

THE COMMUNICATOR

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Homelessness: Closer to Home than Expected

By Glorisel Belliard

When you think about a homeless person, what comes into mind first? Honestly. Those poor bums on the subway, maybe. The smelly young guy with tattered, dingy clothes that kindly asks you for money and you think in the back of your head he only wants it for drugs and booze. Or probably poor, uneducated people come to mind; us vs. them, basically. We all do this stereotyping whether we like to admit it or not. It is as if they belong to a wholly different dimension that we do not, and cannot, understand. I will reveal to you, the college student, a shocking truth that is right before your eyes and you would most likely have never guessed: see all those regular looking colleagues at school? Any of them could be homeless right now.

The mathematical genius everyone seeks out for tutoring, the nice-looking girl who you would like to be friends with, the kid that is always way too early for class... any of them could be a homeless college student. According to federal data obtained by Barbara Duffield, policy director of the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, 58,158 college applicants specified that they were homeless on federal financial aid forms for the 2012-2013 academic year. These statistics are only a vague approximate because many other students who might live in their cars, or intermittently stay in friends' houses might not even be aware of being homeless. Some homeless students – perhaps most – feel too embarrassed to even admit their condition.

A few others of these students live in college residences that financial aid, or sometimes a scholarship, helps to pay and the rest is supplemented by a minimum-wage job. However, when the holidays come and campuses close, they often lack a place to stay: friends don't always invite over for a whole holiday season, many on-campus lodgings do not allow students to remain even for a fee, and when they do allow it, the cost per night starts at \$12 and even twice or thrice that amount, making it sometimes impossible for these part-time and minimum-wage workers to afford. On the other hand, many of these students study at colleges that do not provide housing, like here at Bronx Community College. What ends up happening many times for them, in any of the cases, is that they have to sleep outdoors, or if they are lucky enough, in a shelter.

So, how did these students end up being homeless in the first place? Duffield explains that when hardship strikes, families often tend to focus on the younger children, therefore, High school and college students can be overlooked. Nonetheless, it is not only families ignoring their older children, but also the media, our politicians, laws and organizations. Anyone that could potentially help and bring resolution or relief is ignoring this issue, either because of unawareness or disregard. In fact, I always thought that if cases existed, they were isolated. I never even realized the dimension of this issue myself until going through a personal experience that proved me wrong and opened my eyes.

"You never think it can happen to you, until it does." It sounds a bit cliché, but clichés are what they are for a reason: they are true. There are many situations that just never, ever go through your mind involving yourself because it seems so unrealistic and farfetched. I grew up an only daughter in a loving home where, thankfully, all my economic needs were always met.

Living in the United States we were never as "well positioned" as we were when we moved to the Dominican Republic. Many people, to this day, do not understand why I came back to the U.S. when I could have

had a brilliant future without too much effort in the D.R. In spite of the numerous protests, complaints, and even angry phone calls, I was determined in my decision because of reasons I will not state here. I knew it would be very hard, but I never imagined the causes could involve potential homelessness – sharing this is already very personal, so I will treat details sparingly.

During the first years after coming back to New York, I lived with a relative and then moved into countless apartments with roommates. I paid rent and other expenses with the money my mother generously and regularly sent, and with the cash I made from whatever job I had at the moment.

Unfortunately, and inevitable, one event after another led slowly to disaster: I was left without a job because of a problem provoked by a Bronx Community College's carelessness, my mother could not send money anymore due to a series of tragic complications, and before I even knew it, I had nowhere to spend the night. Dragging a small suitcase, I found myself one day roaming the streets of New York desperately calling on my cellphone any person that could possibly help me. It was a shock when people I thought I could count on unconditionally said they were "sorry," and nothing else. Calling my mother never even passed my mind, since her state of mind at the moment was too delicate; there was not much she could do to help me anyway. I finally came up with an idea and called my relative saying I would visit for a few days.

I was lucky to be able to find a solution to my problem in the few days I spent "visiting" my relative, but I'll never forget the feeling of hopelessness when it seemed life had completely turned upside-down. This happened during the week of mid-terms last semester and I think it was, undoubtedly, a miracle that I aced all my tests because all I can remember from those days is the panic in my chest. I discreetly sought help from BCC, but there was nothing they could do to help me. It did not surprise me because I believed my case was not so common, but then it hit me that my situation could not be a rarity. If it happened to me, why could it not have happened to other students? Further investigation confirmed my guess, and yet the numbers shocked me. I still cannot understand why colleges, the government, or whoever are not doing much to help students in this situation. It is a foolish act because college student who graduate and integrate themselves into the workforce are supposed to benefit society at large for obvious reasons. Would it not be negligence if bright, willful minds with incredible potential were to go to waste because of homelessness? I think it is a problem that affects us all, as citizens, and above all, as sensible humans.

Probably, the major cause for this issue to go unattended by the general public is a lack of awareness. I had to face the experience myself to even recognize it as a mayor problem. However, the government is conscious of homelessness among college students and the only legislation I was able to find addressing the issue is the one proposed on November 21 of last year by Senator Patty Murray of Washington. Senator Murray's legislation's purpose is to modify the Higher Education Act of 1965 in order to require colleges to "develop a plan to assist homeless and foster youth to access housing resources during and between academic terms." Murray argues that that the bill "reduces some of the incredible barriers that homeless and foster care youth face to make better life through higher education." It sounds excellent and like



the answer to many prayers, but after further investigation I discovered that the chances of this act getting past the committee is 2%, and the probability of it being enacted is of 0%. Bummer.

A homeless college student, Jessie McCormick, a senior at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, decided to take matters into her own hands. After sleeping outside, signing up for free community service trips funded by her college to have a place to stay during holidays, and many other hardships, she is about to graduate. She decided, though, that enough is enough and presented a petition to her school prompting it to provide housing to homeless students, free of charge. The petition received over 100,000 signatures. The college declared that McCormick's initiative and effort have made it re-evaluate its policies and study along other colleges and specialists possible ways of helping homeless students. While they work on a final solution, the school is working on a case by case basis, helping students individually. Some students were provided a hotel room this Christmas while the campus' residences were closed. Examples such as this one can spark a few solutions.

As difficult as it was, I shared my story because it can easily become yours too. I want to be a college professor some day and be able to prepare future professionals, but that goal could have disappeared and never been accomplished had I not found a solution to my problem. Good students who aspired to one day reach their full potential and contribute to the improvement of our society, but were not as lucky as me, sadly had to give up and we will probably never know how far they could have gone. And there are also the current homeless college students, whose perseverance and endurance is admirable and greatly shows how committed they are. They hang on a thread, though. I believe it is our collective job to ensure that these students graduate, and having a place to live is crucial for this purpose. What if any of these students is the future scientist that discovers the cure for cancer, or the first woman president, or the economist that comes up with the formula to eliminate the line between poverty and wealth around the world? Seems farfetched to you? The possibility of me ever worrying about being homeless once seemed so to me too.

Annual Trip to the National Holocaust Museum

The Annual CUNY - Hillel Trip to the National Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. will take place March 1 - 2, 2014. This is an excellent opportunity to learn more about one of the most important episodes in modern history. It will also allow students to see something of the nation's capital.



Buses will leave New York Saturday evening, and bring students to a metropolitan Washington hotel. A guided visit to the museum, followed by a debriefing session, will take place on Sunday. Breakfast, lunch and dinner will also be provided. Buses will return to New York Sunday night.

All interested students should get in contact with Professor David Gordon (Department of History), telephone (718) 289-5658, as soon as possible. The final day for registration is February 19.

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The Communicator

Editorial Policy and Disclaimer

The *Communicator* staff urges students to submit articles, short stories, poetry, essays, and editorials for publication in the newspaper.

The views expressed in by-lined articles and in published letters are solely those of the writers, and they do not necessarily represent the views of *The Communicator*.

We reserve the right to edit any submission due to space limitations or if the submission is deemed inappropriate because of profane language, verification problems, or issues of libel.

No article or letter will be published unless the author submits his or her name, email address, and telephone number.

Please send all submissions to HYPERLINK "mailto:andrew.rowan@bcc.cuny.edu" andrew.rowan@bcc.cuny.edu.

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Spring 2014 Article Insertion Dates

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Campus News

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All services provided free-of-charge. Counsellors do not give legal advice or provide courtroom representation.
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NYPIRG Welcomes Students to Spring Term

Welcome back to campus! We would like to take a moment to update you on events and activities happening at NYPIRG. For those who may be unfamiliar with us, NYPIRG, the New York Public Interest Research Group, is the state's largest student-directed consumer, environmental protection, and government reform organization. With the support of Bronx Community College students, we continue to fight every semester for affordable and accessible higher education, prevention of hunger and homelessness, and mobilization of student voices with the help of our interns and student leaders.

Over the fall semester, NYPIRG was on campus informing students about rising student loan interest rates and continuing our fight against hydraulic high volume fracturing (fracking) here in New York. In addition to registering over a thousand new student voters, NYPIRG worked with Student Life, the Political Science Club, and the Speech, Drama, and Debate Team to educate student voters at the second annual Mock Debate, featuring students playing the roles of Bill DeBlasio and Joseph Lhota. In addition, NYPIRG coordinated efforts with Phi Theta Kappa, Psychology Club, and the Peace and Social Justice Club to support our neighborhoods through a community food canvass, peanut butter and jelly sandwich making drive, and volunteering at Part of the Solution food pantry.

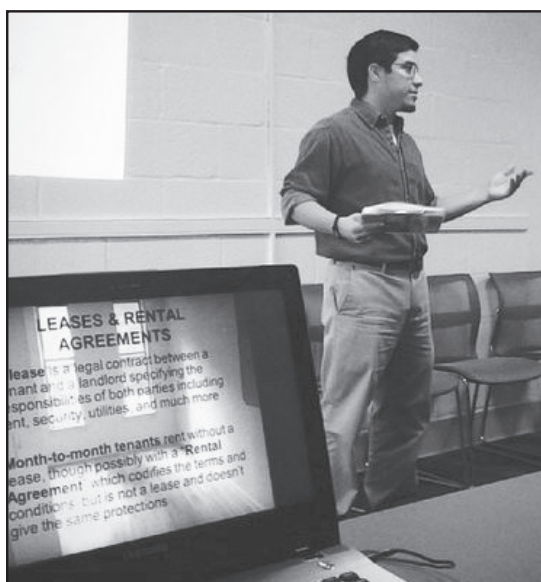
This semester, we'll continue to make politicians accountable to the needs of students. With tuition continually rising throughout the CUNY and SUNY systems and TAP funding unable to keep up, now is the time for students to make their voices heard loud and clear by joining us for our Higher Education Action Day in Albany on Wednesday, February 26. NYPIRG will be working alongside the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), and student groups across the state to prioritize higher education funding in this year's New York State Budget.

The best way for students to be heard is to lead the charge on these issues. I invite you to stop by our office in Meister 214 or contact us at (718) 289-5409 or bronx@nypirg.org. See how you can come in on the ground level and really build up a great political campaign.

Have a great semester!

Armando Chapelliquen
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The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) is funded through the mandatory Student Activity Fee (SAF). NYPIRG offers a refund of the portion of the current SAF earmarked for NYPIRG to any student who does not wish to contribute. For more information or to receive your refund, contact NYPIRG Project Coordinator Armando Chapelliquen.



NYPIRG Project Coordinator Armando Chapelliquen opens workshop with discussion on leases and rental agreements.
Photo: Marcus Charlton

NYPIRG Empowers Current and Future Tenants

By Marcus Charlton

Many New Yorkers, including many students right here on campus, have a difficult relationship with their landlord. Whether it is because of a rodent infestation, a lack of heat and hot water, or having a landlord that is just completely unreasonable, the relationship between a landlord and a tenant can be very delicate. On Tuesday, November 12, 2013, students gathered to learn about their rights as tenants.

NYPIRG offers a series of empowerment workshops, as a part of its Consumer Protection Campaign, with the goal of providing the student body with the tools to save money and avoid getting ripped off. One of these

workshops is the Smart Moves: Tenants' Rights workshop and the goals of this workshop are to teach students to make informed choices when choosing a place to live, emphasize the importance of reading their leases carefully, and offer ways to protect their security deposits.

The workshop covered a lot of information that a tenant should know: the process of looking for a place, signing the agreement with the landlord, eviction, the rights of the tenants to security deposits, and much more. A tenant needs to know their rights. Every tenant has the right to safe, livable, and clean conditions, the right to privacy, the right to organize, and protection against discrimination. If any of these rights are violated, there are resources at their disposal. Now, when looking for a place, one must first ask about and look at things like the sink, the showerheads, the countertops, and the conduct of

the neighbors. If the place satisfies the person, then they sign an agreement with their landlord; however, there are different types of an agreement. There is a lease, which clearly states the responsibilities of both the landlord and the tenant, and then there is a rental agreement, which states how much rent a tenant has to pay, but does not offer the same security as a lease. A landlord can only evict a tenant for breaking their end of the lease, but if there is no lease, all bets are off. A tenant can be evicted whenever the landlord says so. However, an eviction can only be carried out by law enforcement with a court order and if a tenant is evicted, the landlord cannot keep their furniture. Finally, the main way to secure a security deposit is gathering evidence. Be sure to keep receipts for cleaning bills and expenses and doing an inspection of the apartment and taking pictures.

This sounds like a lot of information, but all of the students eagerly expressed how helpful and informative the workshop was. Clifford Bias, one of the students in attendance, later expressed, "It was very informative and there was a big turnout. I enjoyed it." While the workshop was scheduled only for an hour, it actually ran for an hour and a half because of all of the questions and discussion after the presentation ended.

Finally, there are resources available if a tenant's rights are violated. Those resources include the following:

- 1) The New York State Attorney's Office: (800) 771-7755
- 2) New York City Legal Aid Society: (888) 218-6947
- 3) New York State Division of Human Rights: www.dhr.state.ny.us/offices.html
- 4) New York City Humans Rights Commission:
www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/home.html
- 5) NYPIRG's Small Claims Court Action Center at Bronx Community College:
(718) 289-5409

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The Writer's Corner

The Passing of Legacy

By C. Lionel Spencer

Down the street, around the corner, and on a hill sits a house that is shrouded by darkness. All the trees surrounding the house lean away from it; it is a strange sight to see. No one has ever seen such an interaction between the possessors of life and the lifeless, but the house set the stage to illustrate this perfectly. It is a quaint place with a muddle green roof, cracked window frames and a crooked front door. The rest of it is a dirty beige color. It has several panels that are falling off displaying how unattended and old it is. It is isolated from the other houses on the block.

It has a porch with netting that served as windows. The door for the porch squeaks whenever it is opened. The floor is covered in a green rug like material that is torn throughout. The porch has a couples swinging chair. The chair is old, but it works. The frame is white and the seat is brown. The chair also creaks when used.

He came out the house in his wrinkled sweat pants, old house shoes and faded upper thermal shirt. He sniffed the air as one would smell a freshly baked pie then smiled. He stood with his arms crossed pleased with the scent he had found. He went back inside and just a few minutes later returned with a comforter in hand. He sat in the swinging chair but didn't move-- he just sat there. He sniffed as he did before and waited until his arms and legs grew colder. Then, lifting his legs into the chair and wrapping himself in the comforter, he began to rock. He favored the rainy weather most because it gave him time alone: time away from inside. Paul, his best friend, had warned him about the responsibilities of marriage, but he had loved her. He had loved her after their second date at the movies on Halloween when she held his hand to keep herself from screaming. It was then he knew that he wanted to marry her. Soon after he began saving up for the ring: princess-cut, VVS1, off white, 1-carat with a white-gold band.

It was then that he started to open up to her about his past: the foster-care, the child-hood abuse and the therapy. He was a mess when he found her and still is. But somehow they made it work for several years before the passing. It had become very difficult afterward. He pulled away, for he was too familiar with death. It shocked him: the death of his grandfather then uncle and mother. He wanted to comfort her but didn't have enough comfort himself to offer her. He felt like the seven year boy with whose older brothers came to his school to break the bad news to him. He felt small and vulnerable and weak. And he knew he could offer these things to her, but he blamed her. Somehow he felt like she wanted to rob him of having a legacy; she didn't want him to live forever. She didn't want to live forever herself. She sabotaged the whole thing, so he thought. Thinking about it made him angrier. This was exactly why he avoided the conversations because he didn't know what to deal with the anger. Was it her fault? Even if it was, would his anger help move their

marriage forward? Well, outside there were no questions to answer. There were no fake conversations and awkward looks from the woman he loved but despised. There was only peace and rain and the squeaky chair.

Down the street, around the corner, and on a hill sits a house that is shrouded by darkness. All the trees surrounding the house lean away from it; it is a strange sight to see. No one has ever seen such an interaction between the possessors of life and the lifeless, but the house set the stage to illustrate this perfectly. It is a quaint place with a muddle green roof, cracked window frames and a crooked front door. The rest of it is a dirty beige color. It has several panels that are falling off displaying how unattended and old it was. It is isolated from the other houses on the block.

Inside the one family house are two bedrooms. The living room furniture seems used the most with the cups, bowls and napkins cascaded throughout it. The first floor has off-white walls that are stained with everything from oil to sweat. The stairs leading upstairs are sturdy, but the banister wobbles. The master bedroom upstairs in the rear of the house is painted a pastel green: too soft to be manly but it met a women's taste. The room is down a long hallway isolated from the other rooms in the house.

The bedroom floor sent chills up her legs as her toes searched for her house shoes. Though the floor was cold, the other side of the bed was colder. She had gotten used to it by now because it has been sometime since she felt warmth from that side. She finally wrestled her feet into her fluffy bunny slippers that he bought her for Valentine's Day two years ago. She tied her black silk robe closed then went straight into the kitchen to make coffee. Making coffee in the morning brought the house alive. He was the only one who drank it, but since the passing she made the coffee to keep her sanity. The French vanilla smell in the morning reminded her of her. She remembered when they would make the coffee before he would go to work, and how right before he walked out the door he would sing that lullaby to them. They loved it. The coffee brought back memories of fonder times when they were closer.

"Honey, can you pass me a towel?"

The bathroom door opens.

"Here you go. You better hurry up. You're going to be late."

"Can you get the coffee started?"

"Of course!"

She goes downstairs, grabs the grey tin on the counter underneath the cabinets and begins preparing the coffee.

He gets out of the shower, dries off and gets dress. After dressing, he comes downstairs.

"What do you want for dinner tonight?"

He walks over and checks the schedule posted on the refrigerator door then turns to her.

Uh uh uh! It's my turn to cook, so what do you

want to eat?

She walks over to him and puts her arms around his head as if preparing to dance.

"I was thinking since you've been working late that I could take your shift."

"How many times do I have to tell you?" He smiles. "Taking care of you is my most important job."

"I know! I just want to make sure I'm doing my part."

"Honey, you're doing more than your part. You're doing the part for..."

She glances over at the clock over his shoulder and taps both of his shoulders gently.

"Honey, you have to go!"

He releases his hold of her hips and walks to grab his jacket from the hook next to the back door. He opens it.

She wanted that back. On the weekend, he would make them blueberry French toast with eggs. He knew how much they loved French things: the smell of French vanilla coffee, the taste of French toast and the crunch of French fries. He would use the maple syrup to create what he called happy eyes at the bottom of the plate. They were so happy then. Now they couldn't even spend an hour in each other's presence. Despair covered her as she sat smelling the coffee that used to be their muse for love and interaction. She felt her cheeks moisten, but she cared not to conceal her pain. The French vanilla scented filled kitchen was her place of mourning the love that died after the passing.

Down the street, around the corner, and on a hill sat a house that always seemed lite. Green bushes and healthy oak trees surrounded it. Every morning you could hear the squirrels run through the gutters, and the pigeons chirp their awaking tune. The mat in front of the porch stairs read "Home is where the Love Is". The place was cute with its lovely green roof, front door and window frames. The rest of it was shiny beige with new panels that were recently installed. It was the envy of the neighboring homes for its high stature and youthful appearance.

The porch in front of the house had strong netting that gave the comforting feeling of being outside yet inside. The door for the porch had an air pressured pumped that kept the door from slamming or creaking. The floor was covered with a vibrant green rug-like material that gave the impression that you were walking on grass. The porch had a swinging chair that the couple inside always used before retiring for the night. The frame was white and the seat was brown. The chair was new and swung smoothly.

"Don't forget your coffee!" she smirks.

He turns with a grin and strolls over to her with both hands stretched out stomach high. When his hands meet her belly, and her hands cover his, he sings.

"Now there's two; soon they'll be three. Can't wait to see daddy's legacy."

Audition with Hera

By Glorisel Belliard

I want to feel new, untouched, washed. Unsee the things witnessed; wipe away the pain from knowledge. Erase the experiences, yet keep its wisdom. "Unattainable," is what they say. "Madness! Nothing more than the crazy talk of a delirious soul." They are blind and foolish, and my reply is invoking you Hera. Listen to me Hera, I plea your presence divine broken soul. Dip me into the spring of Canathus in Argos, where each full cycle the miracle they proclaim impossible is granted to you and your purity is restored.

Can you feel compassion for me like I pity you? Or do you think I am arrogant like a modern Gilgamesh in search for ambrosia, defying my own irrevocable nature? Then burn me to ashes: throw me into the Fire of Purification and toss my remains into the Ganges. Oh Hera, all your mightiness and divinity proved to be worthless against tragedy; what can a bare, impotent mortal soul like me ever do to shield away despair? I implore, not to Hera the revengeful, which is only what you became upon unjust injury to your once undefiled heart, but to the true Hera, whose pure goodness led to her misfortune.

Only you and Nienna, the ever-weeping virgin, know of suffering enough to understand. I could offer you Nellie White lilies and Asian orange blossoms, but of what use can they really be to you? Instead, I give you my naked devotion hoping it can be enough because it is all I have left of true value; everything else is lost.

Help me redo myself. Save me from the grievous circle. There was no one to protect you, but you can rescue me.

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The Writer's Corner

A Man with No Land

By C. Lionel Spencer

Today at work I sat discussing heritage with three of my coworkers: a Haitian African, a Jamaican and a Dominican. They all conversed about revolutions, events and people from their homelands who are stapled into their histories. They spoke with such pride because various people and situations have helped to shape their people's identity and culture. Whatever happened on their land happened in their history. I sat a bit envious, for though they are like African Americans in which most of them were brought to their respective lands, they and their lands are one. They are tied to their old-new homes. They love it, and it claims them. These thoughts led me to ponder what land do African Americans associate themselves with? And what land claims the African Americans? From my experience, it is clear that African Americans are not deeply connected to any land.

When I consider each of my coworkers' land heritage, I am troubled with my lack thereof. In African American history we have many heroes who have, on American soil, fought for us, descendants of slaves, to attain many freedoms. In a land where we were brought to as slaves, we now have rights, liberties and representation in the highest office in the free world. But does America really claim the African American as his brother, or are we simply overstayed visitors? From slavery to lynching and the countless murders of minorities throughout the years among other things, I presume that the land of the free hasn't truly accepted the free slave. When so many injustices are allowed against us, it's hard to feel like America is really our home. Well, I know that's how I feel. So, if America seems unsure of our kinship, where do we call home? Where are we connected to? At times, it seems like nowhere.

Both my parents are from the South and came north to escape the tumultuous south of the 50's. My mother was born in Savannah, Georgia, and my dad was born in Lee, South Carolina. Neither of them, nor I, have ever traveled outside of the country. We don't go visit cousin so and so in Nigeria. When we go visit family, we go down south. When West Indians or Africans ask me where my family is from, I often say the South because I have no other point of reference. I was born and raised in the New York; I have no connection to the South or Africa.

I tried reconnecting with my family from the

South, and as pleasant as it was it left more questions. Who are we really as a family? Where are we from? I learned that one of my great grandfathers was a musician and that excited me. I felt a sense of rootedness. I realized that I wasn't an island, but that men who came before me excelled in similar ways and shared similar pains. Still, questions like where certain relatives got specific strengths haunt me. Not having a home land that is filled with my people, my heritage and my culture leaves me a bit misguided about who I am. It also concerns me of who we are as black men and women. Does our legacy end with jazz and the civil rights and a certain black vernacular? Or is there more? Though my parents are from the South, we are so much more than Southerners. My parents themselves do not claim to be from anywhere else but the South. They have, like many of our parents and people, no connection with who they really are and where they really from: Africans from Africa.

Many attempts have been and are being made to mend the lack of identity and culture that resulted from slavery. Kwanzaa, created by an activist and scholar named Maulana Karenga, was conceived to give Afro-Americans their own holiday: a sense spiritually individuality. The Pan-American Flag was crafted with a similar intent: to give us culture and identity. With all these attempts, the thirst for a home hasn't been quenched within blacks. Recently, many celebrities have begun to participate in DNA analysis that traces back one's genealogy. African American Lives, hosted and narrated by Henry Louis Gates Jr that premiered on PBS in February 2006, is an example of this. It is a documentary that explores the history of men like T D Jakes, Chris Tucker, and Dr. Ben Carson as well as women like Oprah Winfrey, Whoopi Goldberg, and Dr. Mae Jemison through genealogical research. It married these Africa Americans to various countries and tribes in Africa which us remarkable.

Unfortunately, this isn't the norm. Most blacks, if not in financial constraints, are at least misinformed about their access to such options. Many black men like me live either in the state of creation or in a state of assimilation. We either try to create an identity and culture for ourselves or we simply put on the American self. We align ourselves with American values, belief systems and ambitions ignoring any connection or reflection to our damaged past.

We are a people whose culture continuously changes, for we have no foundation. Land-heritage brings foundation.

Going back to live in Africa can prove to be problematic, for we have no trusted relatives there. However, finding out where our families originate from, give each of us a better context than what many of us have as African Americans. We are able to associate with outstanding music, attire, and spiritual practices that outdate our Kwanzaa, jazz, hip-hop, pan African flag creations. It is not a matter of better or worse but context. I believe saying to be extremely true: "you don't know where you're going, unless you know where you come from."

On February 6, 2008, African Ancestry posted a video on YouTube of Judge Hatchett discovering her roots and she told this story while speaking to a young man:

"I went to Africa with my sons last summer. And there was a Massai warrior who's a little bit older than you are. And he said 'where are you from?'" And I said, naively, I said I'm from the United States. He said 'nah nah nah nah nah no! Where are you from my sister?'" And I didn't know. And so when you got tested I got tested, so you have my results which I have not said I have been dying for this to come back today so I can have my result because never ever do I want to say again I don't know." Ask African Americans where they are from, and they will tell you some state or county, but the truth is most of our answers are like Judge Hatchett's: we don't know.

For Black History Month, I want my African descendant brothers and sisters to consider going home. Consider investing in these DNA genealogical tests because with land-heritage comes a stable culture and identity and most importantly wholeness which our people so desperately lack. Imagine finding out that your people are from Morocco, Egypt, Kenya, Namibia, Cameroon or Liberia, not from Savannah Georgia or Boston or Mississippi but Africa. Wouldn't that be something? One real way that we can begin to rid ourselves from the evils of slavery is by reconnecting. It is by going back home. With the new advancements in science we can at least know where to start. It's better to be a man a long way from home than a man with no land.

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The competition is open to all CUNY and SUNY Community College students registered for the Fall Semester of 2013 or the Spring Semester of 2014. We encourage students from all academic departments and majors to enter the competition.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONTEST VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR SCAN OUR QR CODE

www.nycourts.gov/history

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The Writer's Corner

Beautiful Biology

By Anuoluwapo Bolarinwa

I found myself swimming in the pool of Biology,
Lost in the deep thought of its beauty
I imagine its unique and fundamental functions to the world
From cell to trees to swaps to insects
I say Biology is complex, but fun.

I dream about the study of living organism,
champing the biology terms on my lips.
I think about the structure of life,
with nucleus being its brain and ribosomes being the body
I just enjoy every thought of it I had.

The small gene that is present in all of living cell
I envision the twist and bend molecule called DNA
The key to understanding my hereditary
The nucleotides kept together by hydrogen bond
De- oxy- ribo Nucleic acid, tiny in size,
But they sure humanize.

It's amazing to learn about what happens inside of me,
from time to time .
I absorb the fact that I make millions of cells everyday
My busy veins, arteries, and capillaries
pumping blood through me
my delightful alimentary canal
aiding the pathway of food in my body
To me, Biology is exciting.

I scrutinize the anatomy connection between me
the calcium rich that keeps me alive
Supporting my body
Protecting the inside of me
Organs will be heave all over if they are absent
Can't imagine my body without these amazing joints

I think of how sunlight gives energy,
the chlorophyll inside the leaves captures the sunlight.
How the green plants feed the world,
They give oxygen.
Organisms rely upon this virtually
it helps in the formation of glucose
It is a very complex process known as photosynthesis.

After studying all of these,
their thought stimulates my mind.
! Oh Beautiful Biology
Words can't express how much you enlighten me.

The Pride of an African Born

By Anuoluwapo Bolarinwa

I was born in the land that brings out the beauty in us all
I was born on the land abused and left in dismay, yet richly favored
I was born where the sun never set and never rises
I was born where the heat is like the second skin
I was born where the skies are dazzling bright
The pride in me is breaking free
Oh yes, I'm an African Born.

I was born in the second largest continent on earth
I was born in a land blessed with natural resources
I was born where there is rich culture
I was born in a place filled with beautiful diamonds
I was born in the continent where great leaders come from
I know that seven lives' is what I've got
Oh yes, I'm an African Born

In the twilight, going home behind my mother
Listening to the songs of birds and whispers of the night
I learned about the stories of my brave Ancestors
Over land and Over seas
Over Mountains and in the wild,
I will be brave and strong
Because, I'm an African Born

Pare Away the Topaz Flesh

By William Murray (9/25/2008)

Call me your baby
Love me from a place innately
Love me undeniably
No maybes

Our sudor solute in the tub
The pressure cook of rub-a-dub
Melds us into pulp and putty
The suckling gulps
Of two quick studies

I call you my baby
And love you like the static
That chants in my head lately
Scores of cinematic ballad

Milk sugar, hibernal pallid skins
Solstice comes
And pares away the topaz flesh
Of our complexions' orange zest

Citrine autumn leaves
They plunge
As our resurrection comes
Snowflakes will plummet

If we must tug to reach our summit
Anything it takes, my lovesome
Punishing slap of frostbite
Lips and cheeks chapped

Call me your baby
Say "baby, watch the weather map"
They're wearing two-pieces in Austin
Say "baby, wear your ski cap"
It's much colder there in Boston

The pilgrim season
Wardrobe masks and gift-wrap
Let's rehash, like vintage fashion
All the passion that we've ever had

Call me your baby
Love me from a place innately
Love me undeniably
No maybes



Whirled Through The World

By William Murray (12/18/2008)

If the road is hot as coals
Or if it's icy, and tripping up your soles
And the wind tries to whoa you
And your soul is fighting woe
And the benders that throw you
Into your heart-throes
If you're being whirled
Through the world
Just try to find the flow
If the road is hot as coals
Or if it's icy, and tripping up your soles
And the wind tries to blow you
And the snow's about to pelt
Know what you know: it always melts

*William Murray, now a student at Lehman College, as an alumni contributor to
The Communicator.*

Photo: William Murray

Outside the Quad

Farm Sanctuary's Guide to Veg Living: A Review

By Dr. Joyce Bloom

Have you ever wondered about the implications of your food choices? The result of eating healthy foods is the greater potential for the health of the person -- the eater. The health of the planet is at stake too. There are individual, family and national as well as global implications to your food choices.

Guide to Veg Living is an excellent resource which introduces the reader to the health reasons for embarking on a vegetarian (non-meat diet) or vegan (non-animal product) way of life, provides an overview of nutritional elements needed in a veg food plan and creates examples of veg foods in the form of recipe temptations.



The second benefit of humans decreasing their consumption of meat and other animal products is to those that are eaten – the animals. Annually, billions of animals in the United States endure unspeakable cruelty in the food production industry.

The third benefit is to the Earth. The booklet proclaims: “protect the earth, one bite at a time.” Raising livestock has detrimental effects on the environment. It ruins the range, destroys the rainforest by clear cutting, produces three quarters of a million tons of manure every day (which includes heavy metals, antibiotics, nitrogen and phosphorus that can make its way into the aquatic system), introduces disease causing pathogens into surface waters, contaminates streams and drinking water, and compromises air quality. More than seventy percent of grain produced in this country and eighty percent of corn is fed to farm animals. According to a Cornell University study, the amount of grain fed to the animals in the agribusiness industry could feed about 800 million people.

An estimated 4,000 gallons of water are needed to produce one day's supply of a person's meat-based diet, whereas a contrasting 300 gallons per day are used to produce one day's worth of a plant-based diet. Animals raised for food also utilize fossil fuel in the process.

Did you know that there is a configuration of food groups called the New Four Food Groups? These groups are: whole grains, vegetables, legumes (such as beans, lentils, dried peas), nuts and other protein foods and Fruits. William Harris, M.D., is cited

as indicating that a plant-based diet is associated with healthy weight, blood pressure, serum cholesterol and blood sugar as well as with risk reduction for cardiovascular disease and some forms of cancer. As well, allergies, arthritis and asthma also respond to vegan nutrition.

The guide also gives tips for healthy eating when navigating the grocery store aisles and dining out. In light of the obesity epidemic healthy eating is a crucial focus for families. Since the lifetimes eating habits of children are typically determined in early childhood, there is information on giving kids a healthy start with good food choices.

Benjamin Spock, M.D., is quoted as noting that “Children who grow up getting their nutrition from plant food rather than meats have a tremendous health advantage. They are less likely to develop weight problems, diabetes, high blood pressure and some forms of cancer.”

If you love your healthy self, animals and the environment, consider eating more of a plant based, rather than animal based diet.

Here is one recipe for healthy filling eating -- picture this:

STICK TO YOUR RIBS CHILI (Makes about one quart)

Ingredients:

2 teaspoons olive oil
1 cup finely chopped onion
½ cup finely chopped celery
2 cloves minced or pressed garlic
2 ripe, peeled, seeded and coarsely chopped medium tomatoes
1 15 oz can red kidney pinto, or black beans (approximately 1 ½ cups rinsed and drained)
1/8 oz can tomato sauce or 1/3 cup tomato paste
1 tablespoon sweetener of your choice
1 tablespoon chili powder
½ teaspoon dried oregano leaves
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
¼ teaspoon ground cumin
1/8 teaspoon ground allspice or cinnamon
pinch of cayenne pepper, to taste
Salt, to taste

1. Place the olive oil in a 4 ½ quart saucepan or Dutch oven and heat it over medium high. When the oil is hot, add the onion, celery and garlic. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, for 10 to 15 minutes or until the onion is tender.
2. When the onion is tender, stir in the remaining ingredients except the salt and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover the saucepan with a lid and simmer the chili for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Season the chili with salt, to taste. Serve hot.

Ready set: Go Veg!

The Guide to Veg Living is published by Farm Sanctuary, P.O. Box 150, Watkins Glen, NY 14891, 607-583-2225, www.farmsanctuary.org.

HIV AND AIDS

By O'Brien Awuah

My name is Human Immunodeficiency Virus, but I am famous by HIV. Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, popularly known as AIDS, is my brother; we always walk together. Several researchers argue that I was born in 1959 in some chimpanzees in Africa. I was not well known by then, but became famous, a real threat, worldwide, in the early 80s. I am really not sure whether I am an African, an American, a European, an Asian, or an Australian; I am everywhere and I am proud of my citizenship. I need neither passport nor visa to travel across borders. Immigration has nothing to do with me, being scanned for illicit drugs or weapons, and I have no problems with overweight luggage.

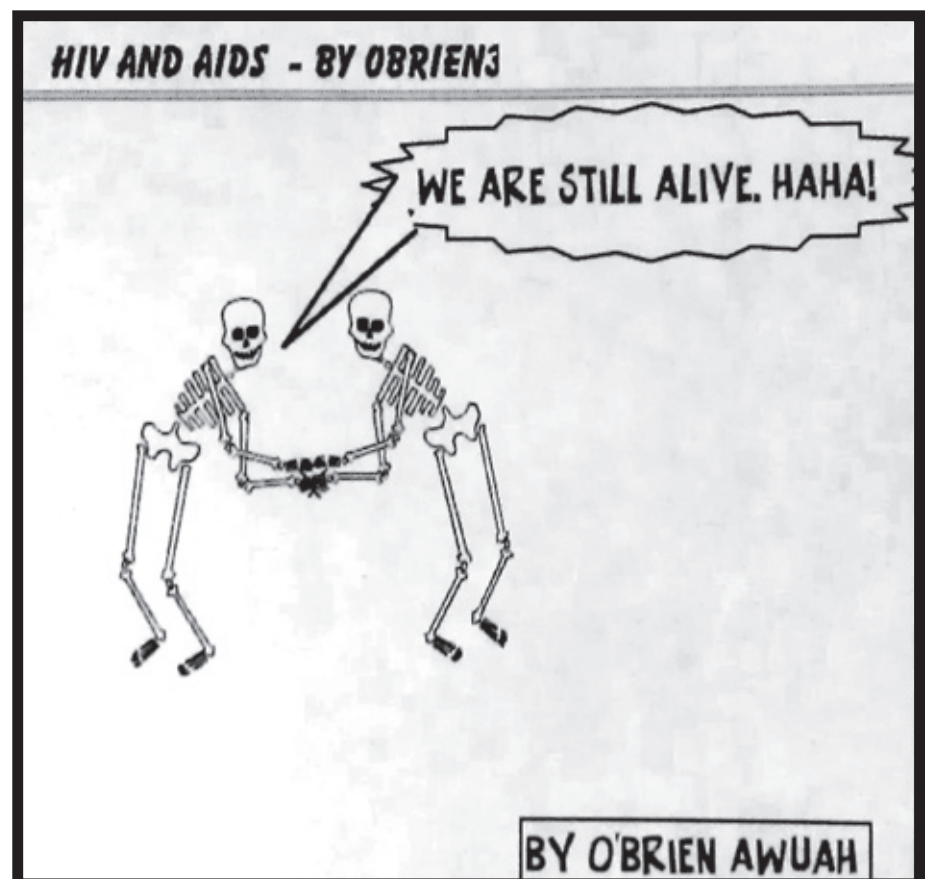
My characteristics really put scientists to work relentlessly with an effort to get rid of me. Nonetheless, their efforts always drown into the depth of the sea. As they try harder, I maneuver myself to lure them, haha! Am I not clever? I am very sociable but very cruel when my friendship lasts for a while. I make thousands of friends, including politicians, musicians, kings, sportsmen and women, professors, students, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and all manner of people; kids are not left out, ooops!

The cruelty part of me makes my friends regret going out with me because I torment their lives. I make rich people poor because I help them spend all their money on treatment. Frankly, I am always excited when several people lose their jobs because of me, couples get divorced, or when great people are disgraced after the public finds out that I am their best friend. Do not forget, I love hurting students too; I can cause them to lose their future goals so they are at risk too.

My brother AIDS is worse; whereas I have a little sense of humor, he has none. He comes to kill and to destroy. He kills thousands of people each day, not leaving kids and youths out. Since 1981, I (HIV) have infected one million persons, and AIDS has killed five hundred thousand persons in USA (www.cdc.gov). Wow! That was a hard work right?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report that over 1,144, 500 people aged 13 years and older are my best friends (HIV), including 180, 900 (15.8%) who are unaware of their infection. Great job; check your status, you may be one of them.

I am still making several friends so watch out. Read more about me and in the next issue.



Study Abroad at CUNY This Summer

CUNY's Study Abroad programs offer students a wide range of short-term, semester and year-long programs that lead to significant cultural and academic experiences. You may participate in a program on your campus or any CUNY college. This is an exceptional opportunity to pursue your education while traveling the world. Start your search with the Study Abroad Directory.

To find the program that best suits you and your academic and career plans, consult with your home college study abroad office or liaison. Consider the type of credits you need for your course of study, along with requirements for your major, minor and general education requirements.

Three types of CUNY Study Abroad Programs to consider:

- **Study Abroad programs** may be semester-long, year-long or short-term (typically run during the summer or winter intersession). These programs consist of courses aimed toward a particular course of study and are taught by faculty of the host institution or by visiting CUNY faculty. Students usually pay tuition to the foreign institution through the sponsoring CUNY college. Financial assistance, such as federal student loans and Pell grants, may be available.
- **Exchange programs** provide similar opportunities. CUNY students attend an overseas institution for a semester or academic year in exchange for foreign students who enroll at a CUNY college. CUNY students generally pay CUNY tuition to the sponsoring CUNY college. Under current law, the State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) may be applied to such exchange programs. Students may also be eligible for federal student loans and Pell grants.
- **Faculty-led programs** are courses taught by CUNY faculty. The programs are short-term and typically run during the summer or winter intersession. Financial assistance, such as federal student loans and Pell grants, may be available.

Many students also participate in non-CUNY international programs. Students are strongly advised to consult their financial aid office and the study abroad office or liaison at their home college to determine financial aid eligibility.

International Programs / Office of Academic Affairs
The City University of New York
 205 East 42nd Street
 New York, NY 10017
international.ed@cuny.edu

<http://www1.cuny.edu/studyabroad/programs/>



China



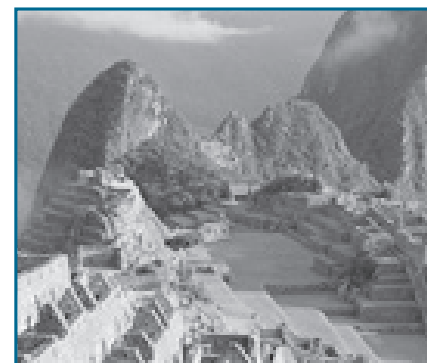
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