As the Bronx Community College (BCC) Nursing Club, our goal each semester has always been to promote health and wellness within the BCC community. This semester we have chosen to vigorously pursue this goal and also attempt to make a tangible impact on the wellbeing of the people of the South Bronx and our global community. After all, the nursing club is composed primarily of soon-to-be nurses who by virtue of their career ambitions are mandated with the protection, promotion and optimization of health for all world populations.

This semester started out by deepening the connections among our members. On this campus, the nursing program is recognized as rigorous, challenging and competent at turning out some of the best nurses this side of the equator. Sadly, there is also a high attrition rate within the department with anecdotal reports suggesting that to attempt the registered nursing program here at BCC is to attempt academic suicide. Against this background, the nursing club has instituted a mentoring program to pair junior nursing students with senior nursing students so that the seniors can provide advice and guidance out of their own experiences and help to motivate the juniors to stick with the program, hopefully improving the current attrition rate.

This program, titled, “NUR-Torign” to signify the combination of the concepts of nursing, nurturing and tutoring, is only in its first semester so it is too far early to say whether this program will have a lasting impact on the progression of the students who have been involved in it. We expect great results, as approximately 50 students have asked to participate within the first month.

As a club we exist, not only to help our members but also the wider college community. We see the 40th Annual Spring Health Fair as a wonderful opportunity to do so. At this health fair we will offer screenings for many of the main indicators of poor cardiovascular health, high blood pressure (hypertension). In addition, we will be providing much needed health teaching based on individual results. By combining our detection and our expert teaching on the topic of hypertension we intend to make a positive impact on the health of our college community. In fact, it is not enough to tell someone that they have a problem; it is much better to tell them how they have that problem and provide them with resources to help solve it.

On September 20, BCC will become a smoke-free campus. The Nursing Club strongly supports this initiative, as there is well-documented evidence that smoking negatively affects both smokers and non-smokers. We are collaborating with the BCC Smoke-free Taskforce to increase awareness of this change on campus and also to help the smoking members of our community to locate the resources they will need to help them live tobacco-free lives.

Within the communities surrounding the college, many residents lack adequate access to the basic human needs of food, clothing and shelter. Healthcare is even more difficult for low-income residents. In this tutorial, the nursing club in collaboration with the Relief Bus service, offered hypertension screening to members of the community on April 19, 2012. The 5 members of the team (from left to right: Esther Ogunloye, Fatim Camara, Nadeen Lindsay-Brown, Rochelle Goodlitt and Francesca Jha) are photographed in front of one of the modified school buses out of which the Relief Bus organization has served food to the less fortunate for over 20 years. There were so many people in need of more specialized healthcare than we could provide but we still made a difference and have made the commitment to go again.

Our club has also been active on the international scene. Six senior nursing students, also members of the Nursing Club, joined forces with the Organization for International Development (OID) for a five-day medical humanitarian mission trip to Haiti. Three professors from the Department of Nursing and Allied Health, one of whom had already retired, were also in attendance. Photographed from left to right are: Dr. Marcia Jones, Prof. Marva Watford (retired), Norma Fernandez, Diana Orsini, Melissa Sun, Rose-Marie Leachman-Russ, Nadeen Lindsay-Brown (Club President), Chantal Rivera (Club Vice-President), and Dr. Virgina Bernard. Sitting in front, are four first year nursing students from Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The members handed out hygiene kits, and donated stethoscopes of their own and those collected from other club members, to the nursing students in Haiti. They assisted with providing medical screening and dental care to hundreds of Haitians living in “tent cities” who remain in desperate need, two years after the earthquake. The BCC Nursing Club students were humbled by their experiences and are proud to be called advocates for health!

So you see, the BCC Nursing Club is on the move and we have no intention of slowing down. If you are interested in being a part of a vibrant, motivated group of people who care about the wellbeing of their community then the BCC Nursing Club is for you. No, you don’t have to be a nursing or pre-nursing student to be a member, so look out for our announcements and join us. Together we will continue to promote health and wellness at BCC and around the world.

Rochelle Goodlitt is Secretary of the BCC Nursing Club and Nadeen Lindsay-Brown is President of the BCC Nursing Club.
The Communicator

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

We reserve the right to edit any article or letter submitted due to space considerations.

We reserve the right to refuse publication to any article or letter due to space considerations as well as those articles or letters deemed inappropriate because of profane language, non-verification problems, or slander.

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

Please submit all articles and letters to the following email address: communipaper@gmail.com

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CUNY Adjuncts: Supporting the System that Neglects Them

By Charlotte Witherspoon

Academia is a dog-eat-dog world. A cliché, yes, but with several PhDs competing for every single job on the market, the landscape has gotten significantly drearier. Rather than getting tenure-track positions upon graduation, many PhDs have to turn to adjuncting in order to supplement their incomes and gain teaching experience while waiting for full-time positions. Adjuncts are not just PhDs; they are graduate students, professionals who enjoy teaching. Far from rare, CUNY’s faculty workforce is comprised of more than 60% adjunct labor. Simply said, without adjuncts, we couldn’t have a CUNY. Despite being the driving force behind CUNY, adjuncts are disgruntled. They do not always earn a fitting wage and their rights are being stripped away by the system. This is not just a CUNY problem, but one that permeates through academia.

Because the market for professional academics has been glutted in recent years, universities have been more powerful than ever before. It is more economical to replace a retired tenured professor with two or more adjuncts than with one full-time. The unprecedented number of PhDs coupled with the recent economic downturn has led to a deterioration of adjuncts rights. The market is so flooded with people willing to do work in compromised conditions that the adjunct body does not hold the bargaining power that it once could have.

There is a stirriing in the adjunct community, both outside CUNY and within. On BCC’s campus, adjunct Adam Tripp has been attempting to organize the adjunct community. The Professional Staff Congress (PSC) has mounted a campaign to win adjunct health insurance. Professors and students alike wear buttons asking CUNY to do the right thing and recognize adjuncts as the invaluable assets that they are.

CUNY has capped how much each adjunct can feasibly work within the system. Adjuncts are permitted to work nine hours at one college, and one course bearing no more than six hours at a second school. At the average rate of $2250 per course, per semester, an adjunct teaching four courses in two semesters only makes $23,200 per year. Most CUNY professors who make their livings from adjunct teaching tend to teach outside of the system. It is not uncommon for a professor to teach their maximum three classes at BCC, one at CCNY, and another at one of New York City’s private colleges. Just counting the classes taught within CUNY, time spent on travel, grading, communication with students, and actual in-class teaching could amount to more than eighty hours per week. Using this math, the wage would amount to approximately $9.50. Given their level of skill and training, this is a pitance.

Why should you care? The quality of teaching is affected by the adjuncts’ outside lives. Students might get more individualized attention if their professors were not saddled with outside troubles. If adjuncts could earn a better wage, teaching fewer classes, they could likely pour more resources into their individual sections, improving the quality of teaching. In a school system with graduation rates that range from middling to abysmal, keeping the best quality teachers should be paramount. Students are more likely to stick around and finish school if they feel some sort of connection to it. If their professors consider their classes just another stop in a day of drudgery, why would the students think otherwise?

The Impact of Leadership: Keep Leading! Keep Learning!

By Alex Luma

As I always say, leaders not only make the weather in their own minds and their own lives, but they use everything they have learned to change the weather in the lives of others. Leadership is a vital part of life in many different aspects. Some people are born leaders and some are shaped into them. In my opinion, once you become a leader, there is no turning back.

The very distinct aspect of the way my mind works is that I want to be an instrument of change in numerous ways. Many people in life know what career aspiration they want to pursue. There are several different options, some of which include the medical, paralegal, and technical fields. Some can’t figure out their calling, even in the early stages of adulthood. I, on the other hand, don’t like limiting myself and want to accomplish everything I possibly can. It’s my motivation and sense of persistence that keep me going. When my time comes, I want to be able to say that I used everything God gave me to accomplish my dreams. I don’t want to treat my life like a polynomial. Yes, I want to factor out the non-necessities, but not the potentially great opportunities that were never given a chance.

A great leader can make the most out of the least. The smallest effort can make the biggest difference. There are many ways to revolutionize the mindset or the state of the world we live in. As a leader, you have to have confidence in your own potential and be willing to dedicate yourself to working hard. That aura of leadership that you develop is what you are using to empower and uplift the people of the world, especially those willing to receive your message.

Commitment separates the doers from the dreamers. In the eyes of a motivated student, it’s going over the material one more time to make sure you’ve got it covered. In the eyes of a fixer, it’s getting off the ground after you’ve been knocked off your feet. To the Olympic athlete, it is running or swimming another few laps before stepping out of the competitive arena.

To keep leading, you have to have the willingness to learn effectively, which includes taking advantage of the numerous opportunities and cycles of knowledge at your disposal, throughout your life, career, and educational journey among others. To keep leading, you have to have a vision. Vision is an important function for a leader. Vision leads the path of the leader and sculpts the target known as your goals. All that’s left is to know how to use that inner ammunition you were blessed with to reach your destined target. Your vision sparks the flames within your heart and mind and helps you to light the candle within others that may have either been extinguished or never lit. Keep leading yourself beyond the finish line. Don’t allow life to limit itself for you. Lead, learn, make a difference, and never give up on your dreams.
Empowering Groups: Transformative Leadership

By Josue Lopez

Perhaps the most important pillar of Phi Theta Kappa philosophy is leadership. Although members of Phi Theta Kappa may lead by example with academic achievement, a GPA does not define a leader. A leader is one who develops others by inspiring and empowering them to build on their abilities while creating new, lasting skills. Although leadership is more of an art than an exact science, the transformational leadership approach is more effective in leading groups than transactional leadership.

As presented by Rob Carey and Gigi Delk at the 2012 PTK convention, the primary factor of transformative leadership is creating an environment of full inclusion and participation. A group of individuals working towards a common goal may have separate roles and responsibilities but they are all co-producers of the end result. As co-producers they should receive full disclosure in real time as to the circumstances, progress, and needs of the group. This transparency helps create a sense of identity and unity within the group, as well as provides opportunity for individuals to take initiative in collaborating with and assisting other members.

Such opportunities empower members to develop skills that are not confined to one set of aligned responsibilities and tasks.

The second factor of transformational leadership is accountability. Establishing an environment of accountability within a group will make everyone feel like a co-producer of the end result. Accountability will help build what Carey and Delk called “The Five Cs”- Character, Competence, Commitment, Consistency, and Cohesion. In a group, each of these attributes is contagious and they are all conducive to achieving as a group as well as transformively developing individuals. A lack of accountability will discourage improvement as well create an environment where contributing is optional. Thus, effort and leadership will be transactional, based solely on the benefit one can receive for a certain amount of effort put forth.

Transformative leadership is empowering others to develop and achieve as a group through full inclusion and participation, while simultaneously developing individual leaders by fostering a sense of accountability. Transactional leadership limits development by only allowing certain opportunities. Each member of the group should have access to skills and abilities of others, so that the opportunity for development of each individual is maximized.

Broncos Lose Title, Face Tumult

By Keyunna Singleton

The basketball season is officially over, and so is McKinnon’s head coaching career. The CUNY champions and men’s basketball team to their National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division III championship, head coach Shannon McKinnon was reportedly released for poor sportsmanship behavior. It’s been three years since Coach McKinnon was promoted to the position of head coach from assistant coach for the men’s basketball team. Since then, he has received awards for his dedication to the team, including the CUNY Head Coach of the Year, and the District Five Sportsmanship Award in 2011. Within his time as head coach, he has managed to lead the team into its back-to-back CUNY championship titles, a regional title, and a chance to win a national championship.

McKinnon and his all-star team of assistant coaches – Warren Thompson, John Ridley, Curtis Responses, and Vince Bailey – transformed the team into one of the worst in the division to 5th in the nation. Bringing their record from 4-21 in the 08-09 season to 28-7 in the current passing season.

McKinnon’s coaching team was already numerically promising. A resident of the Bronx all his life, McKinnon’s adolescent years resemble that of the youth in today’s urban society. From the young age of fifteen, he acted as a product of his environment. His interactions in the street led him to a close call with both death and imprisonment. According to McKinnon, it wasn’t until the birth of his son Raymond that he decided to change the direction of his life. He also prides former assistant coach and big brother figure the late Troy Trusdale for encouraging him to continue his education. He states, “If it weren’t for Troy Trusdale I would have never gone back to school, and I would have never gotten the job.” According to many of the Broncos, in his position as head coach McKinnon helped groom a very determined group of young men and brought the team to heights they may have never reached without him.

Not only did McKinnon help build the students’ athletic skills and confidence, but he helped both men and women scholars that were not interested in the idea of higher education enroll in college institutions. McKinnon’s advocacy for education has helped improve the lives of many students in urban community. Former BCC player John Simmons went to SUNY Purchase after being drafted by the Broncos. He is currently pursuing his master’s degree at L.I.U. McKinnon also helped Hector Hernandez, who played for the Broncos last year, move on to City College. In addition, he assisted students that did not attend BCC, some of whom now play basketball overseas.

So the question that troubles the mind of the genuinely concerned is: How can someone who has made such a monumental impact for the school and the students be fired from a position they were obviously passionate about? The answer lies in the decision of BCC President Carole Berotte Joseph. According to Mary Rogan, Legal Liaison to President, the details to the president’s decision cannot be disclosed, as they are personnel matters. However, shortly after his termination McKinnon released a statement explaining his beliefs about why he was dismissed. The statement details the events and situations that McKinnon and several of the Broncos believe led up to the day of his termination. McKinnon spoke of conflicts that he had with the Athletic Director (AD) of Hostos and expressed that she repeatedly tried to get him fired throughout the season.

McKinnon’s statement spoke briefly about the game that led directly to his termination admitting that “the athletes punched a wall [and] kicked over garbage pails.” He also admitted to using foul language in an attempt to release his frustration at the end of the game, because the referees failed to make crucial calls during regulation and decided against a goal-tending claim in overtime that went in favor of the North Carolina Sandhills, who beat the Broncos by one point in the second round of the Nationals and later went on to become Division III National champions. Although McKinnon admits to using inappropriate language, he claims to have displayed his reaction in front of BCC AD Eric Mercado and the CUNY Commissioner.

Eric Mercado did admit to being present at the game; however, he did not speak about the language that McKinnon used. Mercado recalled that he was sitting about 20 rows above the court only a few seats above the commissioner, who turned to Mercado in that last play of overtime and questioned whether or not the “block” was indeed goal tending. Mercado stated that in “five action” that was not a call that he was confident making; however, after reviewing the tapes he determined that in his point of view, it was.

Immediately after the play, the Broncos brought its attention to the referees, pointing at the rim and expressing how strongly they believed it was goal tending. After the referees denied the call that ended the game, the Broncos reacted aggressively, sprinting after the referees who followed protocol and scurried to their locker room immediately after the game. No one reported that they believed that the team intended to harm the refs; however, Mercado states that in a situation such as this the head coach should be the first person on the scene in a pacific role. This was not the case according to BCC’s Dr. Donna Genova the NJCAA chairperson for women’s basketball, who states that McKinnon failed to take control of the players.

Genova states that Region 15, which is the region that the BCC Broncos represent, has a coaches’ code of conduct that was questioned at the time of the decision of McKinnon’s termination. All parties agree that it was extremely unfortunate that the Broncos did not get to bring home the national title in addition to their others; however, McKinnon and several of the Broncos believe led up to the day of his termination. McKinnon spoke of conflicts that he had with the Athletic Director (AD) of Hostos and expressed that she repeatedly tried to get him fired throughout the season.

In an attempt to diffuse possible hostility from the players if a situation like this were to occur again, Mercado states that all the members of the team, coaches included, will have to take civilian sportsmanship training. In addition they will have to undergo the NJCAA Leaders for Life program. In the upcoming semester the athletes will also be required to partake in community service.

Mercado assures the team new and returning players that he will find a quality head coach that will help maintain the status of the program and contribute to defending the titles that the team has acquired. Although McKinnon has left BCC, he continues to communicate and encourage the players and students of BCC. McKinnon ended his statement: “I love BCC!”

Having ended the season so dramatically and losing their head coach, the Broncos are going to need all of the school’s support next semester in order to continue their great success. They are a strong team with many talented and ambitious players. Over the summer they will have time to recover from their losses this season and return a new team next season accompanied by a new team of coaches.
CollegeFish.org: Make Your Fish Bowl Come True
By Josue Lopez

As Phi Theta Kappa is an honor society, membership is a form of recognition for one’s academic achievements and prowess. However, becoming a member of Phi Theta Kappa brings more than just bragging rights; a host of advantages are afforded to members, many of which can be accessed through the website CollegeFish.org. At a glance CollegeFish may seem like any other search engine for scholarships (i.e., FastWeb.com, CollegeBoard.com, etc.) especially since, more often than not, scholarships are the first thing to come to mind when we think of honor societies. What distinguishes CollegeFish.org is the fact that it is geared toward and provided free of charge for Phi Theta Kappa members; this focus provides several advantages which current and prospective Phi Theta Kappa members should be aware of.

CollegeFish understands Phi Theta Kappa members are highly valuable and competitive candidates for transfer to any four-year university we set our hearts on. This being the case, the tools provided by CollegeFish.org members plan their transfer experience and empower them to take the necessary steps to ensure the scholarships and institutions to which the member applies will be the best fit for the individual member. Members are first instructed to create a detailed profile, pick up to ten universities to add to their “fish bowl,” standard practice with these kinds of websites. But before one jumps directly into applying to schools and scholarships, the most important aspect (reflected by it being placed at the very top of the tool bar) is planning. CollegeFish provides a detailed list of steps students should take in the transfer process from choosing top schools, and having one’s transcript reviewed, to making housing arrangements and even registering for classes. The entire process is spelled out step by step and a fully customizable calendar tool is integrated to help students stay on track as they juggle the transfer process and their current course load.

Beyond the extensive tools provided to the student, an advantage afforded to the student which is often over looked, is the convenience it provides the four university and scholarship boards. These institutions know student profiles on CollegeFish reflect highly valuable transfer applicants. We are members of an international honor society, leaders on campus, trail-blazing researchers; in short, we are exceptional candidates. Even before a student utilizes the resources of CollegeFish she is recognized as an attractive candidate simply by being a Phi Theta Kappa member. Too many of our members of the Lambda Nu chapter simply join Phi Theta Kappa, add it to their resume and do not pursue the fruits of their labor. To those prospective and newly inducted members, I implore you all to start early and fully capitalize on this wonderful tool and resource tailored just for you.

Emotional Intelligence: Know Yourself
By Josue Lopez

Succeeding academically and professionally is challenging enough, but the added pressure and importance of leadership ability and interpersonal communication in today’s competitive world can wreak havoc on one’s emotional state. Stress can easily lead to self-doubt, lack of motivation, depression and poor judgment. Educational forum presenter Velda Arnaud lends insight to the art of improving one’s emotional intelligence. A term familiar to psychologists and educators, emotional intelligence, according to Collin’s English dictionary, is an “awareness of one’s own emotions and moods and those of others, (especially) in managing people.” Arnaud takes this definition further by adding honesty with these emotions being just as important as the awareness. After all, many of us are experts at denying our emotional troubles and/or suppressing emotional conflict. We each have two minds, one rational and the other emotional. Oftentimes our emotional mind dictates our behavior in one way or another, however, it is entirely up to us whether or not we will allow our emotions to run our lives.

Developing emotional awareness is crucial to employing rational thought and behavior. One must be able to monitor one’s emotions and ask, “Why do I feel/act this way?” One step to gaining emotional awareness is recognizing behavioral patterns. If we know exactly how we tend to react to certain stimuli, we have every chance to change this behavior and deal more honestly with the emotional foundation of that reaction. Once one addresses one’s behavioral patterns, it is then possible to begin regulating one’s emotions. Managing one’s emotions means taking responsibility for these emotions, rather than playing victim to them. What is left is to plan new behavioral reactions to these emotional triggers.

While we identify our emotional triggers and plan to react accordingly, we must keep in mind that emotions are contagious. Emitting negativity can only breed negativity. Whether it be lashing out at those who frustrate us, or over-venting to those we confide in, outsourcing of negativity can affect others. One must be mindful of the emotional energy we emit. Although working on one’s emotional intelligence is a difficult and continuous process, the freedom to progress in one’s personal development, free of emotional “deadweight,” is well worth the effort.
If you can imagine 5,000 people in the same room, with a minimum GPA of 3.5, the drive of geniuses to reach for the stars, and the common goal of using leadership, fellowship, and service to change the world, then you are picturing the Phi Theta Kappa International Honors Society’s 94th Annual Convention which was held at the Grand Ole Opry Resort and Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee on April 12-15, 2012. Phi Theta Kappa is a prestigious honors society that values the four hallmarks it was built on, which is Leadership, Fellowship, Scholarship, and Service. The convention is set to network with individuals from over 150 chapters that were present and represented from around the globe. The networking sessions are created so that chapters can collaborate their ideas on the Honors Study Topic and this year the topic is “The Culture of Competition.” The Honors Topics contain topics that are on the news, on an international level, and are necessary components to fix a worldwide issue. Phi Theta Kappa members are required to create campus initiative projects that will get members involved as well as their campus and the surrounding communities. This effort is held in unison with chapters collaborating with the same goals all around the world.

The convention is a necessity for any student let alone Phi Theta Kappa members. There are transfer fairs from over 100 schools within the United States, mini-sessions held regarding scholarships such as the Hites Transfer Scholarship, and special programs for four-year colleges and universities. They also provide fundraising efforts information by other chapters to raise funds for their home-town chapter, and also for important items such as the Obendorf Life Scholarship Fund, which Phi Theta Kappa members have raised over $125,000, and intend to double those efforts by June 1st. The Obendorf allows students who cannot afford a college education the opportunity to follow their dreams and give their contribution to change the world for the better.

The most intriguing part of this year’s convention for me was being a campaign manager for Naomi Dias, a student at Cape Cod Community College in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. Dias was a candidate for the International President of PTK. This honor is not possible without the leadership development the convention provides to become a five star member and a five star chapter. The campaign experience is a group effort and allows students to express their role in changing the world using the international officer position. Another important role of the convention was my voting delegate obligations. My responsibilities are to vote for international officers and use my vote to represent my chapter. The Phi Theta Kappa Annual Convention is, without question, an experience that has allowed me to develop my leadership skills.

Sharon Chin is president of the Lambda Nu Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa.
The Impact of Leadership: Keep Leading! Keep Learning!

By Alex Luma

As I always say, leaders not only make the weather in their own minds and their own lives, but they use everything they have learned to change the weather in the lives of others. Leadership is a vital part of life in many different aspects. Some people are born leaders and some are shaped into them. In my opinion, once you become a leader, there is no turning back.

The very distinct aspect of the way my mind works is its unique potential of change in numerous ways. Many people in life know what career aspiration they want to pursue. There are several different options, some of which include the medical, paralegal, and technical fields. In my opinion, once you become a leader, there is no turning back.

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◆ Receive e-mails about programs, services and job-related topics;
◆ Gain access to announcements, upcoming events, career advice documents, career advice videos, podcasts and career articles from over 125 authors;
◆ Manage your on-campus interview schedules;
◆ Build an online portfolio in Career Portfolio Central to support your résumé and demonstrate your best work to employers;
◆ Register to all Career & Transfer Services workshops and events.

To create your College Central Network Account visit us at
Loweh Hall, Room 535 or attend one of the following workshops beginning March 25th, April 1st:

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Basketball Slave

Basketball Slave: The Andy Johnson Story is filled to the brim with extraordinary tales from behind the scenes of the early Original Harlem Globetrotters and loaded with a wealth of historical information never disclosed about the slow, quota-based inception of African American athletes in the NBA. This book clarifies the role of the Original Harlem Globetrotters in making the NBA the multi-billion dollar organization it is today.

It is also a fascinating and inspirational story that weaves the heart-wrenching account of a young boy who became a man through the lessons of basketball. He grew up watching his family working in the cotton fields of Louisiana, to playing basketball barefoot in the streets of Hollywood, California. Having his education undervalued as a high school basketball star and being sent to a major university without any hopes of receiving a degree, to finally being sold on the professional basketball auction block three times without any ability to negotiate his pay or where he could play. Johnson turned every devastating event into another opportunity by staying positive in the game of life.

The Death and Life of the Great American School System

A passionate plea to preserve and renew public education, The Death and Life of the Great American School System is a radical change of heart from one of America’s best-known education experts. Diane Ravitch—former assistant secretary of education and a leader in the drive to create a national curriculum—examines her career in education reform and repudiates positions that she once staunchly advocated. Drawing on over forty years of research and experience, Ravitch critiques today’s most popular ideas for restructuring schools, including privatization, standardized testing, punitive accountability, and the feckless multiplication of charter schools. She shows conclusively why the business model is not an appropriate way to improve schools. Using examples from major cities like New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Denver, and San Diego, Ravitch makes the case that public education today is in peril.

Ravitch includes clear prescriptions for improving America’s schools:
- leave decisions about schools to educators, not politicians or businessmen
- devise a truly national curriculum that sets out what children in every grade should be learning
- expect charter schools to educate the kids who need help the most, not to compete with public schools
- pay teachers a fair wage for their work, not “merit pay” based on deeply flawed and unreliable test scores
- encourage family involvement in education from an early age

The Death and Life of the Great American School System is more than just an analysis of the state of play of the American education system. It is a must-read for any stakeholder in the future of education.

This Is Where I Leave You

Judd Foxman’s father is dead, and his wife has had an affair with his boss. If that isn’t the making of a hilarious plot, I don’t know what is. While its premise is depressing at face value, Tropper takes a week of sitting shiva with a dysfunctional family and turns it into a compulsively readable narrative. I almost asphyxiated myself with laughter. The saddest thing about This Is Where I Leave You is that is has to end.

The Gun Seller

Wait a minute, isn’t he that guy from House? Yes, yes, he totally is. Don’t let that deter you. Thomas Lang is a would-be assassin who can’t follow through with his job. An attempt at goodwill goes awry and puts him at the locus of an international. If you like guns and girls and lightning-fast dialogue with a plot that never stops twisting, this book is for you. It is perfect for a lazy day on the beach or a long plane ride in the middle seat. Even if you’ll go no farther than Burnside Avenue this summer, The Gun Seller is definitely worth a look.
Summer Reading Recommendations from Across Campus!

Summer is almost here, even though the schizophrenic weather might tell you otherwise. With a lighter course load and a longer day, it is the perfect opportunity to catch up on reading. Feeling a little lost? Luckily, we have a campus filled with voracious readers chomping at the bite to give you recommendations. We have everything from gritty Bronx tales to early-20th century fiction to a nanotechnology website. Surely you’ll find your interests represented here.

Because I’m a total philistine, I’m also going to recommend that you settle in with your HBO Go and Netflix accounts and watch some television. Get thee to Aaron Sorkin and Stephen Moffat. Watch Sports Night and Sherlock, West Wing and Doctor Who. Go walk around MoMA—CUNY students get in for free. Grab your book and head over to Wave Hill, or sit under a tree right here at BCC.

Vicki Flaris—Department of Chemistry

An easy scientific read is the following website I subscribe to. It’s FREE and you can get frequent new snippets of information on what’s new and happening in the exciting field of nanotechnology. Go to www.nanotechweb.org and click on the box to become a member.

Joshua Halberstam—Department of Communications

Choosing a book from the universe of possibilities is even more difficult that choosing an ice cream flavor at Ben and Jerry’s. But here are two excellent books that come to mind, one fiction, and one non-fiction. Both are gritty New York City tales.

Lush Life By Richard Price

This fast-paced novel unravels a crime that takes place in the Lower East Side, but its tentacles soon reach much further—and deeper. If you want an example of how to write outstanding dialogue, this is a go-to book. The Bronx-born Price, by the way, wrote the screen play for many well-known movies, and the script for some of the best episodes of The Wire.

Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble, and Coming of Age in the Bronx By Adrian Nicole LeBlanc

This riveting narrative by LeBlanc, a journalist who worked ten years on this story, tells of the struggles of a cohort of young people in the Bronx back in the day of the crack epidemic. The tale is at once disturbing and inspiring, but always enlightening—and Bronx Community College has a part in the saga!

Theresa McManus—Chief Librarian

I enjoy reading. My tastes in reading change, for a long time I read primarily nonfiction, however I have once again been enjoying fiction. Two books I enjoyed recently are Caleb’s Crossing, by Geraldine Brooks (Penguin Books, 2011) and Shadow Country: A New Rendering of the Watson Legend, by Peter Matthiessen (Modern Library, 2008).

When I get caught up in these great stories told by talented authors I find it easy to leave the routines, worries and day to day concerns of my life suspended. I feel as though I see what life was like in times and places very different from my own and I am amazed at the detail and depth of the writer’s research. As I read a book, I envision the social and political conditions of the time, the religious beliefs and practices of a new culture. The book is beautifully written, there are descriptive passages of a natural world untainted by development, of friendships across cultures, of lives willingly dedicated to service, of acts of good and evil, of all of the elements characteristic of our human condition. As I read I was reminded of the courage of some of our own students who leave cultures and familiar communities to venture to places to live among people with different lifestyles and cultures. The book is challenging, but worth it, it provides the reader with insight into lives in the mid-1600s in North America, and into gender and race roles in particular places and communities.

Caleb’s Crossing By Geraldine Brooks

Caleb’s Crossing is set in the mid-1600s in an island off of Massachusetts known today as Martha’s Vineyard. The narrator, Bethia Mayfield, tells of her life and of her friend, a Native American of the Wampanoag tribe, Cheeshahteaumauck (later given the English name Caleb). Cheeshahteaumauck became the first Native American graduate of Harvard. The author’s fictional account of being young, female and relatively powerless, tells of Bethia’s life from childhood until she is an old woman, of circumstances that caused her to accept becoming an indentured servant. She tells of prearranged marriage that she did not have a say in, and that she managed to dodge, and she describes heroic acts as well as sacrifice, brutality and tragedy. As she tells of her life and the lives of her friends, she helps me imagine what it is like to be one of the first from a community to venture far from familiar culture to learn to be among the first of one’s people to learn the language, beliefs and practices of a new culture. The book is beautifully written, there are descriptive passages of a natural world untainted by development, of friendships across cultures, of lives willingly dedicated to service, of acts of good and evil, of all of the elements characteristic of our human condition. As I read I was reminded of the courage of some of our own students who leave cultures and familiar communities to venture to places to live among people with different lifestyles and cultures. The book is challenging, but worth it, it provides the reader with insight into lives in the mid-1600s in North America, and into gender and race roles in particular places and communities.

Shadow Country By Peter Matthiessen

Shadow Country is set in the wild Florida frontier around the beginning of the twentieth century, and tells the story of E. J. Watson, an entrepreneur, an outlaw, a charismatic person who was capable of good and evil. It is written as a trilogy, with separate sections from different points of view. The author reveals life through the eyes of backcountry Americans whose lives are filled with hardship. He gives voices to them I hear as recognizable characters. Themes run like a common threads through the novel, themes of development, racism, destruction of natural wonders and habitat. There was a real Edgar J. Watson, he was born in South Carolina in 1855, spent much of his life in the Ten Thousand Islands region of the Everglades, an area considered a refuge for outlaws. Watson’s life was legendary even before Matthiessen’s epic novel, stories told of his having committed acts of violence and murder before meeting his own violent end in 1910. The book is also beautifully written, with its descriptive passages of pristine waters and islands in the Everglades of Florida, of individuals we become familiar with, who struggle to build lives in a remote and dangerous frontier, with all of the pain, joy, rewards and losses that were realities of daily life in that time and place. I highly recommend Shadow Country for a captivating and fascinating excursion into the imagined lives of an infamous man and his relatives, friends and enemies, as they sought to tame a wild, dangerous and bloody frontier.

Peter Matthiessen is a renowned author of both fiction and nonfiction, his Shadow Country won the National Book Award’s price for Fiction in 2008. Geraldine Brooks, awarded a Pulitzer Prize for March, is known for her ability to breathe life into historical characters. My life is enriched by entering the worlds these authors create, with characters very different from me. Reading these books helps me to see parallels with my own life, I enjoy reading of their joys, pain and pleasure as they strive to achieve their goals and live through the births, deaths, romances, friendships and other realities that characterize our human condition. I highly recommend these well written and imaginative fictional accounts of lives from history; they offer a fascinating peek into other places, times and cultures.

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