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New York: A View From Below

BY GRASSHOPPER

You’re not from New York City, you must have heard a lot about how nice it’s become. That the crime levels have declined, that the local economy is doing very well, with the city boasting of billion dollar surpluses and windfalls from the booming stock exchange. This is in comparison to the notorious image of New York City as a nitty-gritty crime ridden west frontier town. The national media has been very supportive of the particular individual that has been credited for this “achievement,” NYC’s very own Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani.

Giuliani, a former federal prosecutor, made history in NYC in his own way by leading a several thousand police rally turned police riot on the steps of City Hall before he became mayor. Then Mayor, David Dinkins (the city’s first Black mayor) had made some overtures to develop a fully functioning and autonomous Civilian Complaint Review Board. Giuliani tapped into an obviously angry police force and took advantage of this conservative backlash from NYPD, by leading this rally. Off duty cops that day were heard calling the Mayor Dinkins a “washroom attendant” who had no business running governmental affairs. Black council members at City Hall that day were verbally harassed and racially insulted by off duty officers who were also getting drunk in public while their on duty fellow officers watched on. Giuliani came out of this riot smelling like a rose. Giuliani was able to tap into a racially polarized city by exploiting the worst aspects of supposed racist tendencies in the white middle and working class against neighboring Black communities.

If you’re old enough to remember, you may have heard of Howard Beach, Bensonhurst, and Crown Heights, NYC neighborhoods that propelled incidents of racial violence so rank and odious, it made international headlines. Rather than being a peace maker, Giuliani cam­
paigned on a Nixonian “law and order” platform which appealed greatly to a white voter constituency that was fearful and distrustful of Blacks.

Needless to say, Giuliani won the elections by seizing enough liberal turncoats to his position. He initiated what he termed a “Quality of Life” campaign. He strongly argued that what New York City needed was an absolute clamp down on all those things that made life unbearable. Sounds good? Okay, so that means we’re going to raise people’s wages, fight racism, raise the minimum wage, improve the education system, promote and aid higher education students, fight domestic violence, fight racist police brutality, create more jobs, aid poor and impoverished people, fight greedy corporations, eliminate stop-and-frisk law—am I coming across here? But from the beginning, Giuliani masterfully exploits the frustrations of predominately white commuters by cracking down on “squeegee men.” That’s right, squeegee men, the scourge of civilized society who try to make a living by wiping the windshields of passing motorists. While liberals whined about civil liberties, Giuliani won his first victory, unchallenged, allowing NYPD to remove or arrest squeegee men. He then logically moved against the homeless and panhandlers. It didn’t seem to bother the conscience of hardened New Yorkers one bit.

What was particular about this mayor was not just his skillful rhetorical style, but his tightly controlled press conferences. This tactic also forewarned other journalists and toed marginal journalists into line. Pretty soon, March 3, 1968 continued on page 11

Making Sense of Student Activism in 1998

Welcome back to campus and welcome to our first issue of the 1998-1999 school year! We hope you like our new look. We moved from Cambridge to Boston a few months ago. Somehow we managed to get a place that is cheaper and bigger than our previous space, and that is above ground level. Somehow we managed to get a place that is cheaper and bigger than our previous space, and that is above ground level. In These Times, Marti Garza, our former Organizing Director is now the Campaign Organizer at United for a Fair Economy. And Mark Piotrowski, our all-purpose organizer and Campus Alternative Journalism Director for almost two years, was hired as the Associate Publisher for In These Times.

On-going criticism of the national magazine for progressive student activists

OCTOBER 1998

Linking History: The Great Chicano Protest of 1968 & Proposition 227

BY CARLOS MUÑOZ, JR

Thirty years ago, on March 3, 1968, more than a thousand Mexican American students walked out of Abraham Lincoln High School and marched through the streets of East Los Angeles, California. In the days that followed, they were joined by several thousand more students who walked out of five other predominantly Mexican American high schools. By the end of the week, more than 10,000 had joined the strike which lasted approximately ten days and disrupted the nation’s largest public school system.

The major purpose of the student strike was to protest the conditions of inequality which Mexican Americans had been forced to endure since they were colonized after the end of the U.S. Mexico War of 1846-48.

Three months after the student strike, the Los Angeles public power structure, with the help of the FBI’s Counter Intelligence Program (COIN-TELPRO), arrested thirteen Chicano college student leaders and community activists who helped to organize the high school strike. Indicted for conspiracy to “willfully disturb the peace and quiet” of the City of Los Angeles, each faced 66 years in prison if convicted. These activists were members of the United Mexican American Students (UMAS), the Brown Berets, and other community organizations.

Approximately two years later, a California Appellate Court cleared the activists, ruling that they were innocent of the conspiracy charges by virtue of the First Amendment. As one of those thirteen activists, this ruling freed me to participate in many more protests and struggles in my fight against Proposition 227, which may eliminate bilingual education in California.

Significance of the Strike

The strike was the first mass protest against racism ever staged by Mexican Americans in the United States. Carried out in the non-violent protest tradition of the Southern civil rights movement, the strike’s historical significance paralleled the 1960 black student sit-ins in Greensboro, N.C. The Los Angeles strike signaled the beginnings of a powerful Chicano student movement throughout the Southwestern United States.

The strike marked the entry of Mexican Americans into the turbulent history of the 1960s. The student movement generated by the strike was crucial to the emerging Mexican American civil rights movement and helped shape the Chicano Power Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

These struggles opened doors for equal opportunity in higher education and created Chicano Studies programs in colleges throughout the country. From these emerged the first generation of Mexican American scholars, writers, poets, artists, filmmakers, actors, lawyers, medical doctors, health care and social workers, and teachers. Bilingual education, too, was a product of these fights for Latino equality.

Despite these gains, Latino educational inequality still persists. Latino students in public schools continue to experience the same tracking system which I went through back in the late 1950s. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 30 percent of Latino youth drop out of high school—compared to 8 percent of white students and 12 percent of blacks. And most Latino students who are fortunate enough to graduate from high school are ill-equipped academically or don’t meet college entrance requirements. For example, Latinos are the least qualified.

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The Fight to Preserve Open Admissions Against Attacks by the Board of Trustees Involves Nothing Less Than Blocking Educational Apartheid

BY ROB WALLACE

In late May, the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York (CUNY) ended CUNY’s 29-year-old policy of Open Admissions by aborting remediation classes at CUNY’s senior colleges. In August, a State Supreme Court judge blocked the change in policy.

As started in 1970, the Open Admissions policy allows any New York City high school student who obtains a diploma at CUNY. Those students who can not handle the college material are placed in remedial courses until they can. The point of the policy was to allow access to a college education to students that were traditionally provided substandard high school educations by the public school system.

Open Admissions was implemented after Black and Latino students at City College started successful protests against the exclusionary nature of the CUNY system which, in 1969, was comprised primarily of white students.

Following implementation of Open Admissions, a veritable revolution in education swept New York City. By 1976, the majority of CUNY students were of color. By the early 1990s, 63 percent of CUNY undergraduates were non-white, 54 percent Black or Latino. One barrier in the racial apartheid of New York education had been smashed.

In May, the Board of Trustees began to implement the apartheid once again. The Board voted to block from entering CUNY’s four-year senior colleges any student who could not pass proficiency tests in math, reading, and writing. The Board planned to implement the new policy at CUNY’s senior colleges starting in September 1999. The Board, comprised primarily of Mayor Giuliani and Governor Pataki appointees, oversaw CUNY-wide policy.

The new policy would effectively end remediation classes at the senior colleges. As of now, all CUNY Open Admissions, students who could not pass any of the tests could still attend the colleges, take remediation courses, and retake the exams when ready, albeit within a certain set time. The remediation courses were therefore a linchpin of Open Admissions.

The Board’s decision turned the three assessment tests into entrance exams. You can’t pass the tests? You can’t enter CUNY’s senior colleges. No other public university in the country uses such entrance exams. The tests are now another barrier for New York’s poor and working class. The senior colleges have been shown by studies by Lehman College’s David Alavin to be gateways to higher education and professional jobs for a generation of students of color. The Board’s vote to end remediation officially returned apartheid and class war to CUNY.

Apartheid Again

Anne Paolucci, the chair of the Board of Trustees, told reporters after the vote, in revealing language, “We are closing out the four-year colleges and putting remediation where it belongs,” at the already devastated two-year community colleges.

The end of remediation at the senior colleges will effectively “clean out” tens of thousands of poor, principally Black, Latino, Asian, and immigrant students.

According to CUNY’s own study, five colleges, including City College, would lose half their current enrollment if the Board’s new policy was enacted. City College has already lost over 3,000 students, many in good academic standing, over the past three years. The losses at City College can be attributed to budget cuts, tuition hikes, and City College-specific departmental closures. In 1995, Yolanda Mone, City College’s president, closed, among several other schools, the psychology department, and entire School of Nursing.

The CUNY report declared under the new Board policy, minority students will be the worst hit. The report stated 55 percent of Latino, 51 percent of Asian, and 46 percent of Black students who would have been allowed entrance under present admissions criteria will be barred from entering the senior colleges. Whites too will be blocked, with 38 percent kept from entering by the new policy. In total, 12,000 students—46 percent of 1999’s entering class—will be barred if the policy is successfully implemented.

The CUNY report seconded projections by Lehman College professor Lavin who has for years tracked the positive effects Open Admissions has had and continues to have on CUNY students and New York City. Lavin and colleagues reported that of the 8,000 regular students who entered the senior colleges in Fall 1997, 5,000 would have been excluded under the new policy. That included 2/3 of the entering Black, Latino, and Asian students, and half of the white freshman.

Clearly, if this policy is implemented it would represent one of the greatest New York City’s working class will have suffered this half-century.

The Board of Trustees was provided the CUNY report a week before it voted in the new policy. And Lavin’s study had been available for months. So Board members, many of them bankers and government hacks, were quite aware what impact their decision would have on the schools and their students.

Indeed, before the vote, the Board met for an hour with CUNY lawyers to discuss the likelihood that lawsuits would be leveled at the university system on the grounds the new policy racially discriminated.

Mayor Giuliani, who has continually hammered CUNY with threats and recriminations, called the Board’s vote “courageous.” He declared, “[The Board’s] sends a powerful message that CUNY is starting the important process of restoring its reputation as one of the great public institutions of higher learning in this country.”

Under the new policy, many students brilliant at political science or physics, for example, but not versed in the material any one of the entrance exams would test, would be barred entrance to the senior colleges. Imagine a newly immigrated Einstein barred from City College because he flunked the reading entrance exam.

A Legal Battle Won

On August 10th, State Supreme Court Judge Elliot Wilk issued an injunction against the Board’s decision to end remediation at CUNY’s senior colleges. The decision stems from a suit brought against the Board for violating state Open Meetings Laws when it voted against remediation in May. The suit was brought by Professor William Crain of City College’s psychology department, and David Suker, a City College graduate student.

Furthermore, on May 26th the Board ejected what few public audience members the court could hold. Inside the meeting, six audience members were arrested; “including those watching and listening peacefully,” as Justice Wilk’s ruling put it. Among those arrested were a Franciscan nun and Assemblyman Ed Sullivan (D-Manhattan), the chairman of New York State Assembly’s Education Committee. Outside the building, 20 demonstrators protesting the decision were arrested.

The Board, never elected by their CUNY constituency, would not permit such violation of Board “democracy,” as Chair Paolucci called making fundamental decisions on the future of CUNY behind closed doors! “This is a huge victory for the forces of democracy in this city,” said Crain of Judge Wilk’s decision. “Hopefully, it will force the CUNY Board to reconsider their closedmeetings policies, as well as the destructive decision to eliminate remedial education for thousands of students who need it.”

Anthony Coles, a senior Giuliani advisor, called the ruling “ludicrous.” The Giuliani administration has lost just about every lawsuit filed against the City for violating Open Meetings and Freedom of Information laws.

Coles’ comments, and later Giuliani’s personal attacks, apparently pissed off Wilk that in late August he denied what CUNY had automatically received from other state judges in the past: a stay of the injunction while CUNY appealed. That means the Board’s decision is currently blocked and the campuses must refrain from making any moves to dismantle remediation programs.

The Board’s decision is also being contested on another front. Earlier this summer, former City College administrator and current faculty Board of Trustee representative Susan Sahmer requested New York State’s Board of Regents to review the decision to end remediation. The Regents overview education state-wide, including CUNY’s master plan, as well as a document describing the structure of CUNY and the principles by which the university is to be run.

Sahmer charged that because ending remediation fundamentally changes admission standards and the very structure and mission of CUNY, the Regents would have to review the decision. A key question the Regents are looking into is whether sufficient access to CUNY would be maintained if remediation were ended at the senior colleges. From CUNY’s own report and Professor Lavin’s work, access under the new policy would be denied.

That so worries the Board of Trustees that, in their usual style, the Trustees have launched a war against the Regents, bitterly questioning the Regents’ authority to review the Trustees’ decision. That in turn pissed off the Board of Regents which is less open to dismantle remediation programs.

CUNY students need to exercise political power by organizing against the CUNY administration. Only those most affected have the interest, and the power, to defend an Open Admissions policy that permits New York City’s working class and Black, Latino, Asian, and immigrant peoples the right to earn a college degree. Otherwise, CUNY administrators, whatever race they may be, will willfully send CUNY back in time—to educational apartheid—if it would further their own careers.

Isn’t that right, President Moses?
It was June 1st, the day before last spring’s commencement, and four days after the CCNY Board of Trustees voted to end all remedial courses at four-year colleges at a tumultuous meeting where 24 people were arrested. On that day, a City College of New York (CCNY) employee approached a CCNY student who he knew to be an active member of the Student Center, and asked him to be a "smoke detector" actually a surveillance camera. The CCNY employee said he had seen the surveillance equipment—a receiving device, a TV monitor and VCR recording the image in front of the "smoke detector" in the room next door to 3/201. The student, David Suker, gained access to the room when he arrived in the morning and his sculpture was being set up. Upon entering, a long, bizarre summertime at CCNY

Why NAC 3/201?
NAC 3/201 has been the center of student activism on campus since it was taken over by student activists during a student strike in 1989. The room was renamed the Shaker-Morales Community and Student Center, in honor of two revolutionary leaders who had gone to CCNY in the 1960s, and it was dedicated to student activism against its use by the administration of the Harlem and Washington Heights communities.

It is the core of the Pre-University Program, a grassroots student-run program to prepare high school students for college. The Pre-University Program brings more than 200 high school students to CCNY every Saturday. It is organized and staffed entirely by volunteers, and it is free for the students.

Going Public
After Suker saw the surveillance equipment, he and two other students—Yadmis Rodriguez and Brad Sigal—videotaped footage of the surveillance camera and equipment, and called student-rights attorney Ron McGuire, who immediately came to campus with a reporter from the Amsterdam News. The equipment was examined and became clear they had uncovered an organized surveillance operation.

Attorney Ron McGuire filed a lawsuit against City College on behalf of the three students two days later, alleging that their constitutional rights to free assembly had been violated. They did not, however, know exactly what City College was doing until they were told by President Moses that they had been "in the act," acknowledged that the equipment was theirs.

The students held a press conference on the steps of City Hall to break the story to the public. That night, the story broke on all the television news programs (it was the lead news story right after one of the Chicago Bulls playoff games), and over the next week it hit almost all of the New York newspapers including the New York Times, El Diario, and the Daily News.

Moses Busted
CCNY President Linda Moses didn’t seem to know how to respond. If she knew about the surveillance, then she authorized spying on students organizing peaceful and legal activities. If she didn’t know about it, then she was out of touch with the legal spy games going on under her reign. So the CCNY administration made up a far-fetched tale to explain their political spying.

The June 5th Daily News reported that "Officials at the Hamilton Hall this week were investigating a camera which was a security surveillance mechanism to stop thieves from swiping computers." CCNY Security Director Timothy Hubbard stated, "This was just a standard surveillance device we use to determine criminal activity and to protect the property we have employed over the years to combat crime." It is certainly unsettling if it is "standard" for CCNY security to spy on students with hidden cameras. But even that explanation, unsettling as it was, doesn’t get the whole story.

Many on campus questioned Hubbard and Moses’s story. The New York Times reported on June 17th that, "Gary Benssen, a Mechanical Engineering professor at City College and chairman of its faculty union chapter, said security officials were correct in saying that there were burglary problems on campus—he has lost six computers in his lab in the last two years, he said. But, he added, the surveillance wasn’t a response to recent thefts, and he had been told to install his own alarm." The Real Reason for the Surveillance
Really finally came clear with Security Director Hubbard. When he was subpoenaed by McGuire and the students, he was forced to submit an affidavit explaining his reasons for the spying operation. In his affidavit, dated June 10, 1998, Hubbard acknowledged that the students were aware that this surveillance was to prevent computer theft. But the truth squeaked out at the end of his affidavit.

"..microphones, cameras and the surveillance equipment..." As he did in his affidavit, he said there were also two other reasons, both political. In Hubbard’s June 10 affidavit, he states: "Finally, the third reason for placing the camera outside 3/201 was in response to a report of a possible student or non-student take over of all or portions of NAC, including room 3/201. It was informed that a group of students (or non-students) might be planning to attempt to take over the building sometime around commencement, on June 2, 1998 ...[so] we decided that the security staff would leave the building un-monitor for unauthorized persons on the premises, including in and around 3/201."

This stunning admission directly contradicts the official statement made by President Moses and university spokespeople. For example, Moses stated in a "Presidential Communication" dated March 22, 1999, "I wish to assure the College community that [the use of surveillance directed toward students or other persons based on their political views] has never and will never occur at CCNY." In his affidavit to the court dated June 23, 1998, Moses repeats the same theme, saying, "City College has not conducted and will not conduct any surveillance against any of the plaintiffs or any other students or faculty members.

Hubbard says one of the reasons for the surveillance was to monitor for a political protest or building takeover at commencement, while Moses says City College has never and will never conduct surveillance directed toward students or other persons based on their political views. The affidavits contradict each other, it appears that either Hubbard or Moses is lying under oath.

Moses Retaliates
Stung by the bad publicity, President Moses lashed out in retaliation at the students who had discovered the secret camera. On June 18th, President Moses took the highly unusual step of declaring last spring’s Graduate Student Council (GSC) elections "null and void," while also changing the locks on all GSC offices to keep both the outgoing and incoming student governments from entering. These actions effectively shut down the graduate student government.

GSC administrators locked the editors of the CCNY Messenger graduate student newspaper out of their office as well, asserting that the CCNY Messenger was actually just a newsletter of the GSC, and therefore it wouldn’t be affected by the GSC elections. Establishing that the GSC elections were convenient for Moses, since one of the plaintiffs, Brad Sigal, was also editor of the CCNY Messenger, which had consistently criticized the Moses administration’s inaction in defense of open admissions.

Why Moses Did It
President Moses resorted to these anti-democratic measures because he didn’t like the slate who won the GSC election, which included Rodriguez, Sigal, and Suker. The election was swept by the "New Millennium" slate, who won ten of the 11 council seats. The slate included many prominent activists in the struggle to save remediation and open admissions at CCNY. Moses had been wishy-washy on the issue all year, and CCNY students had confronted him numerous times to try to get her to take a stand against the Moses administration. President Moses was fearful of an activist student government that would demand accountability and political backbone in this tumultuous time at CCNY.

These articles appeared in the September 1998 issue of "The Messenger," an independent student newspaper published by CCNY students—not be confused with the "CCNY Messenger" which is the official graduate student newspaper at CCNY that has been shut down. In the absence of the CCNY Messenger, some students at CCNY have created this new independent publication, "The Messenger," to carry the news that students wouldn’t otherwise be getting.
The month of June was a great time to be in Chicago, IL. Standing on the shoulders of giants, mayors, and buses headed to the Windy City for a historic event. Surprisingly, it wasn’t to celebrate the Bulls 6th World Championship title. Close to 2,000 activists, scholars, organizers, and community members crowded into the campus of University of Illinois-Chicago's campus. The term radical may have differed some individuals from attending, but it was an event I did want to attend.

Two years went into planning the BRC whose theme was "Setting A Black Liberation Agenda for the 21st Century. A People's Assembly."

The conference housed over 1000 people. To most, it seemed to give a strong voice to the Black Welfare Queen. These welfare recipients who have been forced into the Work Experience Programs now find themselves locked into slave wage menial jobs that offer no real skills or social mobility and often end up replacing fired union workers.

His Quality of Life campaign targets another vulnerable group. Black and Latino youth. In New York City, 2000, the most recent year for which there are statistics, no less than 43% of the total population, 14-24 year olds, were killed or wounded by the police. This fact was underscored in January 1994, Giuliani's first year in office. In 1994 alone, 31 people were shot on the streets and 23 died in custody. On average, cops shoot and kill someone on the average of one person per month. This is a statistically significant increase over the previous years and is forced by NYPD by officers. In 1996, Amnesty International issued a report on "Police Brutality and excessive force in the New York City Police Department." The report made comparisons between the NYPD and the death squads of dictatorial regimes around the world which are infamous for torture and murder.

The skyrocketing rates of police brutality and abuse of power by officers is alarming. The overwhelming number of victims have been Black and Latino. All people of color, however, are also affected as well a small number of white people. Many of those killed off-duty were drunk. What most attract to these killings have received little or no media coverage. This has been dismissive of the case, and used to justify shooting the victim. This went hand in hand with an intensification of the criminalization and repression of young people of color. Pretty soon all top of shootings were making headlines. One Black youth was shot for holding a silver candy bar in his hand. All the usual talk about self-defense and police training. But the fact is the majority of these killings have been dismissive of the case, and used to justify shooting the victim. This went hand in hand with an intensification of the criminalization and repression of young people of color.

It was becoming clear that the question was painfully becoming whose "Quality of Life" were we talking about? Giuliani’s second term in office, which began in 1994, was marked by the implementation of the "Quality of Life" policy. The policy was designed to target communities of color, and primarily Latino and Black communities.

The policy included a variety of initiatives, such as increased police patrols and the establishment of "Quality of Life" units in neighborhoods. The policy was also directed at solving the "poor education" and "poor housing" problem. The policy was implemented with the goal of improving the quality of life for all citizens, but it was evident that it was primarily directed at communities of color.

The policy was controversial from the start, and it was met with resistance from community members. The policy was seen as a tool to control communities of color, and it was met with outrage from community members.

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"They say that George Pataki (the governor of New York) hopes to run again in 2002. With the budget he's proposing, we will barely read at all." The cadence rang out across West Capitol Park as a group of students marched, dressed in the caps and gowns of college graduates, attracting the attention of reporters and capitol staffers. Student protests are hardly front-page news in Albany, certainly not with a governor who seems hell-bent on addition to protesting cuts in education funding, these students came to protest the dismantling the state university system. But this protest was slightly different, because in governor's prison expansion policies.

The protest is a sign that activists and policy analysts have begun to discover the dirty little secret state politicians have kept hidden for several years. Across the nation, state governments are stealing funds from higher education in order to pay for a massive and unnecessary program of prison expansion. In 1997, the Justice Policy Institute (JPI) released From Classrooms to Cellblocks, a national study of trends in state and federal spending on education and incarceration. The results are disturbing. In 1995, for example, total state spending on prison construction increased by $926 million to $2.6 billion, while spending on university construction fell by $954 million to $2.5 billion. In states such as California, which has built 21 prisons and only one university since 1984, the pattern is even more pronounced. General expenditures mirror those in construction. Since 1987, total spending on prisons has increased by more than 30 percent, while higher education has been cut by 18 percent.

The impact of this trend on students has been tremendous. As budgets are slashed and the number of people seeking post secondary education grows, state schools are forced to reduce services and raise tuition—making a college degree inaccessible to many qualified applicants. In New York, the Student Association of the State University (SASU) estimates that tens of thousands of students may have been pushed out of school by large tuition and fee hikes at the beginning of the Pataki administration. In California, according to the JPI study, 450,000 students will be heading toward public higher education and most likely be unable to attend because of lack of space or tuition fees.

Those who remain in school do so under difficult conditions, working long hours, taking on large debt, and spending an average of five and a half years (as a result of limited course availability) to complete a four-year degree. Students are not the only people who suffer from fiscal appropriations that place jails before schools. Dependence on incarceration to deter poverty-driven crime has turned urban communities into war zones, transforming a prison sentence into a standard rite of passage for one out of three Latino and African-American men. Targeting of minority communities by law enforcement feeds racist media images and denies more than a million people of color the right to vote (as a result of felony convictions).

Students are taking the lead in organizing against prison expansion. In 1996, students from the Democratic Socialists of America came together with former prisoners from the Harlem-based Community Justice Center to form the Prison Moratorium Project (PMP). The mission of PMP is to educate the public about the causes and consequences of prison expansion and to build a coalition of students and community activists to challenge the growing prison-industrial complex.

Since 1996, PMP has developed programs to educate, train, and organize students and youth to oppose prison expansion and defend access to education. While PMP has been active from Virginia to California, much of our energy has gone to the development of a model organizing program in New York. In 1997, students from New York University, Columbia University, and State University of New York (SUNY) campuses at Binghamton and Geneseo organized a series of educational events, including a rally, gameshow, concert, and forums to raise awareness about Pataki's proposal to spend $800 million on new prisons. In 1998, PMP began to work closely with a statewide coalition of criminal justice organizations pushing for reform of the state's drug laws that force judges to sentence drug offenders to extremely long prison terms and leave kinship drug traffickers with a plea-bargain advantage over sellers on the street.

With the assistance of the Student Association of the State University, PMP activists organized forums at college campuses around New York City and the state, putting together two guerilla theater actions at the state capitol. The campaign culminated in a letter, signed by student government representatives from nine SUNY campuses, calling on Pataki to repeal the Rockefeller Drug Laws and restore funding to SUNY. Thanks in part to these efforts, the coalition succeeded in convincing the student assembly to pass modest Rockefeller reform provisions, which unfortunately failed to pass in the Senate.

Join the movement toward long-lasting, sustainable remedies for social problems through education, and let lawmakers and educators alike know that augmenting prison funds is a short-term fix at best. For more information about PMP and activities taking place at campuses nationwide, contact Kevin Pranis at 212.727.8610 ext. 23 or at kpranis@dsausa.org.

Kevin Pranis was the Youth Section Organizer for the Democratic Socialists of America, and is currently on staff at PMP.

No More Prisons

Denounced and exploited by mainstream media, hip hop music speaks to the devastation wrought by crime and the criminal justice system within minority communities. The Prison Moratorium Project's (PMP) first rally and Hip Hop concert in Brooklyn's Prospect Park to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Attica rebellion has borne another creation that will continue to inspire prison activists—"No More Prisons," a PMP hip hop compilation CD released in September.

More than two years in the making, "No More Prisons" brings together an amazing team including old-school and underground hip hop artists (including Bahamadia, The Coup, Edo G, L Dubeaducha and Mental Giant), spoken word artists (including The Last Poets) and professor and social commentator Cornel West.

The release of the single coincides with the PMP's participation in Critical Resistance, a major national conference on the prison-industrial complex taking place at University of California–Berkeley on September 25-27. The release of the "No More Prisons" single will be a tremendous opportunity for students to become involved by organizing house parties or concerts to raise awareness of this issue and the project. If you're interested in taking part in this, or any other aspect of the PMP, contact Kevin Pranis and PMP.

SLAM!

(Student Liberation Action Movement)

To find out more about the struggle to fight educational apartheid within the City University of New York or New York City, contact 212.462.9106, cuunyslam@hotmail.com, or www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/lobby/6353.