection against the possibility that there may be exchanges on the form which the chairman does not report and which therefore cannot be challenged.

The point is not simply that we need more meaningful observation and evaluation forms, but that the whole process of evaluation must be changed. As long as administrators and tenured faculty have sole control of the process while retaining faculty will think it matters, the process will be irrelevant to teaching. We need good teaching—and good administration—really important at MCC, or in CUNY generally, all college staff, not just tenured people, would be evaluated and advised in their way of working. Unofficial and tenured staff would sit on all personnel and budget committees (CUNY-by-laws presently forbids them from doing so), top student "opinion" about untenured teachers will eventually be sought at MCC, probably via surveys. We don't object to manipulative use as the faculty-observer forms. (Just don't make the question to the student, yes-men like Dean Pittman, whom James's September 16th letter to "Chairmen of Departments and Coordinators of Programs" of the faculty, "Now, the forms as a means of "performance measurement" that could stand as legal evidence and scientific support for nonreappointment in union grievance proceedings before arbitration boards or in the courts.

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