Everyday People Have Their Say

• Birth • of • an • Internation

special coverage begins page 9
What is Spheric?

Coming out of all the troubles of last year, several of us at Hunter and Brooklyn Colleges have gotten together to try and find OUR voice as CUNY students.

Times are rough and looking ahead, they’re getting rougher. Every night the Governor and President get on TV to tell us how all their decisions are the will of the people. But, you know, that doesn’t seem the case. I didn’t see any one out in the streets demanding larger class sizes and increased tuition. Only a bunch of landlords and financiers in political fundraisers complaining about taxes. We decided to start getting ourselves organized.

More than just reacting to attacks on our school, we see that the big decisions affecting our lives are made by groups hostile to us. We are hoping that through these pages we can discuss our dreams for a world where we have overcome the lack of power in our communities.

We need submissions from everyone, no matter how well we think we write, or what kind of politics we have. Spheric aims to be a community paper for all of CUNY’s community colleges and senior colleges. Not having a line of communication and information was a real weakness for the student movement in the Spring of 1995. Let us begin here. All Power to the People!

The ACT of the Paper
Is More Than the Fact of the Paper

Spheric is funded entirely by the International Flouridation Conspiracy through the Media Board of Hunter College.

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So long as the debate over race is a matter of how white people should treat black people, we are still not ending racism in America.

This theory assumes that whites in general have created these programs, which they call "fair."

Black people didn't seem surprised that Fuhrman was a racist. The black police on the Simpson jury said they knew he was lying before they even heard the tapes.

And here is the real fact: So did every white person watching.

It is impossible to live in America and not know. But just like a smoker who knows every drag kills them, white people are living in a dream world where their own children will never come home to roost.

So, most white people don't think they are racist. They don't say nigger, don't even think it. They go to school with and work by black people and get along well enough. They are outraged to some degree by out of control brutality against blacks, such as the acquittal of the cops who beat Rodney King. They know about slav­ery and Jim Crow. They know Martin Luther King. They know about slavery and Jim Crow. They know about slavery and Jim Crow.

They work for companies and are subject to the laws others write. Most white people don't have power in America. They have white-skin privilege. Both white people and black people have been known to style things in this void, a psychology of race has come to dominate white discussion. Racism is not about how white people feel, it's about how we all actually live—it's about power. White people in general continue to view race as a problem of perception and "fairness". This psychological view of race acts as if no one benefits from the social construction of race. It assumes that if white people don't actively hate black people in public, if they use the right words and vote for the right politicians, then black equality should follow suit. This, of course, black people really are inferior.

More than just feeling these things, whites are conditioned to think them. So are blacks for that matter. We (I mean all of us) are told to others about all the good things whites have done for blacks, but the news of TV becomes more real than what's happening right down the street.

Over and over we are shown cultural images of successful black people such as a black reporter covering some civil rights convention or even a "general" news story, a sitcom with comfortable unassuming blacks and even condonement from government officials of the stupider faces of racism.

But for all the talk of forced busing, our schools are as segregated as thirty years ago. For all the talk of affirmative action, black people per capita have 1/30th of the property whites do. For all the talk of community policing, brutality numbers climb year after year. For all the talk of a color-blind society, Harlem is black and Westchester County is white and you must be blind to color to see that.

So long as the debate over race is a matter of how white people should treat black people, we are still not ending racism in America.

The question is not whether white supremacy will be ended or not. It is when will black people own and control their own means of sustenance. Redistribution of power was never on the white supremacist agenda. Now that even playing nice is considered a waste of time by the white power structure, everyday white people need to try and deal with the basic realities of black American and aid in the struggle for black self-determination. It is only in the freedom of all people on their own terms that we can even begin to speak of love.
¿Cuba Libre?

Octubre 22, 1995 encontró a la comunidad de Harlem recibiendo con bracos abiertos al presidente de Cuba, Fidel Castro. Mientras que los otros dignatarios que se encontraban en Nueva York para el 50 aniversario de las Naciones Unidas celebraban entre ellos mismos, Fidel revivió su famosa estadia de las minorías en Harlem, cuando en 1960, visitó por primera vez a los Estados Unidos. En esa época, Dominado por Malcolm X y Fidel Castro, uniendo simbólicamente la revolución de Cuba y la lucha de los Afro-Americanos en los Estados Unidos.

La noche del 22 las personas que se unieron en el Abyssynian Baptist Church vinieron bajo ese mismo espíritu. Una multitud diversa de activistas puertorriqueños, dominicanos y latino-americanos asistieron. Entre ellos estuvieron figuras como Angela Davis, Nydia Velázquez, Sam Anderson y organizaciones estudiantiles como Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and Student Power Movement (la nueva generación de activistas). Vinieron todos a demostrar su apoyo y solidaridad con "Cuba revolucionaria" y a denunciar el bloque económico que tiene hasta el día de hoy al pueblo cubano.

"Viva a Castro, "el barbudo," fue una experiencia llena de emoción y contradicciones. Una de las presentaciones más resaltaba en mi mente.

¿Cuál es la lógica que propugna el gobierno Estadounidense a ser mucho más recalcitrante un embargo económico que no ha tenido otro resultado mas que ser más miserable la situación del pueblo cubano? Los E.E.U.U. pintaban una imagen de Castro como un dictador que impide la democracia y reprime al pueblo cubano. La noche del 22 las personas que vinieron bajo ese mismo esfuerzo anti-emigrante del partido Republicano propone reducir sustancialmente el "walla," la ayuda médica y el acceso a la educación, no únicamente a los independientes sino a aquellos que no sean ciudadanos de los E.E.U.U.

Pero esperan, esperan. Como los diablos que analizan la situación en Cuba desde varias perspectivas. Mientras cita el discurso de Castro esa noche, estuve pensando que aunque ay ay que reconocer las realizaciones que a logrado Cuba, no se puede cometer el error de idealizar la situación en Cuba o de convertir a Castro en un ídolo monolítico.

"Que viva Castro, que viva," decían dos jóvenes sentados frente a mi, sus ojos encendidos de pasión. Yo entendía lo que sentían. En los E.E.U.U. (como en el mundo) nos encontramos una vez más en una época en la cual la injusticia social, económica y política ha aumentado sus fuerzas contra la humanidad. "Desde estos muros revolucionarios," dijo Loveleth Madrid, "Castro y Cuba suelen ser uno de los únicos vestigios de la vieja isquedia - una voluntad de lo que puede ofrecer al socialismo, la revolución vista como respetan Fidel y su país para muchas personas.

Pero la obligación de ellos que siguen en la lucha, ellos que todavía creen en la posibilidad de terminar un mundo verdaderamente libre y democrático. Su obligación es analizar de manera crítica las contradicciones de la situación en Cuba.

La comunidad más vulnerables en los E.E.U.U., son Washington Heights en South Bronx o Liberty City en Miami entienden la urgencia de obtener las necesidades materiales. Adquirir vivienda decente, ayuda médica y educación son el objetivo más directo. Pero Castro y otros líderes de Cuba han resultado mas que ser los opositores del sistema, incluyendo laborales, que expresan su descontento con la política y entorno, en las palabras de Castro, representan una amenaza a la seguridad nacional.

Como fijo, la vida en el interior Cubano ha organizado y autorizado lo que llamada "brigadas de respuesta inmediata" que logren a los opositores del sistema, incluyendo laborales humanitarios. El punto no es que se encuentre en contra de las reformas, sino que el país se ha convertido en una especie de frontera entre el desarrollo económico y la alimentación. "Estos atacan a Cuba deben estar aislados en celdas oscuras..." dijo a los opositores del sistema, incluyendo laborales humanitarios. El punto no es que se encuentre en contra de las reformas, sino que el país se ha convertido en una especie de frontera entre el desarrollo económico y la alimentación. "Estos atacan a Cuba deben estar aislados en celdas oscuras..."

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Why Black Students Owe Their Time and Energies to Save the Life of Mumia Abu-Jamal

by Cad

For many of us, college will give us an opportunity to raise our living standards and be the launching pad to new careers. Black college students like other college students, have worked diligently to succeed in the academic world.

However, many of us have forgotten about the hard work that our elders have put in to give us access to higher education. Many of us believe that our high school averages and SAT scores are the only reasons why we have been allowed into these institutions. We must remember that only 25 to 30 years ago these schools would not even consider allowing people in. Let's keep it real, do you really think that you are any smarter than your parents or grandparents who were denied opportunities at higher education, in vast numbers? Do you really believe that white institutions woke up one day with some new found moral courage and said "Okay, it's time we gave a few of them a chance?" Don't think so, but many of us are misguided enough in these places to walk around here thinking that we earned our way in with good grades.

We have no concept of the fact that our people put their lives on the line for this society to change the little that it has. It has Power concede nothing without struggle, but how many of us today continue on with that struggle, and how many of us are just trying to fill the few slots that have been allotted for us in the job market?

Many of the freedom fighters involved in the social movements of the 60's and 70's are still languishing in american prisons, but we don't know about them because we are too busy trying to get that good job to stop and find out. Mumia Abu-Jamal is one of those freedom fighters. Mumia is a former Black Panther Party member and an award winning journalist from Philadelphia. Mumia was well known in Philadelphia for his critical reporting on police brutality and government misconduct. He has been fighting for the human rights of African Americans since he was a teen-ager and now Mumia is fighting for his own life.

In 1982 Mumia was falsely convicted for the killing of a police officer. The circumstances surrounding the incident and subsequent trial led to Mumia being railroaded into jail and sentenced to death. On the night of December 9, 1981, Mumia was shot in the stomach as he was rushing to help his brother. The cop was found dead at the scene. Witnesses said another man shot the cop and ran off. However, when other police came on the scene, and noticed that Mumia was the person shot and immediately arrested and beaten. Even though Mumia needed immediate medical attention, he was brutalized by cops before and after being taken to the hospital.

At the trial Mumia was denied the right to represent himself or have counsel of his choice. Mumia's incompetent court appointed defense attorney was allotted only $150 for the complete pre-trial investigation. This made it evident that he was fighting a losing battle. In a city which is 40% black, only 2 blacks were chosen for the jury, one of whom was replaced by a white. Eleven potential black jurors were struck down. The presiding judge, Albert J. Boscaccia, is a life time member of the Federal Order of Police and has sentenced more people to death (31) than any other judge in the country (of them people of color). He refused to let in evidence obtained under "evidence" that Mumia quoted Mao, saying that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." All of this was supposed to suggest that Mumia had been wanting to kill a cop since he was a teenager.

Now after Mumia has been on death row now 13 years, the Governor of Pennsylvania has signed Mumia's death warrant. Mumia was scheduled to be executed August 17th on Marcus Garvey's birthday. However, the powerful outpouring of public support has led to his getting a stay of execution. Subsequently Mumia's appeal for a new trial has been turned down and must now proceed to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

Mumia has been sentenced to death not because he killed a cop but because Mumia is an uncompromising freedom fighter in the struggle for justice for African people in amerikkka. As noted before, like so many activists of the 60's, Mumia has been under surveillance by the FBI since he was a teenager in the Panther Party. Mumia. Dr. King, Malcolm X, Huey Newton, Stokely Carmichael, and Fannie Lou Hammertime were not watched because they were guilty of any crime, but for daring to speak up against the brutality, poverty, government corruption and challenging the merit of a society that puts profits in front of human rights.

We must get involved to save the life of Mumia. If Mumia is killed, then that makes it easier for one of us to be next when we decide to stand up and struggle for our human rights.

No — Mike Tyson was not a political prisoner but Dhruba Bin Wahed and Angela Davis were . No — Tupac Shakur is not a political prisoner but Gerrenimo Pratt and Mumia Abu-Jamal are. Ask yourself why the former names are much more familiar to you than the latter, and what we can do to change that. All Power to the People.
The Mark Fuhrman Quota

I'm not saying that every cop is a Mark Fuhrman, but that there are enough Mark Fuhrmans and Stacey Koons in every police force across the country to get the job done.

...
The police are more than a military institution for the personnel of an occupying army in place that serve to perpetuate the system we live under. To give some credit to the young women and men who join the US armed forces, the differences between police officers and regular military personnel must be addressed. The majority of Armed Forces personnel enlist because they need a job, need the GI Bill, or to get the high-tech training that will supposedly give them a competitive edge in the job market.

Police officers, however, are a different matter. Police work is a career choice. They choose to become pigs, not necessarily because they believe that they will be doing some good for society. Even if they want to help the community, the despicable things that police work involves usually turns a rookie’s idealism sour. Many times, rookie mentality is shaped by the veterans of the force, many of which joined out of racist sentiment, or have become racist through many years of racist police work. So, when someone joins the police force, they are quickly thrust into the job of parading and controlling communities that they are not from, much like occupying armies, and are quickly made into pigs, by veterans, or the very experience of having to deal authoritarianly with people who have been driven to break laws written by rich people.

For example, white cops who commute from Long Island or Westchester County to NYC, will have no qualms in being brutal and piggish with the Blacks, Latinos, and poor white folk of the communities they work in, and could be lovers smiling as they pass. This glowing cheek and wind caught hair I hold before gallows and the coarse hemp of rope in a country called my home. I feel the sun forever more as mine.

Loose the fire! Omens collect the institutions and paperwork the ghosts of lorde and che and coltrane bring mine down on mau-mau wings of mockingbirds and the willfully mad mad poet women in asylums mad poet men in prisons haikus snow through all the bellvues textures of lead and calloused satin haunt Attica all these hung poets singing within the sun singing the skin singing the skin and the turning of leaves.
by Topaz

DEAR TOPAZ,

I am a Sophomore at a Hunter College, majoring in philosophy. Last spring, I went to the CUNY budget cut rally and met a really cute chick. We totally hit it off. We walked together, chatted together, and she held my hand when we tried to make a break for it. Then when it didn’t work she kept holding my hand. At this point I was all set to make my move when suddenly this fuckin' pig grabbed me. I tried to fight him off, but he got me in some choke hold headlock, and threw me in this goddamn puddle wagon with three of his own buddies. What the fuck I swear, I was doing nothing—maybe yelling a bit, but nothing criminal. Don’t these asshole cops have nicer people to grab up, you know? These asshole cops have nice dangerous people to grab up? Man, I fucking hate them.

It’s easy to know that chick again. I never had a chance to get her number before those goddamn math bukies washed away the serial smear granolada or something like that. So I have two questions. One: How can I find that girl? Two: Why are cops such fucking dicks?

Down with bacon

DEAR BACON,

All those in favor of cops, show of hands, please. Anyone? None. Real — not all cops are bad. I’m sure there are some nice cops out there. It’s just that all the nice cops don’t bug us for so reason only the goddamn motherfuckers who wash away the serial smear granolada or something like that. So I have two questions. One: How can I find that girl? Two: Why are cops such fucking dicks?

Down with bacon

DEAR DEAR,

I am sitting in the dark on the West Side pier, trying to get the nerve in to piss in the water. For the past fifteen minutes or so I have been telling myself the obvious that practically no one will see me and that I’m not risking anything if anyone does. And for these past fifteen minutes the only thing I’ve been able to start thinking about is showing the person, or, I’m afraid of being unable to control my own desire for it, masturbating and murring up the basis of my irresistible attraction.

I have just come from having sex with a girl on Christopher Street. It was pretty satisfying, but immediately after the scene I felt like getting on the subway to the city, and just crying, to express my felt that old deep discontentment with life and my mind was racing, not just crying induced thoughts.

The pier would be a good place to meditate a little, I thought quiet sounds and water rippling was what I needed most right then. And, I thought, I could piss in the water before the long trip home. I had no idea this weird psychological process would hit me.

This is ridiculous, I tell myself, it’s not like I haven’t done this before. It’s obvious that nobody would care if I did it, and I’m sure no one would ever realize I did it. And, if the guy I was with did care, he would probably accept it, as he has always accepted me.

So I have two questions. One: How can I find that girl? Two: Why are cops such fucking dicks?
March 23rd: We're not asking for what is ours

On the cool midday of March 23rd, 1995, a 16-year-old Puerto Rican girl from Spanish Harlem squeezed her way through thousands of protesters, past the weak stage security and with unself-conscious courage approached the stage manager demanding to speak. She explained that she had stayed up half the night writing a speech and no one would hold her back. Chaos was already ruling the stage as every guy with five friends demanded his turn on the mike. Politicians including Al Sharpton and Borough President Ruth Messinger were turned away from the stage, yet this young woman took her turn. She told the story of her life, her family coming to New York, her schooling and hopes. She asked why people so obviously hostile to her and her family were even able to make decisions that so poorly affected them. She spoke in Spanish and English and declared she would never be quiet. The crowd roared in response. How was it that the largest student protest New York has seen since the 60's was more interested in the words of a young woman from Harlem, than the practiced speeches of liberal government officials? How was it that people came out on the 23rd to speak for themselves?

To understand what happened and to figure out which way to go in our struggle for education and self-determination, we need to study the many lessons and different stories from Spring '95. Spheric has collected stories from a variety of viewpoints in an attempt to present the full breath of opinion. By printing an article, Spheric is in no way endorsing the opinions of the writer, we are only trying to give a complete picture.

We hope this collection serves as a springboard rather than an ending. The struggle which we all unleashed is about more than just classrooms and books, it was about we the people standing on our own feet for once. And while we didn’t stop the budget ax, we have learned much about power in America, the power of people united, and that our future really rests only in our own hands.
Half a Year After the March

by Asif Ullah

March 15th to a sea of cheering students. Another professor from the Sociology Dept., said the termination of the year is "in addition to the 17% already laid off over the past four years." The teach-in was held to build consciousness as well as momentum for the City Hall March that followed the week after.

According to a New York Times article, "not since tuition was first imposed during the fiscal crisis of the 1970's has the City University faced such deep cuts." The deep wounds left by the faculty and classes have been reduced by almost 25%. Irreparable sections have been eliminated.

Among the departments shut down or reduced considerably are the nursing school at City College, remedial classes at most of the CUNY's 18 colleges, music, theater, and environmental health departments at Kingsborough Community College, communications, media studies at Hunter College and Lehman College, which dedicated a $45 million gymnasium, was forced to resign their physical education majors. "These are rough times," said Hunter Sociology Professor Carter during a teach-in on March 15th.

Many feel the "they" have won. "I went to the march and although I don't regret it, I don't think I'd do it again if there's another one," said an angry Alisa Ali, a junior at City College in reference to the march. Alisa, who was considering entering the discontinued Nursing program at City, has now settled for English writing. "There's no use in fighting them." Still there are many who are less pessimistic on the outcome of the march: "I think March 23rd was a start," said Ivan, a History major at Hunter.

This time their slogans are followed by question marks.

Ivan and many like him, feel the march was the reason why tuition was raised 25% instead of 20%. "We scared them," Ivan said smiling.

never submit to the man always submit to spheric
OPEN POEM TO THOSE WHO RATHER WE NOT READ...OR BREATHE

Fascism is in fashion
but we be style
  dressed in sweat danced off Taino and
  Arawak bodies
we children of children exiled from
  homelands
  descendants of immigrants denied jobs
and toilets
carry continents in our eyes
  survivors of the Middle Passage
we stand
and demand recognition of our humanity

Starving for education
we feed on the love of our people
we flowers
the bloom on Amsterdam Ave
though pissed on by rich pink dogs
through concrete cracks
We passion kiss in the backs of police vans
recite poetry in prison cells
stained walls in blood tracing brutality
know the willow she weeps for
we her jazzy tears tasting of the strange fruit
of southern trees

Fascism is in imperial fashion
but we be style
our tongues (long slashed to keep silence)
wear blood jewels
our heads sport civilizations
our hips are velvet wrapped in music
and you can see the earth running
right under our skin

In a state of police
cops act as pigs treat men as dogs
mothers as whores
the bold youth of a nation hungry and cold
an entire nation of youth
behind bars grown old
the mace and blood did not blind we
witness and demand a return to humanity

We braid resistance through our hair
pierce justice through our ears
tattoo freedom onto our breasts

The bluesy souls of brown eyed girls
clash with the blackened blood on the pale
hands of governments of war
cops who think they’re bluer than they are
mercenaries sent on a mission to set back
our strength power love

We be eternal style

While evil is wearing itself down with
badges guns contracts laws cash
and rouges its thin lips with human juice
strained off billy clubs
and tightens its power tie around necks
that just won’t bend
we see the price tag hanging out
the cost is our death
and we refuse to pay

We be political prisoners walking around
semi-free
our very breath is a threat
to those who rather we not read
and think and analyze and watch out and
fight back
and be human beings the way we need to be

We wear warrior marks well

Fashion is passing
style be everlasting
we

Suheir Hammad
42195

Dedicated to those who realize our empowerment is through education.
In My Blood

by Lenina Nadal

My family never gave up on freedom. In the 1950’s, while young girls wore poodle skirts and housewives wore high heels on television, my grandmother was learning powerful English words to curse out members of the Board of Education. She scolded them with passion hoping the school would finally listen to the needs of Latino parents in her community. My grandfather worked in a restaurant cooking meals for the rich and well-dressed. He would long to come home and reminisce about his youth as a warrior for Puerto Rican Independence. He tickled his lips playing patriotic songs on his harmonica. When I was a child, overwhelmed by throngs of people at the Puerto Rican Day parade, I held my country’s flag tightly in my fist as my father balanced me on his shoulders. I held strongly to the dreams which were fought for by my family. Whenever I resisted authority, I touched on this spirit which rushed through me and filled me with strength. But, marching through the rain last April, the spirit which guided me was my own. It was a simple thought, “why should we have to pay more for education? Shouldn’t we be able to explore our world for free?” that led to the students at various CUNY universities to rebel. For this question we were made to feel intimidated, as if our questions were unreasonable. When some students decided to starve themselves for the sake of education, the students were told that we did not have the right to protest in school and that we would be arrested. We were gathered in a common area of the college and were resentful to the authorities. We walked out of the college with conviction followed by the guards who breathed upon us heavily, asking us to move. It was midnight and it had started to rain. When we reached the streets, we huddled close in puddles of water mixed with gasoline on the sidewalk. I let the rain pour on me, soaking my hair and my long blue dress. I longed to be naked for my clothes were heavy and constraining. We were tied to one another by a quiet love, one that touches all who undertake the risk to fight for freedom.
A demonstration
Kate McCarthy

Vast and deep - an ocean of people rushed into the trap like a crashing wave
They gathered for a cause but ended up digging their own grave.

A whirling chaos that drowned the outrages of the demonstrators.

Driven by anger and frustration - an unpredictable current had formed.

A cause pulled back to the seas.

Let a drift for people's personal scenes.

A seawall of billy clubs and mace.

This time, had they lost the race?

The temperamental sea of people were forced to retreat.

As they slowly walked away - bittersweet smiles never showed their defeat.

The rosy row calls red beyond red, blue past blue "you see, but we be"

This is not a love song
Joselyn Miranda

There is a man
I want to meet
Just to have
for one day
in a room with a view of
times square
tie naked to the bedpost
I'd stand there
smiling to myself
waiting until his dick got hard
to then cut it off
and see the sheets fill with red
against his pale white skin
I'd take pictures & mail them to college students all around New York
Then I'd leave him bleeding & crying singing
"I hate you, You fucking dick Pataki you're a motherfucking moneygrabbing, politician, white shit"

But halfway down the stairs I'd stop and turn around because it's wrong to leave a human being suffering.

So I'd go back to the room and put a bullet through his head.
by Alex S. Vitale, CUNY Grad

and ideas, but often low on resources. Both overall groups were more racially diverse than not. As a result, the Coalition's organizing was closely tied to student leadership.

Student reaction to the day was mixed. Many students were alienated by the militant rhetoric of the speakers and the sense of poor organization.

luring tide of global austerity.

The first challenge that faced the Coalition was how to deal with the official CUNY-wide student government, the University Student Senate (USS), which was aligned with progressive state and local legislators. The USS's goal was to preserve CUNY programs through intensive lobbying within the Democratic Party. We backed up by carefully orchestrated mobilizations that they would control politically. The two groups came into immediate conflict as each began to plan demonstrations in March. The USS, working with the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus of the State Legislature, called for a march to Wall Street for the 16th. The CUNY Coalition called another march to Wall Street on the 23rd. A battle ensued over which event would be more prominent and which group would come to represent the legitimate center of the struggle.

The USS decided to work with established student leaders at the campuses; their political positions were determined by a centralized leadership. In contrast, the CUNY Coalition created ad hoc committees that were open to everyone. On some campuses, these committees were closely tied to student governments or major student organizations. On others they were not. As a result, the Coalition's organizing was high on energy and inclusive of diverse people and ideas, but often low on resources. Both groups were well supported by the students at the campuses but neither was as diverse as the overall CUNY student population. The issue of racial composition did come up on individual campuses, but it was not a point of difference between the USS and the CUNY Coalition.

March 23, 1995 — Students gather to storm Wall Street.

by Joel Brandt, Hunter College

I n the months since we fought to stop the cuts, a lot of discussion has gone on trying to figure out what happened and which way to go. From cultural nationalist critiques, to distorted liberal mantras, to the truly bizarre "general strike" rhetoric which haunted every public meeting, each group has tried to put their own spin on the student movement.

No, we didn't stop the budget cuts and, no, we didn't start the revolution. We did, however, unleash ourselves and thousands of everyday people to stand on our own feet. Never in my life have I seen such passion, such unity in the moment...and the CUNY Coalition has a list of what went wrong and what did work. Some of this work is helpful. In advance negotiations with the police they had not been able to get permission to march to Wall Street as advertised and were instead forced to follow a route of only six blocks that was lined by police barricades. And as the march came to a stop, the police initially prevented people from leaving the rally. This caused a minor panic and a major sense of disempowerment. When达不到 orientation leaders were able to open up people's stride. A greatly diminished crowd remained to hear the speeches from legislators and student government leaders, which were often incoherent.

From the start, the CUNY Coalition's strategy was more militant and less bureaucratic. Over the course of many heated meetings the
Monday April 25, 1993 - Students blockade Holland Tunnel.

**Vitaie, continued**

Coalition voted several times that the goal of the March 23rd event was to "shut the City down." In practice, this meant drawing 5-10,000 students to City Hall and marching through the financial district, causing maximum disruption of business as usual. By not scripting the day, the Coalition hoped to give participants the sense that they had a role in shaping the event as it occurred. It was hoped that this level of empowerment, like the open organizational style which would create momentum to build a sustainable student movement that could take on the budget cuts and a wide variety of political issues.

On the 23rd, some 7,000-10,000 high school students, up to 10,000 university faculty, 7,000-10,000 university students and over 1,000 union and community members turned out.

The student speakers made threats against the police, and tried to motivate the crowd through extremism, at times, offensive language.

The next day, Rev. Al Sharpton and Dennis Rivera, president of 1993, the public health care workers' union, called the Coalition and suggested another City Hall/Wall Street march under a unified community/student labor banner. They had both been present March 23rd and were appalled by the police tactics. They proposed a joint event for April 4th, the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination.

Students voted overwhelmingly to support the new coalition, but not without voting turn to page 16.

papers announced the news in the following days.

The second major problem I see was that we could not hold together the citywide coalition after the spring. The reasons for this are many. We are coming from a variety of different communities and we have radically diverse philosophies. Times of crisis gel us in opposition to government policy, but in terms of what we want, there is not a clear vision which unites us at this time.

The list of people I've heard blamed for the disintegration of the CUNY Coalition includes: radicals, liberals, anarchists, Marxists, "white people", black nationalists, professional leftist, Trotskyites, police infiltrators, the Grail Center, and on and on. Rather than finding one particular cause, it seems that without a unifying vision of the world we hope to attain, we cannot keep unity beyond these moments of crisis. Unfortunately, little work has been done to try and find our unity and much has happened to cement our differences.

No matter how much bad blood is spilled, events will again force us together. Let's try to keep politics in command and know what we want, clearly argue for it, respect differences, and achieve the highest level of unity we can. Our enemies have done a damn good job of uniting, let's keep this discussion alive.

Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, the issue of "representation" has been floating around. This has been put forward in the following ways: the coalition was run by white liberals/radicals who endeavored people of color by pushing minority even with one-person, one-vote - whole groups did not take an active part in those discussions so they didn't even get the chance to vote, that small and aggressive white minority were able to talk at length about things no one wanted to hear without a popular base to justify it, that meetings were dominated by "powerful personalities" and not the positions they raised; that meetings were packed by various factions; that the placement of meetings at the CUNY Grad Center gave too much influence to graduate students who tended to be white and middle-class, and that a standing leadership body was not elected.

These various criticisms boil down to two essential issues: democracy within the CUNY Coalition and its representation as a body of CUNY students as a whole.

No group can represent everyone. People form different collectives to do particular things. People form groups to use different tactics. The CUNY Coalition was formed to be a grass-roots body to really reach out on the campuses rather than take directions from US and the state Democratic Party (e.g. Denis Rivera, Ruth Messinger and Al Sharpton). Did it represent every CUNY student? Obviously not, but those students who supported the call came out, and bodily supported the objectives raised by the Coalition. If they did not support them, they would not have come. Maybe some were ignorant of the permit issue, but the fierer calling to strike and shut the city down seemed pretty explicit to me.

The idea that internally there was some sort of cabal pulling strings and manipulating votes is absurd. Yes, there were factions. These factions did not break down, however, along racial or school lines internal to the Coalition. The direct action faction included poor, working-class and even middle-class students. The liberal "lobbying" faction included some.

The direct action faction won the discussions, based on the strength of the arguments and the actual popular will on the campuses. No other explanation fits the actually.

I've seen years of liberals sapping the creative power of popular movements under the banner of "inclusion." But I want more than a rally. I want a world where the decisions which affect our communities, schools and workplaces are made by us and not some jackass in Albany or Wall Street. And I'm not alone in feeling this. That was the sentiment that broadly made March 23rd proceed with its radical vision, and no backtracking can deny it.

Some people "alienated" by the radical direct action faction. Yes, but I think that just more to do with not really shutting the city down. Some didn't want that to happen in the first place, but they had NYPIRG, the Democratic Party, and the US to represent them. Those groups were multi-racial and multi-class in composition also, but the vision and politics...
**People to the Power or Power to the People?**

**Vitalis, from page 117:**

Withering attacks against the union leadership... Many students especially those from hard-left sectarian groups, including the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and the Revolutionary Workers' League (RWL), as well as anarchist groups like Love and Rage, attacked the union officials as reformist bureaucrats and labeled the radical potential of rank-and-file workers. They saw an April 6 as a chance to build a rank-and-file movement that might result in city-wide strikes; union leaders, on the other hand, saw it as a more limited opportunity to express the momentum within labor and student groups to stop the Republican attacks on services. One exception to the narrow sectarianism was the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which advocated strong links to labor and a representative organizational structure.

Students, labor leaders from 110P and District Council 37, and a representative of Rev. Sharpston formed an organizing committee. The Coalition selected students who strongly opposed the union leadership and who, according to them, believed that they would be the best negotiators in an uncompromising political position. The committee agreed to three demands: no budget cuts, no tax cuts and an end to corporate welfare. It also agreed the event would be non-violent in the spirit of Dr. King.

Most students felt that the very act of a project would be enough to represent a large victory, but some wanted to push things further. During the final organizing, students continued to decry the union. And at the last meeting, several proposals were put forward for civil disobedience actions and resistance to any police efforts to divide the crowd. While specific details were not called out, the Coalition approved the principle of preventing any police intervention.

Turnout for the event was relatively small, about 500, made up equally of students and workers. The marshaling was well integrated and, despite a brief rainstorm, things moved smoothly. However, several of the students spokespeople were unable to get union rank-and-file workers to expose the possibilities of shutting the city down through united action. They made threats against the police and tried to stand over workers through extremist and, in some cases, offensive language.

In response, Dennis Rivera addressed the crowd and stated that if such rhetoric continued, he would pull his members out of the march. Boos rang out, but primarily from students. Rather than inspiring the rank-and-file, the students alienated most of them, for better or worse, most municipal workers are not politicized beyond immediate workplace concerns. There is no compelling reason why they should look to students for political leadership. Students have low standing socially, few resources, no proven track record and limited political experience. Revolutionism will not make up for these things.

During the final rally on Wall Street, a group of students prevented the police from estimating a crowd control barrier to keep a cross street open to pedestrians. It appeared that they might be arrested. This enraged the union organizers who were already simmering from the previous protest. As a result, the crowd was dispersing fast enough that the police decided that the barriers were no longer necessary.

As a result of the speeches and the street action, ties between the CUNY Coalition and local unions were seriously damaged. The possibility of any future joint actions was gone.

Some of the student speakers later admitted that they had been swept up by the moment and regretted their tone. None of the students had communicated a clear message of why the CUNY system was under assault and what it would take to defend it. Instead they were more concerned with presenting a revolutionary vision which they thought would inspire people to look beyond the immediate crises. It is important to think beyond immediate circumstances in planning political activities. It is also important, however, to understand where, politically your potential constituency is.

The repeated decisions by the Coalition to favor a revolution-building strategy over a stable and effective student campaign against the cuts left most students and student activists alien on the sidelines. There is not support in the current climate for revolutionary rhetoric. People are willing to engage in a certain degree of political activity, even militant activity, but only if it believe it will have short-term meaningful consequences. Any attempt to build a long term student movement must operate with this understanding. It is by doing a good job on a clearly defined issue that students will gain the respect of their peers and make a broad-based movement possible.

The CUNY Coalition should have found better ways to sustain coalitions with organized labor. This doesn't mean going in to reformist Democratic politics. Ways can be found to push both a radical agenda and to gain common ground. It was clear that the union leaders were willing to accommodate the students a great deal. And students represent an important political constituency for both a community labor-strike against the Democratic Party. By working with the union, the Coalition's own student organization would have been enhanced; and the unions might have been willing to provide resources that would have been of great help to the Coalition.

The public sector's fiscal problem cannot be solved by voting for the Democrats, but at the same time a movement for economic reform is not going to be built on rhetoric.

Political mobilization are built on a vision of change and the possibility of real successes along the way. The CUNY Coalition, while maintaining an inclusive, non-hierarchical structure and radical politics, become dominated by a desire to create a revolution which student movement got out of the air. As long as this kind of sectarian nihilism is the dominant force in the CUNY Coalition, a stable base of student support will be hard to come up to an end. Let's not kill our movement by delivering it into the hands of snakes. Wall Street is the center of the empire. Whole nations are traded on their boards, people's lives raised for a penny a share. That is the process that destroys CUNY, that destroys the people who make the money from the work we do. If we know this to be true, and most of us do, let's stop buying into the dream and do what we can to resist.

The CUNY Coalition, while formalistically founded because of the budget cuts, understood these truths and acted accordingly. America is not a democracy. The bourgeoisie owns New York and our futures. It trades them for profit. We will point our finger at the source and not apologize. This second point is essential and must be maintained strongly and centrally in our movement, whatever particular forms it takes.

Mass Line is understanding that we have been given no special right to tell people what to do. That our ideologies and personal ambitions are secondary to the material conditions of our people's lives. That we must be maintained strongly and centrally in our movement, whatever particular forms it takes.

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OPENING MOVES

On February 27, 8,000 students, mainly from the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY), attended a rally organized by the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) in Albany against dramatic proposed cuts in the state budget for higher education. The NYPIRG rally was organized to coincide with a day of student lobbying of state legislators.

Many of the students gathered in Albany were in no mood to be politicians. What the demonstration represented was a basic right. Growing impatience with an endless array of spokespeople emphasizing the importance of registering to vote and writing to our legislators, groups of students organized an impromptu march that managed to capture the whole crowd. After marching up and down a long mall the students started to march past the state capital building which was guarded by no more than a dozen cops on horseback. Students waving the flag of the Dominican Republic were the first up the stairs of the capital building. For a moment the crowd hesitated and then proceeded up the stairs to the doors of the capital.

The NYPIRG organizers panicked and pleaded with the crowd to return to the rally site. It was too late. Several hundred students poured into the lobby of the capitol building chanting, among other things, “Revolution, Revolution.” Few of the NYPIRG organizers, working with the cops, managed to secure the doors and prevent the rest of the students from getting in. The rest of the crowd then marched several blocks to the administrative headquarters of SUNY where the police were better prepared. After several unsuccessful attempts the crowd managed to push through the police and get into the SUNY building, where they remained for about twenty minutes.

The demonstration, which was the first of many local Albany coverage coverage of the capitol movement, was an attempt to prevent these participants from being arrested. The demonstration was organized by the CUNY Coalition Against the Cuts with the explicit aim of “Shut the City Down.” Only about 20,000 were able to get to the rally area around City Hall. The rest were prevented from getting to the rally by the police and clagged the streets surrounding the rally.

The crowd included thousands of the 14,000 High School students who walked out of classes that day. When the students at City Hall attempted to get through the police barricades and into the street in order to march on Wall Street they were met with horses, mace and billy-clubs. Seventy-five students were arrested and many more were injured or otherwise assaulted. Reporters and photographers were also caught up in the police riot.

Eventually the repeated attacks by the police forced the determination of the crowd, which gradually dispersed. Several thousand students regrouped at BMCC nearby and several hundred organized a march to 1 Police Plaza where the administrative headquarters of the people arrested earlier were being held.

Later that evening Police Commissioner Beaton attempted to speak at a previously scheduled event at Hunter College. Students disrupted the event by shouting Beaton down with accusations about police brutality at the demonstration. After one of the students was thrown out of the room a crowd of students gathered outside and chanted-loudly throughout the night. As Beaton left he was pursued by an angry crowd of students chanting “Cops Off Campus!” Run Beaton Run!” The news blackout on the movement against the budget was finally broken. The March 23 demonstrations got front page coverage in every English and Spanish language daily in New York in addition to extensive national and international coverage.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

The March 23 demonstration seriously shook the power structure by announcing the existence of an autonomous working-class student movement outside the control of any of the traditional “progressive” forces of New York City politics.

The CUNY Coalition refused to let any politicians speak from the stage. Ruth Messinger, the liberal Democratic Manhattan Borough President, was told to get off the stage. The response to the March 23 demonstration was immediate. The “left wing” of the Democratic Party represented by the Rev. Al Sharpton and 1199 President and (vice-president of the New York State Democratic Party) Dennis Rivera, called for a march from City Hall to Wall Street on April 4.

Just as March 23 demonstrated the power of the people to take matters into their own hands the April 4 demonstration showed the determination of the system to bring any such expression of our power back under control. The April 4 demonstration had many lessons to offer the new student movement. Rivera and Sharpton promised the CUNY Coalition that they would be “equal partners” in organizing the demonstration. They were everything but.

About 5,000 people, mainly students, turned out for the demonstration. 1199 did not mobilize its own membership in anything like the significant numbers they turned out for March 1, 1999, over the CUNY Coalition on several important issues from which we would get to speak to how the marshals would respond to police provocations.

At one point after several students had made uncompromising radical speeches, Dennis Rivera took the microphone and threatened not to participate in the march if there were any more “provocative speeches.” The crowd, including many 1199 members, booted Rivera. Al Sharpton had to intervene to save his Rivera’s political fortunes.

In an expert piece of demagoguery, Sharpton played the firebrand, railing the crowd up with chants of “No Justice, No Peacé,” and then turned around and announced that any “provocateurs” would be “handed over to the police.” Those who were familiar with Sharpton’s past as an FBI informant didn’t doubt his willingness to collaborate with the cops.

April 4 cost the movement some momentum but it has also taught some important lessons about alliances with “progressive” Democrats. After April 4 the momentum returned to the individual campuses.

At SUNY Binghamton, Governor George Pataki’s car was stoned by students as he attempted to visit his daughter who was participating in an event on campus. On April 11 about 20 students at the City College of New York (CCNY) in Harlem initiated a hunger strike in a 24-hour access building on campus. That night CCNY president Yolanda Moses called in the police to arrest the hunger strikers and their supporters when they refused to vacate the building at 11 pm.

In 1969 CCNY was the site of an occupation that led to open admissions at SUNY. Since then there has been a tradition of not bringing the cops on campus. Moses’ decision to use mass arrests against a hunger strike outraged not only other CCNY students but also community activists in Harlem and Washington Heights.

Only minor charges were brought against the 47 arrestees, but they were held in police custody overnight and the hunger strikers were denied any fluids in a blatant effort to break their resolve. The next morning the hunger strikers returned to CCNY, and by early evening they had been joined by several hundred supporters from the community, from other CUNY schools, and from Columbia and other private schools. That evening a decision was made to avoid arrests and to leave the building when ordered to. The crowd then marched in the rain for several hours in a spirited demonstration through Harlem. Answering an offer of sanctuary from Columbia students the crowd attempted to gain access to Columbia but were blocked at the main gate by police. The crowd then rushed a smaller gate and about half
April 4 cost the movement some momentum but it also taught some important lessons about alliances with "progressive" Democrats.

Over and over one hears from these quarters the refrain that the politicians don't know what the cuts will do to the people who will be affected by them and that the purpose of the movement is to let them know.

In contrast to this, the CUNY Coalition Against the Cuts took a stance that more directly anti-capitalist position that the cuts are part of the general process of capitalist restructuring taking place around the world and that the real power behind the budget cuts is on Wall Street, not in Albany. Even in the CUNY Coalition there is a lack of clarity.

Frequently, activists argue that the budget cuts in higher education will be bad for New York's economy because CUNY produces so many people who are trained to work in high-paying skilled professions, as if the ruling class has just made a big blunder in calculating the effects of the budget.

In fact the budget cuts are perfectly rational from the point of view of the rich, in the new global economy the high-paying jobs that support the US's large middle class are being greatly reduced. At a time when the possibility of high-paying jobs traditionally reserved for the white middle class is shrinking CUNY is producing thousands of SUNY, Latino and Asian competitors for those jobs. This underlines nicely initated at the start of the Spring semester by the president of student government at Bronx Community College, it has been going on for a while. The budget cuts are, in effect, a form of long-term riot control.

WE DON'T NEED NO-STINKING PERMITS

The CUNY Coalition proposal is accompanied by a vicious campaign to demonize students as undeserving of higher education to the people who are trained by the progressive Democrat govenment at the community college level.

By contrast, the CUNY Coalition, in spite of many failings, was honestly led by students who were not directly concerned with future political careers. The March 23 demonstration was more than an attack on the budget cuts. It was a challenge to the ability of the Democrats to keep opposition to the budget cuts within the bounds of protest as usual.

The CUNY Coalition and the rest of the institutionalized progresiveness (the unions, churches, etc.) are in deep trouble. They have lost too much of their credibility to be able to influence the workers to their right. Their one remaining claim to viability is that their ability to retain in the uneasy alliances of society. It is clear that on the whole the system is choosing to rely more heavily on repression (cops and prisons) and less on co-option represented by the progressive Democrats.

Demonstrations and strikes are on the rise, and if they force the idea that the unaccountable bureaucracies of institutionalized progressiveness are as ineffective and irrelevant as the campaigns of white union bureaucrats are well over, on a crowd agitated to to the streets.

Security for the demonstration was organized independently by each school with a coordinating apparatus that never actually worked with the consequence that there was no effectiv stage security and everywhere with a buddy over 175 pounds could get on the stage and demand a turn on the microphone and many did. After almost a year of music, speeches and visible chaos on stage, the announcement was made that we were going to march to Wall Street.

The problem, however, was that there were several thousand cops and ready to stop us. The biggest problem was that there wasn't any coordination among the crowd to break through police lines.

While some of the failure of coordination can be blamed on technical problems, the real fault was political. The lines of trust and communication between campuses had not been built up to the point that they could overcome the predictable technical and logistical screw-ups. In spite of these weaknesses March 23 also demonstrated the incredible power of this movement. The struggle of the students armed with the fighting spirit displayed by the thousands of youth who turned out to do whatever was necessary to shut the city down.

By contrast the CUNY Coalition failed to organize an effective action to actually shut down the financial center of New York, the only CUNY campus where they have a significant presence is the CUNY Graduate Center. Initially CUNY Coalition organizers had posed to route from school to school, but because of the superior facilities offered by the Graduate Center the meetings became fixed there. Both the ISO and the Graduate Center are considerably whiter in composition than the rest of CUNY. Coalition organizers had a majority of white students while the movements on the various campuses are overwhelmingly made up of people of color.

In addition to the ISO and the Graduate Center a number of other groups did not have much success because of the lack of significant blocs in any of the old left. While the net effect of all this was an atmosphere of distrust and poor communications between the large while leadership and the students who had never participated in any sort of politics before and their viability is palpable.

This paper was expressed clearly the day after March 23 when students at Hunter College gathered to sum up the demonstration and to talk about where they wanted to go. While the room was filled with pacifists, militants and revolutionaries, the socialist communists, nationalists, Christians, Muslims, Jews and independent radicals were not in a minority but they were present. When it was suggested that everybody take a minute to say what it was that they stood for and wanted the group to stand for that unity would have been made clear. Although our commitment to defeating the cuts and defending CUNY had brought us together not one person mentioned either. The movement against the budget cuts was not a tired re-run of all the failed last stands of the old left of the '60s. It successfully mobilized a mass of people who have never participated in any sort of politics before and their viability is palpable.

The budget cuts are, in effect, a form of long-term riot control.
In the world of tuition inflation, wage deflation, schools are ghastly and bogged crowded with college-aged males who gulp down just about the only affordable pain reliever on the market. Women learn the trade of educational celibacy and capitalism of youth to climb the white male penis ladder of the corporate world. Young mothers push strollers up and down the block as if searching for fathers, but not knowing where to look or even where to go. In the world of pay more for less, I'm not sure I know where to go either. Classes resemble the volume in the 6 train during the evening rush hour and more professors speak English as a second language or one only understood to themselves. The worst thing about this world is that it is real. When I attended the City Hall demonstration on March 23rd to protest the proposed budget cuts on the entire board of education, including city and state universities, along with 20,000+ elementary, high school, and college students, I knew we were fighting some Leo Luther and his crew. I also know that it was a class, race, and education battle, but little else. This evil in my eyes was bigger than every last one of us. In fact it was so great that it wasn't real, just an it. So all the speeches, Marching, and slogans were just acts of student solidarity. Kids came together to say HO!, but not What?. Or rather, they were there to say What?, but really said HO! as they were clueless to what it really was and just what it can do. Well it did it. If, of course, was Pataki and Giuliani but not just them. It got their appointed staff of trustees at the Board to tell the parents and me that a 17% million cut would mean just a difference of a subtraction of a class period for high school students. As if you could do a class lecture for professors. This, and a little cut of a quarter of professors and guidance counselors, 100% cuts of after school programs for teens, library hours for college students and a billion other things. But no, these are minor alterations and wouldn't change a thing. Maybe it may change Giuliani's salary by an increase of $35,000. Besides, according to Mr. Giuliani, who evidently makes light of the issue, a tuition hike may be a good thing as it may encourage students to work harder. We all owe Mr. Pataki and Mr. Giuliani a very HOT thank you.
Because woman’s work is never done and is underpaid or unpaid or boring or repetitious and we’re the first to get the sack and what we look like is more important than what we do and if we get raped it’s our fault and if we get bashed we must have provoked it and if we raise our voices we’re nagging bitches and if we enjoy sex we’re nymphos and if we don’t we’re frigid and if we love women it’s because we can’t get a “real” man and if we ask our doctor too many questions we’re neurotic and/or pushy and if we expect community care for children we’re selfish and if we stand up for our rights we’re aggressive and “unfeminine” and if we don’t we’re typical weak females and if we want to get married we’re out to trap a man and if we don’t we’re unnatural and because we still can’t get an adequate safe contraceptive but men can walk on the moon and if we can’t cope or don’t want a pregnancy we’re made to feel guilty about abortion and... for lots and lots of other reasons we are part of the women’s liberation movement.

SO STEP THE FUCK BACK AND SHOW SOME RESPECT