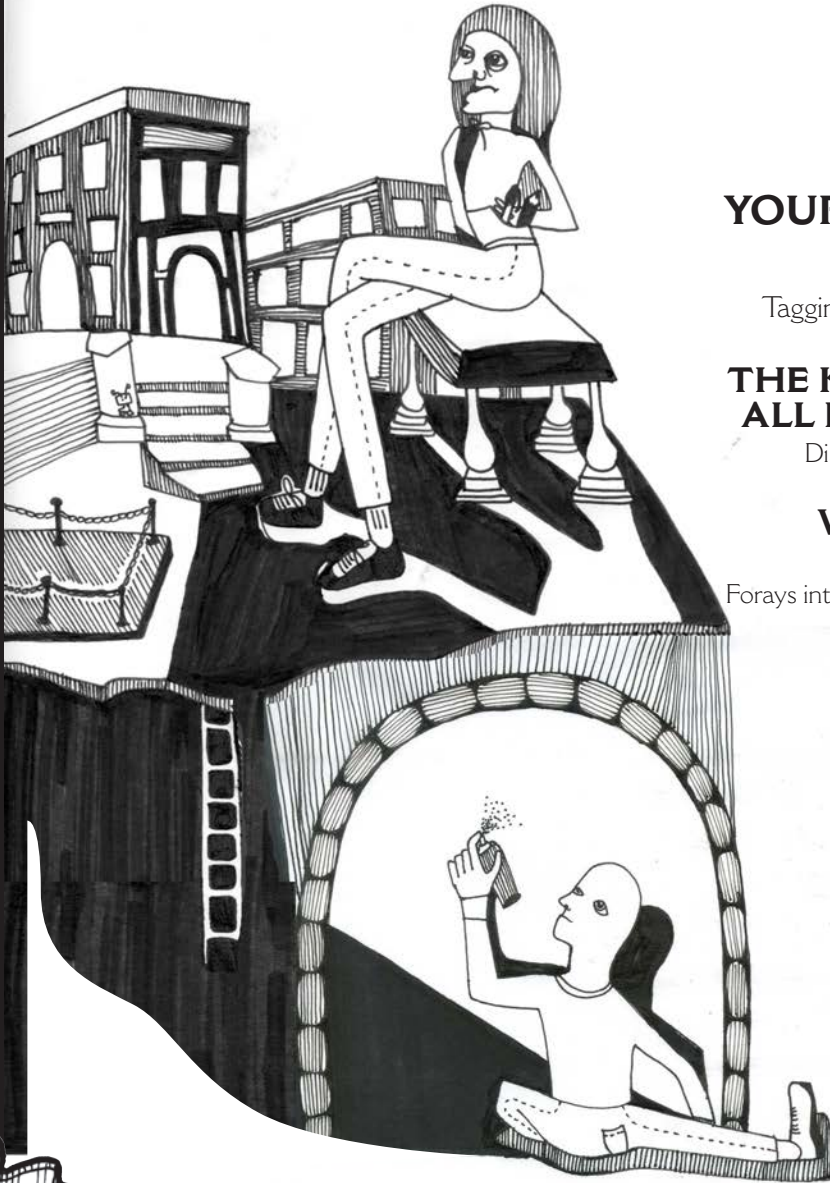


THE UNDERGRADUATE MAGAZINE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, EST. 1890

# THE BLUE & WHITE

Vol. XVII No. IV

March 2011



## **YOUR NAME HERE**

Tagging the Tunnels


## **THE KIDS ARE ALL RIOTING**

Dissent Since '68

## **WALL OF SHAME**

Forays into our pre-frosh  
Facebook past

RIFFING WITH CHARLIE TODD AND ANSWERING "THE SHAVING QUESTION"



LIZ NAIDEN, CC '12, *Editor-in-Chief*

ELAINE BAYNHAM, CC '13, *Publisher*

ADAM KUERBITZ, CC '12, *Managing Editor*

JON HILL, CC '11, *Editor Emeritus*

MARK HAY, CC '12, *Features Editor*

AMALIA SCOTT, CC '12, *Literary Editor*

BRIAN PHILLIPS DONAHOE, CC '12, *Culture Editor*

SUSAN OU, SEAS '13, *Layout Editor*

HANS E. HYTTINEN, SEAS '12, *Online Editor*

COLE DIAMOND, SEAS '13, *Website Developer*

CINDY ZHANG, SEAS '11, *Website Developer*

STEPHEN DAVAN, CC '12, *Graphics Editor*

CINDY PAN, CC '12, *Senior Illustrator*

HANNAH LEPOW, CC '11, *Senior Editor*

CLAIRE SABEL, CC '13, *Senior Editor*

CAROLYN RUVKUN, CC '13, *Senior Editor*

SAM SCHUBE, CC '12, *Senior Editor*

*Contributors*

SARAH CAMISCOLI, CC '12

GRANTLAND D'AVINO, CC '13

LIZ JACOB, CC '13

PETER KRAWCZYK, CC '13

MEGAN MCGREGOR, BC '13

CONOR SKELDING, CC '14

BRIAN WAGNER, CC '13

PETER STERNE, CC '14

MICHAEL YOUNG, GS '13

DAVID HU, SEAS '13

LILY ICANGELO, BC '13

SAMEEA BUTT, CC '13

MATT SCHANTZ, CC '14

ELLA QUITTNER, CC '14

CLAIRE HEYISON, BC '14

SYLVIE KREKOW, BC '13

*Artists*

ANGELIQUE CHANDY, GS '12

CHLOE EICHLER, CC '11

MADDY KLOSS, CC '12

MARA DAWN KRAVITZ, GS/JTS '12

EMILY LAZERWITZ, CC '14

ELIZABETH LEE, CC '12

LOUISE MCCUNE, CC '13

ELOISE OWENS, BC '12

ADELA YAWITZ, CC '12

*Copy Editors*

HANNAH FORD, CC '13

CAMILLE HUTT, CC '11

SAM HERZOG, BC '13

# THE BLUE & WHITE

---

Vol. XVII

FAMAM EXTENDIMUS FACTIS

No. IV

## COLUMNS

- 4 BLUEBOOK
- 6 BLUE NOTES
- 8 CAMPUS CHARACTERS
- 12 VERILY VERITAS
- 25 MEASURE FOR MEASURE
- 27 CAMPUS GOSSIP
- 35 DIGITALIA COLUMBIANA

## FEATURES

- Hannah Lepow & Mark Hay* 10 AT TWO SWORDS' LENGTH: SHOULD YOU SHAVE?  
*Our Monthly Prose and Cons.*
- Mark Hay* 13 YOUR NAME HERE  
*The Blue & White explores Columbia's graffiti sub-culture.*
- Lily Icangelo* 18 WALL OF SHAME  
*Forays into our pre-frosh Facebook past.*
- Brian Wagner, Conor Skelding, Grant D'Avino, Peter Sterne* 20 DISSENT SINCE '68  
*Tales of forgotten Columbia protests.*
- B&W Staff* 28 STAFF PERSONALS  
*Because even magazine editors need to find love.*
- Hannah Lepow* 30 IMPROV RIGHT HERE  
*A conversation with Charlie Todd.*
- Mike Young* 34 TAKE THE G TO THE RED HOOK  
*The Blue & White docks in post-industrial Brooklyn.*

# BLUE BOOK

As a new Editor-in-Chief, one should exercise caution and remember one's place. The Blue & White is a magazine - a take-it-as-you-will, throw-it-at-the-wall-and-see-what-sticks, sticky piece of food for thought. Our place is to suggest; yours is to digest. As my favorite internet guru has said of post-structuralist society, "IF YOU CAN'T MAKE IT FAKE IT BY OVER-EXPLAININ' IT" (<http://vimeo.com/17431354>).

In my mind, that is what the B&W can and should provide. Plus, it would be dishonest of me to hide my personal affinity for the phrase "fake it by over-explainin' it." Despite my frequent desires to editorialize, campus journalism must remember its role as an influence on our community's discourse, rather than an agent with the power to "make" it. We, as a larger group—Columbia Morningside students and staff affiliates—"make it" everyday and must continue to remake everything constantly, because our community is always changing.

This issue of the B&W attempts to over-explain certain social phenomena that make—create, regulate, deconstruct and ultimately change—the cultural and social reality of our vague, sprawling, and poorly defined "community." In "Wall of Shame," (pg.18) Lily Icangelo reveals the moments in which the classes of 2011 through 2014 were born... by getting access to your pre-frosh Facebook groups. This month's At Two Swords' Length (pg.10) narrates a fictional couple's struggle with The Shaving Question, a small decision that can cast one among the prom-queens or the butchest of the butch. Our conversation with Improv Everywhere founder Charlie Todd (pg. 30) explains how unexpected happenings can change the use of any public space, including our campus.

"Fake it by over-explainin' it" is my way of saying that we have no intention of encouraging (or, for that matter, discouraging) riots or graffiti-doing in "Dissent Since '68" or "Your Name Here," in which four promising young writers explore Columbia's recent protest history (pg. 20), and Features Editor Mark Hay goes underground to uncover the graffiti culture of Columbia's legendary tunnel system (pg. 13). This issue of the B&W is interested in subversion... in theory... if one wished. As a magazine editor, I take my greatest pleasure in encouraging people to consider hypotheticals. In our little Columbia-Morningside world, there are no changes that do not come from changes of opinion in our citizenry. To find where our community is going, we ought to open and continue to reopen our minds to the idea that not everything has to stay the way that it is. Real laws—like the policies that are closing the tunnels—and informal laws—like the norms that keep us from "looking up more often," as Charlie Todd puts it—are always subject to change, if you stop to think about it.

Liz Naiden  
Editor in Chief

## MARCH CROSSWORD BY FINN VIGELAND

*The answers to the eleven starred clues are related to an article in this publication (don't replace "publication" with "issue," since there's a pun on "issue" in the puzzle) or a general B&W theme.*

### Across

- \*Much-quoted history professor
- \*Name that quote (challenge to Bwog commenters)
- \*First word of many B&W personals
- First month in el año
- Game with Reverse cards
- "It's the end of "
- \*Like some hope, depressingly
- Summary
- Snitch
- With 28-Down, just manage
- Like some books in a quaint shop
- Donkey, in Düsseldorf
- \*Corruption
- Material in a Canadian tuxedo
- "¡Sí se !" (César Chávez labor slogan)
- Saturn S.U.V.
- Varnish ingredient
- House call?
- Site of the oldest church in France
- \*Copies of the B&W published on the third Sunday in June?
- Fin, before he transferred to the Special Victims Unit, on Law & Order: SVU
- Kind of artist?
- "The buck stops here" prez
- Wire service initials.
- Trattoria course
- Designer's concern
- \*Shop, like Ikea, that's got magical powers?

- "I finished!"
- Ballet bend
- Justice Dept. investigation grp.
- Flower's home
- "It's !" (cheesy horror movie line)
- \*Parades of leprechauns?
- Singer Joplin
- By way of
- "All systems !"
- \*Frequent Woody Allen feeling
- \*Word meaning "type" that the B&W editors told me they just really, really like
- \*Geocaching in a city, for instance

### Down

- Dreaded
- At first, say
- Put in order
- Coastal bird
- Used a bus, e.g.
- Action done in either a garage or a pit?
- Hydrocarbon ending
- Mars or Mercury
- Zimbabwe's capital
- Humdingers
- Partakes in Secret Santa
- Gun enthusiast's org.
- Big mouth
- Greenlights
- Tree with a colored inner bark
- New Hampshire's state flower
- Accept, as a not universally accepted philosophy
- Churchillian gestures
- See 21-Across
- Body part above la bouche

- 31. Insane
- 35. Record holder?
- 37. Apportioned
- 38. Like one who has just emerged from a pool
- 39. Dennis and the Classics IV (1960s-'70s group)
- 40. It currently equals about .73 euros: Abbr.
- 41. Greek consonants
- 42. "The Simpsons" character whose last name is 18 letters long
- 46. Mass figure
- 47. Indian encountered by Columbus
- 49 48-Across in a haunted house
- 50. Awaiting with suspense
- 51. Their home is the Green Monster
- 53. Conspiracy theorists believe he's still
- 60-Across
- 54. "... and so on"
- 58. Lady of the Haus
- 60. 1977 double-platinum Steely Dan album
- 61. Computer-linking acronym
- 62. Mid first-century year
- 63. Middle East issue
- 64. Canadian-born hockey great

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
14						15				16				
17						18				19				
20					21					22				
23					24					25				
26										26	27			
28													28	29
30						31				32				
33													33	
34						34				35				
36										36				
37													37	
38													38	
39										39				
40													40	
41	42									43				
44													44	
45										45				
46										46				
47													47	
48													48	
49													49	50
51													51	
52										52				
53													53	
54													54	
55													55	
56													56	
57													57	
58													58	
59													59	
60	61												60	
62													62	
63													63	
64													64	
65													65	
66													66	
67													67	
68													68	
69													69	
70													70	

### POSTCARD FROM MORNINGSID



*Compiled by B&W Staff  
Postcard by Stephen Davan*



Inside the Arthur Ross Greenhouse walls of blossoming orchids, lemon-scented eucalyptus, sugar cane, citrus, and Cypress might just be the perfect setting for your own Summer of Love. If you're not into that sort of thing, a trip to the roof of Milbank still might brighten your day. The greenhouse is always open to students and regularly welcomes visits from neighborhood elementary school students, photography and drawing classes, research scientists, and aspiring student horticulturalists.

Associate Professor of Ecological Genetics and Director of the greenhouse Hilary Callahan explains that the Milbank greenhouse is unique in Manhattan because of the rich collection of plants and related research materials it houses. "We have what a botanical garden has, on our campus." Botanical gardens tend to be large, well-tended parks that sometimes include greenhouses, but always cultivate non-native, out of season, or otherwise untenable plants as part of their operations. "The extra-special thing about that is there really isn't a botanical garden with a greenhouse in Manhattan," meaning that Barnard is the only site in the borough where certain plants—those that survive year round only in a greenhouse environment—can be enjoyed and studied. "I think it shows that the sciences are strong here, because it's a research facility. But it's also very beautiful. I think a lot of people who study plants realize that people are drawn to them for aesthetic reasons."

Businessman and Barnard trustee Arthur Ross (CC '31) donated \$1 million to build the existing greenhouse in 1997. The new facility, named in his honor, replaced an original greenhouse that was built to crown Milbank in 1928 but had since become too small for its collection. Today's greenhouse, designed by the architecture firm Stein Partnership, features automated temperature control and solar shading, and boasts 18-foot-tall research bays to accommodate wildflowers like the Pink Lady's Slipper orchid

and exotic plants like the Sacred Lotus of India. Despite the academic function of the greenhouse, a scholarly interest in biology or environmental science is not required for students to become caretakers. Tse-Chu Dolma, BC '14, says her interest in sustainability led her to work in the greenhouse, but admits that the best part of her job is the peace she finds among the plants. "It's really an escape from this urban campus with so many driven students around.



This makes you come back to nature and reflect on yourself. I feel like I get a really good breath of fresh air when I'm here." Caretaker Stephanie Eng, BC '13, agrees. "I think it's a really nice space to go to because no one knows where it is so it's really quiet. You can see over the entire campus."

Student caretakers are trained by head caretaker Krystyna Bucharowki, whom Professor Callahan aptly describes as "the Dr. Doolittle of plants." Dolma and Eng praise Bucharowski not only for her green thumb but also for her cultivation of friendships. "She'd put two of us caretakers in the same room sometimes and then we could just do our work but also chat," remembers Eng. Bucharowski's enthusiasm for plants is infectious—thanks to her guidance, this reporter left the greenhouse with seeds from a chili plant and instructions for starting her own collection.

—Claire Heyison

Calling itself the "University Super Store," the Morton Williams supermarket on 116th Street and Broadway has a storied, eight-year history on campus as the home of overpriced goods, under-enthusiastic employees, and walls adorned with photographic Columbia idolatry. But for all its—shall we say—character, it is one single piece of technology that gives Morton Williams the upper hand in the battle for neighborhood grocery supremacy: the ticker, a half-functioning beacon of knowledge and inspiration that hangs from the ceiling's perimeter and scrolls quotes

like "WHAT DO SNOWMEN EAT FOR BREAKFAST? SNOWFLAKES — AUTHOR UNKNOWN!" across its blinking, red LED matrix.

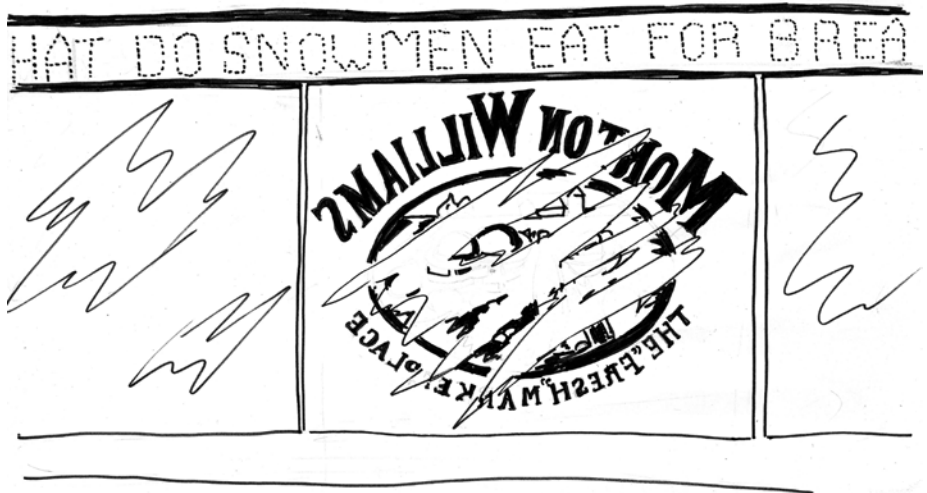
As with any sign, the ticker theoretically communicates messages to the store's customers. It's really okay, for example, that you

just paid way too much for that Haagen Dazs because "AUTHOR UNKNOWN!" can cheer you up with a clever pun. But the ticker's high, out-of-the-way placement means that customers often overlook it. Even one Morton Williams employee was surprised to learn of the ticker's existence when we pointed it out to her during an interview.

Those who do happen upon the mythic ticker may have their shopping experience brightened by the food-related quotes from William Shakespeare. Or the wisdom that "COOKERY IS NOT CHEMISTRY. IT IS AN ART. IT REQUIRES INSTINCT AND TASTE RATHER THAN EXACT MEASUREMENTS," a quotation from some man named Marcel Boulestin who presumably had something to do with food before he died. Or, maybe he's still alive—your guess is as good as ours on this one. Morton Williams's manager couldn't offer us much help, either: "We don't pick the quotes. They come in the machine pre-loaded," he said.

So to that nameless signmaker out there who apparently gave up a career as a *littérateur* to become a mere letterer, we hope you take comfort in the fact your ticker has enlightened us. But we do urge you to reconsider your profession. Pursue your passion for literature before it's too late, for as your own ticker says, "THE APPETITES OF THE STOMACH AND THE PALATE, FAR FROM DIMINISHING AS MEN GROW OLDER, GO ON INCREASING — CICERO."

—Sylvie Krekow



# Campus Characters

You might not know the following figures—but you should. In *Campus Characters*, THE BLUE & WHITE introduces you to a handful of Columbians who are up to interesting and extraordinary things and whose stories beg to be shared. If you'd like to suggest a Campus Character, send us an email at [editors@theblueandwhite.org](mailto:editors@theblueandwhite.org).

## PHILLIP DUPREE

For many Columbia students, December 19, 2009 marks a night to remember: the biggest campus-wide snowball fight in recent memory. The man responsible is Phillip Dupree, SEAS '11. What began as a simple desire to ease finals stress turned into a snow battle of epic proportions—by the early evening on December 19th the Facebook event boasted nearly 600 attendees. Dupree climbed onto Alma Mater as the throngs gathered on Low Plaza. As if parting the Red Sea with his staff, he commanded his followers to vacate a central space and form two teams. To his surprise, they obeyed. And with a “3-2-1 ATTACK!!!,” the battle began. As Dupree’s friend Katie Lupica, CC '11, describes the snowball fight, “Other than Holi (the annual Hindu festival on Ancel Plaza), it’s pretty much the only campus event I’ve

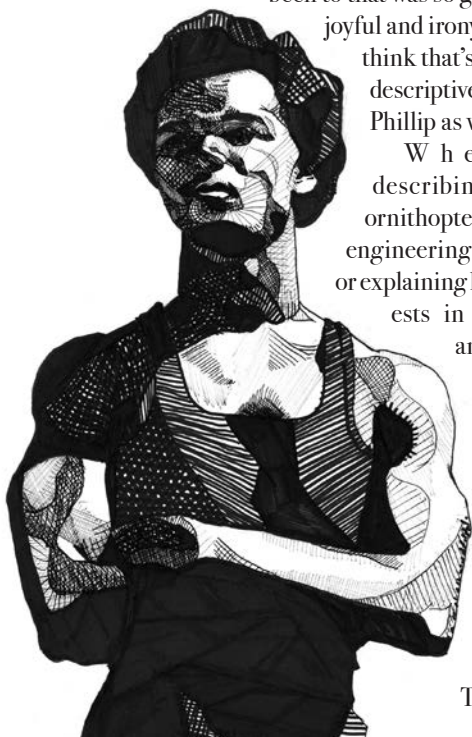
been to that was so genuinely joyful and irony-free. I think that’s pretty descriptive of Phillip as well.”

Whether describing an ornithopter for an engineering project or explaining his interests in Parkour and longboarding, Dupree rates that irony-free enthusiasm. Take a

random day Dupree spent in the city during the summer of his junior year: he had originally planned to check out a music video being shot near the Queensboro Bridge, but he returned home late that night as both a music video star (the original actor never showed up) and the proud owner of a new longboard (won in a competition while waiting for a costume change). Despite the adventurousness of that day, Dupree doesn’t think intrepidity is necessary for a fun time. “You don’t have to search high and low for something crazy to do,” he says, “but you do have to put yourself out there, make tiny, interesting choices, and watch where they lead you.”

As an RA in John Jay for the past two years, Dupree has done his best to share these attitudes with his residents. He thrives on the excitement freshmen bring to his life. “It’s like having 45 younger siblings,” Dupree says, and he is always happy to play the role of the thoughtful older brother. In his first year as an RA, Dupree went to his friend’s kitchen in Hartley and made pancakes for his residents every Sunday. This year, he and his residents like to gather to chat over tea. But free food is secondary, in Dupree’s mind, to the advice he offers his residents whenever he gets a chance: “It takes time to really find where you want to be in college. I didn’t really find my place until junior year. Chill out.”

Indeed, two years before his junior year snowball fight glory, Dupree was just like any other freshman—a little lost and looking to find his niche. He cites the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship as the first group on campus to really make him feel welcome. And though cynical atheism often seems to dominate the student body, participation in the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship plays a large part in Dupree’s life. “It can be un-cool at Columbia to be religious, but being Christian is the foundation of who I am.” An active member of the IVCF, Dupree spends his Thursday nights at St. Paul’s Chapel rocking out on his clarinet in praise of God. Dupree and his fellow club members are currently in the planning stages of organizing a week of events, scheduled to take place in April,





to raise awareness of human trafficking and slavery. Perhaps Dupree puts his views on faith and social justice best: “It’s about love, plain and simple.”

It is this attitude that seems to fuel Dupree’s incredible humility toward his adventures. “Having cool stories to tell about snowball fights and Parkour are fun, but I think that when I leave, I’d rather be remembered for being devoted to social justice and raising awareness on present-day human slavery or being a great RA. I don’t pretend that anyone’s going to remember the snowball fight in a couple years, but someone who works toward social justice? That’s someone people might remember.”

—Liz Jacob

## ERICA WEAVER

Erica Weaver, CC ’12, passionately plunges into the past. The medieval enthusiast speaks Old and Middle English, composes poetry on a typewriter, and studies ancient manuscript writing. She keeps a list of unusual and intriguing words handy: baroque, equinox, wanderer, dastardly, rutabaga, toothsome. Weaver almost always wears flouncy retro dresses. Her stockings sometimes have foxes on them.

And it isn’t an act. You could practically pluck Weaver from a sepia photograph. Though she does seem to live in another world, her friend Danica Damplo, CC ’12, clarifies her nostalgic sensibilities. “Erica prefers to focus on the world of medieval literature as if it is existing at the same time as this one,” Damplo explains. “She’s not completely in another world, but when she does delve, she lives it as if it’s existing.”

“Sometimes I romanticize the past and think I should just live in a monastery,” Weaver wistfully trails off. “But there are lots of modern conveniences,” she concedes. A self-proclaimed Southern girl, Weaver grew up in Norfolk, Virginia immersed in a culture clinging to a problematic past. She enthusiastically relays the equal sense of discovery she feels reading Faulkner and studying medieval manuscripts. “The book in the Middle Ages was such a physical artifact,” she explains, as she illustrates the painstaking process of creating and preserving a manuscript with gestures. Weaver doesn’t just recount stories—she acts them out, adopting the mannerisms of each character.

With the same infectious energy, Weaver creates goofy videos for each of her friends’ birthdays and explains the medieval punctus, a trademark of her writing. The earliest form of punctuation in manu-

scripts, the medieval punctus serves as an alternative to the hyphen or period by marking an “unspecified turn in the thought process” and adding “more ambiguity to the poetic line.” “But everyone in writer’s house refers to it as the Erica dot,” she jokes.

In spring of 2009, Weaver co-founded a new SIC, the Writers House, to cultivate Columbia’s literary community. Co-founder David Berke, CC ’12, who first met Weaver in Lit Hum, remembers post-class pow-wows that would become the Writers House weekly workshops Weaver now leads. “Not to say that I’m good with poetry, because I’m not,” Weaver insists, “but I started devoting time to questions of craft, line breaks, and punctuation in college.”

Well-versed in Weaver’s prose, Berke vouches for her quiet brilliance. She was “one of those,” Berke recounts, “the ones who picked their spots, and when they do talk everyone listens, and they completely change how everyone thinks about the subject.” Fusing medieval themes with seemingly unrelated subjects, Weaver’s writing incorporates this same understated complexity. “I guess I’m interested in periods of intimacy in public places—when you come into close contact with people you know nothing about,” Weaver explains, “I write a lot about sea-life and archaic medieval things.” Berke, sincerely in awe of her, described their work-life relationship: “It’s strange knowing how brilliant she is.”

Despite her intense devotion to the arcane, Weaver doesn’t fall into the brooding writer stereotype. She is refreshingly silly and admittedly illogical. “I have to devote my life to literature, and that’s probably impractical but it doesn’t matter to me.” A blend of a Southern girl’s social warmth and a writer’s patient craft, there is, as Berke describes it, “a distinctly Erica way of being.” ♦

—Carolyn  
Ruwkun





# Should You

I am a heavily forested man and damn proud of it. When a boy starts pushing up foliage, that is when he knows he has become a man, all other activities of the pituitary gland be damned. No offense to those with alopecia areata, of course.

The fact that you could skin me and turn me into a carpet is how I know I am not just a man, but a strong, beautiful beast. But if Disney taught me nothing else, it is that every beast must groom away some of his coarse nature to snag his belle. (That was the point of that movie, right?)

Six months is exactly enough time to see everything you can in another human being and form a rationale for never, ever wanting to see her snaggle-toothed, over-made-up, vacant-eyed face ever again. Sure, I see flaws in my current entanglement, but Buddha knows why, I've come to like Hannah's snaggletooth. And I know she does not appreciate coming away from an encounter with thick, curly black hairs stuck in her smile.

Maybe there was an allure to my fuzz at first. Running her hands through something with the texture of a Persian rug—that is a luxurious experience you don't get with most men. Hair, and lots of it, gives you an air of rugged virility and mystery. A grizzled mane with a healthy sheen is the choicest of aphrodisiacs.

But, if that novelty passes, what then? I can admit that hair, everywhere may have some downsides.

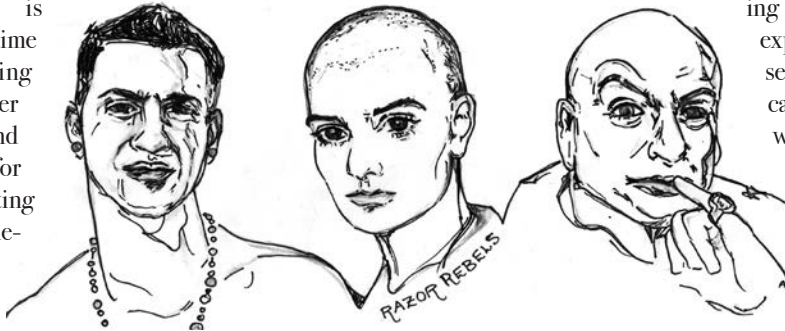
The natural bouquet of my skin is a potent pheromonal snare, worthy of inclusion in that Ben Whishaw movie *Perfume*. Yet I'll admit hair has a habit of trap-

ping the aroma of anything that enters, exits, or just passes by. It pushes down my musk and mingles it with the basest of odors. And in the heat of passion, all of the stewing scents by my roots boil and bubble, and as her face approaches my flesh I can only imagine that I must sometimes smell like a sewage treatment plant in the dead of summer.

Sure, shearing away my wooly coat will leave my pink, soft underskin vulnerable to predators. It's also still a bit nippy, and I'm not looking forward to a frigid breeze blowing over my newly exposed delicate self. But a shave can change the way one looks, highlight attractive features, make minor attributes look more impressive. And I aim to impress.

All right, I am a schlub. I am a lazy man. I love that about me, and I love my relationship with me and with the hair a slovenly life produces. But for Hannah, I can change. I can be a better man. I can

be virile without being vile. And it's not like I'm giving up everything—I can keep some rugged stubble. She will like that, because who doesn't think stubble is sexy? And add a dab of cologne, put a new layer on top of my musk, maybe remind her of her father's aftershave, trigger some daddy issues and play on those. Yes—keep the stubble, clear the forest! Be dashing and clean, not untamed and unkempt. Good plan. Shave the face, bring sexy back, keep the girl. not untamed and unkempt. Good plan. Shave the face, bring the sexy back, keep the girl.



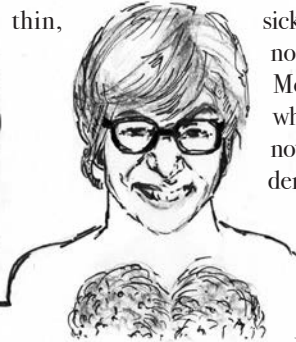
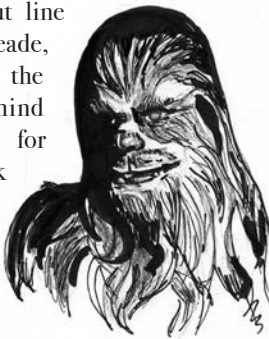
## AFFIRMATIVE

*By Mark Hay*



# Shave?

I like to think that I try reasonably hard. When all the popular girls in middle school started shaving under their arms I followed—it was that or become the hairy outcast, a monster in the girls locker room. Since those tender preteen days my hair removal techniques have run the gamut, from shaving (always acceptable) to Nair (disgusting) to the pre-beach vacation wax (ouch). But as I stand in the check-out line at Duane Reade, ready to ask the woman behind the counter for a six-pack of Venus Embrace razors (\$20 literally down the drain), I suddenly pause.



ating the state of our relationship are leaning more towards the con side. In fact, something's been weird with Mark lately. He's...shaving. And okay yeah, he's shaving with a dull razor, which he admits will totally wreck his skin later, but his stubble now resembles that of a freshman freaked out during exams, not a rugged, manly, possibly-graduate student. And his lips without a

thin,

cover of mustache are sickly—how did I not notice that before? Most importantly, why is he doing this now? Why the sudden effort to groom himself, just as I slip comfortably into the unshaven realm of relationship-hood?

Seriously, why shave? It's barely March, and regardless of the over-enthusiastic Californians on display on College Walk, a rare 40 degree day does not mean you can wear shorts yet. And furthermore, Mark and I have been dating for six months. That's long enough to start forgiving certain hygiene lapses, right?

What really makes me change my mind about daily shaving is Mark. I'll be far from the only stubbly member of our couple—his flowing hair, erupting from every patch of skin—is one of the things that first drew me to him. His scratchy kisses remind me that there is no love pain (or at least mild discomfort). And sure, maybe I'm attracted to his beard because it reminds me of my absent father, bearded in those faded photos by my bedside, but Mark wouldn't know that.

If I'm honest, Mark's hirsutism is probably the main reason we're still together. Now that we're at the six-month mark, my weekly pro-con lists evalu-

He must be trying to impress another girl. That's it. He knows I don't mind his prickliness, but he's after another lady who would. I knew it; I knew I'd miscalculated my list of pros and cons; I knew he was just a manipulative womanizer under all that hair! And I can't believe that I myself considered not shaving—if I'm starting to let hygiene slide, maybe I need to take some time to just focus on me.

My pro-con list is spinning out of control. It would if lists could spin. Shit, I'm even confusing my figures of speech.

I reflected on these tangled thoughts as I walked back towards my room, but suddenly I made an about face and turned in the direction of Mark's building. Time seemed to speed up. Moments later I'm peering at him from behind his bathroom door—he's whistling and...shaving. With shaving cream! This is not good. The first words that come to my mind are, "Mark, we need to talk." ♦

## NEGATIVE

*By Hannah Lepow*

# TOLD BETWEEN PUFFS

*In which our hero is expelled from the cafés of Paris by the proletariat*

Ah, a semester in Paris, what could be finer? A spring day on the Boulevard St. Germain, so very far from the darkness of cavernous Butler halls. And for all its thrills, brunch at Community Food & Juice cannot compare to a leisurely late afternoon meal taken with wine at Le Chateaubriand. Most importantly, a semester on The Continent offers one the opportunity to travel. No one has really *done* Venice who hasn't seen La Serenissima during Carnevale. With all this in mind, Verily V. late last fall decided to endure that crucible sometimes called the "student visa application process," pack up his trunks, and leave Manhattan behind.

Having arrived safely and finding shelter in a suitable arrondissement, V.V. verily began to acculturate himself to the Parisian *mode de vivre*—a kitchen stocked with unpasteurized artisanal cheeses and Côte du Rhône by the gallon, and an appropriate amount of flâneur-ing (weather permitting).

Oh it was all so marvelous, a much needed respite from the travails of our onerous university enslavement! Indeed your own V.V. frequently found himself overwhelmed with pity for his fellow undergraduates across The Pond, too encumbered by—dare I say it—mid-term examinations to take a well-deserved weekend in the country. But as pack upon pack of Gauloises emptied themselves and days faded into weeks, V. Veritas slipped into a rather delightful routine with a few dear friends and thought less and less of his brothers in the Heights. Life, the sort of life one is meant to live, seemed underway at last, after much, much too much time spent wasting away in a wretched corner of Morningside's gated prison, satisfying oneself with whatever Australian wine (one

cringes!) happened to be on hand.

It was all so perfectly pleasant—all one could really hope for was better reservations—when suddenly, one evening, somewhere between the cheese course and dessert at Le Comptoir du

Relais, out of nowhere, V. Veritas found himself face to face with veritable revolution!

Without any sort of provocation (what sort of things are tuition and fees to be fighting over?) the students of Paris had taken to the streets. They even waved that dreadfully overused banner declaring "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" as they blocked the university doors, keeping your own V.V. from attending class. A cultural experience, indeed! Having never

been one of democratic tastes, Verily firmly decided he would forgo participation in such enterprises, set nary a foot in the Quartier Latin, and take the opportunity instead to indulge himself. In such circumstances one really does deserve it. Reservations, tailored suits, and appointments were all made in great earnest.

But then...*quelle horreur!* The trade-unionists took up the students' cause and joined them in their hullabaloo! Crowds of miscreant protesters thronged in the streets, making it impossible for one to get anywhere by car service. It was, to be blunt, horrific. It became clear to your own vexed V. Veritas that he should flee, and quickly, lest he, like the Bourbons (proven very distant relatives) find himself consumed by the Parisian mobs.

And so, under cover of night, bags were stuffed in the trunk of a car and Verily Veritas bid a hopefully temporary farewell to the The City of Lights to ride out the unrest at the *château* of old family friends in the Loire—we Veritates have always learned to make do. Unsure of his future, and just back from the hunt, your own V.V. cautiously awaits the semester ahead. ♦



# Your Name Here

*The Blue & White explores Columbia's graffiti sub-culture*

BY MARK HAY

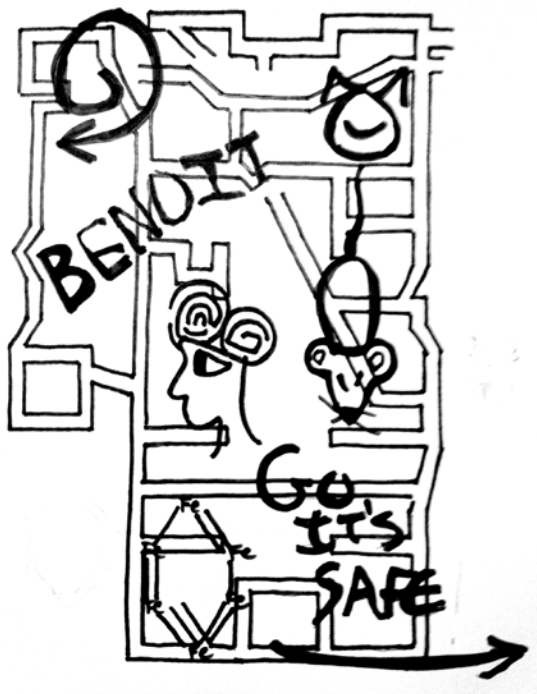
Back in Berkley, СИЛА (pronounced see-lah, now a Columbia student) was an active tagger. Her Russian nom de guerre could be found stenciled and sprayed throughout the areas she frequented, woven among a tapestry of others. СИЛА was just one member of an active tagging community, composed of supporters, artists, self-promoters, and droves of amateur hipsters toting around spray cans in their messenger bags as part of the “look.” As СИЛА says, “tagging can be used to signify or solicit membership in a particular ‘scene,’” and so should be expected of youths, especially anxious youths searching for an identity—never in short supply at a college. But one will never see a СИЛА tag in even the most remote corners of campus, and rarely find any form of graffiti at all. Columbia is immaculate.

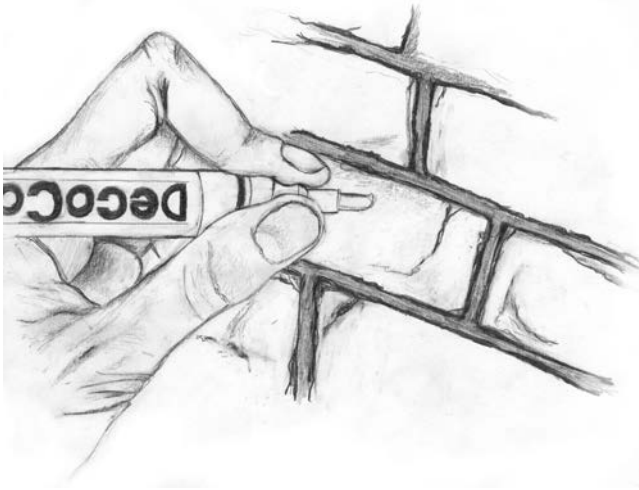
Or at least it is becoming more so. According to Dan Held, Director of Communications for Columbia University Facilities, “In 2010 there were 12 recorded

incidents of graffiti on campus.” But as we learned in 2007, at the height of a “graffiti epidemic” on campus covered by *The Spectator* and on *Bwog*, most graffiti here is isolated, obscure, and personally directed—think anti-Semitic scrawl on a bathroom door, more than systematic branding. And it all vanishes almost instantaneously. The university’s focus is on keeping the campus pristine—vandalism is handled by facilities, not public safety, and is only reported to the police if it contains a bias incident (racial slur, assault message, etc.).

In Morningside as a whole, the only culture of what is generally called “graffiti”—more specifically “tagging” with a repeated symbol of identity, or “street art” in the case of artistic vandalism—has been pushed deep underground. We cannot see the university as acting entirely independently in its scouring of the campus and the neighborhood; Columbia is mimicking and participating in a larger city-wide movement of graffiti removal. When the City debuted the long-awaited High Line Park in June 2009, it announced its intent to glorify the long-abandoned rail line’s structural aesthetics, staying power, and long history. Although the park design includes a few opportunities for visitors to view the abandoned rails, debris and weeds that once covered the High Line, they will encounter none of the graffiti that once adorned the walls along the tracks. The Graffiti Free NYC paid for the clearing of graffiti from at least twenty buildings in the area before the park was opened. The program, established in 1999, shells out big bucks to remove graffiti from public as well as private estates in the city, even in years of deficit. To the city and the campus, graffiti is de facto blight, all of it unacceptable and juvenile vandalism to be removed unless a private business requests otherwise. According to СИЛА, these “broken window theory”-inspired policies have influenced the social landscape of the city and, indirectly, have made it harder and less socially acceptable to tag at Columbia.

“It totally changes your lifestyle,” she says. “As a tagger, you creep around at night, you explore dark





places, you get chased by cops, you permanently have paint on your hands, fingernails, clothes, etc.” SILA admits “that sort of lifestyle might not be so conducive to being a successful student at this fine academic institution.”

Aboveground, the visible tagging community in Manhattan has been all but dismantled. Even the most obscure of nooks, once out of sight and out of mind to the city, now come under threat, like the West Side Line tunnel under Riverside Park, known as the Freedom Tunnel because of the large murals painted there by Chris Pape, a.k.a. Freedom, several decades ago. “Unfortunately in the past year,” says Steve Duncan, CC’02 and prolific urban explorer of *undercity.org* fame, “Amtrak, whose trains run through the tunnel, has been painting over all of those murals along several miles of concrete walls.”

But graffiti is not totally gone from our neighborhood. It has just been pushed below our feet, into those places few of us have access to or the wherewithal to find. As it vanishes from the Freedom tunnel and the subway viaduct—where 1 trains roll into the light at 122nd street—remains an inactive site covered still with decades old graffiti, all graffiti in Morningside seems to be under attack. Given the difficulty of resisting the crackdown, tagging has become the domain of tunnelers, roofers, urban explorers, those who can gain access to the city below the city, and in Morningside, the city below Columbia. And as they descend into the legendary “tunnels,” the nature of their endeavor changes and becomes more than “vandalism”; “graffiti”; “tagging”; or “street art.”

As Armin Rosen persuasively suggested in a 20 June 2007 *Bwog* article, it takes a particular sort of

individual to go down into the tunnels—a collection of systems underneath the campus including the remnants of the Bloomingdale asylum, the Manhattan Project, and modern utilities spaces. Before they can leave their mark, they must be ambitious and accomplished urban explorers. Tunnelers’ motives are not mainly promotional in the way SILA describes. What promoter would look to advertise their style or brand where few if any will ever see their tag again? The tunnelers are explorers above artists, recorders above promoters, and the tags they leave are distinct—devoid of self-reference, full of coded meaning.

To the uninitiated, this graffiti appears trivial—repeated symbols, hastily scrawled lines of poetry and names with no meaning. But those with a thirst for knowledge decipher these glyphs and read into them a rich history, a record of exploits and the individuals who embarked on them. For those of us with less time, patience or *chutzpah* than the tunnelers, a guide comes in handy.

### The Blue & White Descends

Winding through clattering and hissing pipes and caverns of machinery, casting a wary eye about, Helix quickly crosses a tunnel where security and staff could be lurking. He stops at the path into the off-limits spaces properly known as “the tunnels,” his eye transfixed on one brick in a dark corner. He snakes under a pipe that blocks the corner and then points towards the brick, which sports black, blocky letters: “Benoit.”

“This is why I like Benoit,” says Helix, staring fixated at the brick. “He leaves really simple tags in the most interesting places.”

As Rosen wrote in his *Bwog* post, taggers like Benoit, Charlemagne, Mouse, AOOAOA, and ADHOC are ubiquitous.

They’ve plastered themselves along almost every step one can take, but without ever really promoting themselves, without giving an “I”—lacking a desire to be remembered personally for their talents and exploits. The only exception is ADHOC, the tag of Ken Hechtman who forfeited his anonymity in 1987 when it was discovered that he had used his tunneling skills to extract a lump of depleted Uranium-238 from the Pupin labs (since cleared). But even in the 80s, Hechtman, a fairly destructive individual with a chronic allergy for authority, was not the

norm. Most Columbia taggers are like Helix.

Helix squeezes through a hole that could not accommodate a man of notable stature (it appears to be the largest hole a sledge hammer wielder could make) and drops down onto a pile of folding and pock-marked torpedoes, which he suspects may be the empty shells of Manhattan Project-era fuel cells. He arrives in the dead dark of a long chamber he believes was once a shooting range and stops at the end of a hand railing. The LED-blue beam of his flashlight catches a familiar scrawl out of the corner of his eye—two winding strands next to the word “HELIX.”

“That’s me,” says Helix. “If you see my tag, it means you’ve gotten somewhere cool.”

Helix’s tags, like many others, are guideposts. Throughout the oldest tunnel system, at major points of egress, like the base of the early-campus staircase, dark and cramped with pipes dripping boiling water onto one’s head (which has been marked with a naming tag: “Mount Doom”), taggers have left a series of clues, cryptic riddles guiding explorers to the most fascinating secrets of the system. At other points, they guide the lost—a small tag by a door in a winding tunnel identifies an exit to Hamilton Hall. In this, they emulate their predecessors, hobo tags. These rough geometric signs, hard to spot unless one knows where to look and now flaking and yellowed along the more accessible tunnels, once carried symbolic messages to the “mole people,” the subterranean homeless population. “Food here,” they once told those in search of a night of sanctuary. “Safety, a place to sleep, floods easily.” The message of signs like those of Benoit serve much the same function, although their audience has a different set of desires.

Turning from the tag indicating Hamilton, Helix stops dead again, his eyes caught by a small, blue arrow just above a tag by Mouse, pointing straight at a wall: “Library Hell.” Helix says it once pointed the way to another system which runs under Butler, Carman, and Lerner. But now the tag points to a wall of plaster with one pipe running through it, exposing a glimpse of one of many lost tunnel systems preserved only in the memory of these tags.

In this act of recording, the taggers are historians. Sometimes they are unintentional record keepers, like the author of “Library Hell” or “TIME”—fittingly one of the oldest taggers (according to Helix) whose signatures live mainly in the bowels of the boiler rooms at the north of campus, faded and sometimes caught

behind hot pipes installed long ago and already rusted, which would prevent any hand from tagging there today. Many taggers effectively carbon date the tunnels, marking the switch from coal to steam and a handful of other historical changes, the discovery of which is a treat for the exploring community.



But for many explorers the historical aspect of descending is much more explicit, not just one part of the experience. While Helix and several other urban explorers (none of whom knew each other before the writing of this article) speak of a simple urge to be aware of their surroundings—to know what is behind this door and where that tunnel leads. Duncan also identifies a deeper motive: he and all the rest are geeks. Plain and simple—really geeky people willing to drop through a hole in the ground and crawl through rainwater to find something unseen, some link to a history and a culture passed over by everyone else.

Given the historical bent of the tunnels’ main denizens, it should not be surprising that some tunnels have more graffiti than others. The Signature Room, an offset rocky nook under north campus, bears a copy of almost every tag that appears anywhere else in the systems not because it is easy to access, but because it is a record room, a nexus of history. The density of Benoit, Mouse, and Helix tags also increases as one creeps closer and closer to the remains of the Manhattan Project, the old coal hoppers, or the crumbling brick walls of the asylum era. The world the explorers search for, immerse themselves in, and literally become a part of as they write upon its walls is the world of Columbia’s history.

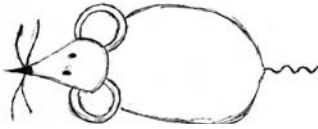
It’s a similar impulse that compels Helix to scrape through every ashtray (presumably left by previous explorers) and check in every cardboard box or other debris that litters the tunnels. “You have to check for signs of habitation,” he says, flipping through cigarette butts. “Sometimes they leave you things—I found a Red Bull down here recently.” He has also found a dollhouse shrine to the Virgin Mary, a keg of beer that has not been produced since the ‘70s, remnants of the Axe and Coffin secret society, and other signs that there once was a healthy community of tunnelers here.

“The sad thing is,” says Helix, is that “for every one thing that we find down here, we’ve lost another forev-

er” as the University welds, plasters, or nails up doors.

On the St. Paul’s entrance to the underground, authorities have recently placed new security cameras, and magnetic strips that pick up attempts to slip through windows. Throughout Pupin and Kent, first new locks were placed on the doors to the tunnels, but the aged wood slipping in its hinges could be jimmied with a knife and the right weight to bypass the deadbolt—recently, metal plates and locks were installed to prevent it. After wriggling down a series of pipes and crawling a story below the grates in front of Mathematics, you’ll find the crawl space entrance there sealed shut with a wooden beam and nails.

Administrators have a number of practical reasons to fear an accessible underground. Below Hamilton, clusters of wires lay open. Helix suggests from here one could take out the phones all over



campus, give one’s self free cable, or, he say as he opens an unlocked box of switches, take out the air-conditioning in Hamilton Hall. Towards Pupin, a rogue tunneler is even more of a threat. Exposed pipes and wires there could (legend has it) take down the power in a good portion of the Upper West Side. And, of course, during the ’68 protests, the tunnels were used for communication by factions by students occupying different buildings. WKCR’s Andy Seitos, CC ’71, even wiretapped phone lines in the tunnels in order to scoop major news outlets during the uprisings.

To echo Rosen and Duncan though, basic security precautions and dangerous conditions discourage most with a criminal impulse from descending into the abyss. The degree of commitment and skill required to pick locks, skirt even one security camera, and endure the discomforts of some underground places is born of passion, not chaos or sociopathy (save for an odd case like Hechtman). Duncan, Helix, and a host of others feel a sense of connection to other taggers and explorers they have never met. The core of this identity is not shared experience so much as shared feelings towards their environment. They all agree that no tunneler would ever think to damage a place whose history they care for so deeply.

But the continuing crackdown in our tunnels may succeed in keeping even those with the most altruistic,

exploratory and historical impulses out. No one is quite sure why, but the crackdown has gained momentum in recent years. Many of the tunnels have been “closed” for at least half a century, but have remained accessible until recently. Sparrow—another amateur explorer whose small bird sticker tags appear on campus above ground occasionally before being removed—believes the crackdown started in earnest about four years ago. Helix has seen it picking up even more speed and energy (and technology—swipe cards, key pads, security cameras) just in the past few months to the point that, he admits, he can no longer keep up. What’s more, he knows that if he pulls down the beam blocking the Mathematics crawl space or if he manages to slip past the magnetic sensors on the St. Paul’s window, the university might take further steps to fully seal the tunnels, or parts of them, for ever.

The population of underground taggers is obviously dwindling due to increasingly difficult access. New works seem to be fewer and less frequent, while some taggers like Mouse, whose dated tags end in 2006, are dropping off the map. And as the community dwindles, new generations also have fewer and fewer opportunities to learn from older tunnelers. Benoit was SEAS ’01 and the regular tours he gave to inspire younger generations ended long ago, and the map of the tunnels available on WikiCU, apparently compiled by Mike Schiraldi in 1999, is of little help today according to Sparrow. As a result, Sparrow does not know any other explorers, and Helix, though he knows one or two, has never met anyone else in the tunnels, save an occasional apathetic maintenance or construction worker.

Duncan’s photos and minor *célébrité* have inspired some interest in the tunnels. Likewise, the documentary “Exit through the Gift Shop,” and other fanfare surrounding British urban artist Banksy has drawn some popular attention to the subject matter in general. Urban exploration (UrbEx) is, for the moment, a popular topic to think about and talk about. But Sparrow doubts many people at Columbia will make action out of the inspiration Duncan and explorers and street artists all over the world can offer them. СИЛА is inactive here,

and as the roofs and tunnels

**TIME**



become inaccessible and his friends remain unwilling to explore with him, Sparrow is beginning to fall silent as well. The easiest tunnels still receive traffic from eager young feet, but how many have the perseverance, skills, and courage to break through a locked door into something unknown?

And when even Helix cannot gain access to the history preserved in the tunnels, what then? One of the most important living repositories of Columbia's institutional memory is Robert McCaughey, the Ann Whitney Olin Professor of History at Barnard College and author of *Stand Columbia*. McCaughey remembers only the use of the tunnels by police in the 1960s, not by students. In fact, McCaughey has no real knowledge of the tunnels or their secrets. There is no reason for any students on campus today to remember that the Pupin labs were cleared of Manhattan Project papers and gadgets in 2003, or the removal in 2008 of the cyclotron, a mammoth relic treated with great reverence by tunnel taggers. Even memory of the Axe and Coffin society is now fading from memory. Only the tunnelers and taggers seem ready to record this history, but their presence, their lore, and their visibility have all been on a steady decline since 2006, threatening each year to disappear entirely.

Why we have decided this history is not worth

remembering? Why this part of Columbia is not suitable for the brochures or at least respectable, above-ground daily conversations, no one can say. But it connects the graffiti above and below in one sense—both have been declared de facto blight. Despite the history, **BENOIT ☺** the narrative, the art they may contain, the histories of graffiti and the tunnels are a shame to the university—a memory of a time and tradition that is being erased. Whether the crackdown is active or the erasure is unintentional and unavoidable makes no difference. Perhaps the historic and exploratory impulse, the taggers urge to record and identify, will manifest anew in some brilliant way. But it's just as likely that something inside of this place will die, leaving nothing below our feet but veins deprived of the life that once rushed through them. ♦



# Wall of Shame

*Forays into our pre-frosh Facebook past*

BY LILY ICANGELO

It is sometimes hard to think of Columbia students as a united tribe. We are not a college whose sense of community is wrought by a collective despair at being stranded in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by trees and bears and unpaved roads. But deep in the annals of Facebook there lies proof that we all do have something in common—the inelegant, gauche, social anxiety of those post-acceptance, pre-college months—when we had yet to arrive but could think of nothing else. We may not have agreed on politics or the perfect prospie profile picture, but we all shared the need for reassurance that we were not alone in our excitement and anxiety.

Facebook’s “Class of...” groups satisfied that need, providing a cool blue salve for the raw wounds of newly admitted students, wrenched from their cozy high school cliques by selective (or perhaps arbitrary) admissions letters. The administration creates these official “welcome” groups for recently admitted students every year, to help them get to know their fellow almost-freshmen and connect them with current students. Students must be invited or confirm their admission to Columbia in order to join their official class group; other students start unofficial and open groups that fill with spam after students arrive in Morningside and eventually lose interest. Though the groups of both types quickly recede into the haze of their members’ memories along with the likes of NSOP

and

AlcoholEDU, the conversations on the group message boards that once ruthlessly tossed you from valiant crests to deep troughs of the waves of pre-collegiate popularity remain preserved there like mosquitoes frozen in amber.

Examining this petrified “pre-frosh” confabulation (“Ulysses is your

favorite book too?!?!”), one can trace the trajectory of minor issues into sheer panic attacks—comments riddled with the overuse and abuse of exclamation marks and caps lock. Take “a minor bedding crisis,” an example of the passions of women from the Barnard Class of 2011. The thread’s first comment: “So in the e-mail that the elusive Steve Tolman sent out, in the attached newsletter it was mentioned that we DON’T need extra long sheets. WTF?” A deeply perturbed student responded, “Wait?!?! What?!?! That catalogue they sent out only sold extra long sheets?!?! That makes no sense!!!” You may scoff now, but the anguish of pre-college limbo combined with Facebook’s merciless transparency encouraged penetrating bed-sheet anxiety, which may have done more damage to your id than you realize.

Barnard groups are not the sole keepers of bizarre, misplaced anxieties. Equally fanatical and overly passionate messages still litter every page of the official so-called “Columbia” groups, which seem to include Barnard students in some years but not in others. Columbia 2012 had a lovely thread entitled “XXX Sex XXX”. One post pityingly emphasizes the eighteen-year-old virgin’s fantasy of a dorm packed with 500 other fervent youths. Unfortunately, the lusty kid’s dream was crushed as his invitation to orgy was quickly turned into a lengthy debate about the Gardasil vaccine. Even the many Twilight threads inspired sophisticated vampiric debates and a succinct history of the relationship between British and American accents.

In addition to copulation, many people took to the groups to avoid the horror of random roommate pairing. Hopeful students created cohabitation criteria threads, in the hopes that the Internet would facilitate the finding of a soul mate. Unfortunately, Facebook did not always prove to be the best matchmaker. Many students who vowed to be best friends forever recount violent screaming matches two days into NSOP.

There were, of course, the pretentious threads, nearly unbearable to read in hindsight. In the “I turned down \_\_\_\_\_ for Columbia” thread, commenters left long lists of schools they were accepted to along with the merit-



based scholarships that each of those schools were offering them. Another common breed might be dubbed the “sooo ivy league” comments, appearing in response to questions like “Who Wants To Start A Cigar Club (On Campus)” and “I only picked this Ivy because the colors are better than the others.”

We cringe to click through their discourses today, but what our class groups lacked in maturity, they more than made up for with encouraging commiseration, easing the transition from high school to college with the proof that everyone else was nervous, horny, and little bit conceited too. Reflection on these unbelievably public diaries of Columbia University’s collective conscious serves to remind us that our lofty aspirations are not all that bring us together, and that our baser, more humble instincts – to get drunk, to get laid, and simply to be well-liked – are common to us all. ♦

**15% OFF!** ANY MEAL ANYTIME! (WITH COUPON)

**NEW YORK CITY**  
**Big Daddy's**  
 BURGERS · SHAKES · TOTS  
 DUKESNYC.COM

**OPEN 24 HOURS!**  
 FRIDAY AND SATURDAY

<b>UPPER WEST SIDE</b> 2454 Broadway (Corner of 91st) 212-677-2004	<b>GRAMERCY PARK</b> 239 Park Ave. South (Btw 19th & 20th) 212-477-1500	<b>UPPER EAST SIDE</b> 1596 Second Ave. (Corner of 83rd) 212-717-2020
---	--	--

Not valid with pick up or delivery. Not valid with any other promotion. No cash value. Not valid on tax and tip.

**MATT FROM VERMONT**  
SPORTSMAN / ADVENTURER

**SIRIS**  
PROFESSIONAL GENTLEMAN OF LEISURE

**WE TAKE FLEX**

**1/2 PRICE FOOD EVERY MONDAY**

998 Amsterdam Avenue, between 109 & 110, NYC  
 212.316.2747 [www.SIPBAR.com](http://www.SIPBAR.com)

**SIP**  
 bar • lounge • coffeeshop

# Dissent Since '68

## Tales of forgotten Columbia protests

*Though many Columbia students take pride in the university's history of student activism, a strange amnesia often strikes our collective memory of the years following the 1968 protests. We cannot and will not forget the newsmaking violence of the spring of '68, but our glorification of "1968" is more than a fascination with those incidents. 1968 stands for a time when Columbia students were politically and socially opinionated, committed, and courageous. We forget, if we were ever told, that Columbia students have taken risks to make themselves heard dozens of times since 1968. They staged sit-ins, organized protests, disrupted university operations. And yes, they even took over buildings.*

*In the following pages, The Blue & White profiles four notable protests since 1968 and the students who led them. They have written the histories of student activism, outrage, and speech on campus for the past four decades, but as you turn these pages, dear readers, consider that the future is for you to write.*

### 1983 - APARTHEID DIVESTMENT

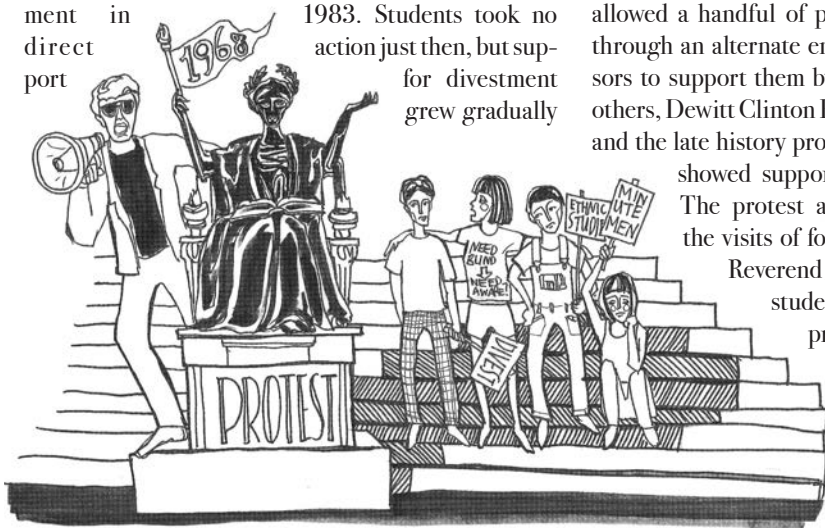
To force an end to South Africa's apartheid policies, the United Nations recommended throughout the 1980s that all national governments divest (remove all ties and investments) from companies doing business in that country. Students across America urged their schools to divest as well, and soon protests were erupting on dozens of campuses. At Columbia, the issue came into the spotlight once the university trustees rejected a University Senate proposal for divestment in 1983. Students took no direct action just then, but support for divestment grew gradually

until, two years later, the students rose up in a collective action that the university could not ignore.

In late March 1985, seven students began a hunger strike to pressure the university to remove all financial ties to South Africa. The administration had already frozen its investments in all firms doing business there, but the protesters would only settle for full divestment—the withdrawal of all funds from any activity connected to South Africa or apartheid laws. Students first rallied on Low Plaza in April, 150 of them then marched to Hamilton, chained the doors, and blockaded the front entrance. The protesters allowed a handful of professors access to Hamilton through an alternate entrance, but urged the professors to support them by not holding classes. Among others, Dewitt Clinton Professor of History Eric Foner and the late history professor James Shenton publicly showed support for the student movement.

The protest also gained momentum from the visits of folk singer Pete Seeger and the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who praised the students' "willingness to suffer for a principle."

The administration, hesitant to call the police, sought to resolve the conflict through legal action. They filed a case against the Hamilton Hall protesters in



the State Supreme Court in Manhattan for illegally occupying private property.

On April 22, the protesters declared their intention to abandon Hamilton, just hours before a court decision demanded their dispersal. The protest leadership pledged to continue their activism, but acknowledged that, as protester Laird Townsend told the *New York Times* on April 23, “it’s time to move on to new tactics.” Three days later, without fanfare or commotion, the protesters deserted Hamilton.

Despite the attention brought to apartheid and divestment by the April protests, the university failed to divest itself of \$40 million in contentious assets in the following months. The issue lay quiet until 200 protesters walked out of President Michael Sovern’s commencement address. They relocated to the steps of Hamilton to honor the fifteen students whose degrees had been withheld for their involvement in the occupation of Hamilton. Within six months the university’s trustees had announced a divestment plan that would rid Columbia’s portfolio of South African stocks over two years, ending the conflict and making Columbia the first Ivy League school to divest.

According to some, the protesters cannot claim full credit for the eventual capitulation of the university.



The trustees may have felt national pressure building as other universities, as well as state and municipal governments, divested fully in South Africa. Barnard History Professor Robert McCaughey would give the protests partial credit for divestment, partly, he says, because he questions their methods. “I don’t think [the protesters] really galvanized the sort of following they wanted,” and although they may not have helped the university divest as much as they clearly hoped to, “I really don’t think they

hindered anything either.” Foner, however, maintains that “the university would certainly not have divested without the student activism [. . .] They weren’t moving toward divestment.”

Regardless of the direct impact of the demonstrations, they set a powerful precedent for student activism at Columbia. The university showed respect for

the students involved both by forgiving the second demonstration. But more importantly, the protesters saw their goals achieved and made a difference in the fight against apartheid.

—Brian Wagner

## 1992 - SAVING NEED BLIND

In the early months of 1992, Columbia faced an extreme budget crisis that severely jeopardized the university’s ability to provide financial aid to its students. \$1.75 million in the hole, by late Jan. the faculty Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid (CAFA) was considering cutting aid eligibility from 51% to 41% of students in the incoming class, as well as changing Columbia’s admission policy from “need-blind” to “need-aware.” Author and civil rights activist Bryonn Bain, CC ’95, was one of the students who would storm Low Library that February. In the May 2010, Bain told *The Blue & White* that the threat to need-blind admissions resonated with him personally as a student. “A big part of the reason that I went to Columbia was because it was one of the places that offered a prestigious education but where it didn’t matter if your parents were able to pay.”

To its credit, the Columbia College Student Council immediately started to organize students and voiced opposition to the cuts at faculty and administration meetings. Still, on February 2, University President Michael Sovern told the University Senate, “We are all committed to need-blind admissions, but there is some level we cannot go beyond.” CCSC refused to accept Sovern’s pessimism—according to *The Spectator*, they organized 300 students to rally on Low Steps the very next day.

But some, including Todd Chretien and Ben Jealous, both CC ’94, were unsatisfied with the rally’s impact and soon formed the Ad-Hoc Coalition Against the Cuts as a more radical alternative to CCSC. At the time, Chretien told *Spec* that AHCAC’s goal was “to give the faculty a bit of spine against Sovern.” After a proposal to lower incoming class size in the face of budget cuts proved too divisive, the Coalition resolved to advocate for need-blind admission alone. They forwarded messages through ROLM phones—still used regularly in the pre-Facebook days of yore—to spread word of a second protest and planned to storm Low Library on February 11, 1992.

What was meant to be a peaceful demonstration escalated when Noah Potter, CC ’95, clambered onto

a ledge of Low Library and into a room near where a faculty meeting was taking place. After Public Safety removed Potter, over 200 students followed his example, entering and occupying room 211. They issued three demands: that Potter be released by Public Safety; that they be allowed into the faculty meeting where the cuts were being considered; and that they not be punished for invading Low. Senior Vice President Joseph Mullinex told the protesters that if they abandoned their assault on Low, he would recommend leniency. Frustrated by their continuing exclusion, the students did exit Low, only to split into groups and use police barricades to block the five entrances to the building.

Public Safety officers' attempts to break the barricades resulted in scuffles and the eventual damage of the glass doors at Low's front entrance, cracked as students fought to keep guards and faculty locked inside. Jealous could be heard on a megaphone saying, "If you're not going to let us in, we're not going to let you out," although some crafty faculty escaped from Low through the tunnels. After just a few hours, though, the remaining faculty and administrators allowed five students into the meeting to voice their opinions, and agreed to delay the vote on need-blind admissions for another two weeks.

On February 21, the faculty committee submitted a new proposal; to maintain need-blind admissions and meet 100% of every student's demonstrated financial need, the undergraduate schools would accept an additional 60 students for the next academic year who could pay full tuition. On February 25, a unanimous vote by the faculty passed the proposal. Bain reflects, "[W]e managed to save the policy. The administration decided to change their minds after we got a lot of press, and the alumni heard about it and they spoke up." He and his fellow protesters remind us that "students have a real power that is often unrealized. Talk about issues, talk about things you want changed, and then go do something about it."

— *Conor Skelding*

## 1996 - FIGHT FOR ETHNIC STUDIES

In February 1996, administrators agreed to meet with students in a group called the Committee for Ethnic Studies and the Core Curriculum. Dissatisfied with the lack of progress after the meetings, four committee members, Marcel Agueros, CC '96, Michael Maldonado, CC '96, Heather Starr, BC '96, and

Joaquim Ochoa, a Teachers College first-year student, began a hunger strike on April 1. They promised to ingest nothing but electrolyte-enriched water and live in a tent pitched on South Lawn until the administration met their demands. Their hunger strike would last for 15 days.

The strikers demanded the creation of an ethnic studies department to house Latino/a, Asian American, and Native American studies, and an increase in minority professor appointments across the board. They considered an autonomous department crucial, since only departments have the power to hire tenure-track faculty, secure and spend their own budgets, and shape their own curricula. According to an advertisement placed in the *Spectator* by the



Committee, "Ethnic Studies exposes and interrogates the formation and relationships among central core disciplinary concepts of: race, ethnicity, and institutionalized racism: the intersections of race, class, and gender: and internal colonialism."

Columbia students were not alone. The mid '90s saw a surge in demand for ethnic studies programs, beginning with a 1993 hunger strike at the University of California, Los Angeles. Columbia's protesters received letters of support from students at Brown, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, while students from City College joined in Columbia's demonstrations.

Two days later, approximately 200 students and community members rallied at the sundial in solidarity with the hunger strikers. Although Starr was unable to continue due to health concerns, the remaining hunger strikers continued to fast until the protest's resolution.

Tensions mounted over the next few days until the protesters took over Low Library, resolving to stay put until the administration released a written statement affirming its support for ethnic studies. 125 students held Low through the night. The next morning occupants were given the opportunity to leave or face arrest. 21 students remained inside to be arrested

and handcuffed by New York City Police officers in riot gear.

On the afternoon of April 11, approximately 100 demonstrators entered Hamilton Hall for a sit-in that would last until the end of the hunger strike. They rejected the administration's first offer to appoint a few more faculty positions in Asian American and Latino/a studies, but after consulting with Foner; Manning Marable, Director of the Institute for Research for African-American Studies; and Robert O'Meally, Zora Neale Hurston Professor of English and Comparative Literature, yielded to an amended proposal. The new agreement would create a faculty committee to "facilitate the development of research, scholarship, and curricula" in Asian American and Latino/a studies and help to establish an "institutional and intellectual framework for programs in ethnic studies at Columbia."

A few days later, the hunger strikers disbanded, and students marched out of Hamilton, chanting "the students united, have not been defeated." The original demands of the protesters, however, had not been met. The proposed faculty committee, headed by Marable, identified an interdisciplinary center as the best institutional form for ethnic studies at Columbia. In 1999, the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race (CSER) opened its doors. It currently houses Asian American, Latino/a, and Native American studies, but it is not a department—its organizational structure is a compromise. The mission of the center has also strayed from the Committee for Ethnic Studies' original goals. "There was a chance that it [the protest] could have succeeded. It could have, but it did not," said Gary Okihiro, founding director of CSER and current SIPA professor. "The center has changed now. It's no longer ethnic studies." Instead, he said, "the study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity" of various peoples is the center's focus, which "is not a discipline."

— Grant D'Avino

## 2006 - AGAINST THE MINUTEMEN

The grainy Columbia Television footage of a packed Roone Arledge Auditorium from Oct. 4, 2006, opens with Jim Gilchrist, founder of the vigilante border patrol group Minutemen, railing against the "two thousand Mexicans on the border." Students are jeering, but for the most part remain in their seats. Then, without warning, the audience erupts

into cheers and the camera pans away from Gilchrist, revealing a group of white-shirted protesters who have climbed onto the stage and unfurled a banner reading "No Student Is Illegal" in English, Spanish, and Arabic. Gilchrist retreats from the microphone as his supporters rush to his defence, trying to wrestle away the banner from the protesters. Students later claimed that violence ensued at the hands of Gilchrist's posse. That assertion was highly contested, and the footage is too muddled to confirm exactly what happened during the brawl on stage. The confusion and violent tug-of-war over the banner lasted only a few minutes before Public Safety intervened.

A few days after the protest, President Bollinger sent an email to the student body expressing his horror that Gilchrist's free speech could be disrupted at Columbia, which "has always been, and will always be, a place where students and faculty engage directly with important public issues." Fox News pundit Bill O'Reilly took a very different view. "Okay, no spin: Columbia University is a disgrace," he declared on *The O'Reilly Factor*, the night after the protest. "It is a place of indoctrination," he continued, "let us call it the University of Havana-North." The president of the College Republicans, Chris Kulawik, CC '07, who had personally invited Gilchrist to speak, agreed. He appeared as a guest on O'Reilly's show and admitted he felt "ashamed to go to Columbia."

Columbia was plunged into the 24-hour news cycle. Papers from coast to coast rushed to print editorials portraying the university as a bastion of radicalism, Mayor Michael Bloomberg publicly condemned Bollinger for the protest, even *The Daily Show* ran a segment. Lydia DePillis, CC '09, the editor of *Bwog* at the time of the protests, now believes the sensationalist coverage was inevitable. "Just like the subsequent hunger strike and recent drug bust, the outside media is fascinated by what crazy things Columbia kids do, and mostly just overplays their importance." The students, for their part, reacted to the biased media coverage in the





way they knew best, creating a mock Facebook group and T-shirts for “University of Havana-North Fascist Liberal Anarchists.”

Not all students were content to chuckle and brush off the coverage. Avi Zenilman, CC '07, then editor-in-chief of *The Blue & White*, accepted an invitation to a televised debate with Kulawik and O'Reilly regarding the nature of political activism at Columbia. Zenilman subsequently explained his decision to appear on The O'Reilly Factor on Bwog. “I think it was necessary that SOMEONE from Columbia other than Chris [Kulawik] go on Fox News, if only because I think the characterization that Columbia is ‘out of control’ is simply untrue.” Unfortunately, he was shouted down

by O'Reilly, who seemed upset that Bollinger refused to come on his program.

Eventually, the media lost interest in the story, but the protest did have some lasting effects on campus. Karina Garcia, CC '07, who held the banner during the protests, went on to found Lucha (Spanish for “struggle”), an activist organization devoted to social justice, before embarking on a short speaking tour. Paco Martin Del Campo, CC '11, a former member of Lucha’s executive board, decided to apply to Columbia after Garcia spoke at his high school. He and other Lucha members believe the protesters in 2006 were in the right. “The Minutemen tried to legitimize their racist organization by coming to Columbia, and we needed to challenge that, to shut them down,” explains Cara Buchanan, CC '11, another former member of the Lucha executive board. “Why are Columbians so ashamed of their activist past?” The group has been very outspoken against the ROTC’s return to Columbia during the heated debate of recent months. In some corners, it seems, the fight to define Columbia’s identity in the aftermath of the Minutemen protests isn’t over.

—Peter Sterne

(212) 749-5554  
 MON - SAT 10AM TO 8PM  
 SUNDAY 11AM TO 6PM  
 FRIDAY CLOSED 1:30-2:30



**JACK'S ART GALLERY**  
 CUSTOM FRAMING • CUSTOM MIRRORS  
 CORPORATE ACCOUNTS WELCOME  
 ONE HOUR FRAMING AVAILABLE

JOHN MAMOOR  
 Manager

2855 BROADWAY  
 Between 110th & 111th Streets  
 NEW YORK, NY 10025

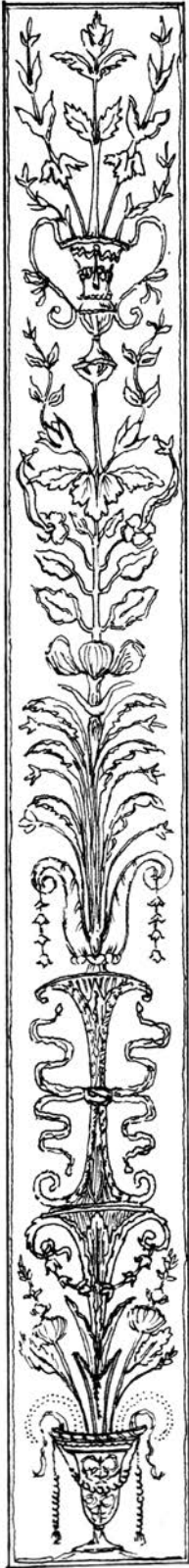
**UNIVERSITY HOUSEWARES & UNIVERSITY HARDWARE**

2901 - 2905 Broadway @ 113th Street  
**(212) 882-2798 (212) 662-2150**

**www.universityhousewares.com**

*“FOR ALL YOUR HARDWARE AND HOUSEWARE NEEDS”*





# MEASURE FOR MEASURE

---

## WHAT THE DEAF HEAR WHEN THEY SLEEP

Keven told her they  
couldn't be  
sweet girl she was and took  
to the bottle

Child, revisit  
the well-tempered clavier  
spill forth your bach-ing  
and your radio

head down, sound out  
vowels like bells  
shivering silver, oh pirates  
oh shore, the sea melts  
with sounds  
feel its crest, its pull and tide  
and the quiet

Lift your bowed face and forget  
the bromiders and  
doctors who croon so swilly  
even you know  
it's not just  
the world is but a murmur of the heart

God showed his hences the  
bible, and they laughed

and one ribbed him  
saying, what a jest  
is this

but what did they mean

is it not as though to say  
do not  
underestimate the deleterious effects  
of starving yourself

Please pick up, the dark bottles  
will last until May  
and we can take them in moderation  
one a day  
before that time

oh sweep and dust yourself off  
not for your country who is tied  
in her red and blue swaddlingbands

Hands clasp about your throat  
and this is not to say  
it was safe  
or even clean

God surely wasn't joking when he stole  
from your purity a ghost

— *Tucker Kuman*

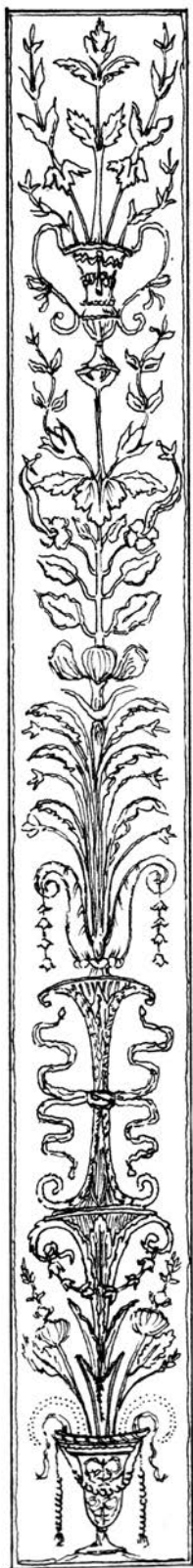
# MEASURE FOR MEASURE

---

## FATHER'S HANDS

There, over by the twisted tree roots clutching the stony soil, over there, I said, when we were children and had come to the cratered cliffs of Normandy. Don't you remember Father lingering, malingering near the tree? Don't you remember him performing the Posture of History: windbreaker-clad arms folded, aquiline nose pointed towards the sea? Remember, I said, we were in Normandy, where father remembered remembering flashing on a screen...a lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France...years ago...the air dense with smoke and the cries of men, and the air filled with the crack of rifle fire and the roar of cannons. That Normandy. Remember what we inherited that day. Father gestured towards the sea grasping at empty handfuls of air, his hands spreading across the landscape coming together and apart, and us watching a story play out in the molecules between his hands. In between his hands, we think we remember history sculling across the steely seas. Lonely and windswept, approaching the narrow, white pebbled paths that serpentine about the holes and slabs of concrete worn by rubber-soled boots. The concrete dens, those cinderblock dugouts dappled in red rust, the tinted shade of an apple core. Remember your apple cores left on the wooden kitchen table, the sticky rings left behind. And the shrapnel scattering, the transmuting landscape, his hands folding together and apart, his hands cracked and fingertips callused like a cellists'. The land rolled outward from them, descending into a hundred-foot cliff bowing to the sea. And across the cliff, remember the quiet, empty craters. We disappeared down into those pits. Danced around a stump. Balanced one-legged upon a heap of stony rubbish. Remember the bones stripped of their meat and replaced with flowers. Remember the grass growing and littering it, transparent cicada shells and dead, perfect iridescent-green flies crunching under our tennis shoes. Remember us eating toast at the kitchen table, picking up the crumbs with our fingertips. We thought about the red ants that streamed about the blades and the grubs and worms that lived amongst the goldenrod and milkweed roots. And there, remember observing the scattered bird feathers. Remember how Father approached, his hands dancing, folding together and apart like bird wings. Remember the aesthetics of remembering. Now I think we remembered hundreds of elephants. Elephants lumbering there from far away, to come to sleep on the cliff tops of Normandy. The tired beasts circling about once and settling down into the dead dirt, wrapping their trunks about themselves to fall asleep. They sunk deeper and deeper into the ground, dimpling it in the shape of their round bodies until it surrounded them like a womb. Snow fell and covered their dosing bellies and settled into their cracked skin, so everything was soft and smooth and wild flowers unfolded and the long strands of grass slid out through the dirt year after year. Remember father crouching, legs spread apart, and us seeing the beasts rising and leaving their slumber, leaving hundreds of hollow impressions from where they had slept. Those were the holes we crawled down. Don't you remember saying, an elephant never forgets.

—Noelle Bodick





## CAMPUS GOSSIP

I LIKE MY COFFEE LIKE I LIKE MY BOYFRIENDS:  
2.50 + TIPS

Two girls sitting in NoCo have just paid for coffee. One's phone buzzes (Joe's new card swipe system texts the receipt to your phone):

"Ooh is that from him?"

"No, it's from Joe, my other boyfriend."



GRAND THEFT SHOPPING CART

Girl talking to boy about her project for a game programming class:

"My group really wanted to do a video game about homeless people, like a fighting game. You complete missions, stay alive, or get addicted to heroin or go into the shelter, but then you can become part of a homeless gang and get so rich that they won't let you go back into the shelter."

"That ... sounds really ... exploitative, or offensive or something."

"Well I suggested it as a joke, but people really seemed to like it."



WE'RE NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Alan Brinkley in America Since 1945:

"Destroying communities is something I know a lot about, being Provost for 7 years."

Student:

"Were you discontented and disillusioned growing up?"



PAGING CHRIS HANSEN

Guy running down the street clutching a power cord: "I have inappropriate things on my laptop, fuck!"



"So my friend's husband just made a twitter for their baby..."



MOMMY DEAREST

Woman rambling on a cell phone outside of Havermeyer:

"Mommy has some big problems, and if you can't be sympathetic to them then just stand out of the way"



A GREAT OPPBROTUNITY AT THE IFC MEETING:

Fratstar: "We're doing a charity dodgeball tournament between the frats. Anyone have any ideas which charity we should pick?"

Broseph: "Some sort of anti-drug coalition."

(Collective murmur of agreement and nodding follows.)



UNDERCOVER COCK

A student recently decided to end an evening of debauchery by bringing an off-duty police officer back to her dorm room. Upon waking, she discovered that he had confiscated her fake ID. This encounter was observed by her roommate, who was too intoxicated to realize she had walked in on their lovemaking and had fully disrobed in front of them before passing out in her own bed. The roommate, who covered under the covers the next morning until the gentleman caller left, calls the confiscation punishment for "fornication in the first degree."



FROSEX

Professor Kelley lecturing at Frontiers:

"This is as close as we get to sex in the morning."

Frog-copulation noises ensue.



"Ice cream... it's breast milk!"

# Staff Personals

---

Because even magazine writers need to find love.

## Seeking Men

LOLPussy: I can haz dick?!? (6080)

Jittery client looking to tunnel into your server. (1451)

Artist wants to spread her creative juices all over your canvas. (5553)

I'll swallow anything organic. (5233)

London native ready to influence your Strokes with her Kinks. (6317)

Always looking to recruit new staffs. (3025)

Do you want some candy? (3025)

Francophile wants more than Frenching. (4336)

Be my coxswain, and I'll stroke your boat. (5558)

Put your rabbit into my hat, and we can make some magic together. (5608)

Hey, actually, I'm all set. Great. Tanks! (6290)

Religion major seeks someone to uncover her mystery rites. (6411)

London export interested in trade negotiations. (3270)

I prefer "law stylist." 30 Rock enthusiast seeks one last college fling before professionalism sets in. (3223)

Don't miss my *Times* announcement! (6290)

Be my Chaplin, and I'll be your table dance. (6434)

Never schmaltzy, up for waltzing, so take her home to meet your Bubbe already. (6313)

Episodically erotic, unfailingly neurotic. (2491)

Sweater vest up! (4925)

Choli ke piche kya hai? Let me show you. (2051)

Ladyplayer seeks game, videogame. (4710)

Dinosaur lover searching for bone. (5482)

Electrical engineer wants to feel a spark with a boy who won't charge. (4981)

## Seeking Women

Forget Uncle Sam, I'll stand at attention for you. (GS Lounge)



Have me your way. (4417)

Boston native wants to put cream in your pie. (2270)

I've got a supply for your demand. (2710)

I just quit smoking! That's cool, right? (2710)

I just started smoking! That's cool, right? (2710)

Tall, dominant blonde seeks same. (6064)

Captain of dying industry seeks lounge chair covered in inky newsprint to fuck on. (4134)

Looking to split a *New Yorker* subscription, engage in dungeon play. (2682)

Latinist-cum-lover seeks classic Romance. (2866)

Small Asian male seeks small Asian female. (4222)

I'll open my source if you open yours. (7744)

Russian Lit major looking for someone to bring his Bronze Horseman to life. (6399)

Looking to embed your systems. (7066)

Young man with tremor promises perpetual good vibrations, no batteries required. (4620)

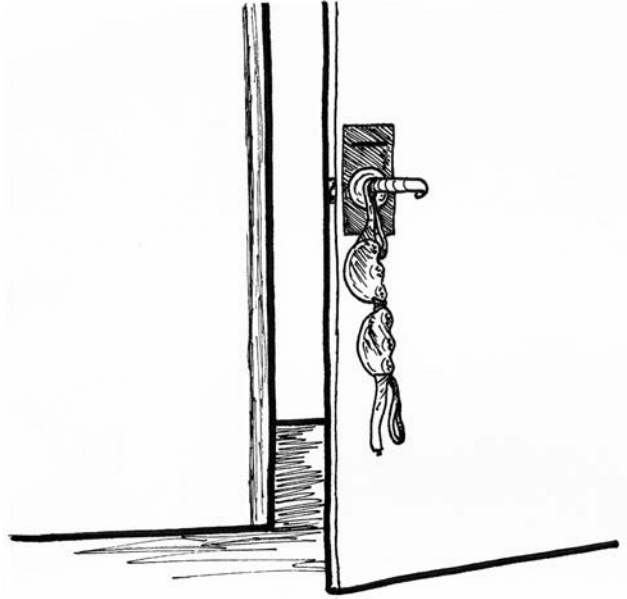
Art history major seeks phallic symbols in nearly everything. (4649)

Thick description wants some deep play. (4941)

Queen of ambiguous "friendships" seeks the Gayle King to her Oprah Winfrey. (5506)

## Whatever I Can Get

Me: rising editor-in-chief of prominent campus publication. You: first year stunned senseless by power. It's tradition! (6064)



Over the Sufi mysticism now. Let's try tantric sex. (612 Lewisohn)

Dirty dean seeks modern-day philosopher to Foucault her Kant. (Hamilton 208)

Full disclosure: I'm a furry. (Baker Field)

Feeder seeks feedee for V&T pizza. (2875 Broadway, Suite 303, New York, NY 10025)

Majestic predator wants to sweep you off your feet. (The Skies!)

Blessed MILF wants you to matriculate all over her. (Low Steps)

Got blight? Let me be your beacon. (Low 202)

Anti-revolutionary, uprisings encouraged. (exiled, somewhere in the South of France)

Exotic dancer will bear it all. (LeFrak Gym)

I want to make you bwet. (editors@bwog.com)

Strong, beautiful administrator seeks well-endowed philanthropist to enter her Vag. (109 Milbank)

My name's Feniosky. Isn't that hot? (510 Mudd)



## THE CONVERSATION

---

# Improv Right Here

---

*If you happened to be looking up while walking through Union Square one night in March, 2005, you might have witnessed a peculiar scene. The windows of the Whole Foods building on 14th Street were filled with people doing enthusiastic jumping jacks in perfect unison. A few of the jumpers also held poster board letters which, together, urged their audience to “Look Up More.”*

*Commanding the troops on the ground with hand-signals was Charlie Todd, the founder of Improv Everywhere. According to the group’s website, “Improv Everywhere causes scenes of chaos and joy in public places.” Improv Everywhere has orchestrated dozens of large-scale pranks throughout New York City, including the annual No Pants Subway Ride. Todd is also a performer at the Upright Citizen’s Brigade Theatre in Manhattan, and the author of *Causing a Scene*, a book about Improv Everywhere’s exploits. Blue & White senior editor Hannah Lepow sat down with Todd to learn about pranks from the master.*

*The Blue & White:* So your last mission featured a lone, clumsy ice skater stranded and falling down on the rink at Bryant Park when the ice was cleared, only to turn out to be a professional figure skater. How did you come up with that idea?

*Charlie Todd:* Two of the more senior members of Improv Everywhere—Matt Adams and Katie Sokoler, my main video person and my main photographer – they happened to be in Bryant Park and they saw something similar. They saw a guy kind of struggling to leave the ice when it was time for the Zamboni clearing. And I think he fell a couple times and a lot of people were watching and kind of laughing. And they suggested the idea to me of trying to find a professional skater who could be in that situation and then all of the sudden start skating really well.

*B&W:* It looked like the people who were watching really got a kick out of it, but there did seem to be some mixed reactions.

*CT:* Yeah I’ve kind of been surprised. A lot of the YouTube comments (which you can never take too much stock in because often it’s just 14-year-olds), but a lot of people had the reaction of being angry that people watching were laughing instead of helping. But I don’t think they understood the situation. They couldn’t just run out there and help him. There was a wall all around the ice.

*B&W:* What are the best and worst reactions you’ve gotten to a prank?

*CT:* Well the worst reaction we’ve gotten over the years is someone calling the police. We did a prank in the Best Buy on 6th Avenue and 23rd Street a few years back that had about a hundred people put on blue polo shirts and khaki pants and walk around the Best Buy and they decided to dial 911 as a response to that.

*B&W:* Because that’s an appropriate response...

*CT:* Yeah. So it hasn’t happened lately. We still do unauthorized projects pretty regularly but we

---

**"The goal is to make people laugh and to make people take a second to take a break from whatever their routine is."**

---

haven't had a response that extreme in a while. But in terms of the best response, really the goal is to make people laugh and to make people take a second to take a break from whatever their routine is, and hopefully laugh and smile and become a little bit more engaged with the world around them.

I'm as guilty as anyone else of tuning out my surroundings in New York. It's very easy to listen to your iPod and read something on your iPhone when you're riding the subway and ignore everyone else around you. And I think that's a perfectly acceptable way to deal with the commute. But it's nice sometimes to find a reason to have people take a break from that and experience something together.

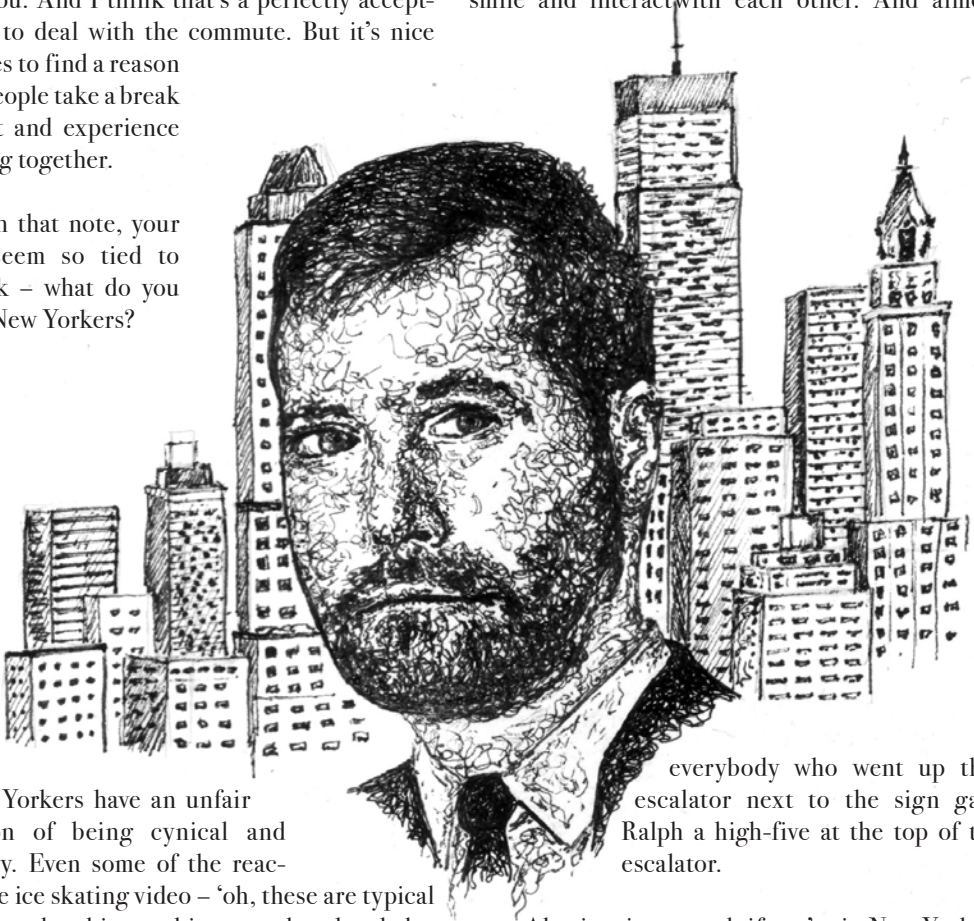
*B&W:* On that note, your pranks seem so tied to New York – what do you think of New Yorkers?

*CT:* New Yorkers have an unfair reputation of being cynical and unfriendly. Even some of the reaction to the ice skating video – ‘oh, these are typical New Yorkers laughing at this guy rather than helping him’ – I don't think that's accurate.

And also there's such a great percentage of New Yorkers who are not from New York. And I love native New Yorkers as well, but I think one of the things that's so special about New York City is that you have people from all walks of life, all over the country, all over the world, who have decided to move to New York and try to make it in whatever

their field is. And I think that gives the city such an exciting energy.

But the activities that we plan show the best side of New Yorkers. I think the high-five escalator project we did at the 53rd Street subway stop is a good example. One of the least exciting, most frustrating places you can be in New York – waiting in line to go up an escalator at 8:30 a.m. on a weekday morning in the middle of winter – we provided New Yorkers with an excuse to laugh and smile and interact with each other. And almost



everybody who went up that escalator next to the sign gave Ralph a high-five at the top of the escalator.

Also just in general, if you're in New York, if anything ever goes wrong, if anyone trips or falls, immediately everyone stops and checks if they're okay and calls an ambulance if necessary. I feel like New Yorkers are pretty willing to give directions. I think we're more helpful than perhaps the way we're portrayed in movies or in stereotypes of people who live elsewhere.

*B&W:* I hope so – that's nice to hear. Do you try

to act differently from a stereotypical New Yorker in your daily life? Do you ever just interact with people on the street, to get a sense of what's going on in the community?



*CT:* Just in my general life I'm pretty similar to everybody else. But when I'm presented with something that's unusual, or a bit of entertainment in an unexpected place, I do my best to pay attention and engage myself with it. Even if it's just someone coming on to a subway car with a guitar. I tend to press pause on my iPod and at least listen. I think it's important to be aware of your surroundings and the possibility of cre-

ativity happening around you.

*B&W:* Do you consider yourself funny?

*CT:* Yeah! I consider myself to be a funny person. I perform improv comedy at the Upright Citizens Brigade theater and have a show there every week. Improv Everywhere is primarily, in my eyes at least, a comedy group. It was started by comedians. And my interest in doing things is in doing things that are funny. There may be all sorts of other things going on in a prank, but I generally won't do something unless it's funny in some way.

*B&W:* Did you pull pranks when you were a kid?

*CT:* I did, yeah. My mom and dad always made April Fools' Day a big deal for my sister and I, so I grew up with an interest in pranks. I definitely pulled pranks with my school friends, and a lot of pranks on college roommates and stuff like that. But it

wasn't really until I moved to New York and saw the potential of the anonymity of New York and the great public spaces that I got inspired to do any organized pranks.

*B&W:* Aside from your parents emphasizing April Fools' Day, what are your inspirations?

*CT:* I was really inspired by a book I read in college about Andy Kaufman called *Andy Kaufman Revealed!* by his writing partner Bob Zmuda. It had a lot of descriptions of Andy and Bob together doing impromptu performances in public places. A lot of them were sort of argument-based, where they would get into a fake fight in a diner by the side of the road. So, stylistically a little different from what Improv Everywhere does, but in terms of technique very similar.

*B&W:* You've talked about doing things just to get a laugh. Are you trying to do more than that? Are you trying to start a movement?

*CT:* Well I wasn't trying to start a movement and then I think I inadvertently did.

*B&W:* That's how the best movements are started, right?

*CT:* Yeah, and I think that's great. I never really intended...I mean, I was very surprised when I started getting emails from people in other cities saying, 'I love what you're doing, can I do it here?' And while we don't have official branches or chapters of Improv Everywhere, we've encouraged people who want to try out their ideas or do similar things to absolutely go for it. We do some events – our No Pants Subway Ride is an example of an annual event that we do where we encourage people in other cities to organize their own. This year about 50 cities around the world did.

In terms of a larger message, I think the inherent message is that creativity in public spaces is a good, positive thing that should be encouraged, as long as it's not disruptive or affecting people in a negative way. Also, it should be allowed to happen freely, without permits or bureaucracy.

*B&W:* Off of the YouTube comments you were men-



tioning earlier, has social networking affected your missions or how Improv Everywhere works?

*CT:* I think primarily social media has served as a great way for us to distribute the documentation of our events and to spread the word whenever we have a new project and a new video. Using Twitter and our Facebook page and YouTube of course, we're able to very quickly spread the word of a new project.

In terms of the projects themselves, we still primarily recruit participants for our events by email, and quite a lot of them tend to be secret and covert, and we can't announce ahead of time publicly on Facebook or Twitter exactly where we're going to be and what we're going to be doing. But for some of the open-to-the-public annual events, like the No Pants Subway Ride, we definitely create a Facebook event. And this year we had 10,000 RSVPs on Facebook. Only 3,500 showed up, which is pretty interesting. And actually it's kind of good. I don't really want 10,000 people to show up.

*B&W:* Yeah, that might bring up the police again... So you're saying social networking doesn't ruin the spontaneity or the surprise of the moment?

*CT:* There can be concern of news of an action getting out before we want it to, due to social media. For example, last spring we did a project called the Tourist Lane, where we used chalk and painted a line down 5th Avenue and stenciled signs that said "New Yorkers" and "Tourists" – giving tourists a walking lane and New Yorkers and fast walking lane. So we did that, and we were planning to release it about a month after we did it. We were editing the video and preparing it, and the chalk was still on the street for several days before it washed away. One person took a photograph of it on their iPhone and put it on Tumblr, and it just completely blew up from that one photograph. All these blogs were posting it, and then all of the sudden the mainstream media found out and there were

articles in the *Post* and the *Daily News* about it, and someone asked Mayor Bloomberg about it at a press conference, and the Department of Transportation found out about it and sent a crew to clean it up.

So all this happened before we had a chance to reveal it. We were sort of beaten to the punch by someone with an iPhone. But it ended up being fun because there was this mystery of who was this mystery artist who had done this. So we let a couple weeks go by and then we announced that it had been us.

But it can be challenging to do a very public stunt and not have the news of it leak out before you want it to.

---

"It's important to be aware of your surroundings and the possibility of creativity happening around you."

---

*B&W:* You've mentioned so many different types of technology – iPads, iPods, iPhones. Do you think people need more of an absurd public outlet – like your events provide – now that we live so much of our lives on the Internet and are constantly checking our phones or listening to music, or what have you?

*CT:* Yeah, I think so. I think one thing that's nice about Improv Everywhere is that while it primarily lives on the Web and is a website, it gives people ways to use social media and tools of the Internet to meet each other in real life and to go out and participate in something and to meet new people and interact with the real world. While so much of what we do is about organizing online and documenting online it's nice to have that real life component.

*B&W:* It seems like that's the message of what you've said in previous interviews is one of your favorite projects – "Look Up More" with people in the windows of the Whole Foods building in Union Square doing jumping jacks to the astonishment of the crowd below.

*CT:* Yeah, exactly. That's the point of our projects. To get people to look up more. ♦

# Take the G to the Red Hook

*The Blue & White docks in post-industrial Brooklyn*

BY MIKE YOUNG

Before it was extended to Church Avenue in December, the G line ended at Smith and 9th streets. Today's trains still emerge from a tunnel and rise quickly above Brooklyn. Looking north you see the Gowanus Canal, Park Slope, and downtown Brooklyn. Look south, and you'll see a small bit of city right between the subway's elevated tracks and the Gowanus expressway, which dwarfs the buildings below and conceals the neighborhood beyond it. Go that way.

"Take the IKEA shuttle! I could tell you how to walk there but you'd probably get lost," says a man outside the Smith and 9th station. Although the walk from the G isn't complicated, it can be eerie. Once you pass underneath the expressway, the city falls silent. Were it not for the handful of commercial vans and trucks parked on otherwise empty streets, Red Hook might appear altogether abandoned. Boards cover windows of brick warehouses and empty four-story homes. The piers are a 15-minute walk south of Smith and 9th. Just walk against the wind, or towards the mammoth grey cranes that bend toward the mouth of the Gowanus Canal and the Upper Bay. These piers have been responsible for the fate of Red Hook since the mid-19th century.

The construction of the piers in the 1840s attracted shipping to the area, and with it stable jobs and an influx in population. Though dockworkers were mostly Irish and Italian, Red Hook was also home to one of the first Puerto Rican neighborhoods in New York. The population of this city of longshoremen swelled enough to warrant federal funding to construct the Red Hook Houses. Finished in 1938, the development is one of

the largest public housing projects in New York.

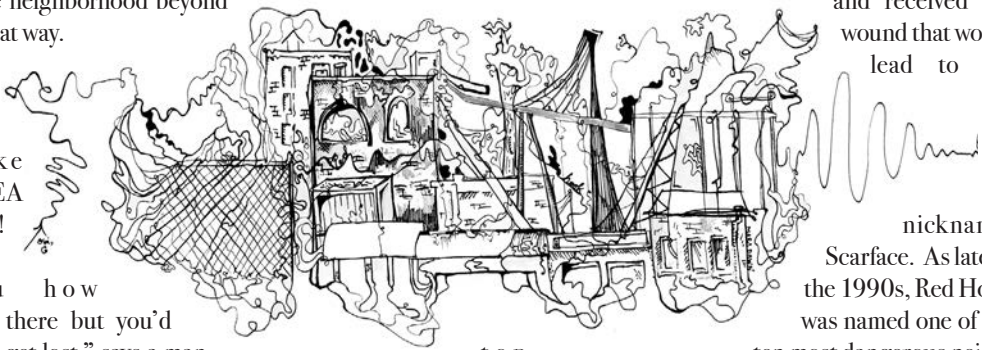
By the 1960s, the bulk of the shipping business in Brooklyn and Manhattan had moved to New Jersey. A sharp economic decline followed in Red Hook, and by the late 70s the neighborhood was known as a chancy, isolated corner of Brooklyn. Even before the downturn, Red Hook was known as a rough patch. It was there that, as a teenager, Al Capone was first arrested

and received the wound that would lead to his

nickname, Scarface. As late as the 1990s, Red Hook was named one of the

top ten most dangerous neighborhoods in the U.S. by *TIME* magazine, which also called it the "crack capital of America."

Over the past decade, Red Hook has made a slow comeback. Condos and other private residences have grown in number, sometimes the result of the rezoning of industrial lots. IKEA and Fairway have taken two of the piers, but Red Hook has more to offer than these signs of commercial revival. Red Hook has the only frontal view of the Statue of Liberty in New York City, best glimpsed from Louis J. Valentino Park, home of the Red Hook Waterfront Arts Festival every summer. A few blocks from IKEA, Rocky Sullivan's pub offers free Irish language lessons every Tuesday night, along with traditional music, live readings, and events including an upcoming street hockey tournament. When asked about the neighborhood's economic resurgence, Matthew, a Red Hook local and bartender at Rocky Sullivan's has mixed feelings about the changing neighborhood. "I think it's always going to be cut off... But it's good in a way. You're not going to find Starbucks or any of that down here." ♦





# DIGITALIA COLUMBIANA

---

*These excerpts were culled from documents left on Columbia's lab computers. We encourage our readers to submit their own digitalia finds to us, via email, at [editors@theblueandwhite.org](mailto:editors@theblueandwhite.org).*

Beside my high school graduation photograph  
was a picture of my grandparents when they were  
young. The photo was noticeably lacking in teeth.



The alluring rewards of Heaven may be the verdant  
gardens and the beautiful virgins



The Sonnet Then and Now: (Insert Something  
Clever Here)



if we were to find ourselves alone would your eyes  
undress me?



Gluttonous Gus

Frozen hope and microwaved dreams

Celebrity carnivore  
Tabloid herbivore

Slurping sugery succes  
Crunching till he crashes

Folds of fame  
Rolls of riches

Diabolical diet of delicious destruction



Responsibilities: internet research, indexing asy-  
lum application, reviewing documents



One becomes the whale enriching the image by  
physically and emotionally connecting the wearer  
with the shirt. The personal aspect complements  
the surrounding objects and thus completes the  
image.



Our solar oven will be quite inexpensive to make  
because we are using natural resources such as a  
dugout in the ground



So if meat was not an option before because it  
required too much energy compared to cooking  
corn, they will know be able to consider meat as an  
option. Currently their diet does not include much  
protein and our system will improve their access to  
sources of protein.



It made us see the truth the we already knew  
before. The are thousands of girls out there who  
become involved in sex work because of the mater-  
ial possessions it can provide them with. These  
girls are college-educated, middle-class daughter  
of doctors or lawyers who want to keep up with the  
society image of success. They go into sex work  
because they want the latest Louis Vuitton purse.



She became the scapegoat monster because she was  
different. We couldn't put her in a box.



He had fallen in love when she had removed her  
burqa



Is this British style to write behavior or is it behav-  
iour?



When he opens the door, the music pauses. For a  
brief second, we have a truly silent film. ♦



**VARELI**  
RESTAURANT BAR

Take a break,  
Mediterranean style.

Welcome to Vareli. A neighborhood restaurant that's also worth the trip from almost anywhere. Have a seat at our 20 foot polished copper bar and enjoy a beer, some wine or fine Mediterranean small plates and full meals. Or maybe you'd like to sample some of our extraordinary artisanal cheeses and charcuterie. Or head upstairs to our comfortable and casual dining. Whatever your mood, Chef Amitzur Mor and Sommelier Richard Bill are here to take very good care of you.

[www.varelinyc.com](http://www.varelinyc.com)  
**OPEN EVERYDAY FOR LUNCH & DINNER**  
2869 Broadway @ 111th Street 212.678.8585

# STUDY.EAT.SLEEP.

UNFORTUNATELY, WE CAN ONLY HELP YOU WITH ONE OF THEM.

If it's fresh, and in season, it's right here at Westside Market. From perfectly picked produce, to perfectly aged cheese, to perfectly prepared hot dishes, catering platters and so much more. That's what our customers have come to expect at any of our Westside Markets. And that's what we deliver (and we also really do deliver - right to your door). Add the most attentive and friendly customer service you could want, and it all adds up to West Side Market. So if you want great taste, look no further than West Side Market.



Get it @ theMarket®

77 Seventh Avenue @ 15th Street  
212.807.7771

2171 Broadway @ 77th Street  
212.595.2536

2840 Broadway @ 110th Street  
212.222.3367