

SUMMER 2017

# COLUMBIA

MAGAZINE

COLUMBIA MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2017



## TURNING THE PAGE

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OPENS MINDS BEHIND BARS



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NICK SOUSANIS

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## 21ST-CENTURY CAMPUS

I attended Columbia in the early-to-mid-seventies, when New York City was experiencing difficult times. I loved entering the Morningside campus. It was like stepping into another world — peaceful, noble, and filled with knowledge. To this day, I've never perceived it as closed off or gated. It's a traditional campus inspired by classical architecture in a vibrant urban setting.

I also like Renzo Piano's concept for the Manhattanville campus — open and accessible to everybody (“Manhattanville,” Spring 2017). But I do question whether its utopian openness might hit the hard wall of reality, given the intensely urban environment and the neighborhood. But these things can be addressed pragmatically with time.

Having two nearby campus locations, one traditional and one contemporary, could be the best of both worlds.

**James Bruno '74SIPA**  
Cazenovia, NY

Renzo Piano appears to envision his Manhattanville campus as a kind of public amusement park. Time will tell how that works out, but there's no question that his view of Morningside is a modernist's opinion and debatable accordingly.

If McKim's Morningside is “intimidating,” so was Penn Station. *Intriguing* is more like it. Exploring the campus as a New York City high-school kid, I remember thinking, “I've got to go here.”

**John F. G. Leighton '52CC**  
Redondo Beach, CA

Renzo Piano stresses that there “will be no clear boundary” between the University and the city. He reminds me of what Jane Jacobs wrote in her 1961 masterpiece *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*: “Columbia University in New York is taking a constructive step by planning sports facilities — for both the university and the neighborhood — in Morningside Park, which has been shunned and feared for decades.” The irony is

that the proposed gym, often described as having a second-class “backdoor” for the Harlem community, was the trigger for Columbia's 1968 rebellion. I hopefully note that Columbia is not repeating the errors of the 1960s.

**Henry W. Rosenberg '73CC**  
Northampton, MA

While Columbia's Morningside campus features some undeniably beautiful architecture, its insular, fortress-like design, devoid of interaction with the street, has always left the neighborhood with a windswept, vacant feel.

The new Manhattanville campus is certainly a step in the right direction: Renzo Piano's design features publicly accessible buildings on an open street grid. But missing from all the beautiful renderings (and explicitly promised in early conversations about the campus) is ground-floor commercial space. We see lobbies and quads that say “students welcome,” but nowhere are restaurants, cafés and shops that say “neighborhood residents welcome.”

# LETTERS

## ROARING NINETIES

Thank you for the lovely profile of the remarkable nonagenarian David Perlman. May I suggest you devote an equally inspiring article in each issue to others in this age bracket?

**Hagith Sivan '83GSAS**  
Philadelphia, PA



# LETTERS

This is a real shame. Ground-floor retail and dining would provide vibrancy and foot traffic at all hours of the day and night, long after labs and classrooms have emptied out. Just as important, these shops and cafés would provide employment opportunities for local residents. What good is a publicly accessible campus with no place for the public?

**Munier Salem '15GSAS**  
Brooklyn, NY

*The Manhattanville campus will offer retail, restaurants, and services for both the campus and the local community. For example, the Jerome L. Greene Science Center's ground-floor corridor will house a restaurant, a café, an indoor climbing facility, and a community wellness center. The education lab there is already open and giving local students hands-on experience in science. —Ed.*

A simple map of Morningside Heights and Manhattanville would have given your readers some notion of where the new buildings will fit into the current landscape. As it is, there are many fanciful drawings, with no demonstration of how and where they'll be secured to terra firma.

Separately, although past University presidents and most graduates don't donate enough money to get their names on buildings, was there any thought given to naming a new structure after McGill, Sovern, Bollinger, Eisenhower, or Obama? You're condemning twenty-first-century students to historical amnesia if they

don't know how Columbia became what it is today — between Nicholas Murray Butler and whoever gave the money for the new neuroscience center. Surely, Columbia has produced artists, scientists, politicians, leaders — graduates — whom you could exalt?

**Sarah White '71BC, '73JRN**  
Williamstown, MA

The Spring 2017 issue of *Columbia Magazine* proved to be the best in recent memory in content, style, and presentation. Certainly, the coverage of the Manhattanville project was a dominant factor; it was undoubtedly spectacular in concept and implementation.

The Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute, with its emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly piqued my interest. It reminded me of our Philosophy Hall seminars a half-dozen decades ago dealing with the “mind-body problem.” I hope the current Columbia philosophical fraternity will be welcome at Manhattanville to share in their own way.

**William J. Bonville '51GSAS**  
Grants Pass, OR

The new buildings that “adorn” our campus, as well as the proposed ones, are all neo-modern, ugly, and conceived without regard to the old-fashioned but beautiful and timeless existing campus. The interiors are cold, aseptic, and without any pretense of being warm and comfortable. Is this how we carry on the amazing legacy of Columbia University?

**Leo Glass '56CC**  
Monticello, NY

Given the Trump administration's proposed cutbacks in the funding of medical and energy research, it seems timely to ask what contingency plans Columbia has made to prevent the new Manhattanville campus from becoming a costly white elephant. If research faculty cannot secure grant money, who will occupy the new buildings and pay for their upkeep?

**Peter Feibelman '63CC**  
Albuquerque, NM

## PR STRATEGY

Your laudatory article about New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito (“Speaking Up,” Spring 2017) mentions that she advocated for Oscar



López Rivera, a Puerto Rican terrorist who attempted to bring about independence for Puerto Rico. The fact is that the US has offered independence to Puerto Rico several times, and the electorate has overwhelmingly rejected it — and with good reason. Becoming an independent nation would bring with it significant losses, not least of which would be the right to American citizenship, which allows Puerto Ricans to travel freely to the continental US and back, and work without visas, documents, or green cards. Mark-Viverito's career in New York would likely have been difficult, if not impossible, if she had had to deal with immigration issues.

**Robert Reimers '61SEAS**  
Gardner, KS

## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

CODE	SCHOOL	CODE	SCHOOL
BC	Barnard College	NRS	School of Nursing
BUS	Graduate School of Business	OPT	School of Optometry
CC	Columbia College	PH	Mailman School of Public Health
DM	College of Dental Medicine	PHRM	School of Pharmaceutical Sciences
GS	School of General Studies	PS	College of Physicians and Surgeons
GSAPP	Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation	SEAS	Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science
GSAS	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences	SIPA	School of International and Public Affairs
HON	(Honorary degree)	SOA	School of the Arts
JRN	Graduate School of Journalism	SPS	School of Professional Studies
JTS	Jewish Theological Seminary	SW	School of Social Work
KC	King's College	TC	Teachers College
LAW	School of Law	UTS	Union Theological Seminary
LS	School of Library Service		





## BANNER YEAR

I remembered the most important answers to your quiz about Columbia's first coed graduating class (Finals, Spring 2017) — that the 1987 valedictorian, salutatorian, and president were all women, and that the class was 45 percent women — because I've repeated these facts countless times to demonstrate Columbia's commitment to coed education after two hundred years of single-sex admissions, and to express admiration for the righteous ways women took their rightful place on campus.

I've also repeated the story of how someone apparently gained access to the roof of Butler Library and unfurled a banner to compete with the frieze of all-male writers (Herodotus, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, et al.) — this one of all-female writers (including, if memory serves, Sappho, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Brontë, and Dickinson). I believe the *Spectator* ran a photo. Brilliant!

**Clyde Moneyhun '76CC**  
Boise, ID

*For your enjoyment, we're reprinting the photo you remember, from September 1989, above. The banner was the handiwork of Laura Hotchkiss Brown '89GS. —Ed.*

## PUBLIC OPINION

Regarding the debate over where on the Morningside campus to install Henry Moore's abstract sculpture *Reclining Figure* ("Angle of Repose," College Walk, Spring 2017), good luck teaching students who think it improper to place a contemporary sculpture in a neoclassical setting. That's been done all over the world.

Also, be concerned about the willingness of students to sign a petition for almost anything. Here at Pitt-Johnstown, about a third of the student body signed a petition to defund the student newspaper because it publishes the campus crime report.

**George Fattman '64JRN**  
Johnstown, PA

## TALKING BLACK

As a Columbia medical student in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it drove me crazy when my Black patients would say, "Hey, doc, can I *aks* you a question?" Now, more than three decades later, I learn the reason in the spring issue of *Columbia Magazine*. In "English in Black and White" (Booktalk), linguist John McWhorter explains, "*Aks* and *ask* are both from

Britain. The fact that *ask* became standard is just an accident. Black people say *aks* because slaves worked on plantations with people who said *aks*, that's all." Better late than never, and thank you!

**Robert D. Wagman '81PS**  
Toronto, Ontario

As a veteran of Professor Emeritus Charles V. Hamilton's Black Political Science class and a former member of Manhattan Community Board 9, I applaud and support the reasoning you present in the Spring 2017 issue for capitalizing the letter "B" in "Black." Thank you for your journalistic courage and integrity.

P.S. The Spring 2017 issue is among the best — if not *the* best — I've read in the past forty years.

**Richard Sussman '76CC**  
Nyack, NY

## COED BEFORE COEDUCATION

It is worth noting that while the College graduated its first coeducational class only thirty years ago, the engineering school was coed long before (Finals, Spring 2017). Although not many women chose engineering in

the 1950s, there were some in each department. I believe I was the only woman graduating in electrical engineering in 1958.

**Suzanne Palocz '58SEAS**  
Cranbury, NJ

## TOUGH LOVE

Judging from the interview "Weighty Matters" (The Big Idea, Spring 2017), Michael Rosenbaum has made impressive contributions to obesity research and education. But I wonder if the good doctor may be allowing his benign nature to displace the sterner counsel that is needed to fight this hugely destructive disease. When asked "What would you tell a relative who needed to lose weight?" Rosenbaum answers that it's not the person's fault: being overweight is a biological disease, so by inference, blame is unwarranted.

I agree that it's desirable to avoid needlessly injuring an afflicted person's feelings, but I think we are still obliged to raise public awareness of unhealthy behavior, and to strongly urge individuals to take some responsibility for what they do to themselves and their kin. We ought not to be purely

understanding when we see (as I have) a mother feed her five-year-old Pop-Tarts and Coca-Cola for breakfast. We should not react only with tolerance when a young man gorges himself till his weight triples and he succumbs to diabetes and heart disease.



# LETTERS

What needs to be done? We've seen that, to some degree, health authorities and doctors have been effective in discouraging smoking. Surely they must do the same and more about "weighty matters." Perhaps Rosenbaum will agree that to mount an effective campaign against obesity, we need tough love as well as sympathy.

**Irwin Shishko '51GSAS**  
Delray Beach, FL

## TRUMP AND IMMIGRATION

While I'm not surprised that students and the liberal-left faculties of many otherwise learned universities took part in the attacks against President Donald Trump that followed his election and inauguration earlier this year, I was disappointed that *Columbia Magazine* gave prominent attention to these negative reactions by both the Speaker of the New York City Council and the president of the University. Both based their vitriolic reactions on the administration's tightened regulation of immigration. Both failed to recognize that entry to any country by those born or residing elsewhere is not a right but a privilege granted by the receiving nation.

Societies have always set standards upon which acceptance and recognition are based — standards relating to health, morality, financial self-support, intent, and, above all, security. One would not open the door to one's home without applying standards of acceptability. Columbia University would not admit a student who has

not met the academic, social, or moral standards it has established to protect both its reputation and the safety of its student body.

Columbia's president, its faculty, its student body, and the editors of its magazine should recognize the difference between rights and privileges.

**Avrum Hyman '54JRN**  
Bronx, NY

## BAGGAGE CHARGE

I applaud Steph Korey and Jen Rubio on their success with a clever idea to redesign luggage with the needs of modern travelers in mind, including a built-in phone charger ("From Bags to Riches," *Network*, Spring 2017). But clever and smart aren't the same thing. Even corporations with deep pockets have had serious problems with batteries. If I were an airline or the National Transportation Safety Board, I would look very carefully at the safety of high-capacity batteries in luggage.

On another topic, B-school teaches us a lot about the bottom line and little about social responsibility. Why did Korey and Rubio immediately

run to Asia for design and manufacturing? Was there any effort to find those services right here in the USA?

**Roger Rhodes '96BUS**  
New York, NY

Kudos for Steph Korey's success with Away bags. I am wondering, though, if the built-in battery on the carry-on models creates an issue when there is no overhead space and the bag must go into the belly of the plane. Aren't lithium-ion batteries disallowed there?

**Bob Fately '82BUS**  
Las Cruces, MN

*The folks at Away tell us that their battery complies with all FAA, TSA, and DOT regulations. It can be carried on any flight and checked on any flight except those originating in Asia. Visit [www.awaytravel.com/battery](http://www.awaytravel.com/battery) for more information. — Ed.*

## LOST AT SEA

Thank you for the short piece on Chilean president Michelle Bachelet's visit to the *Marcus G. Langseth* research vessel ("Chilean president visits Columbia research ship," *Bulletin*, Spring 2017). In the inset photograph, however, you failed to recognize one of your own. Emilio Vera studied at what was then called the Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory, earning his PhD in 1989. Now an associate professor of geophysics at the University of Chile in Santiago, Vera worked with Columbia to conduct this scientific cruise.

**Juan M. Lorenzo '91GSAS**  
Baton Rouge, LA

## BINGE-WORTHY

*Columbia Magazine* has become a must-read end to end, with no skipping! Thank you for what has become an exciting and inspiring publication. It makes me proud to be an alumna. I am halfway through the Spring 2017 issue and had to get up to write this, to offer kudos to what I am sure is a very hardworking team.

**Christine Welker '89CC**  
Rhinebeck, NY

I just read the Spring 2017 issue and truly couldn't put it down — so many well-written and fascinating articles! Bravo for a job well done.

**Jennifer Lawson '74SOA**  
Washington, DC

## YOUR NAME IN LIGHTS

Alumni magazines inevitably highlight success and achievement, but why not also randomly pick out alums and do profiles of them? You may connect with a wider audience by showing alums who are just regular people who may have their own definitions of success and their own hopes, aspirations, fears, and failures, too.

**Sin Hang Lai '01GSAS**  
Norwalk, CT

## CORRECTION

*In the Finals quiz in the Spring 2017 issue, the correct answer to question eight, "Which team won the first women's Ivy championship for Columbia?" should have been the 1989 fencing team, not, as we wrote, the 2006 soccer team. We regret the error and encourage quiz-takers to give themselves the point.*

**QUESTIONS?  
COMMENTS?**

**WE WELCOME THEM ALL!**

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Letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.



*“It was important to us  
to see the effects of  
our giving now.”*

—JEFFREY '68SEAS  
AND LINDA FRANKLIN

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**MORE**  
POSSIBLE

## Combine current giving with will planning.

Jeff and Linda Franklin are on track to create up to **eight named scholarships** through their current giving to the Jeffrey and Linda Franklin Scholarship Fund. They plan to fully endow them all later with gifts through their wills. “We wanted be able to meet the students we are helping,” says Linda, “to see how Columbia is affecting their lives, and to know that we are making a difference.”

**What will you make possible?** Contact us at 800-338-3294 or [gift.planning@columbia.edu](mailto:gift.planning@columbia.edu) to learn more about giving through your will and other creative ways to support Columbia.



# COLLEGE WALK

NOTES FROM 116TH STREET AND BEYOND



## ROOM WITH A VIEW

The Wallach Art Gallery relocates to Manhattanville

First, there are the elevators. Like visual sorbet, their intense orange walls seem to cleanse the optical palate, so that when the doors open onto the sixth floor of the Lenfest Center for the Arts and visitors step into the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, their eyes are already primed to soak up the paintings, sculptures, and installations within. And yet the initial sensation of entering the 3,600-square-foot sunlit space is visceral as well as visual: a jolt of recognition that one is standing in an important new art venue in New York, and therefore the world.

Which is just what Deborah Cullen had hoped for. Five years ago, when Cullen was appointed director and chief curator of the Wallach Art Gallery, she was tasked with

moving the institution from its 2,300-square-foot windowless warren on the eighth floor of Schermerhorn Hall to a bigger, more accessible space in a brand-new location on West 125th Street in Manhattanville.

A self-described “art-history nerd,” Cullen, who spent fifteen years as the curator of El Museo del Barrio, had long been an admirer of the Wallach. Established in 1986 by Columbia’s Department of Art History and Archaeology, and known for its research-based programming, the gallery was a hidden jewel that deserved a more prominent setting.

For Cullen, overseeing this move was a dream assignment. The things she would be able to do — the spatial puzzles to solve, the boundaries to push! Here, too, was a chance to infuse the Wallach with the fresh blood of living

artists — including those from surrounding communities and the School of the Arts — and offer that vibrant bouquet to the public.

On April 22, when the Lenfest Center opened, Cullen welcomed visitors to the Wallach’s inaugural show: the annual MFA thesis exhibition for the School of the Arts’ visual-arts program. It was the first time that this showcase had been held on campus. (Schermerhorn was too small, so for years it was held at a space in Long Island City.) Throughout the day, hundreds of people poured across the public plaza, entered the building, and passed through the glass-enclosed lobby and into those orange elevators.

Inside the Wallach, the artwork hung, dangled, spread, rose from the wood floor, beckoned from around

TIM LEE



corners. People stared, cocked their heads, or stood with hands clasped in pensive attitudes. Some took pictures with their phones. And there was Deborah Cullen, chatting with artists and faculty and guests and photographers. She looked thoroughly excited and slightly overstimulated. "I feel like an anxious mother," she said with a laugh.

Cullen had mastered the boxlike space by shrewdly breaking it up with thick movable walls, creating a graceful layout with ample room for each student's work. "I try to give it some flow and sensibility," Cullen says. "It's sort of like figuring out a Rubik's Cube."

The Wallach will be open year-round, and Cullen wants the public, and especially the neighbors, to know that this is their gallery, too. "This seems like a wonderful time to be

thinking about broader community," Cullen says. "We need to let people know they're welcome: *Here we are. It's free. We want you here.*"

Community-building is part of the impetus behind the Wallach's next show, *Uptown*, which runs from June 2 to August 20. The exhibit features artists who live or work north of 99th Street. "I think it's really important for Columbia to be a good neighbor and put its money where its mouth is," says Cullen. "There's not a lot of overlap or cross-pollination between the neighborhoods of northern Manhattan." *Uptown* brings together artists from Harlem, Washington Heights, El Barrio, and elsewhere.

In assembling the artists, Cullen drew from her own knowledge and solicited more names from other local institutions: the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Hispanic Society of America, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. And as she met new artists, she asked *them* for recommendations. "Pretty soon I had a list of two hundred artists," says Cullen. She selected about twenty-five for *Uptown*.

Winnowing things down on the one hand, expanding them on the other: Cullen the scene-shifter, the space-shaper.

The space-*sharer*.

"People have been wandering into the lobby of Lenfest and saying, 'What is this?'" says Cullen. "That's a real benefit. We didn't have drive-by traffic in Schermerhorn. But here we will."

— Paul Hond

## THE SHORT LIST

**VISIT** A new exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art celebrates the 150th anniversary of **Frank Lloyd Wright's** birth. Organized by Columbia professor and MoMA curator Barry Bergdoll '77CC, '86GSAS and Avery Library. From June 12 to October 1. [moma.org](http://moma.org)

**WATCH** Academy Award-winning director **Kathryn Bigelow** '81SOA is releasing her latest film, ***Detroit***, which recounts a particularly violent incident from that city's 1967 race riot. In theaters August 4.

**CRUISE** The Columbia Alumni Association's **Alumni Travel Study Program** mixes learning and leisure at sea. Destinations include the South China Sea and the Chilean fjords of Patagonia. [alumni.columbia.edu/category/study-trip-type/cruise](http://alumni.columbia.edu/category/study-trip-type/cruise)



**TOUR** Take a guided historical and architectural tour of the Morningside campus, starting at **Low Library**. Weekday tours are held from June 1 to August 31. Register at [visitorscenter@columbia.edu](mailto:visitorscenter@columbia.edu)

**MEET UP** Columbia's virtual **Networking Hour** brings together alumni professionals across a range of industries. July 13 at 6:30 p.m. EDT. Register at [bit.ly/CAAnetworkinghour](http://bit.ly/CAAnetworkinghour)

**LOG ON** Exercise vigilance with Columbia's **Global Freedom of Expression** website, which tracks free-speech cases worldwide. [globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu](http://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu)



# DISTURBING THE PEACE

Standup comedians sit down for a conference



**S**o, a Muslim American comedian, an Asian-American comedian, and a Jewish American academic walk into a room . . .

Well, almost. Azhar Usman of Chicago and Jenny Yang of Los Angeles didn't walk into the room; they were projected onto a screen via Skype at the Kellogg Center in the International Affairs Building. There they joined educator Nancy Goldman '11TC

and moderator Wajahat Ali to discuss the role of humor in social justice, as part of Columbia's annual Sustaining Peace Forum, an all-day event cosponsored by centers at the Earth Institute, SIPA, Teachers College, and the business school.

Ali, a writer and lawyer, opened with a crack about Usman's tardiness ("This is Muslim Standard Time; stereotypes are being perpetuated as we speak")

before offering a dictionary definition of peace: "the freedom from disturbance; tranquility." Yet, he said, "the role of comedians is often to disturb, disrupt, be loud, agitate, and upset." Yang told the crowd that there "needs to be disruption and sometimes some unrest for peace to happen," and that challenging power through humor "makes us feel like we're less crazy. Someone has to say 'the emperor

has no clothes' or else we'll go insane."

Usman traced comedy's protest roots to the 1950s, when comics from minority backgrounds began confronting societal hypocrisies. "The great pioneers — Lenny Bruce, Dick Gregory — were basically a crew of Black American and Jewish American standup comedians," Usman said. "They were always agitating, always making audiences uncomfortable." They were also getting laughs — in effect, softening up a listener's defenses, allowing their ideas to seep through.

"Jokes create an opening," said Goldman, an adjunct assistant professor at Teachers College. "You're more open physically and cognitively when you hear a joke." Yang spoke of using humor "as a direct line to someone's emotions and thoughts."

Ali, the moderator, reflected on the shifting role of the comedian, from fool to social critic to, nowadays, arbiter of truth. Noting that millennials tend to get their news from late-night TV comedians, Ali asked if standup has a "moral responsibility." To which Usman, who wears a long beard and a skullcap (a basis for his riffs on his interesting experiences in airports), paraphrased Lenny Bruce: "The job of a comedian is to consistently produce laughter through telling jokes," he said. "That's the job description. If the comedian does that, he or she is a good comedian." But the comedian who raises moral awareness, he said, attains brilliance.

And then the talk turned, as it had to, to political

correctness. Ali observed that a heightened PC culture, especially on college campuses, makes many comedians “feel hamstrung from truly delivering the biting material that they believe is edgy and pushes things forward.”

Usman, who used to practice law, supports standards of etiquette that deter hateful or disrespectful speech. “But at the same time,” he said, standup is “all about free speech.” Yang, a former labor organizer, saves her barbs for those at the top. “When I tell a joke, I think about the consequences of my words,” she said. “There’s always a target in comedy. Who’s my target? I think about that and care about that.”

Traditionally, the target has been authority. “We inherited the history of the court jester,” said Goldman, and the idea that “the average citizen has the power to make fun of those in high office.” Comedians, she said, “are playing the role of the citizen criticizing the court.”

Though the job doesn’t get easier when the court itself lurches beyond satire.

“Steve Bannon,” said Usman, “is like a cartoon villain.”

“Do you think he twiddles his thumbs when no one’s watching?” said Ali.

“He’s more of the two-hands, fingers-together type,” says Yang, making a steeple gesture under her chin.

“Is Stephen Miller the cat stroker?” said Ali.

“Someone’s stroking the cat,” Yang said. “It’s probably Donald Trump.”

“Ba-dum ching,” said Ali.

— Paul Hond



## INTELLIGENT DESIGNS

The human brain becomes art on the wall

**B**rain Index, a twenty-four-foot-high digital art installation on the ground floor of the Jerome L. Greene Science Center, invites visitors to peer inside the brain and also to meet the neuroscientists who are working upstairs to unravel its complexities. Looped images of the brain are spliced between profiles of Zuckerman Institute researchers, and interactive panels guide viewers through each scientist’s area of expertise. “We’re trying to make the science in the building accessible and personal, and at the same time communicate how much we have yet to learn,” says Laura Kurgan ’88GSAPP, a Columbia architecture professor who spent three years working on the project with Mark Hansen, a Columbia journalism professor and data specialist. “The moving screens map the research taking place in the building and, like opening doors, invite the public to step in and explore.”



## No-Spin Zone

How to talk when we talk about science

**H**ow do you convince a skeptic that climate change is real? Or persuade a creationist that humans share a common ancestor with chimpanzees?

“What we try to do in this class,” said Claudia Dreifus, a veteran correspondent for the *New York Times*, “is teach scientists, or scientists-to-be, the basics of journalism, so that they can communicate their own science to the world.” But on this spring evening, the class, Writing About Global Science for the International Media, offered by the School of Professional Studies, had a twist: the lesson was how *not* to talk about science.

Dreifus’s guest was Cornelia Dean, the former science editor of the *Times*. Dean had just published a book, *Making Sense of Science: Separating Substance from Spin*, which seeks to help nonscientists evaluate scientific claims.

One sign of spin is a posture of certitude. “We can’t say in science that something is *true*,” Dean said. What we *can* say is that there is “no credible challenge” to a theory.

Dean suggested that people often misunderstand the scientific method. “If you take a chem lab or a physics lab in high school, you’re typically given ingredients and a set of instructions for your so-called experiment, whose outcome is known in advance,” said Dean. “Nothing could be more antithetical to the spirit of scientific inquiry.” Rather, science “is filled with blind alleys, bad ideas, failed projects. But we don’t describe it that way.”

As a result, many people see science as infallible, so that when new evidence comes along and shakes old assumptions — which is how science works — they can lose faith in the whole enterprise.

A student raised her hand. She had recently interviewed a climate scientist, who told her that there are people who, “no matter what you say, no matter how much you try to convince them otherwise,” won’t accept the evidence that the planet is warming. How, as a journalist, the student wanted to know, did Dean approach people like that?

“You’re not there to persuade people,” Dean said. “You’re there to give them information.”

Worth remembering for your next assignment — or family barbecue.

— Ian Scheffler '12CC

## COUNTING VAN DORENS

Past winners of the Mark Van Doren Award for Teaching raise their glasses to the profession

**O**ne after the next, the honored professors arrived at the landmarked building on West 57th Street. Inside, they entered a high-ceilinged room, which was preserved in a kind of mid-century bohemian-intellectual glory: Persian carpets, red walls with gold filigree, bookcases and paintings, busts and lamps, tall bay windows hand-painted with Russian folk dancers. In the midst, under the chandelier, stood Adam Van Doren '84CC, '90GSAPP. He was talking about his grandfather, Mark Van Doren '21GSAS, '60HON, the poet, critic, memoirist, editor, Great Books promulgator, Pulitzer Prize winner, and the embodiment of the Platonic ideal of a Columbia professor, which he was for thirty-nine years.

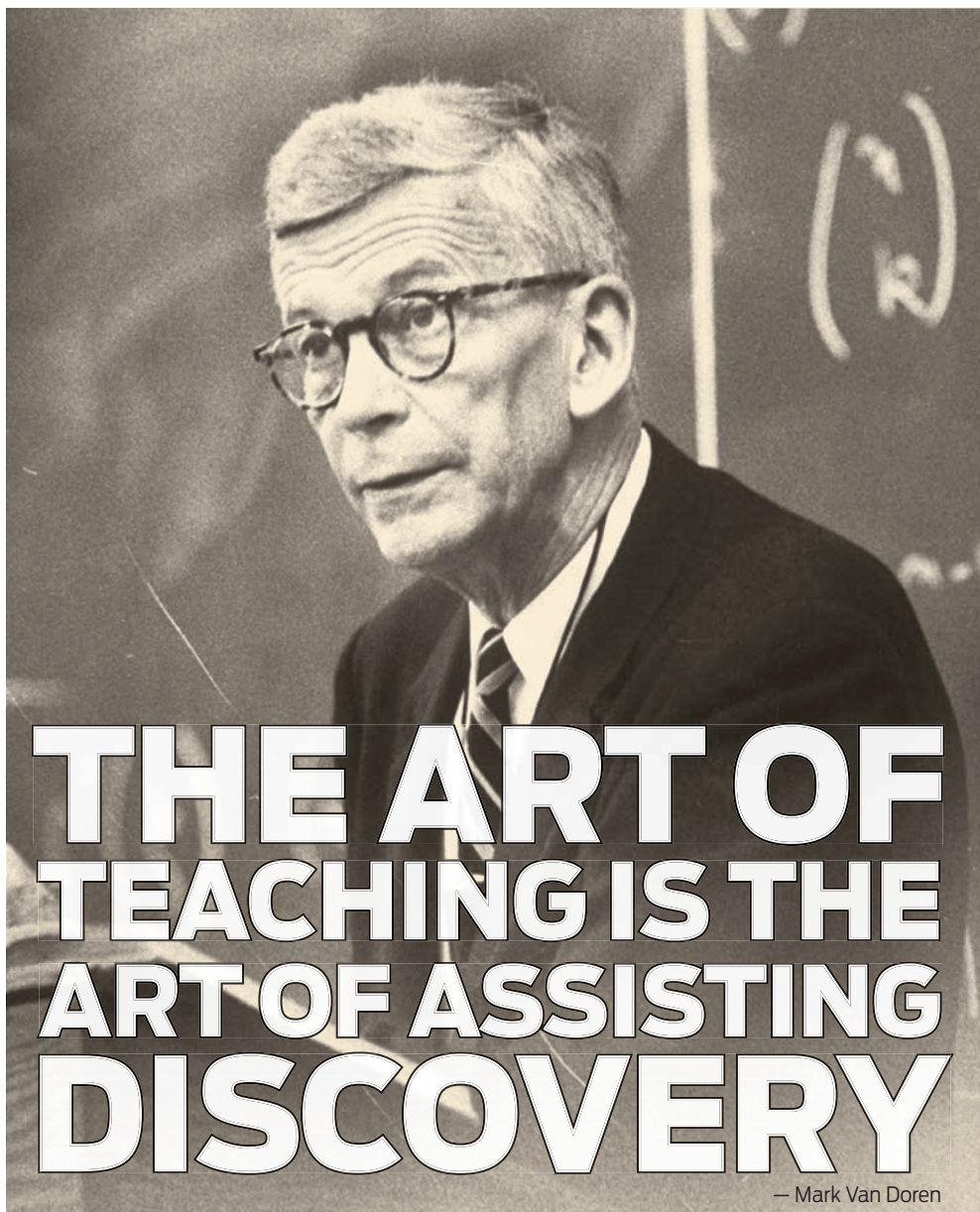
“I never saw my grandfather teach, but I heard enough to know that for him, connecting with students was a matter of choice,” said Adam, a painter and filmmaker who teaches at Yale. “Some professors could give two beanstalks about connecting; they just regurgitate information and write their books.”

For Mark Van Doren, the art of teaching was “the art of assisting discovery,” as he wrote in his 1943 book

*Liberal Education*. He would engage his Columbia College students as equals, with real inquisitiveness, wanting to learn along with them. Adam referred to *The Seven Storey Mountain*, the memoir by the Trappist monk Thomas Merton '38CC, '39GSAS, who devoted a long passage to his professor, writing of “Mark’s sober and sincere intellect, and his manner of dealing with his subject with perfect honesty and objectivity and without evasions.”

Near the wine-and-cheese table, past recipients of the Mark Van Doren Award for Teaching — which was established in 1962 and is conferred by students — chatted with members of the current awards committee, who would soon announce the 2017 winner, history professor Caterina Luigia Pizzigoni.

It was a hall-of-fame lineup of profs: Kenneth Jackson, Carol Gluck '77GSAS, Michael Rosenthal '67GSAS, Elizabeth Blackmar — thirteen in all. One waggish, sprightly eighty-five-year-old eminence — that would be Ted Tayler, famed professor of Shakespeare and Milton — was lamenting, with a twinkle, the widespread use these days, written and oral, of a certain four-letter word, which he enunciated delicately. He half blamed Allen Ginsberg '48CC.



— Mark Van Doren

Taylor, a perennial student favorite, came to Columbia in 1960, a year after Van Doren's retirement. Like Van Doren, he taught in Hamilton Hall for thirty-nine years. He hadn't personally known the professor, who died in 1972, and was surprised as anyone to learn that Van Doren had sprung from the dusty loam of rural Illinois, and not, as some guests speculated, from New York Dutch nobility.

After all, in the 1930s, the Van Dorens *were* the New York literary establishment. Mark's brother, Carl Van Doren 1911GSAS, was a literary critic and Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer; Carl's wife, Irita Bradford Van Doren, was the books editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*; Mark's wife, Dorothy Graffe Van Doren '18BC, was a novelist and, like several other Van Dorens, an editor

at the *Nation*. This explains Dorothy Parker's line about her attempts to cure her insomnia: "I have even tried counting Van Dorens."

Adam told of how Mark's students, after class, still under the spell of his teaching, would follow him across campus, into the subway, and up to his front door in the Village. "My grandfather called it 'the third thing,'" said Adam, describing the

essence of Mark's pedagogical method. "There's you, there's the teacher, and there's what happens in between." Adam understood why his grandfather was revered, and how he stayed friends with his students: Merton, Ginsberg, John Berryman '36CC, Alfred Kazin '38GSAS, Lionel Trilling '25CC, '38GSAS, Jack Kerouac '44CC, and others. "There's no generation gap when you're connected with ideas," Adam said.

As a student at Columbia himself, Adam was a regular at the Van Doren Award festivities. But it wasn't until five years ago, when he revisited the ceremony and met former Columbia College dean Austin Quigley, that he learned about the selection process. Adam had assumed that the awards committee got together to vote "on one sleepless forty-eight-hour weekend." But Quigley (who received the award in 2015) informed him that the students attend classes of prospective honorees and meet once a week over seven months to hash things out. Impressed and inspired, Adam decided to organize a gathering of the winners.

And here it was, a multi-generational get-together of practitioners and pupils, from the venerable Taylor to Adam's daughter, Abbott Van Doren, a Columbia sophomore.

Adam praised the professors and saved his last word for those who brought out the best in the best teachers.

"To the students who make this all possible," he said, glass in hand. "I salute you."

— Paul Hond



# SUPPER CLUB

*New York Times* food writer  
**Melissa Clark** '90BC, '94SOA  
invites everyone to the table

BY REBECCA SHAPIRO

It's a Tuesday morning at Brooklyn's Runner & Stone bakery, and Melissa Clark '90BC, '94SOA is in line, holding court.

A layer of fog hovers over the gritty Gowanus Canal nearby, but the bakery is airy and warm. Clark, like a cat, has found the sunniest table, and she's placed her order — a buckwheat baguette, extra butter, and a latte with plenty of sugar. Now she's chatting up the other customers, selling them on the surprisingly nutty texture of the buckwheat and the fact that the bakery uses rich European butter. She talks quickly and emphatically, and by the time the other customers have reached the cash register, they're transfixed by this preternaturally cheerful woman with the broad smile and the mane of red hair. Many abandon their original orders and decide to mimic Clark's.

"I can't seem to help myself," she says. "You'd think I was on the payroll."

In fact, Clark has nothing at stake. She just loves food, to the point of evangelism. And if there's a way to make a meal better — even an ordinary Tuesday breakfast — she wants to share it with the world.

Clark's new friends may not recognize her, but odds are they've made one of her recipes. She's written the weekly column A Good Appetite in the *New York Times's* dining section for more than a decade, and a search of *NYT Cooking*, the paper's digital culinary hub, finds nearly a thousand recipes attributed to her. She's also written or collaborated on a mind-boggling thirty-eight cookbooks. This spring, she released her latest — *Dinner: Changing the Game*, a collection of what *Bon Appétit* called "over 200 why-didn't-I-think-of-that recipes."

Clark is known for pairing basic, easily mastered cooking techniques with new and interesting ingredient combinations, giving home cooks







vastly more options. For example, *Dinner* includes eight different recipes for roast chicken: one with sherry vinegar and grapes; one with smoky paprika, crispy chickpeas, and kale; and so on. Once readers are comfortable roasting a chicken, they suddenly have eight dishes in their arsenal. Quick pizza dough (store-bought is also fine) gets topped with butternut squash, pecorino, and roasted lemons — a sophisticated alternative to tomato and mozzarella for the same amount of work.

One dinner game-changer, Clark says, is keeping a well-stocked pantry. She suggests, for example, that home cooks invest in a jar of harissa, a North African chili paste that she uses in a chicken dish with leeks and potatoes, a slow-roasted tuna with olives, and a spicy baked shrimp with eggplant and mint. Pomegranate molasses — a staple of Middle Eastern cuisine — finds its way into chicken breasts with walnut butter, roasted tofu and eggplant, and peachy pork with charred onion.

“People really get into a cooking rut, thinking that they can only make five or ten different recipes. There’s that beef thing they make. Or that chicken thing,” Clark says. “But my book has twenty-six chicken things. And most of them are riffs on the chicken thing you already know how to make.”

This is not to say that Clark expects, or even wants, people to follow her blindly. She loves it when people tell her not only that they’ve made her recipes, but how they’ve adapted them to their own palates. The recipes are meant to be jumping-off points, totally functional as written, but always open to what she calls, very technically, “futzing.”

“I see myself as a guide,” Clark says. “Everyone has a thing. Mine’s just always been food.”

Clark grew up in Ditmas Park, Brooklyn, in the seventies and eighties, in a house where meals were cherished and Julia Child’s *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was like a family Bible. Clark’s parents — both Columbia-trained psychiatrists — were enthusiastic home cooks who teamed up to host dinner parties nearly every weekend.

“They were constantly making fricasseed rabbit and pâtés,” she says. “I thought that was what everyone ate for dinner.”

Clark’s earliest memories are of being in the kitchen, helping her parents make bread or shape walnut-studded dough into cookies: “If there was a bowl to lick, I was ready to help.” Weekends were also for exploring, and the Clarks followed their stomachs. They went to the Lower East Side for bagels and lox at Russ and Daughters (still Clark’s go-to for smoked fish), to Sheepshead Bay for clams at Lundy’s, and to Chinatown for dim sum, where Clark honed her already adventurous palate: “I always went for the cart with the chicken feet. Eating them is a delicate process. I’m *really* good at it.”

But Clark’s real culinary education came in the summers, when her parents would shut their psychiatric practices for the month of August and take Clark and her sister to France. Long before Airbnb or even e-mail, they would arrange house swaps with other families.

“We’d exchange actual letters,” Clark says. “And then this French family would come to Brooklyn, which was not the most charming place in the world in the eighties. And we’d go to some magical little town in Provence. We got the better end of the deal.”

The Clarks visited their share of Michelin-starred restaurants, where Clark ate the classics: perfect omelets, delicate sole meunière, and towering soufflés. But it was the markets and farm stands that really made an impression. In France, there was no such thing as a weekly trip to the grocery store: people would buy fresh bread, cheese, and eggs every day. Instead of margarine, there were slabs of real butter softening on every shop counter. And there was an open-air market in the center of every town, with piles of tomatoes, eggplants, cherries, peaches, figs, and bunches of fragrant herbs.

“At that time, it was harder to find fresh vegetables in America,” she says. “Everything was canned or frozen. I was totally taken both by the produce and by the idea of seasonal eating.”

At age fourteen, Clark earned a place at the prestigious Stuyvesant High School,

where she studied with Frank McCourt, who eight years later would become famous for his memoir *Angela’s Ashes*. “He was the first person to tell me that I should be a writer,” Clark says.

After school and on the weekends, she worked at an ice-cream parlor called Peter’s, on Brooklyn’s Atlantic Avenue. When the owner decided to start serving brunch, he put Clark in charge. “Basically, he didn’t want to get up early on Sundays,” she says. “I got to make pastries and chicken-liver omelets. And I also got a feel for how a professional kitchen works.” Though she would spend a great deal of time in restaurant kitchens throughout her career, working as a brunch chef at seventeen was the first and last time she actually cooked in one.

Clark thought about going to culinary school, but instead followed McCourt’s advice and headed to Barnard, where she

**“I OWE A LOT OF MY EARLY SUCCESS TO JUST BLINDLY SAYING YES TO EVERYTHING.”**

studied English, then directly to Columbia for an MFA in writing.

To pay for school, Clark worked full-time at Columbia’s Institute for Research on Women and Gender, first as a secretary and then as a research assistant. Professors there encouraged Clark’s nascent interest in medieval history, and for a while, she thought she’d write feminist-tinged historical fiction, in the tradition of Antonia Fraser.

“But I kept getting distracted by food. It was my metaphor for everything. I could be writing about feudal rights in the Middle Ages and I’d spend half the time talking about what they were eating,” she says. “I once wrote an entire paper on bread and onions in *Don Quixote*.”

In 1993, Clark’s second year at Columbia, the MFA program offered its first



Melissa Clark  
with her husband,  
Daniel Gercke,  
and daughter,  
Dahlia.

food-writing class, taught by cookbook author and food historian Betty Fussell. Like M. F. K. Fisher (Clark's childhood idol) and Richard Olney, Fussell was a food-writing pioneer, and in her classroom Clark felt like she could see a future for herself. Clark also started studying with Priscilla Ferguson '67GSAS, a sociology professor who was researching the relationship between cuisine and national identity in France.

"Food writing was not taken seriously then. Aside from a few restaurant critics, it just wasn't a thing," Clark says. "I really didn't know before then that it was something you could do with your life."

Clark switched her focus to creative nonfiction, and for her thesis she decided to craft a portrait of three up-and-coming New York chefs. She spent a year watching them work, trying to capture their different cooking styles, as well as the personality traits that led a person to succeed (or not) in the intensity of a professional kitchen.

In her own very unprofessional student-apartment kitchen, Clark was launching a business of her own. Word had gotten around that she liked to cook, so she started catering events at the Insti-

tute for Research on Women and Gender. Soon, faculty members there and at the School of Social Work, where she also had a part-time job, were hiring her for personal functions.

"It was either me or the deli next door, and I was cheaper," Clark says. "I did a lot of wine-and-cheese receptions, which were not so glamorous. But I was always experimenting. I discovered the Union Square Greenmarket during those years, and Kalustyan's for spices. I started playing around with flavors."

Clark graduated, moved downtown, and tried to cobble together enough food-related gigs to pay the rent: she continued to cater, she wrote restaurant blurbs for *Time Out New York* ("the true dream for any New York twentysomething — going out to eat and getting paid for it"), and she worked as a coat-check girl at An American Place, where she sneaked into the kitchen as often as possible to watch the chefs work. Then a small book publisher approached her about developing recipes for a new kitchen appliance: the bread machine.

"I had six weeks to come up with one hundred recipes. And of course I'd never even seen a bread machine," Clark says.

She had the publisher send her four machines, which she kept running twenty-four hours a day, waking up at four in the morning to feed them new batches of dough. Clark loved the combination of science and creativity in recipe development. She felt as if she'd found her niche.

"I owe a lot of my early success to just blindly saying yes to everything," she says. "Call it confidence or call it stupidity."

Clark's big breaks — the ones that have made her a household name to many home cooks — came in the late nineties, almost simultaneously. After filling in for a friend on maternity leave, Clark was offered her first regular gig in the *Times* dining section: a short advice column called Food Chain. The topics were eclectic and decidedly pre-Google: everything from why it's important to proof your yeast to where to find the best Hungarian goulash in New York City. Most importantly, the piece came with a byline. "It made people start to ask: who is this Melissa Clark person?"

One of those people was Sylvia Woods, Harlem's "Queen of Soul Food," who needed a coauthor for her cookbook. Clark got the job, and for several months she would travel to Harlem and spend time with Woods and her family, listening to their stories. She'd often take the subway home carrying a pot of Woods's homemade oxtails.

"I had platinum-blond hair at that point, and Sylvia called me the whitest white girl she'd ever met," Clark says. "But I found that I was good at ghostwriting, at assuming someone else's voice — it must've been that little part of me that went to Columbia to be a novelist."

From there, Clark went on to collaborate with some of New York's most prominent chefs: Gramercy Tavern's pastry chef, Claudia Fleming; Bouley owner and executive chef David Bouley; and the legendary Daniel Boulud, to name just a few. "People ask me all the time why I didn't go to culinary school. But I think I got a better education working on cookbooks. Who else can say that they've had a private tutorial from Daniel Boulud?"

Oddly, it was Clark's work with restaurant chefs that made her a fierce advocate



for the home cook. To write the cookbooks, Clark would usually take the recipes home and make them in her kitchen, with her own set of knives and pots and pans. She'd make notes about what realistically worked in a home kitchen for someone with access only to a neighborhood grocery store, and then she'd bring the final product back to the restaurant for the chef to taste.

"I was always asking: How do we make it easier? How do we make it faster?" Clark says. "I think many people in the food industry don't understand that there's a difference between a chef and a cook."

**T**oday, Clark's whole professional world revolves around a kitchen: specifically, the one in the Brooklyn brownstone she shares with her husband and eight-year-old daughter. She spends her days there with an assistant, testing recipes for her *Times* column and videos,

of the Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket, Brooklyn's largest farmers' market, which sets up on Saturday mornings at the entrance to Prospect Park. Her weekly ritual is a jog along the park's 3.3-mile wooded loop (the same path she's been running since she was seventeen years old), followed by a stop for groceries.

On a recent Saturday, she's smitten by the spring produce: the broad leaves of rainbow Swiss chard, the fat bunches of asparagus, the rosy stalks of rhubarb, and the elusive ramps, wild-growing cousins of leeks and garlic that only appear for a few weeks. "I love spring produce because it's so fleeting. You gear up for the ramps, think about when the ramps will start to arrive, put ramps on everything, and then they're gone!" Clark likes them on crostini with a little whipped ricotta; this week, though, she grabs an armful of chard, a few stems of rhubarb, and a pound of sweet Italian sausage.

## "MANY PEOPLE IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CHEF AND A COOK."

and for her ever-growing list of cookbooks.

Clark is vigilant about staying current — keeping up with new trends, gadgets, and ideas. One of her most shared recent columns was on the Instant Pot, an appliance that combines a pressure cooker, slow cooker, steamer, and sauté pan (Clark's verdict: buy one if you don't already own a slow cooker). She's fully embraced another technique popular with the blogging set: the sheet-pan dinner, in which proteins, starch, and vegetables roast together for a quick meal. And she's constantly trying to master new international cuisines, to imbue her recipes with different flavor combinations.

"Right now, I'm obsessed with Korean cooking," Clark says, pulling out a Barnard Alumnae notepad where she's jotted down ideas for a kimchi-based stew and a slaw that uses the leftover braising liquids.

Seasonal eating remains central to her food philosophy. She's practically the mayor

"People tend to think of rhubarb only in terms of pie, but they forget that it's actually a vegetable, and terrific in savory dishes," Clark says. To temper the tartness, she plans to sauté it with the chard, fresh ginger, currants, and maple syrup. She'll brown the sausages and serve them with the greens over polenta. "Though barley or quinoa would work, too. Or mashed potatoes. And there you have it — dinner!"

For many professional cooks and food writers, home cooking can start to feel like a chore, an extension of the workday. But not for Clark. Even after spending a full day in the kitchen, sometimes baking the same cake a dozen times until it comes out perfectly, she says that the best part of her day is making dinner for her family.

"My husband will put on music and pour some wine. My daughter is at the table, doing her homework. And I'm chopping vegetables," Clark says. "It's like getting a weekend every single day." 🍷

## SEARED SAUSAGE & RHUBARB WITH SWISS CHARD

TOTAL TIME: 45 MINUTES / SERVES 4

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound sweet Italian sausages, pricked with a fork
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 bunch green, red, or rainbow Swiss chard, stems cut into ¼-inch slices, leaves torn into bite-sized pieces
- 8 ounces rhubarb stems, cut into ¼-inch-thick slices
- 2 tablespoons dried currants
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 1 bay leaf

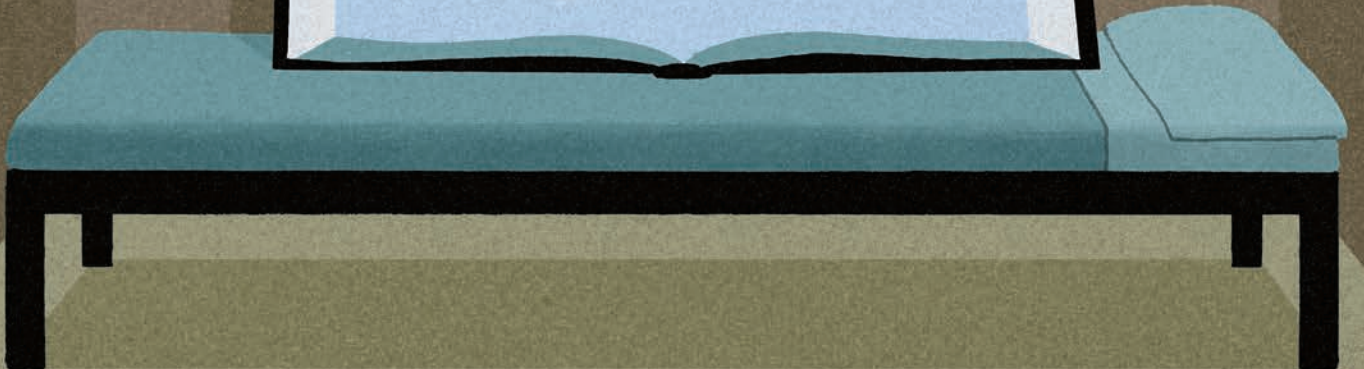
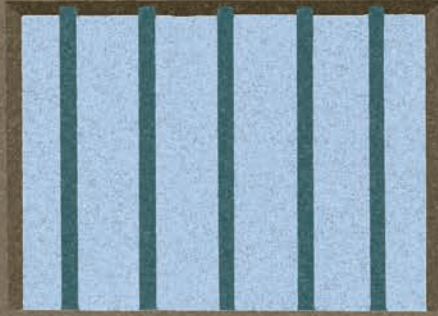
1. Heat the olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sausages and cook until they are cooked through and well browned all over, about 12 minutes total. Transfer the sausages to a plate.
2. Add the onion to the skillet and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in the chard stems and continue to cook until the onion is well browned and the chard stems are almost tender, about 7 minutes. Add the rhubarb, currants, maple syrup, garam masala, salt, ginger, and bay leaf to the skillet. Cook, stirring often, until the rhubarb has fallen apart and the chard stems are tender, 7 to 10 minutes. If the bottom of the pan begins to scorch, stir in some water, a few tablespoons at a time.
3. Toss in the chard leaves and cook, stirring frequently, until they are wilted, about 5 minutes. Transfer the chard mixture to a heated serving platter and pluck out the bay leaf.
4. Return the sausages to the skillet and let them heat through, shaking the pan so they crisp a little on all sides, about 2 minutes. Serve the sausages over the rhubarb-chard mixture.

RECIPE REPRINTED FROM *DINNER*, PUBLISHED BY CLARKSON POTTER, AN IMPRINT OF PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE, LLC.









# Opening Minds

## BEHIND BARS

What happens when you bring college classes to incarcerated men and women?

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By James S. Kunen '70CC

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f you've ever glanced out the window of a plane flying into or out of LaGuardia Airport, you've seen Rikers Island. The flat strip of land, strikingly treeless, sits in the East River between Queens and the Bronx. With its clusters of long, low buildings, Rikers could be some sort of warehouse and distribution center, where tractor-trailers back up to bays to be loaded or unloaded. But there are no trucks. What is warehoused

here is people — about 7,500 on any given day — detained by the New York City Department of Correction. Most of them, accused but not yet convicted of crimes, have been waiting months and even years for their day in court. Others have been found guilty and sentenced to a year or less in jail.

On a recent evening, Mia Ruyter, the education and outreach manager of Columbia's Heyman Center for the Humanities, drives two graduate students — one of them a Columbia philosophy PhD candidate named

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Illustrations by James Steinberg

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Borhane Blili-Hamelin '13GSAS — over the one long and narrow bridge that connects Rikers to anywhere.

Showing their passes at a checkpoint, the educators proceed to the Rose M. Singer Center, where women are held. After a lengthier ID check in the building's foyer, they are ushered through a metal detector and a steel door, then a succession of five sliding iron gates, each clanging shut behind them, and finally one more steel door, into the Program Corridor, where they enter classroom 77.

A male corrections officer brings in eleven young women, aged eighteen to twenty-one. They are wearing identical khaki jumpsuits but manage to make individual fashion statements: a white kerchief around the neck, long pink sleeves, a Mohawk haircut. Quickly taking their seats on gray molded-plastic chairs around a battered folding table, they lean forward attentively, ready to spring into Socratic dialogue.

"Today, the topic is punishment," announces Veronica Padilla, a PhD candidate at the New School and Blili-Hamelin's teaching partner.

When the class takes a quick break, Blili-Hamelin, who has a particular interest in German idealism, the history of social philosophy, and metaethics, explains to a visitor that he's not there to teach a lesson. "We're not lecturing," he says. "My goal is to get students to have as much of a feel for philosophical discussion as possible."

His course, ReThink: Building Critical-Thinking Skills, is one of the ten four-to-six-week workshops that Columbia's Justice-in-Education Initiative has delivered to a hundred young men and women at Rikers over the past year. The classes are taught mostly by Columbia graduate students and include subjects like computer coding, graphic design, architecture, and philosophical discussion. The goal, says Ruyter, who has led three graphic-design workshops herself, is to re-engage the students with education, help them develop skills that will be useful in finding a job, and encourage them to think about social-justice issues.

The Justice-in-Education Initiative is a partnership of the Heyman Center for the Humanities, led by Eileen

The value of entering a classroom, a space in which you are a human being, not a prisoner, is absolutely incalculable."

"What is punishment?" asks Bo, as the students call Blili-Hamelin — everyone's on a first-name basis. "Let's go around the room. Say one word you associate with punishment."

"Something being taken away," says one young woman. "Weapon," says another. The rest respond in turn: "Jail . . . Suffering . . . Restriction . . . Misery . . . Depression . . . Isolation . . . Consequences . . . Sadness."

"What kind of punishment could involve pain?" Bo asks.

"Whipping by parents," offers one student.

Another suggests, "Physical, mental, emotional punishment, by a parent or lover —"

"Or yourself," interjects a third.

Discussing who has the authority to impose punishment, the class comes up with two groups: on the one hand, parents, lovers, and friends; on the other, the government, personified by corrections officers, the police, the DA, the judge.

"What differences are there between the two groups?" asks Padilla.

"You don't have to listen to your family," a student responds. "With the government, you have no choice."

Gillooly '93GSAS, and the Center for Justice at Columbia, an interdisciplinary collaborative committed to helping to end mass incarceration through research, policy work, and, of course, education. The director of the Center for Justice is psychology professor Geraldine Downey, who has been involved in prison education since 1988, when, as a postdoc, she volunteered to teach at a facility in Michigan and saw how transformative education could be.

"Education is a pathway forward for everybody," says Downey, "and society is better for it. Education benefits individuals impacted by incarceration, and that makes society safer. By allowing people who want to turn their lives around the opportunity to do so, we all profit."

The Justice-in-Education Initiative began in 2015 with a one-million-dollar, three-year grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, part of what the *Wall Street Journal* called "a new push" from philanthropists and lawmakers to "prepare inmates for life beyond bars." That same year, Columbia became the first US institution of higher learning to divest from private prisons. And in June 2016, the University signed the White House Fair Chance Higher Education Pledge, which commits colleges and universities to increase

educational access to the seventy million Americans who have a criminal record — including those in prison.

“Opening up education to people who’ve been deprived of it reflects our values as an institution,” says Downey. “Columbia has made a big commitment to support people in getting a fair chance.”

In addition to Rikers, the initiative sends Columbia faculty to teach college-credit courses in three New York State prisons: Sing Sing, Taconic, and Bedford Hills, providing eleven courses to 130 students this year. The program also gives former prisoners a jump-start in continuing their studies with a skills-intensive four-credit humanities course, Humanities Texts, Critical Skills, offered on the Morningside campus through the Department of English and Comparative Literature.

At Taconic and Sing Sing, courses taught by Columbia faculty, along with the faculty of six other participating colleges and universities, are coordinated by the Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison, a nonprofit run largely by former prisoners. The Columbia-taught courses are good for Columbia credit, but there are not enough of them offered for students to earn a Columbia degree. So all Columbia credits earned by students in the Hudson Link program are applied to degrees awarded by Mercy College and Nyack College. Downey would like to establish a Columbia degree program and offer more courses, but it’s not easy: on the prison side alone, obtaining security clearance for a professor is, she says, “a challenge.”

But when educators do get in, the results can be eye-opening. At Rikers, Blili-Hamelin wants his students to think in new ways — to “take a step away from the question ‘What’s my view on this?’ and focus instead on ‘Why should someone hold the view I hold?’ By examining the reasons why they hold one view as opposed to another, people might change their perspective on the issue, and change their perspective on people who hold views different from theirs. That, to me, is the ideal outcome.”

Rikers student Bridget Francois agrees.

“I really like this class,” she says. “The best part is debating. You learn to look at a situation or a topic from a different point of view, not only your own point of view.”

Asked if she hopes to continue her education, Francois replies in her rapid-fire staccato fashion, “I’m twenty-one. I’m in twelfth grade. I’m in here finishing my high-school diploma. I’m still trying to figure out what I want to do. I’ve always wanted to study psychiatry, be a therapist, but I also like journalism, because I love to write. I’d love to study a lot of things. I plan on going to Columbia.”

**Y**ou should not have run from me. I am the great Apollo! I am not some shepherd boy.

Aisha Elliott — or Elliott, A., 92G0185, as the patch sewn on her pocket would have it — declares in imperious tones her idea of what Apollo might

have been thinking as he chased down Daphne, the terrified target of his rapacious desire. She and seven classmates, all clad in baggy, prison-issue dark-green shirts and pants — Elliott’s hot-pink sneakers look defiantly jaunty — are analyzing Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in a Literature Humanities class led by Columbia professor Laura Ciolkowski ’88CC, who is associate director of Columbia’s Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality.

Outside, tall chainlink fences topped by coils of concertina wire hold the students inside the Taconic Correctional Facility, a medium-security prison forty miles north of New York City in Bedford Hills, New York. But though the students can’t get out, ideas have come in.

“When Aisha says, ‘I am Apollo,’ you’re seeing her deep engagement with Ovid’s text, actually entering into the character of Apollo to address his motivations, and to analyze the relationships in the poem as a whole,” Ciolkowski says. “There’s a kind of entitlement to his character. Why? And how does that connect to the larger social and aesthetic structures in which this character operates?”

Elliott had some thoughts on that. “At issue in Ovid’s *Apollo and Daphne* is the concept of power and the way in which it is used to take away a woman’s agency,” she wrote in her final paper for Ciolkowski’s class. “Like Apollo, Tereus was also a male in a prominent position of power who abused and violated women.”

“There was a lot of rape in the poems that we read,” Elliott says. “Why were they raped? Was it based on how they looked, what they said, the lack of power that women have when it comes to men in powerful positions — just really interesting stuff that I never had a conversation about, and I get it now.”

Her professor finds larger meaning in Elliott’s academic growth. “Prison is dehumanizing,” Ciolkowski says. “It’s objectifying, and the value of entering a classroom, a space in which you are a human being, not a prisoner, is absolutely incalculable. In some ways it’s also about futurity, the idea that one isn’t just one’s past. Outside of the classroom they are whatever it is that they did to get into that prison. Inside the classroom they are human beings with a future, with hope, with potential, with the ability to think outside themselves — ‘I am Apollo; I am not just myself. I am able to imaginatively enter into the worlds of others.’ That is immensely valuable for an individual whose space has shrunk down so dramatically, and whose humanity is largely taken away from her.”

The Justice-in-Education Initiative can trace its origins to the efforts of a handful of incarcerated women, including Elliott and her one-time fellow inmate Cheryl Wilkins, who is now senior director of education and programs at the Center for Justice.

The story begins in 1992, when Elliott went to prison, a twenty-year-old convicted of murder and sentenced to



twenty-five years to life. “I’d dropped out of high school, and I started running the streets — carrying knives, carrying guns, selling drugs, just being an idiot,” Elliott recalls. One night, Elliott was out drinking in a bar in her hometown of Utica; she was underage, and another young woman ratted on her. As Elliott recounts it, “They threw me out of the club. I came out swinging. It just went straight downhill from there.” The other woman cut her with a razor — a large scar on Elliott’s forearm testifies to that. “And then I responded. My friend handed me a knife and I just went off.” She doesn’t deny her responsibility. “There were so many ways around that. But you don’t realize it until you stop thinking in a street-mentality way. When you educate yourself, you

called the College-Bound Learning Center, which Wilkins and Elliott helped run.

By 1998, volunteer professors from nine colleges and universities were teaching college courses at Bedford Hills for credit toward degrees granted by Marymount Manhattan College. One of them was Columbia’s Geraldine Downey, who taught an abnormal-psychology class that Wilkins signed up for. Wilkins had a brother suffering from paranoid schizophrenia, and she wanted to learn more about it.

“Cheryl did her project on developing a booklet that provided information to families about schizophrenia,” Downey says. “This opened up something new for me to use in my classes. Students in prison — not necessarily be-

## When you educate yourself, you learn how to be human.”

learn how to be human, how to be respectful, how to have morals, how to be nonviolent. You learn so many things when you’re going to school.”

Sent to the maximum-security Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (also in Bedford Hills, New York), Elliott set about earning her high-school-equivalency diploma, then dived into college courses in a program run by Mercy College. But in 1995, just as she drew within sight of graduation, President Bill Clinton signed anticrime legislation that cut off federal grants to prisoners for post-secondary education. State governments quickly followed suit. In 1994, an incarcerated person could earn a bachelor’s degree while doing time in the federal prison system or any of thirty-one state systems. A year later, practically all onsite college-education programs for prisoners in the US had vanished.

“That devastated me,” Elliott says. She and five other inmates — including Kathy Boudin, who was serving time for felony murder in the 1981 Brink’s robbery — formed a group that enlisted the support of the superintendent of the prison. Their goal was to bring higher education back inside Bedford Hills.

Two years later, in 1997, thirty-five-year-old Cheryl Wilkins arrived at Bedford Hills, sentenced to up to ten years for robbery. Wilkins was aware that there had been a change in prison after college classes ended. “There were more fights, more arguments, a little more hopelessness,” Wilkins says. “So I jumped on that bandwagon and became a part of this committee to bring back college.” With the superintendent’s help, the inmate activists met with representatives from colleges, religious leaders, philanthropists, and volunteers, pulling together enough resources to build a computer lab and academic library

cause they’re in prison, but because they are older and have lived life longer — they’re asking, ‘Why does this matter? How can this be applied?’ It makes you think as an educator in a different way. You think, ‘Can I take these academic concepts out of the ivory tower and explain them in a way that the incarcerated students will find useful?’”

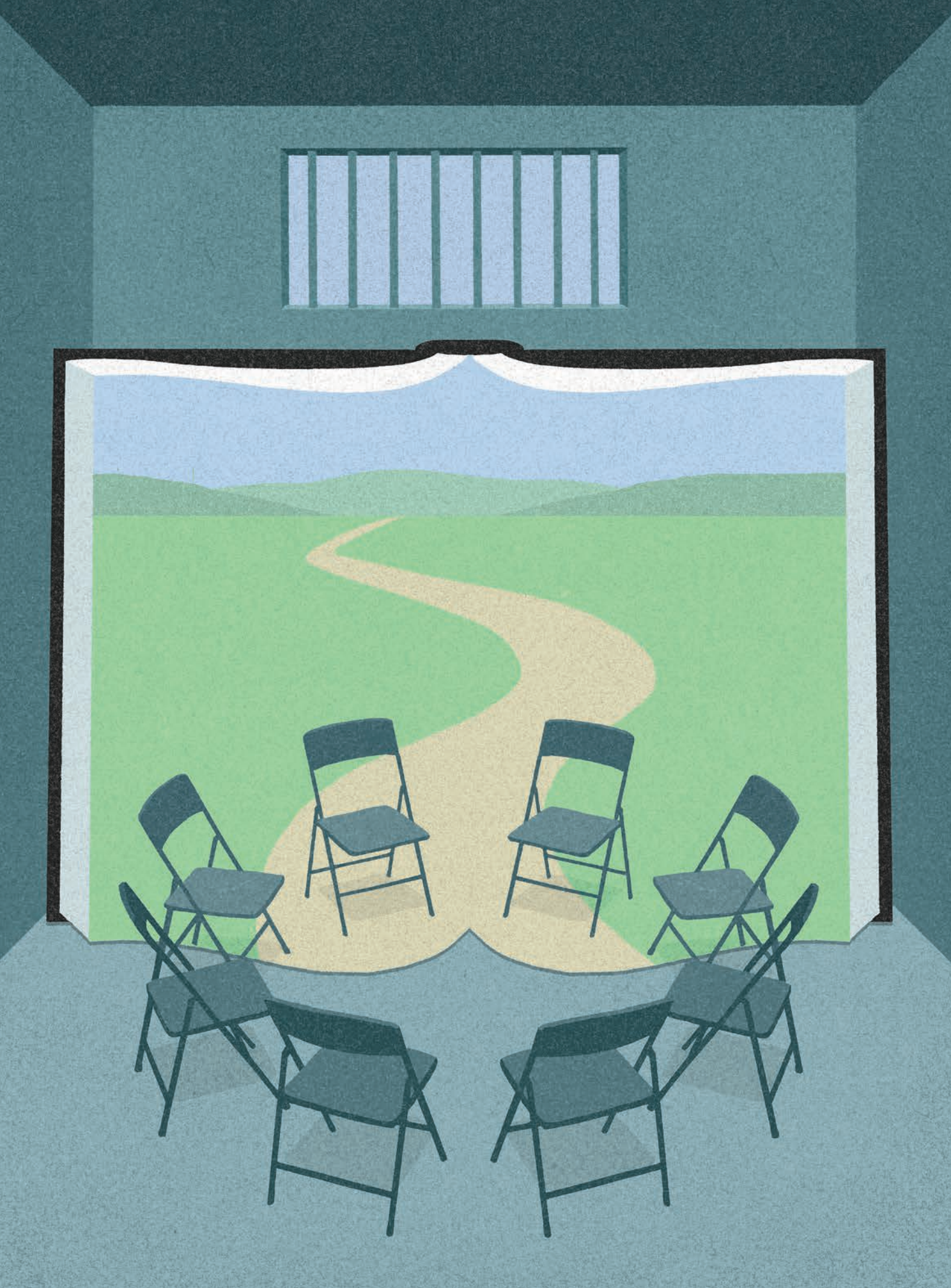
Wilkins was released in 2005 and immediately went to work for a nonprofit supporting the efforts of men and women with criminal records to pursue higher education. She was equally concerned about incarceration’s impact on children and families. In 2009, Wilkins, having added a master’s in urban affairs from Hunter College to the bachelor’s in sociology from Marymount Manhattan College that she’d earned in prison, joined with Boudin, who was released in 2003, to develop the Criminal Justice Initiative: Supporting Children, Families, and Communities, based in Columbia’s School of Social Work. Aimed at addressing the social repercussions of mass incarceration, that initiative — through the efforts of Wilkins, Boudin (who became an adjunct professor at the School of Social Work in 2013), Downey, and Columbia provost John Coatsworth — grew into the Center for Justice.



The United States has 5 percent of the world’s population but about 25 percent of its incarcerated people, with 2.2 million behind bars in prisons and jails. As the Center for Justice aims to reduce these numbers, education has proved a vital tool: according to Downey, who teaches at Sing Sing, “Being a college student in prison is the best-known protection against recidivism.”

Statistics compiled by Hudson Link bear her out: in New York State, 42 percent of men and women released from







prison return within three years. Among those who have completed two semesters or more of college while incarcerated, the figure is 4 percent. And according to a 2013 Rand Corporation study, every dollar spent on inmate education translates to four to five dollars saved on re-incarceration. Yet political opposition to college education for prisoners remains implacable.

Even if education supports rehabilitation, opponents argue, imprisonment serves other important purposes as well — including deterrence and retribution for bad acts — and rewarding prisoners with free college courses arguably contravenes those goals. When New York governor Andrew Cuomo sought public funding in 2014 to support a small program of college education in a few New York prisons, legislators in Albany killed the plan.

“It should be ‘do the crime, do the time,’ not ‘do the crime, earn a degree,’” argued George D. Maziarz, a state senator from western New York. “It is simply beyond belief to give criminals a competitive edge in the job market over law-abiding New Yorkers who forgo college because of the high cost.”

Christia Mercer, who is the Gustave M. Berne Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Columbia, and who

ed by incarceration to take leadership in reducing social problems,” she says. “Many people in prison are parents, and education gives them a way of connecting with their children and inspiring them to continue on the educational path. It makes them better parents. That’s what my students have said to me about education and families: that children recognize the value of what their parents have taken on.”

Still, prison is far from an ideal learning environment, Mercer observes. Incarcerated students use libraries with limited content, have no access to the Internet, and have to write papers in longhand.

These students can be a challenge in some surprising ways, Mercer has found. “I think the students at Columbia are very good at being learners and very good at reading what’s expected of them in class,” she says. “They’ve been trained their whole lives to be good students. My students at Taconic are often brilliant and insightful, but they have not been trained to be good students. I’ve discovered that if you pose a set of questions to a group of Columbia students and expect them to answer the questions, then that’s what they’ll do, because they’re dutiful students. But if you do that with the Taconic students, they might be prepared

Many people in prison are parents, and education gives them a way of connecting with their children.”

taught Introduction to Philosophy in the spring — her fourth course at Taconic Correctional Facility — finds the objections unpersuasive.

“The vast majority of people who are incarcerated are there because they were in circumstances that gave them very few options,” Mercer says. “Eighty-two percent of the women at prisons like Taconic experienced severe physical or sexual abuse as children; 75 percent suffered physical violence by an intimate partner during adulthood; and at least a third of them were raped at some point in their lives. They were in substandard schools that offered no counseling. And so, many of them self-medicated, and it was often in a state of self-medication that they made their mistakes — some of them did terrible things, which they now unblinkingly admit and deeply regret.

“What these women needed when they were arrested was not punishment. What they needed was a chance to rehabilitate themselves. So it’s not clear to me what the point of ‘prison as punishment’ is. But there *is* a point to rehabilitation.”

For Downey, the point extends to families and society at large. “Education allows people who have been impact-

to ask very different questions, because those other questions are the ones most interesting to them.

“Then the discussion goes in a direction that I as a professor would not have set it in, but it turns out to open up a part of the text or nature of a character that I had never thought of.”

She cites her Taconic class’s take on Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*: “In *Twelfth Night*, Maria plays a trick on Malvolio. Columbia students mostly think it’s justified, because Malvolio comes across as a pompous dude. My students at Taconic agreed that Malvolio is a bit of a jerk, but they thought that abusing him in the way that Maria did, and putting him in a situation to suffer in the way that he suffered, was not deserved, and that she and her friends took too much pleasure and delight in his suffering. The Taconic students opened up a moral element in the text that I had never seen before.”

For Mercer, one crucial thing about the Columbia program is that students are proud to be in it. “It gives them a sense of purpose,” she says, “and they work extremely hard to prove that they can do the kind of work that a Columbia student does.”

Aisha Elliott is one example. Mercer had her as a student in two of her courses. “The thing about Aisha is that she mentored women,” Mercer recalls. “A lot of the students in my class were in the college program because Aisha told them they had to be.”

“I didn’t feel like I was entitled to an education in prison,” Elliott says. “But I thought, ‘Now that I’m in prison, I’m going to take full advantage of everything that the state has to offer.’ Clearly my head was full of ignorance and street stuff. Once you get that out of your head, you need to fill it with something. Get rid of the streets, get rid of the ignorance, that stupid mentality that you had, and educate yourself. And I did. Prison is a horrible place. It’s the worst place in the world to be, and there were thousands of people there who should not have been there. But once you know how to write a paper, once you can have a conversation with your professor — there are so many things that education does for you.”

Downey has asked her incarcerated students what being in a college classroom says about them, about who they are.

“They told me it meant they were courageous, creative, committed knowledge-seekers, that they were determined to make something of themselves while doing their time,” Downey says. “It meant that they were resilient and able to lift themselves above the daily horror of life in prison. And they said our coming there as professors showed them that we believed in them — and that affirmed their belief in themselves.”

Last June, Elliott, locked up at twenty, was released from prison a forty-four-year-old woman (“an age I dreamed about for years,” she says). Her daughters were one and three when she went to prison. Elliott’s father was able to bring them to visit her once or twice a year; the girls grew up in the care of Elliott’s sister and their babysitter. Rakeisha, twenty-eight, is a licensed clinical social worker, and Aliya, twenty-six, is a health aide for disabled people and is studying radiology. They and their mother remain very close.

For the time being, Elliott is living in a reentry program in Queens, where she works in a thrift shop. She’s looking into the possibility of going to law school and adding a JD to the Marymount Manhattan College sociology degree that she earned behind bars. Says Ciolkowski, “I love that Aisha is moving on with her life. She’s a unique and incredible person, and I’m so honored to have known her.”

For Elliott, her classes taught her another lesson. “Education is not something to keep to yourself,” she says. “Like if we’re all poor and we get some food, you have to share it with the other poor people. I feel the same way about education. If you have it, you have to share it with people.”

*James S. Kunen ’70CC is the author of The Strawberry Statement and Diary of a Company Man*

## NOT A NUMBER

### Columbia’s Kirk James has seen prison education from both sides

Perhaps no faculty member in Columbia’s Justice-in-Education Initiative understands how much college courses mean to incarcerated people as well as Kirk James. That’s because he has been a student as well as a teacher in prison.

In 1994, at age eighteen, James, who had no prior offenses, was sentenced to seven years to life under the Rockefeller drug laws. At the time he was a community-college student in Queens, studying criminal justice and hoping to be a lawyer. One day, he was enticed by undercover police officers to obtain drugs and guns for them; he put them together with a seller and spent nine years behind bars as a result.

“I know what it feels like for guys to have a visit and see their loved ones leave,” says James, now an adjunct assistant professor in the School of Social Work. “I know what it feels like to maybe not have a collect call accepted. I know what it feels like to be out of touch with your family for years, to go to the parole board and be constantly judged on something that you did ten, twenty, thirty years ago.”

What enabled him to endure imprisonment, he explains, was “the ability to go beyond the walls. And what allowed me to do that was education.” He was able to get that education because in 1999 he happened to be transferred to the Wyoming Correctional Facility, in Wyoming County, New York, which had a privately funded college program. “This experience was transformational,” James recalls. “My number was 9486325. It felt the most oppressive to me, the idea that someone could see me as only this number. I had a psychology professor — he would

have these classes where we could talk about anything. The idea that what we wanted to talk about was important, that our feelings mattered, was validating. There was a validation of who we were. My idea of success is the ability to start to see yourself beyond being a prisoner — the ability to see yourself beyond a number. That’s what education afforded me.”

Last fall, James traveled forty miles up the river to Ossining, in Westchester County, to teach a two-hour, fourteen-week course called Race, Trauma, and Oppression at the maximum-security Sing Sing Correctional Facility.

“It’s been one of the most humbling, rewarding experiences of my life,” he says, “being in a room where twenty-five men are speaking about trauma, about vulnerability, about how to cultivate positive relationships. The thing that’s so powerful, which struck me immediately, was their amazing level of attention, as well as their ability and willingness to be reflective, vulnerable, to speak truth to themselves. We had a conversation — I said there was a great debate now between prison reform and prison abolition. You had folks in the class who said, ‘No, we need prisons.’ And you had folks who said, ‘No, prisons are inherently oppressive and traumatic.’ And the folks who were for prison, some of them started to come around and say, ‘Maybe it’s not that we need prisons, but that we need mechanisms to address behaviors that are dangerous.’

“Their ability to think critically is phenomenal,” says James. “I think if anyone sat in that classroom for an hour, their idea of prisons and prisoners would be *shattered*.”





COMICS, ONCE MARGINALIZED, HAVE TAKEN THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THIS VENERABLE REPOSITORY OF KNOWLEDGE,



THANKS TO THE VISION AND PERSISTENCE OF LIBRARIAN KAREN GREEN,



WHO RECENTLY BECAME THE FIRST CURATOR FOR COMICS AND CARTOONS IN COLUMBIA'S RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY.

# A LIFE IN COMICS

The Graphic Adventures of Karen Green '97GSAS  
How a Butler Librarian Became Columbia's First Curator for Comics and Cartoons  
by Nick Sousanis '14TC

GREEN, WHO GREW UP IN MICHIGAN, WAS A SOLITARY KID WHO LOVED BOOKS.



HER PARENTS TRIED TO GET HER TO PLAY OUTSIDE,



BUT SHE'D TAKE HER BOOK AND KEEP READING.

ONE BOOK, ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND, SENT HER DOWN A RABBIT HOLE THAT LED TO A LIFELONG PASSION FOR PICTURE STORIES.



AS ALICE ASKED, "WHAT IS THE USE OF A BOOK WITHOUT PICTURES OR CONVERSATIONS?"



AT AGE 6 SHE DISCOVERED HER PARENTS' NEW YORKER 25TH ANNIVERSARY CARTOON ALBUM (1925-1950). SHE WAS OBSESSED.

AND IT HELPED HER CULTIVATE A STRONG INDEPENDENT ATTITUDE AND A FASCINATION FOR THE CITY SHE WOULD SOON CALL HOME.

THIS WAS HER INTRODUCTION TO UNDERSTANDING HISTORY,



"It's broccoli, dear."  
"I say it's spinach, and I say the hell with it."



WHEN GREEN WAS TEN,  
HER MOM ANNOUNCED:

WE'RE MOVING TO NEW YORK CITY

- A "LAND OF  
WONDERFUL THINGS."

HER PARENTS WANTED TO GIVE  
HER AND HER TWO SIBLINGS  
EXPOSURE TO CULTURE.

THEY MOVED TO FORT LEE,  
NEW JERSEY, JUST ACROSS  
THE RIVER FROM THE CITY.

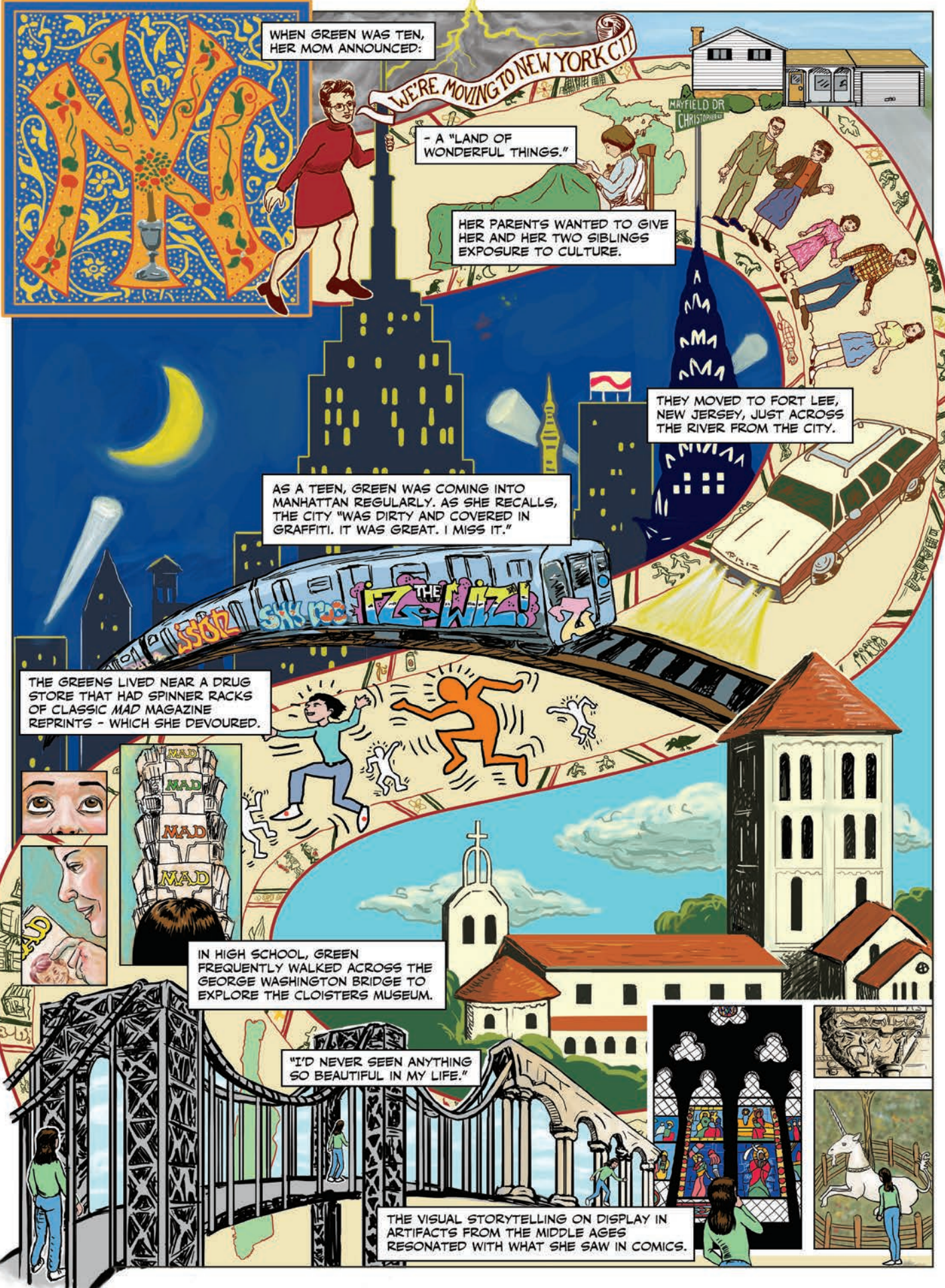
AS A TEEN, GREEN WAS COMING INTO  
MANHATTAN REGULARLY. AS SHE RECALLS,  
THE CITY "WAS DIRTY AND COVERED IN  
GRAFFITI. IT WAS GREAT. I MISS IT."

THE GREENS LIVED NEAR A DRUG  
STORE THAT HAD SPINNER RACKS  
OF CLASSIC MAD MAGAZINE  
REPRINTS - WHICH SHE DEVoured.

IN HIGH SCHOOL, GREEN  
FREQUENTLY WALKED ACROSS THE  
GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE TO  
EXPLORE THE CLOISTERS MUSEUM.

"I'D NEVER SEEN ANYTHING  
SO BEAUTIFUL IN MY LIFE."

THE VISUAL STORYTELLING ON DISPLAY IN  
ARTIFACTS FROM THE MIDDLE AGES  
RESONATED WITH WHAT SHE SAW IN COMICS.





COMICS SEEMED TO FOLLOW HER EVERYWHERE.



BACK WHEN GREEN WAS 11 SHE GOT BRACES. TO HER DELIGHT, HER ORTHODONTIST HAD STACKS OF ARCHIE COMICS.



SHE ENDED UP STAYING FOR HOURS AFTER HER APPOINTMENTS READING...



"I LOVED THOSE COMICS. I THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT HIGH SCHOOL WAS GOING TO BE LIKE. I WAS MISTAKEN."



HIGH SCHOOL PROVED TO BE A DIFFICULT AND TROUBLED TIME FOR GREEN.

IT'S THERE SHE DISCOVERED UNDERGROUND COMICS AND THE COMICS MAGAZINE

**HEAVY METAL**



- WHICH BLEW HER MIND WITH IT'S SLATE OF EUROPEAN CARTOONISTS

after Jim Cherny



- AS WELL AS AMERICAN CHARLES BURNS, WHOSE WORK TOOK HER BREATH AWAY AND SPOKE DIRECTLY TO FEELINGS HIGH SCHOOL EVOKED.

after C. Burns



SHE MADE IT TO COLLEGE IN 1978, BUT DROPPED OUT AFTER ONE SEMESTER AND STARTED BARTENDING, WHICH SHE WOULD DO FOR THE NEXT 15 YEARS.



BARTENDING TAUGHT HER HOW TO WORK WITH AND TALK TO DIFFICULT PEOPLE AND GRIN LIKE A CHESHIRE CAT WHEN SHE WASN'T "FEELING SMILEY."



DURING THIS TIME, GREEN CHASED MANY DIFFERENT DREAMS TRYING TO FIND HER WAY.



1 (AMONG OTHER INTERESTS, SHE FELL FOR EARLY-20TH-CENTURY CARTOONISTS LIKE WINSOR MCCAY.)

IN 1989 SHE WENT TO MASSAGE THERAPY SCHOOL.



2 WHILE SHE EARNED HER CERTIFICATE, SHE DECIDED SHE DIDN'T WANT TO PRACTICE.



3 BUT HER SCORES IN PHYSIOLOGY AND ANATOMY MADE HER CONSIDER BECOMING A DOCTOR.



4 FIRST, SHE NEEDED A B.A., SO SHE WENT TO NYU. SHE ENDED UP STUDYING MEDIEVAL HISTORY.

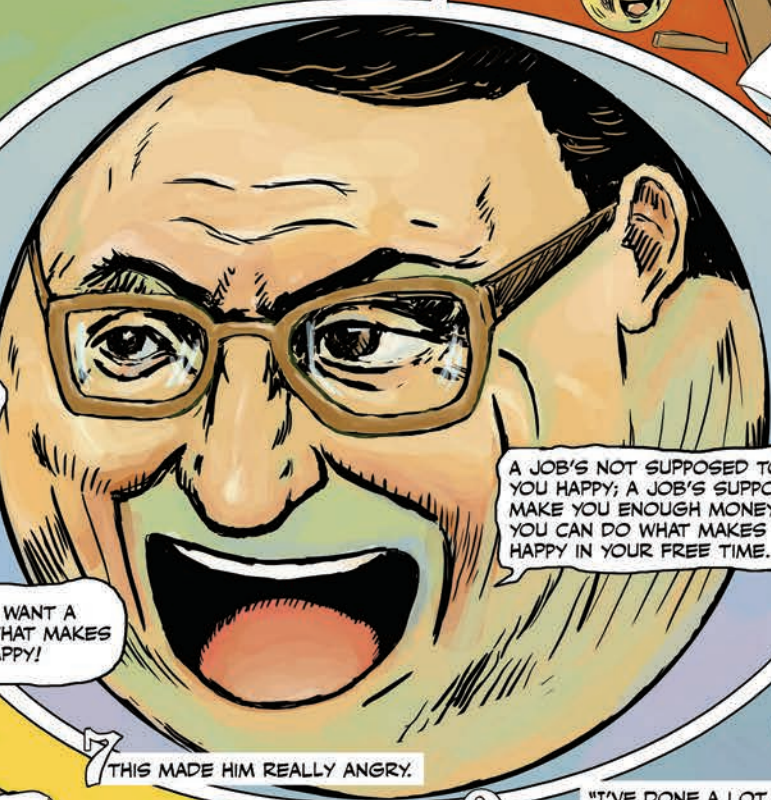
5 HER FATHER, HOWEVER, HAD ALWAYS WANTED HER TO GO INTO SALES.



6 YOU'RE SMART, YOU'RE ATTRACTIVE, YOU'RE PERSONABLE, AND YOU'D DO SO WELL.



BUT I WANT A JOB THAT MAKES ME HAPPY!



7 THIS MADE HIM REALLY ANGRY.



8 GREEN REBELLED.



9 "I'VE DONE A LOT OF TRYING AND ABANDONING THINGS IN MY LIFE. IT WAS HARD ON MY PARENTS, WHO THOUGHT I WAS A QUITTER. BUT I JUST WANTED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS RIGHT FOR ME."

10 IN 1993, GREEN CAME TO COLUMBIA AND GOT A MASTER'S IN HISTORY.



11 SHE WANTED TO STAY AT COLUMBIA, SO SHE BEGAN WORKING AS THE SUPERVISOR OF BUTLER RESERVES.



SHE WENT TO RUTGERS FOR LIBRARY SCIENCE IN ORDER TO APPLY TO BE COLUMBIA'S MEDIEVAL-HISTORY LIBRARIAN.



13 IN 2002 SHE GOT THE JOB.





AS GREEN SETTLED IN AT COLUMBIA, SHE WONDERED WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN COMICS.



SHE BOUGHT A COPY OF PAUL HORNSCHEMEIER'S

### MOTHER, COME HOME



- ITS DEPICTION OF FAMILY AND LOSS OPENED GREEN'S EYES TO WHAT COMICS COULD BE AND SPARKED AN IDEA.

THE LIBRARY'S HOLDINGS INCLUDED JUST THREE GRAPHIC NOVELS: MAUS, PERSEPOLIS, AND PALESTINE - "WORKS THAT HAD RECEIVED ENOUGH ATTENTION TO NOT BE CONSIDERED COMICS."

UNVEILING: PERSEPOLIS AS EMBODIED PERFORMANCE

HOW I WAS BETTER BY THE RADICALS' COMICS BUGS: UNRAVING EPICER THAN MAUS, AND WORKING IT THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

INCOMICS IMAGES: THE AMERICAN COMICS BOOKS OF THE 1950S

INDISCIPLINE OR THE CONDITION OF COMICS STUDIES

THE SEARCH FOR COMICS EXCEPTIONALISM

DRAW A THOUSAND WORDS: SIGNIFICATION AND PUN

RECOGNIZING THAT THE STUDY OF COMICS OF ALL SORTS WAS ON THE RISE, IN 2005 GREEN MADE THE CASE THAT THE LIBRARY GET AHEAD OF THE CURVE.



AND FROM THERE, SHE BEGAN BUILDING A COLLECTION.



IN 2008 GREEN CREATED AN EXHIBITION AT BUTLER, "COMICS IN THE CURRICULUM," DEMONSTRATING WAYS THAT THEMES FROM COMICS COULD BE TAUGHT IN COURSES.

GOTEM

FACULTY IN ENGLISH, NARRATIVE MEDICINE, AND AMERICAN AND EAST ASIAN STUDIES GOT INTERESTED AND NUMEROUS CLASSES HAVE SINCE BEEN OFFERED ACROSS CAMPUS.



Author's note: This is the year I came to Columbia as a doctoral student and first met Karen.

THE COLLECTION STARTED TO TAKE SHAPE.

THEN, IN 2010, OUT OF THE BLUE, LEGENDARY X-MEN AUTHOR CHRIS CLAREMONT CONTACTED GREEN TO OFFER UP HIS ARCHIVES.

**BAMF**

OTHERS FOLLOWED.

THIS BURGEONING CATALOGUE INCLUDES MANUSCRIPTS, SKETCHES, ORIGINAL ART, CORRESPONDENCE, CONTRACTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.

AND THAT COLLECTION OF THREE? NOW OVER 14,000 VOLUMES!

FROM COMICS ICONS LIKE MAD'S AL JAFFEE; HOWARD CRUSE, THE FATHER OF GAY COMICS; EARLY BATMAN CONTRIBUTOR JERRY ROBINSON; ELFQUEST CREATORS WENDY AND RICHARD PINI; KITCHEN SINK PRESS; AND CARTOONIST MORT GERBERG.



WHAT LESSON CAN WE  
DRAW FROM KAREN'S  
ADVENTURES?

## HERE WE GO WITH AN HOMAGE TO AL JAFFEE'S MAD FOLD-IN

Help Karen navigate the twists and turns of her seemingly chaotic path by folding the page.



FOLD PAGE OVER LIKE THIS

A ➡

FOLD THIS SECTION OVER LEFT

◀ B

FOLD BACK SO "A" MEETS "B"

NOW GREEN ATTENDS COMIC CONVENTIONS WORLDWIDE,



COMIC CON



MODERATES PANELS,



TEACHES, ORGANIZES FESTIVALS, CO-PRODUCED A DOCUMENTARY FILM,



JUDGED THE EISNER AWARDS AND PULITZER PRIZE IN EDITORIAL CARTOONING, AND



HANGS OUT WITH HER CARTOONIST HEROES LIKE JULES FEIFFER, DREW FRIEDMAN, AND AL JAFFEE.



"WHAT IS GOING ON WITH MY LIFE?!"



YOU NEVER KNOW YOU'RE  
FOLLOWING A PATH WHILE ON IT. LOOKING BACK,  
YOU SEE HOW IT ALL CAME TOGETHER. FOR HER  
CURIOSER AND CURIOSER LED TO THE UNIVERSITY.

A ➡

◀ B



**N**umbers speak. They tell a story. Remember baseball cards? Kids could recite a player's stats by heart. Those numbers added up to something — the sum of one's skill and effort. Take Jackie Robinson, the Brooklyn Dodgers infielder who broke baseball's color barrier in 1947: 125 runs scored his rookie season; a .342 batting average in '49; six pennants; nineteen career steals of home plate.

Sharon Robinson '76NRS knows her father's numbers. But what if someone were to keep track of *her* professional stats — as a nurse midwife? Fifty births within her first

six months of practice . . . a hundred within the first year . . . 250 after five years. Sharon has delivered some 750 babies — Hank Aaron territory. And that's not counting the births she's overseen as a teacher, first at the Columbia School of Nursing and later at Yale, Howard, and Georgetown.

There's more. How about nine books published, 1,500 students who have received scholarships from the Jackie Robinson Foundation, and thirty-two million kids reached by Breaking Barriers: In Sports, In Life, the educational program that Sharon started in 1997? Those numbers tell many stories.

What if there were bubblegum cards for everyone?

Sharon Robinson is awfully approachable for a member of cultural royalty. She's unpretentious, contemplative, quick to laugh. You can see her father in her face, can hear him in her voice, but after a minute you can almost forget that this is the daughter of an American folk hero.

When Sharon was born, in 1950, her father was one of the most famous, most important people in the country. As the first Black player in the majors in the modern era, Jackie Robinson had electrified baseball with his dynamic, aggressive style and ferocious will, and through his courage and dignity he had moved the nation forward. Polls rated him second in popularity only to Bing Crosby, and *Life* photographers showed up to take family portraits a decade before the Kennedys and the astronauts.

Being Jackie Robinson's daughter came with blessings and challenges. "I learned very early on that I shared my dad with the world," Sharon says. Her father was a passionate civil-rights activist who marched with Martin Luther King Jr., and he instilled in his family an ethos of

(A)

**LEAGUE**

of

*her own*



*Sharon Robinson '76NRS delivers  
on her father's legacy*

*By Paul Hond*

COURTESY OF THE BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

service and a commitment — “an ongoing family mission,” says Sharon — to work for social change. “A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives,” Jackie Robinson often said. The words are inscribed on his tombstone, and Sharon lives by them.

Sharon was six when her dad retired from baseball, after the 1956 season. To protect his family’s privacy, Jackie Robinson had moved the family from an integrated neighborhood on Long Island to a new house on six wooded acres in North Stamford, Connecticut. There was a lake on the property, which the kids — Jackie Jr., Sharon, and David — would skate on in winter. Sharon recalls her father, who couldn’t swim and was afraid of water, walking out on the frozen surface each year to test the thickness of the ice.

To her dad, she was “sweet, shy Sharon” — so sweet, he’d say, that she could sweeten his tea with her pinky. Her mother, Rachel, was beautiful, sophisticated, and accomplished. Sharon and her brothers were raised in the glow of excellence and fame, and inevitably that glow cast shadows. How could they ever measure up? Or establish their identities, or own their success? Even Sharon, the girl, the middle child, who’d never had baseball bats shoved into her little hands by strangers with cameras, became aware, as she got older, of the pressure to achieve.

She was an athlete in high school. She played basketball, softball, and volleyball, and loved to swim. In many ways it was a normal childhood: family dinners, games of Monopoly with Dad, afternoons watching soap operas with her maternal grandmother, who lived with the family. (*The Doctors* was their favorite.) Sometimes Sharon would sneak off with her grandma’s romance novels. Sharon had always figured she’d get married and have lots of kids, and maybe even write a romance novel of her own. But her mother, a psychiatric nurse who taught at Yale, was pushing her toward college and a career.

Meanwhile, her mother and grandmother pampered the boys: rebellious, sensitive Jackie Jr. and adventurous, funny David. And Dad was at the center of everything.

“My mother is very pro-male — whether it’s the boys or my father, they’re exalted,” Sharon says. “Part of it is cultural in the Black community, because we see the males as more targeted; they’re the bigger threat to the status quo. We want them to be safe. We think we’re building their self-esteem, but actually, it forces the women to be ultra-strong and sort of weakens the men.” Sharon laughs. “We should push them out of the nest earlier. That’s typically what Black families do with the girls: they push them out. *We’re not going to pamper you; you’re going to have to take care of your family, your church, and your community.*”

Sharon had known since she was a girl that she wanted to work in a hospital someday (maybe it was all those hours

watching *The Doctors*), and in 1968 she entered Howard University to study nursing. Also that year, against her parents’ wishes, she married a young man who, unbeknownst to her parents or anyone else, had been abusing her physically and emotionally for two years, shattering her already fragile self-esteem. They were married for a year before Sharon found the strength to leave. Then, in 1971, her brother Jackie, who had survived a tour in Vietnam and conquered an addiction to heroin, died in a car crash at twenty-four.

By the time of the 1972 World Series in Cincinnati, where her father was to be honored on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his breaking the color barrier, Sharon was at a low point. Her second marriage was collapsing, she was mourning her brother, and she was still coping with the trauma from her first marriage.





Yet she cherished that moment in Cincinnati. The family stood strong together, though her father, white-haired and blind in one eye, appeared older than his fifty-three years. His diabetes had advanced, and his heart was failing. Nine days after the tribute, Jackie Robinson died.

The funeral was held in New York at Riverside Church. Jesse Jackson gave the eulogy. *No grave can hold this body down*, he said. *It belongs to the ages.*

After her brother's death, Sharon had watched her mother crumble and then put herself back together. Rachel Robinson, like her husband, was a fighter, and Sharon took her cues from her mother's resilience.

She was grateful, too, that toward the end of her father's life, she'd had a chance to spend some time with him talking about her future. Sharon was interested in women's health and brought up the idea of going to medical school for obstetrics and gynecology. Her dad was delighted: it didn't matter to him if she went or not; he was simply pleased that she had the faith in herself to consider it.

As it turned out, Sharon chose another path. At Howard she'd learned about midwifery, and the more she thought about it, the more she realized she didn't want to do C-sections. She wanted to be part of the entire birthing process. She wanted to be a midwife.

Columbia's School of Nursing had a graduate nurse-midwifery program. Established in 1955, it was the first of its kind in the nation. For Sharon, Columbia was ideal: a pioneering school in an urban setting, where she could work with a diverse population. She got in and got started.

"It was a very exciting time, because women's health care was changing," Sharon says. "Women were getting basic rights around contraception and abortion and childbirth itself: having more choice in how they delivered, having a voice in their care, and bringing the family into the birth experience. That was all part of my era."

After graduating from Columbia, she got an internship at LA County Hospital. "It was one of the best internships in the country, with a massive amount of births, and I got a lot of experience in six months. I had to deliver in all sorts of crazy circumstances. Sometimes the women delivered in the hallway." She next joined a small home-birthing practice in West LA: when her beeper went off she'd ride her bike from her home in Venice to the moms-to-be in Santa Monica. "Midwives in this country started off in Kentucky and rode horses," says Sharon, who had a horse as a girl. "Think of it as the contemporary Kentucky midwife for the beach folks."

Her next stop was San Francisco General Hospital, where she dealt with pregnant teens. "That was my subspecialty: adolescent health and working on self-esteem, since self-esteem had been such a big issue for me. I used my time with the teenager to help her build confidence and let her know that part of being a good parent is being sure of yourself."

A good midwifery experience means you have a bond with the expectant mother from labor to delivery, Sharon says. She spent



From left:  
Sharon, Jackie,  
David, Rachel,  
and Jackie Jr.

many hours in dimly lit birthing rooms, listening. And then came the birth. "That's what I miss the most — the touch, the feeling of a baby, of a new life coming out, and you're there holding it and passing it to the mother. It's incredible to see."

1978 was another tumultuous year. Sharon got engaged, then pregnant, and then left her fiancé and moved back east, where her son Jesse was born. She stayed at home with Jesse for a year, and then, in the fall of 1979, she returned to Columbia to teach at the School of Nursing.

Jesse was everything to Sharon. He was not an easy child to raise. He had dyslexia and ADHD, speech and hearing problems — "a whole host of things that required intervention," Sharon says. "I found it challenging to handle all that as a single parent." After three years at Columbia, Sharon needed the structure of a nine-to-five, so she took a job leading PUSH for Excellence, Jesse Jackson's educational nonprofit for high-school students.

In 1987, while at PUSH, Sharon spoke to *Ebony* magazine for an article about whether having a famous name helps or hurts. In it, Sharon disclosed that she had gotten engaged in high school because she wanted to change her name. "I didn't realize it at that point," she said, "but I wanted to be anonymous." She kept her married name at Howard to avoid preferential treatment; it was imperative that she make it on her own. And having seen what Jackie Jr. had gone through — the constant, impossible comparisons — she had declined to name her son Jack. But she soon reclaimed her Robinson name. As she told *Ebony*: "Once you integrate it into your total being, it is a major asset, especially in my case, because my father had a great deal of respect from all kinds of people." The *Ebony* writer told her she ought to write a book about her life.

And so Sharon began carrying around a pad, jotting down thoughts. "I wasn't sure it would ever be a book; I was just writing and doing research on what it means to be abused by your spouse," she says. "Then I figured if I could write that part, I could write anything."

Her memoir, *Stealing Home*, came out in 1996 from Harper-Collins. In it, she discussed her childhood, her family life, the difficulties that came with integrating her all-white school and neighborhood, her marriages, her father's politics, and her parents' partnership. She has since published two young-adult novels and seven children's books.

She plans to write at least one more.

In 1997, the golden jubilee of Jackie Robinson's history-shaping appearance on a ball field, Sharon attended the ceremony at a Mets-Dodgers game at Shea Stadium. Her son threw out the first ball, and her mother and President Clinton gave speeches. That same year, Sharon joined Major League Baseball as vice president of educational programming, teaming up with the publisher Scholastic to create a program for character development in children. After twenty years in nursing, Sharon was ready for her next chapter. Her program, *Breaking Barriers: In Sports, In Life*, was born.

## “Anniversaries let us focus not only on the past, but on where we are now.”

“We introduce kids to nine values that I associate with my dad's success on and off the field: courage, determination, teamwork, persistence, integrity, citizenship, justice, commitment, and excellence,” Sharon says. “We use those values to provide strategies to help kids overcome obstacles in their lives.” The curriculum includes an essay contest, for which two grand-prize winners are honored at the All-Star Game and the World Series.

Sharon is also vice chair of the Jackie Robinson Foundation (JRF), a scholarship program for low-income students of color that her mother founded in 1973. Martin Edelman '66LAW is cofounder and secretary. The chair is Gregg Gonsalves '89SEAS, who attended Columbia as a Jackie Robinson Scholar.

“The JRF is my mom's baby,” Sharon says. “She is very powerful and self-directed, and very clear in what she wants to accomplish. She doesn't take on something that she's not going to push to be successful.”

This spring, the JRF broke ground on the Jackie Robinson Museum, scheduled to open in SoHo in 2019. It won't be just artifacts and baseball. “There's no civil-rights museum in New York City,” Sharon says. “We feel this museum will fill that gap, and we're excited to get it done in my mother's lifetime.”

Though Sharon is dedicated to this work, she's also looking ahead. “My mother is ninety-four, and I'm very much supporting her during this phase of her life,” she says. “But I know it's important I figure out *my* next phase.”

The essays for the *Breaking Barriers* contest are about facing adversity, and many of them center on illness — a topic Sharon knows well. She has lupus (an autoimmune inflammatory disease) and high blood pressure. In 2008 she had a double bypass.

Around that time, Jesse, then twenty-nine, got sick and fell into a coma for two weeks. He was diagnosed with adult-onset type 1 diabetes, like his grandfather. “It runs in my father's family in the males,” says Sharon. “They get a very virulent form of diabetes and heart disease. It had skipped a generation with my brother, and I knew my son was going to get it. I just knew.”

Though Jesse survived the coma, his symptoms worsened. In 2013, he had a heart attack, which proved fatal. He was thirty-four.

On April 15, 2017, Sharon arrived at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, ten miles from Pasadena, where Jackie Robinson grew up. Seventy years had passed since that immortal day at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn when Jack Roosevelt Robinson in his white Dodgers jersey strode pigeon-toed across the grass to the infield dirt.

Guests and dignitaries gathered in the left-field plaza: Sharon's mom, Rachel; Sharon's brother David, who lives in Tanzania, where he runs a coffee cooperative; the extended Robinson family;

Jackie's teammates Sandy Koufax, Don Newcombe, and Tommy Lasorda; Dave Roberts, the team's first Black manager, now in his second year; Dodgers part-owner Magic Johnson;

and Dodgers CEO Stan Kasten '76LAW. Nearby, blue curtains veiled a statue — the first ever for Dodger Stadium.

On the count of three the curtains fell, revealing Jackie Robinson, in bronze, sliding toward the plate, his right fist extended as he completes baseball's most daring play: stealing home.

Sharon was grateful to have shared the moment with her mother. These occasions are far more than celebrations.

“Anniversaries let us focus not only on the past, but on where we are now,” Sharon says. “They help us see where we still need to work hard to reverse the backsliding, and to move things forward. They are moments of reflection, and not just for baseball.”

Sharon Robinson loves the water. She divides her time between New York and Delray Beach, Florida. The beach in Delray is beautiful; the water, healing.

“I've been trying to figure out who I am since my son died,” Sharon says, matter-of-factly. Fortitude and grace suffuse her; there are no stats for that.

Jesse had two children. Jessica is six, and Luke is eleven. They live in Massachusetts, and Sharon hopes to see more of them.

She's been thinking more about the next phase of her life.

“Slowly,” she says, “I'm beginning to visualize what that will look like.”

Her favorite time to walk the beach is sunrise, when the fishermen are setting out in their boats. A golden rim appears on the watery horizon — a crown, lifting as if for the first time — and the world feels calm.

“I have one more book I'm going to do for kids,” Sharon says, peering into the future. She laughs, almost bashfully. “Then maybe I'll get to write some love stories.” 🍷



# Bold Ideas, Real Impact

With the opening of the Manhattanville campus and the launch of an ambitious fundraising campaign, President Lee C. Bollinger says Columbia will have the space and resources to turn even more academic breakthroughs into real-world solutions. We asked him to describe a few of the exciting new initiatives that will enable the University to lead the way forward.

By Sally Lee



**Columbia Magazine:**  
**The University is a very different institution today than it was when you arrived in 2002, and there's certainly a new sense of energy and momentum on campus. How has Columbia changed in the time you've been here?**

**Lee C. Bollinger:** When I started at Columbia, I felt there were several matters of profound importance that had to be addressed. First and foremost was space. Universities need to grow as knowledge grows, and there is a real relationship between space and academic distinction. Space allows intellectual life to expand and flourish. It frees up our capacity to think and imagine. When I proposed building a whole new campus in the Manhattanville section of West Harlem, the idea was that we needed space not only for the present but also for future decades. We had to go big to succeed.

The University also needed money and resources. Compared to the other prestigious institutions with which we compete, Columbia was financially stressed. Today, we're regularly ranked in the top US universities for annual fundraising. Our endowment may never match those of some wealthier institutions, but the gap is closing. And there are assets that Columbia enjoys that nobody else in the world has — most notably our location in New York City.

Of course, space, money, and resources are all related to our focus on academic quality. And we've worked hard on the quality of the institution. We've recruited many scholars who are at the very top of their fields, we've built a more culturally diverse faculty, and we've launched several new centers and institutes in areas like climate change, freedom of expression, and genetics.

Columbia is in a great place. There's no question that it is one of the top

universities in the United States and in the world. And now we must build on these major achievements to do what we do best, which is to discover new knowledge, teach great students, and serve a wider public.

**This emphasis on serving a wider public and solving real-world problems has been the focus of several recent initiatives.**

Yes, this is something that matters enormously. Universities excel at discovering knowledge and teaching new generations, because we are organized in a very unusual way. No other institution recruits extremely talented and creative young people, gives them tenure for life after five or



six years, and essentially allows them to explore and write and investigate things that interest them. It's a highly decentralized system that gives people a lot of autonomy, and it's been spectacularly successful over decades.

But the traditional structure of a university is not necessarily conducive

to taking that knowledge and applying it to the outside world. You have to qualify that, of course, because there are certain parts of academia that do organize themselves around real-world applications and practice. Medicine is a key example. At Columbia, we also have a number of programs, like the

Earth Institute, that are designed to bring knowledge into the public sphere. And some faculty members have always viewed this as part of their life's work. But there's still a big distance between allowing those sorts of things to happen and accomplishing them systematically with deliberate intent.



One of my goals at Columbia has been to encourage groups of faculty from across the University to come together and apply their expertise to solving complex, real-world problems. Columbia World Projects, an initiative announced this spring, is designed specifically to support these types of endeavors. It will provide an administrative staff and infrastructure to help groups of faculty organize their academic research with outside partners to achieve specific goals on specific deadlines.

### **Could you tell us more about the type of projects this new initiative might undertake?**

One of the first projects we're considering focuses on addressing the immediate impacts of climate change with climate adaptation. For example, Columbia's International Research Institute for Climate and Society currently has a project in Uruguay where scientists are working with the minister of agriculture and with farmers to provide climate monitoring and forecasting to help farmers anticipate and plan better for weather variability. We want to expand that effort by replicating it in other countries and possibly applying it in other sectors like public health. That's just one example of a major problem where we have intellectual leadership and can work with outside partners to have a real impact, in both the short and long term.

### **The Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University seems to be built on that same model. It's a partnership set up to identify a problem, affect policy, and create change.**

Exactly, exactly. Its purpose is not only to do research and educate on the issue of freedom of speech and of the press in the digital age, but also to litigate. This is a joint project between the Knight Foundation, which is helping to fund the \$60 million effort, and Columbia. Alberto Ibarguen, the president of the foundation, and I both recognized the need to protect and advance First Amendment rights in a constantly changing digital environment. This will involve helping news organizations and

journalists define and fight for their rights in court. Litigating these cases can be enormously expensive, and many traditional news organizations do not have the resources they once did to protect their rights. Meanwhile, many new-media outlets do not necessarily have the deeply held journalistic values or ethos that would prompt an organization to fight the government on issues of freedom of speech and of the press. So you need a richly endowed institute within a great university to take up these issues and to fight on everyone's behalf.

### **This spring, the University launched a five-year, five-billion-dollar fundraising campaign that follows closely on the heels of a record-breaking campaign that ended in 2013. What can you tell us about the decision to launch this new campaign at this moment?**

Columbia cannot rest. There are so many important things to be done, so many areas of knowledge to be explored, so many students to educate. And again, Columbia, relative to its peers, has a greater need for philanthropic support.

Campaigns are not just about money, of course. They also prompt the University to organize its priorities and mobilize the efforts of alumni and others who want to be engaged. So they are beneficial in many ways.

But the bottom line is that Columbia has got to keep moving.

### **The new campaign is a little different from previous campaigns in that it focuses on interdisciplinary initiatives in areas like climate change, precision medicine, data science, neuroscience, and the arts.**

Yes, exactly. One of the things that we've done very well at Columbia is identifying where knowledge is heading and then organizing our energies in a way that enables us to lead the way forward.

### **How important will alumni participation be to the new campaign?**

One of the things that I'm most proud of is how alumni, parents, students, and others

have become deeply engaged in the life of the University. Columbia has undertaken all kinds of efforts to make people feel more a part of this community, and the response has been wonderful. A capital campaign is an opportunity for everyone to get involved. And since the campaign is built around supporting truly groundbreaking new initiatives, I think all alumni will feel that excitement. I think all of us take pride in the ascendancy of Columbia and in the impact that our faculty and students are having out in the world. By participating in the capital campaign, everybody can play a role in ensuring that this work continues to happen.

### **We've seen an increasing number of gifts from people who are not alumni. What do you think is motivating these new donors to invest in Columbia?**

I think it's proof of the intellectual powerhouse that exists here. People want to be part of it. And they believe that they can help improve the world by supporting an institution that is home to the most intellectually capable scholars and scientists. Columbia has certainly developed that reputation. I think everybody realizes that Columbia is an extremely exciting place, and they want to be involved in advancing its mission.

### **The campaign will also support ongoing commitments like student financial aid and faculty resources. What are your priorities in those areas?**

I am very proud that Columbia has one of the most generous financial-aid programs in the world. At the College and the School of Engineering, we have a need-blind system of admissions, which means that undergraduates are admitted without regard to their ability to pay. In addition, undergraduates whose families earn less than \$60,000 a year can come to the College or the School of Engineering for free, without taking out any loans. We're able to do this because alumni and others have given so generously in support of our financial-aid programs. We have an unending need for financial-aid money, both to sustain the College's and School of Engineering's need-blind admissions

system and to offer better financial-aid packages to students in our professional schools and the School of General Studies. We can't stop raising money for financial aid. It's absolutely crucial if we are to live up to the principle that your educational opportunities should not be determined by the wealth of your family, and to maintain a socioeconomically diverse learning environment.

For faculty, one of our ongoing priorities is to improve their facilities. Columbia has opened several new buildings in recent years, but there are some older campus facilities that are in serious need

We must always start from the premise that the University is not a political actor. I've said this on many occasions. As an institution, Columbia does not endorse candidates or take positions on most policy matters. There are many reasons for this. One is that if the University were to articulate an official position, it might intimidate people with different viewpoints from speaking freely on campus.

That is a sound principle. But like any principle, it doesn't cover every possible circumstance. Columbia has its own values to protect: openness, diversity

ment's structure for supporting scientific inquiry is a good one, and so we will advocate for it.

We also fundamentally believe in scientific objectivity; in the pursuit of truth; in reason; and in recognizing the complexity of problems and trying to work through them. When a society begins to turn against these values, we at the University, in my view, have a responsibility to articulate and defend them in the public sphere. Of course, we know that things are constantly being said in the public sphere that are false, unreasonable, hostile, and mean. And we know that the University cannot insert itself into every such episode — we are not naive. But when the manipulation, deception, and distortion in public discourse rises to the level that we've seen in the past year, I think we at Columbia are not being political when we say: This is of deepest concern, and we will do our best to try to counteract it.

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“One of the things that I'm most proud of is how alumni, parents, students, and others have become deeply engaged in the life of the University.”

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of modernizing and repair. This is true especially for the buildings that house our basic-science departments on Morningside Heights. So raising money for physical renovations is very important.

**Many people are deeply troubled by the current political climate in the US. When you spoke at the College's Hamilton Award Dinner this past winter, you said that the Trump presidency represents “a challenge to the central idea of a university.” What did you mean by that?**

of opinion, and the cultural diversity of our students and faculty, to name a few. We think that affirmative-action policies are necessary to overcome America's history of racial segregation and to create a great learning environment. When such policies are challenged in courts or in the political sphere, we believe that Columbia should participate in defending them — as I have done by participating in litigation and by speaking and writing on the topic. Another example is federal funding of science. We believe that the US govern-

**You've spoken out specifically against the Trump administration's stances on immigration and refugees. What concrete actions is Columbia taking to ensure that international students and researchers feel safe here on campus?**

The Trump administration's executive orders on immigration have caused enormous distress for many, many students. We have seen a decline in applications from international students, which is a phenomenon happening across the United States. We've had several instances of faculty from abroad not being able to get here for meetings or not wanting to risk coming. So there's no question this has had a deep effect on students and faculty. What we've done is to prepare for this as much as possible. The University is providing legal services to potentially affected students and trying to make it known to people around the world that Columbia remains open and that we want people to come here. I've also made public statements about this, signing letters and petitions that the Association of American Universities and others have



issued denouncing the Trump administration's travel bans. And I have authorized the filing of amicus briefs by Columbia in support of lawsuits against the bans.

**All indications are that federal support for science research and arts and humanities programs in higher education will be cut under President Trump. What could this mean for Columbia in practical terms, since nearly 80 percent of the University's \$775 million annual research and development budget comes from government funds?**

We are too early in the process to really know what will happen to the budgets, but if this were to happen, the effects could be devastating. The US system of higher education is one of the most successful at discovering new scientific knowledge. If you cut its funding by 10,


20, 30 percent, not only are you sowing chaos at Columbia, but you are undermining something that is a treasure for the world.

**Your contract has been extended through 2022. At that point, you will have led Columbia for twenty years, making you the longest-serving Columbia president since Nicholas Murray Butler. Obviously you've had a profound impact on the institution. Are there ways that Columbia has changed you?**

Oh, I have no doubt of that. It has widened my intellectual horizons in ways that I could not have imagined. Being a part of a great institution puts pressure on you to become a better person, because you are constantly learning and exposing yourself to new experiences and challenges in order to serve the institution better. Certainly

this was true for me with globalization: I saw that there was something changing in the world that would soon transform research and teaching. And I knew that I needed to know more about how the world was becoming more interconnected in order to be an effective president. So, yes, it's had deep and abiding effects on me.

**When people in the future discuss your legacy at Columbia, what do you hope they'll say?**

I feel a deep connection to Columbia, and I have tried to do everything I possibly can to help it succeed. It's an amazing institution, and its potential is just enormous. You would expect me to say that — but I feel it every single day in an unusual and powerful way. If it could be said of me one day that I helped to unleash Columbia's potential, that would be the ultimate gratification. 

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## The Columbia Commitment: A NEW KIND OF CAMPAIGN

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On May 11, Columbia University publicly launched an ambitious effort to raise funds and engage more alumni. We asked the campaign team to share five important facts about The Columbia Commitment.

1

**We're focusing on impact.** There are more ways than ever to give to Columbia and make a difference. The new campaign will have an impact beyond our campuses by supporting Columbia faculty and students who, often by working with outside partners, are developing solutions to major world problems.

2

**Our commitments are University-wide.** Much of this impact-driven work is happening through our commitment to interdisciplinary research in certain leadership areas. These commitments currently include: Arts and Ideas, Climate Response, Data and Society, The Future of Neuroscience, Global Solutions, Just Societies, and Precision Medicine.

3

**This campaign is for everyone.** Along with "impact giving," the University is amplifying efforts at every school to support the human talent that makes progress possible. Raising money for faculty and students, and being able to offer significant research funding and financial aid, are more important than ever.

4

**Columbia has real momentum.** President Bollinger has said, "Columbia cannot rest." There is too much to be done. This campaign is the most accelerated ever. It seeks to raise five billion dollars in five years, the most ambitious year-to-year goal in University history.

5

**We can all help.** People can contribute at any level, with fifty dollars for a project or school fund of their choice, or with a multimillion-dollar endowment to support one of Columbia's schools or institutes. From attending an event to sharing Columbia content on social media to telling your story on ColumbiaYou ([you.columbia.edu](http://you.columbia.edu)), there are more ways than ever to join the dialogue and have an impact, not only at your school but also across the entire University.

Learn more at [commitment.columbia.edu](http://commitment.columbia.edu).



Celebrate Columbia Club's brand new affiliation with the Penn Club. Alumni who join the Club before June 30, 2017 pay **no initiation fee**.

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# EXPLORATIONS

FRONTIERS OF  
RESEARCH AND  
DISCOVERY



## Painkiller abuse now a global scourge

**T**he epidemic of prescription-drug abuse that has ravaged the US over the past two decades is fast becoming a global problem, according to a new paper by Silvia Martins, an epidemiologist at Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health, and Lilian Ghandour, an epidemiologist at the American University of Beirut. Martins and Ghandour recently examined the results of more than a dozen surveys that have looked at recreational drug use among teenagers and young adults in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East,

and Asia. They found that youths in many high- and middle-income countries are now abusing opioid-based painkillers at rates that rival those seen in the US, where nearly 8 percent of high-school seniors admit to having abused the drugs.

"This is alarming, since opioids are so addictive," says Martins, whose paper appears in the journal *World Psychiatry*. "These painkillers also pose a substantial risk of fatal overdose — especially when combined with alcohol or other drugs."

The misuse of prescription painkillers, such as Vicodin, Oxycontin, and Percocet, has been a serious problem

in the US since the 1990s. Physicians, initially underestimating the addictiveness of the drugs, prescribed them to millions of people for long-term relief from back pain and other common ailments. Many patients have since become addicted to opioids, with some even turning to illicit narcotics like heroin or opium when their prescriptions expire. Even more disastrous from a public-health perspective, experts say, is that prescription painkillers are finding their way into the hands of teenagers and young adults.

"The recreational use of these drugs by young people is the main driving force behind opioid addiction in the United States," says Martins. "Young people have ample opportunity to pilfer them from medicine cabinets of parents, relatives, or friends."

Now that American doctors are prescribing painkillers more cautiously, US drug makers have started marketing them more aggressively overseas. Martins speculates that this is why young people in other countries have gained easier access to them.

"What's needed now is for health officials around the world to educate their physicians about the risks posed by these drugs, so that they don't make the same mistake American doctors did and overprescribe them," Martins says. "Ordinary people must also be educated. They need to understand that prescription painkillers must never be used without medical supervision."

# The future of data storage is in our DNA

As humanity creates more and more digital data, archiving the information on hard drives presents economic and ecological challenges. Today an ever-expanding network of large data-storage centers already accounts for more than 2 percent of all electricity consumption in the United States.

In an effort to develop cheaper and more sustainable storage methods, some scientists have begun experimenting with putting data onto nature's original hard drive: DNA. In the past five years, a number of research groups have shown that synthetic forms of DNA can be encoded with words, images, or music just as easily as with biological information.

Now Yaniv Erlich, an assistant professor of computer science at Columbia Engineering, and Dina Zielinski, a bioinformatics researcher at the New York Genome Center, have achieved a major breakthrough in this area, developing a technique that has enabled them to fit 60 percent more digital data onto a given strand of DNA than was previously possible. In a recent issue of the journal *Science*, the researchers describe how they managed to squeeze a trove of digital content — including a copy of the 1895 Lumière brothers film *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*, a full computer operating system, a \$50 Amazon gift card, a computer virus, and a 1948 study by information theorist Claude Shannon — onto a speck of DNA so small that if it existed in a living organism, it would likely carry the blueprints for just a handful of proteins. They say that their technique could theoretically enable scientists to cram millions of megabytes of information onto a single *gram* of DNA.

“To the best of our knowledge, this is the highest-density storage device ever created,” says Erlich.

Erlich and Zielinski's storage technique is also very reliable. The researchers say that even after they induced the DNA to make copies of itself, and then forced those copies to make copies, and so on, the resulting double helices were found to contain flawless replicas of the original data.

“We really tortured the content to see if there was anything we could do to make errors appear,” Erlich says. “But each time we read the files back onto our computers, they worked perfectly.”

Downloading data onto DNA is still too expensive for commercial use; it cost Erlich and Zielinski about \$9,000 to store and retrieve theirs. But the researchers suspect that if they and other scientists can continue to improve the efficiency with which they translate computer code, with its long strings of 0s and 1s, into the chemical language of DNA, made up of various combinations of the four nucleotides adenine (A), guanine (G), cytosine (C), and thymine (T), the strategy could eventually provide a cost-efficient option for archiving everything from Facebook posts to historical documents.

“One of the shortcomings of the way we've stored data up until now is that our storage media have continually become obsolete and have needed to be replaced by newer technologies,” says Erlich. “But DNA isn't going anywhere.”



Dina Zielinski and Yaniv Erlich



## NEW APP TO HELP DIABETICS

People with type 2 diabetes may soon find it easier to manage their condition, thanks to an app that predicts how particular foods are likely to influence their blood-sugar levels.

The app, GlucOracle, which is still in development, asks users to upload photos of their meals, along with rough estimates of the meals' nutritional content and finger-stick blood measurements. After a week of monitoring how a person responds to different foods, the app begins to predict post-meal blood-sugar levels.

“Even with expert guidance, it's difficult for people to understand the true impact of their dietary choices, particularly on a meal-to-meal basis,” says David Albers, an associate research scientist in biomedical informatics at Columbia University Medical Center, who helped develop the technology. “Our algorithm predicts the consequences of eating a specific meal before the food is eaten, allowing individuals to make better nutritional choices during mealtime.”

The researchers are now tweaking the technology and planning a large clinical trial; they expect GlucOracle to be ready for widespread use within two years.

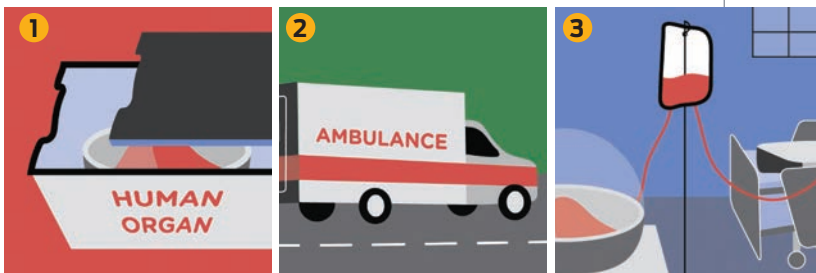


## EXPLORATIONS

# Medical breakthrough could increase supply of donor organs

Every year, thousands of Americans die awaiting organ transplants. Donor shortages are a problem, but another is that organs deteriorate quickly: by the time they are harvested, packed in ice, and transported to where they are needed, many are no longer usable.

Now researchers led by Gordana Vunjak-Novakovic, a Columbia professor of biomedical engineering and medical sciences, and Matt Bacchetta, a Columbia associate professor of surgery, have developed a procedure that they say could enable physicians to repair the damage that donated organs incur en route, thereby dramatically increasing the number that can be transplanted. Their approach, which begins at the bedside of the intended recipient, calls for placing the organ into a hermetically sealed chamber and infusing it with blood and stem cells derived from that patient. They say that after a few days in this apparatus, an organ could be restored to near-perfect health and be ready for transplantation.



“The organ would receive a continuous flow of the recipient’s blood so that its dried-out capillaries and veins would open up and function properly again,” says Vunjak-Novakovic. “At the same time, any parts of the organ with extensive cellular damage would be restored by the growth of new tissue developing out of the stem cells.”

Vunjak-Novakovic, Bacchetta, and colleagues recently tested their procedure on a pig lung, successfully restoring its function after having allowed it to deteriorate for several days. They say their technology — which is currently designed for transplanting lungs but could be adapted for other organs — should be ready for human trials within two to three years.

“We’ve chosen to focus on lungs at first because they are especially fragile: more than 80 percent of donated lungs are deemed unusable by surgeons when they arrive at their destination,” Vunjak-Novakovic says. “We think that if we can restore lungs, we could also restore livers, kidneys, pancreases, and even hearts.”

A donated organ is put on ice, delivered to the recipient, and then infused with that person’s blood and stem cells before surgery.

# How *Citizens United* changed our politics

Since the US Supreme Court ruled, in 2010, that corporations and labor unions can spend freely on political advertisements, unprecedented amounts of money have poured into American elections.

Who has benefited from the influx of cash? Overwhelmingly, the Republican Party, according to new research by Columbia political scientist Carlo Prato. He and Nour Abdul-Razzak, of the University of Chicago, and Stephane Wolton, of the London School of Economics and Political Science, recently conducted one of the first studies to quantify the effects of the *Citizens United* ruling on election outcomes. After comparing the results of state legislative elections held between 1990 and 2015, the researchers found that in the twenty-three states that formerly restricted corporate and union political spending, Republicans have won a three-to-four-point greater share of the vote since 2010 than would otherwise have been expected, given national voting trends. Not surprisingly, this appears to have won the GOP many tight races: the party’s share of legislative seats in these states has jumped by an average of 5 percent.

In states with many powerful corporations and relatively low union membership, such as Texas, Mississippi, Idaho, and North and South Carolina, the *Citizens United* ruling appears to have increased Republican seat share by as much as twelve points. In states with high union membership, such as California, New York, Illinois, and Pennsylvania, the case has had no discernible effect on the partisan balance of legislatures.

“In many states, Democrats are getting crushed,” Prato says. “In those with strong unions, they are merely holding their own.”

# The rove beetles' magical mystery lure

**Q**uestion: What looks like an ant, acts like an ant, smells like an ant, and yet is *not* an ant?

**Answer:** A rare beetle that has evolved to mimic an ant so convincingly, down to the pheromones it secretes, that it can live inside an ant colony even as it eats the ants' eggs.

"There is nothing else quite like this in all of nature," says Joseph Parker, a Columbia postdoctoral researcher who studies the insects. "These beetles, which are members of the rove-beetle family, no longer bear any resemblance to their own relatives. Instead, they have the narrow waists, long legs, and chemical-signaling mechanisms of the ants they prey upon."

To understand how these remarkable creatures

past hundred million years. They say that this is one of the most dramatic examples ever documented of what biologists call *convergent evolution* — when different species respond to a chal-

There is much that scientists still do not know about ant-mimicking rove beetles: Do they live their entire lives inside ant colonies or come and go? Do ants ever discover their ploy and kill them?

laboratory. "Army ants live in such large and socially complex communities that when you capture some of them and put them in the lab, they don't act naturally," Parker says. "When scientists



A rove beetle, at right, with a Malaysian army ant.

## "There is nothing else quite like this in all of nature."

evolved, Parker and Munetoshi Maruyama, a biologist at Japan's Kyushu University, have spent the past ten years collecting specimens from rainforests around the world and then analyzing their DNA. By constructing a family tree of 180 species of rove beetles — only a small number of which resemble and live among ants — they have discovered that multiple species have evolved ant-like characteristics independently of one another over the

challenge in their environment with the same adaptation.

"One of the main challenges for rove beetles living in tropical rainforests has always been surviving in the vicinity of enormous colonies of aggressive, marauding army ants," says Parker, whose paper appears in the journal *Current Biology*. "Many beetles have stumbled upon the same unlikely strategy: rushing headlong into the danger, infiltrating the ant colonies and feasting on their brood."

Do ants benefit somehow from the beetles' presence?

"It's extremely difficult to observe these guys interacting in nature, because in most colonies the ants outnumber the beetles by about five thousand to one," says Parker. "On the rare occasion you spot a beetle among them, you usually grab it immediately, because you don't want to lose sight of it and miss your chance to collect a new specimen."

Nor is it feasible to transplant ant colonies into a

laboratory. "Army ants live in such large and socially complex communities that when you capture some of them and put them in the lab, they don't act naturally," Parker says. "When scientists

have tried, the ants have died within a few days." Parker and Maruyama hope that further analysis of the beetle specimens they have collected, many of which are new to science, will yield additional insights.

"Many of these beetles have special glands in their abdomens, and one hypothesis we're exploring is that they excrete something that is nutritious for the ants," says Parker, who notes that ants can sometimes be seen licking the beetles' midsections. "If this is true, it would suggest that the ants are getting something valuable out of this arrangement, too — that they're not necessarily the dupes they appear to be."



## EXPLORATIONS

# Deep beneath the Dead Sea, a harbinger of future drought

**T**he Middle East, like many arid regions, is expected to get even drier this century as a result of global warming. But how *much* drier?

To answer that question, a team that includes several Columbia researchers drilled more than fifteen hundred feet beneath the floor of the Dead Sea, the landlocked body of salt water between Israel and Jordan, to collect core samples. Their hope was that they might find evidence of how the region was affected by previous climate fluctuations. To their surprise, they discovered two enormous layers of crystalline salt, each two hundred to three hundred feet thick, encased within tens of thousands of years' worth of hardened mud. After carefully analyzing the core samples, the scientists determined that the salt layers accumulated during two periods — one about 120,000 years ago, and the other roughly ten thousand years ago — when the planet's temperature is known to have increased. They concluded that the Dead Sea must have largely evaporated during these warm periods, and as a result huge piles of salt were deposited on the sea floor.

"The water level dropped to about 40 percent of its historical average in each of these periods," says Yael Kiro, a geochemist at Columbia's Lamont-Doherty



The Dead Sea contains some of the world's saltiest water.

Earth Observatory, who led the study, which appeared in the journal *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*. "We discovered this by chemically analyzing tiny bubbles of fluid trapped inside the salt, which reveal the relative salinity of the water at any given time."

The fact that the Dead Sea shrank so dramatically in the past, Kiro and her colleagues say, suggests that it could dry up again. They point out that during the hotter of the two previous warm periods, which is the one that began some 120,000 years ago, average global temperatures rose about four degrees Fahrenheit — an increase similar to what is expected to occur this century as

a result of man-made global warming. The prospect of the Dead Sea drying up again is alarming, they say, because its level is a reliable indicator of the amount of drinking water available to tens of millions of people. That's because it is the endpoint of the Jordan River, which travels more than 150 miles before draining into it.

"Our study shows that in the past, rainfall levels dropped so much that the fresh water nearly stopped flowing," says Steven Goldstein '76CC, '86GSAS, another Lamont-Doherty geochemist who worked on the project. "This means that if it keeps getting hotter now, it could stop running again."

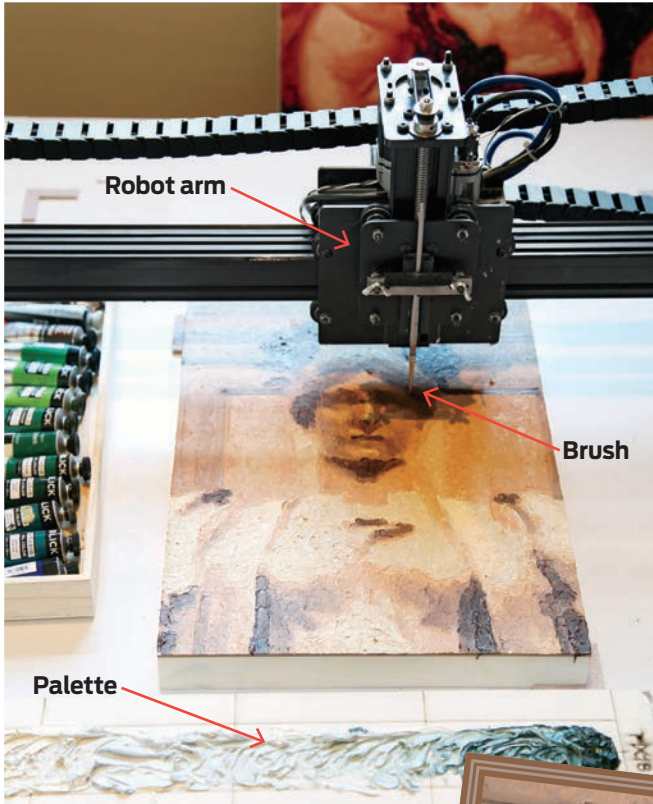
## Gut bacteria linked to chronic fatigue syndrome

**S**cientists at Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health have discovered that people with chronic fatigue syndrome, a mysterious and often debilitating disorder that affects more than one million Americans, have abnormal levels of certain gut bacteria.

While medical researchers have long suspected that an imbalanced gut microbiome may contribute to chronic fatigue, the

Columbia study is among the first to demonstrate that heightened or lowered levels of seven bacteria — *Faecalibacterium*, *Roseburia*, *Dorea*, *Coprococcus*, *Clostridium*, *Ruminococcus*, and *Coprobacillus* — are linked to the condition.

"By identifying the specific bacteria involved, we are one step closer to more accurate diagnosis and targeted therapies," says senior study author W. Ian Lipkin.



## Painted by Mr. Robot

Can machines be curious and expressive? Researchers at Columbia's Creative Machines Lab think so. The lab brings together engineers, computer scientists, physicists, mathematicians, and biologists to push the boundaries of artificial intelligence and digital manufacturing. Among their latest creations: robots that are self-reflective, questioning, and even artistic. "We trained decommissioned factory robots, imbued with creative AI, to paint," says Hod Lipson, a professor of mechanical engineering and data science and the director of the lab. "Some were good. Some weren't. And one stood out: PIX18." We asked if PIX18 could create some artwork for the magazine. The result, an homage to Daniel Chester French, captures Alma Mater in sepia-toned splendor.



### STUDY HALL RESEARCH BRIEFS

**Prescription overload** The number of older Americans taking three or more psychiatric, pain, or sleep medications more than doubled between 2004 and 2013, according to a study co-led by Columbia psychiatrist Mark Olfson '95PH. He says the findings suggest that physicians are overprescribing these drugs to seniors and thus putting them at risk for health problems that can occur when the drugs are combined.

**Inspired by love** Dating someone from another culture can boost your creativity, according to research by Jackson Lu, a PhD candidate at Columbia Business School. After administering creativity tests to 109 students at France's INSEAD business school at the beginning and end of their ten-month MBA program, Lu found that those who engaged in "close intercultural romantic relationships" during their time at school saw their scores rise sharply.

**How old is your brain?** Columbia University Medical Center researchers Asa Abeliovich and Herve Rhinn have identified a common genetic variant that accelerates brain aging and may influence an older person's risk for neurodegenerative diseases. The discovery is expected to point to new therapeutic targets for the treatment of age-related brain disorders such as Alzheimer's disease.

**Smog relief** Folic acid and vitamin B<sub>6</sub> and B<sub>12</sub> supplements can protect your cardiovascular and immune systems against damage caused by air pollution, according to a study coauthored by Andrea Baccarelli, the chair of the Mailman School of Public Health's environmental health sciences department.

**It takes a village** Autistic children who spend a lot of time with a grandmother are diagnosed an average of five months earlier, according to a study led by Columbia Business School economist Nachum Sicherman '87GSAS. He says the findings suggest that family and friends may be more likely than parents to recognize early-warning signs of autism in a child, because their points of view may be more objective.

**Blowing in the wind** Faculty and students at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs and Columbia Engineering recently analyzed trash on New York City streets and found that 41 percent of it is plastic. Lead researcher Ester Fuchs says the findings support recent calls for legislation requiring the city's retailers to charge shoppers a small fee for single-use plastic bags.

— Julia Joy



# NETWORK

YOUR ALUMNI  
CONNECTION

## New York through New Eyes



Justin Davidson '90GSAS, '94SOA has spent a decade writing about art and architecture for *New York* magazine, and his new book, *Magnetic City: A Walking Companion to New York*, offers seven tours that set out to capture the “myth and magic and possibility” of the city he calls home. We asked the Pulitzer Prize–winning critic and Upper West Side resident to tell us more about some of the New York City places and spaces that have captured his imagination.



### LOWER MANHATTAN

The corner of South and Fulton Streets in Lower Manhattan is one of the most evocative in New York. In the early nineteenth century, the six-story building at 92 South Street was the Fulton Ferry Hotel. It was eulogized by *New Yorker* writer Joseph Mitchell in his 1952 essay “Up in the Old Hotel.” In Mitchell’s time, the building was home to Sloppy Louie’s, a greasy spoon that was a legendary hangout for workers from the Fulton Fish Market. The market and the restaurant are long gone, but the dusty, empty hotel rooms are pretty much still as Mitchell found them, in a state of almost sacramental decay.

### SOUTH BRONX

The South Bronx is certainly ready to be rediscovered, and the art deco apartment buildings on the Grand Concourse are testament to a previous generation’s dreams of future prosperity. With its aquatic-themed mosaics, wavy façade, and phantasmagorical murals, the Fish Building at 1150 Grand Concourse is an architectural essay on happiness. Not many buildings in New York express such random joy.

### UPPER WEST SIDE

Riverside Drive was once a boulevard of mansions, and the Rice mansion at the southeast corner of Riverside and West 89th Street is one of the few that has survived. It’s now a yeshiva, but in the early 1900s it was the home of a very accomplished family. Isaac Rice 1880LAW was a lawyer, composer, and chess player. His wife, Julia, a community activist, campaigned against noise pollution. She founded the Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise and even hired Columbia students to count tugboat toots on the Hudson River. The Rices raised six kids, one of whom became an aviatrix and another of whom sailed around the world. They were passionate advocates, idealistic eccentrics, and earnest participants in the city’s cultural life. They seem perfectly emblematic of the restless energy of New York’s Jewish bourgeoisie and the spirit of the Upper West Side.



In his photography series *New York to Los Angeles*, **Ashok Sinha '99SEAS** captures the abstract beauty of the view from an airplane window. Several of his sweeping aerial photos, shot during ordinary commercial cross-country flights, are currently on display at the Marion Center for Photographic Arts in Santa Fe (including *New York to Los Angeles 1*, left). Sinha is also a photojournalist and the founder of Cartwheel Initiative, a nonprofit that runs photography and animation workshops for refugee children.

## ASK AN ALUM FILM FORUM



**Erika Dilday '93JRN, '94BUS** is the executive director of the Maysles Documentary Center in Harlem, founded by influential documentarian Albert Maysles. With his brother David, Maysles produced and directed classics such as *Salesman*, *Gimme Shelter*, and *Grey Gardens* in the 1960s and '70s.

**COLUMBIA MAGAZINE:** What does the Maysles Documentary Center do?  
**ERIKA DILDAY:** We have three divisions: a community cinema, an education program, and a

film-production area. The cinema is pay-what-you-wish, and we often hold post-screening discussions with directors. In our education program, we teach free and low-cost filmmaking courses to youths and adults. We also make documentary films; the most recent, *In Transit*, won a Special Jury Mention

at the 2015 Tribeca Film Festival. I've managed all three divisions since joining the center in 2012.

**CM:** You have degrees in business and journalism from Columbia. How has that education helped you in this job?

**ED:** My business training helps with the day-to-day

aspects of running a nonprofit — keeping the lights on. Journalism, in some ways, is more important. Our mission at the center is really about the intersection of social justice and art. From studying business and journalism, I've learned how to balance storytelling and journalistic integrity



with the need to stay in business. The best thing that I got from my dual degree at Columbia was the ability to give both sides the honest attention they need.

**CM:** Why is documentary film an important medium today?

**ED:** For one thing, it's accessible. Anybody can make a documentary, and the ability to document what goes on around us has really changed our world. Narrative films about real subjects often dramatize stories and alter facts, but documentaries record events as they happen, often in

real time. With so much fake news out there and information that isn't quite believable, people are more likely to trust information when it comes directly from a source.

**CM:** How has the center affected Harlem?

**ED:** The center is a place for entertainment, but also for social action and public service. Many of the films that we show, even those from overseas, tackle issues that we deal with in our community, such as health-care costs, poverty, hunger, and affordable-housing shortages. By screening

these documentaries here in Harlem, we try to make the world a little bit smaller and gain a better understanding of each other.

**CM:** Can you tell us about the center's education programs for young people?

**ED:** One that's having a big impact right now is our Community Producers Program for court-involved youths. We teach teens and young adults on probation how to tell their own stories, an important skill for people leaving the criminal-justice system. The program also helps youths actively pursue topics that interest them; they've tackled issues like fatherhood, immigration, and foster-care reform. Often, people who struggle in school do well with a camera.

**CM:** There are thousands of documentaries released every year. Do you have any recent favorites?

**ED:** Without question, Raoul Peck's *I Am Not Your Negro*, which is about racism in the US and the civil-rights movement. The film was an Oscar nominee, and we were one of two Manhattan theaters to screen it during the nomination process.

**CM:** What are the key ingredients of a good documentary?


**ED:** Access to unlimited information about a subject, openness to tell all sides of a story, and a good editor.

— *Julia Joy*

## Butterfly Effect

**B**utterflies may be ephemeral, but they have held cultural weight for millennia, often portrayed in folklore and art as embodiments of the human soul. For Jeffrey Glassberg '93LAW, preserving humankind's connection to these delicate creatures has been a life mission. "People have always been fascinated by butterflies — by their beauty, their gracefulness, and the fleeting nature of their lives," says Glassberg, who founded the North American Butterfly Association (NABA), a non-profit conservation organization, in 1992.

Before butterflies became a primary commitment, Glassberg was a genetics researcher and the leader of a biotech company that pioneered the use of DNA fingerprinting. He sold the company in 1988 as he became increasingly interested in environmental protection — a decision that led him to Columbia Law School. "I thought that butterflies could use legal help," he says. Near the end of his time at Columbia, he founded NABA, the result of years of collaboration with other butterflyers. Though his legal knowledge was useful as the director of a nonprofit, he never ended up practicing law, returning instead to the worlds of academia and research biology.



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Since founding NABA, Glassberg, who today is an adjunct professor of evolutionary biology at Rice University, has written eight field guides on butterfly identification, including *Butterflies through Binoculars*, the first-ever resource on net-less butterflying. Until the late twentieth century, a butterfly typically had to catch, kill, and pin his specimens; nowadays, improved binoculars and cameras allow for up-close views of live butterflies in their natural habitats. Public interest in butterflying has significantly increased as a result.



A Gulf fritillary drinks nectar.

Nonetheless, the number of butterflies continues to shrink: “Every single day, there are fewer than there were the day before,” says Glassberg, who attributes this loss primarily to habitat destruction and pesticide use. Caterpillars are picky eaters; most species feed solely on specific plant types. Without these plants, certain butterflies can’t exist. Total extinction would have devastating consequences for the environment: plants would

lose pollinators and birds would lose caterpillars, a necessary food source for their survival.

But NABA has made some strides. In 1998, the organization saved the last living population of regal fritillaries in the eastern United States from an Army base attempting to replace their habitat with tanks. Now NABA is set on saving the Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak, an endangered butterfly species in southern Florida, by distributing samples of pineland croton (the only plant it eats) to area homeowners. Anybody anywhere can do his or her part to conserve butterflies by planting a garden with flora consumed by local species — something that NABA encourages with a regional gardening guide on its website.

“One of the wonderful things about working with butterflies is that they take you everywhere,” says Glassberg, who has traveled overseas and to every US state to observe and photograph regional species at peak season. And though he is motivated by the fact that his work is of environmental importance, the rewards of the job are as personal as they are universal. “Being out in a field full of butterflies just makes me feel incredibly good,” says Glassberg. “There’s nothing better in the world.”



Jeffrey Glassberg

— Julia Joy

## NEWSMAKERS

- **C. J. Chivers '95JRN**, a senior writer for the *New York Times*, won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing. His piece “The Fighter” follows a Marine’s descent into violence after he returns home from the war in Afghanistan. Chivers, who served in the Marine Corps during the Gulf War, also won a Pulitzer in 2009 as part of a *New York Times* team reporting in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- **Mahir Cetiz '13GSAS**, a composer and Core lecturer in the humanities at Columbia, won a Guggenheim Fellowship, given in support of exceptional scholarship or creative work. Cetiz was the assistant conductor of the Columbia University Orchestra while studying for his doctorate in musical arts, and his compositions have been performed by the New York Philharmonic and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.
- Two Columbians won PEN awards for their contributions to literary magazines. **Crystal Hana Kim '09CC, '14SOA** won a 2017 PEN/Robert J. Dau Short Story Prize for Emerging Writers — awarded to twelve writers annually for fiction published in a magazine or on a website — for her story “Solee,” which was published in the *Southern Review*. **Joel Whitney '02SOA** received the PEN/Nora Magid Award for Editing for his work on the online literary magazine *Guernica*.
- *Keep the Change*, a film by **Rachel Israel '13SOA** and **Kurt Enger '07SOA**, won the Founders Award for Best US Narrative Feature at the Tribeca Film Festival in April. The film — a romance about two people with autism who meet at a disability support group — began as a short film for Israel’s thesis at Columbia. Israel met Enger at a School of the Arts alumni breakfast in 2015, and they worked together to turn the short into a feature (they also married last year and had a baby in October).
- **Donnel Baird '13BUS** and **Matthew Schwartz '00CC, '02LAW** appeared on *Crain’s New York Business’s* “40 Under 40” list. Baird is a social entrepreneur bringing affordable energy to low-income neighborhoods (see our Winter 2015 story “Power for the People”). Schwartz spent a decade as an Assistant US Attorney, prosecuting financial crimes (he led the investigation into Bernie Madoff). Now he works for the defense, helping to build the white-collar criminal practice at law firm Boies Schiller Flexner.



Find and connect with all your classmates at [alumni.columbia.edu](http://alumni.columbia.edu)



# BULLETIN

## UNIVERSITY NEWS AND VIEWS

### CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY PLAN DETAILS EMISSIONS TARGETS

Columbia University has pledged to achieve a notable reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions under its first campus sustainability plan. Released on April 21, a day before Earth Day, the plan was produced with

of 80 percent by 2050. The University will publicly report its greenhouse-gas emissions through the Climate Registry, a rigorous accounting protocol.

Transportation goals include establishing baseline

Waste-management goals include developing baseline levels for waste, expanding a food-composting pilot project run in conjunction with New York City's Department of Sanitation, and improving recycling rates.



Like all new buildings on the Manhattanville campus, the Jerome L. Greene Science Center is a model of environmental sustainability.

extensive input from students, administrators, and faculty scientists — many of them leaders in the sustainability field.

Energy goals include reducing greenhouse-gas emissions from buildings and purchased electricity by 35 percent (from 2006 levels) by 2020, and matching New York City's emission-reduction target

levels of greenhouse-gas emissions for all University-related and commuter travel, setting guidelines for buying fuel-efficient vehicles, and creating programs that will encourage commuters to walk, bicycle, and use public transit. Columbia will also explore ways to reduce and offset greenhouse-gas emissions for air and other long-distance travel.

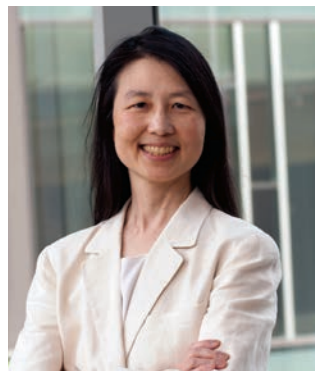
“As an institution engaged in education and research on environmental protection, it is important that we practice what we preach and apply what we learn,” says Michael Gerrard ’72CC, an environmental-law professor who helped to develop the plan. “We still have quite a bit of work to do, but this plan will show the way.”

## JEANNETTE WING TO DIRECT DATA SCIENCE INSTITUTE

Jeannette Wing has been named the Avaneassians Director of Columbia's Data Science Institute and Professor of Computer Science, effective in July. In leading the Data Science Institute, she will oversee the University's efforts to foster collaborations between data scientists and scholars whose fields are being transformed by the availability of copious data. Since its founding in 2012, the institute has grown from its base at Columbia Engineering to include more than two hundred affiliated researchers across the University.

Wing, an MIT-educated computer scientist who formerly served as a corporate vice president at Microsoft Research, is an expert on the reliability and security of computing systems. She previously held executive positions at Carnegie Mellon University and the National Science Foundation.

"The benefits to be derived from Jeannette's leadership and her presence here will be immense," said President Lee C. Bollinger in announcing her appointment.



Jeannette Wing



## TENNIS TEAM WINS IVY TITLE (AGAIN)

The Columbia men's tennis team won its fourth consecutive Ivy League championship this spring, sharing the crown with Harvard and Cornell, as the three teams finished the season with the same 6–1 conference record. The Lions squad, led by All-Ivy players Shawn Hadavi, Jackie Tang, and brothers Richard and Victor Pham, became the first Columbia program to win four straight conference crowns since the fencing team's eight-year streak from 1986 to 1993.

## COLUMBIA WORLD PROJECTS WILL ADDRESS PRESSING GLOBAL ISSUES

This spring the University announced the creation of a new institution called Columbia World Projects, which will help academics and outside organizations work together to solve real-world problems.

To be housed in the University Forum, a new academic conference center on the Manhattanville campus, Columbia World Projects will provide teaching and staff support, project-management expertise, and legal, financial, and fundraising assistance to competitively selected research projects that have the potential to make profound contributions to society.

In an e-mail announcing the creation of Columbia World Projects

on April 11, President Lee C. Bollinger said the formation of the institution follows more than two years of discussions with faculty, deans, and outside advisers about how Columbia might build new connections with "organizations and parties beyond the academy that possess the power and influence to transform [scholarship] into concrete consequences benefiting humanity."

He said the institution's mission is to help Columbia "better connect with the world at-large where laws and policies are made, actions taken, and norms and attitudes shaped."

For more information about Columbia World Projects, visit [columbia.edu/content/columbia-world-projects.html](http://columbia.edu/content/columbia-world-projects.html).



## JOHN LEWIS SPEAKS AT SIPA'S 70TH-ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

**J**ohn Lewis '97HON, the civil-rights icon and long-time Democratic congressman from Georgia, delivered a rousing speech at the School of International and Public Affairs' annual David N. Dinkins Leadership and Public Policy Forum in April, held as part of a weekend-long series of events celebrating the school's seventieth anniversary.

Addressing hundreds of alumni, faculty, and students in Miller Theatre, the seventy-seven-year-old Lewis explained how growing up a child of black sharecroppers in the Jim Crow South

instilled in him a lifelong commitment to combating social injustice. He described his role in organizing the Freedom Rides and the march over Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge in the 1960s, and his ongoing work on behalf of the millions of Atlanta residents he has represented in Congress since 1986.

Lewis's political awakening came early; when he was a young child, he said, his elders told him segregation was just "the way it is" and advised him to avoid trouble with whites. By the time he was in high school, however, he had



John Lewis

decided "to get in the way, to get in good trouble — necessary trouble. And I've been getting in trouble ever since."

To watch Lewis's speech, visit [sipa.columbia.edu/news-center/article/john-lewis-70th](http://sipa.columbia.edu/news-center/article/john-lewis-70th).

## VUNJAK-NOVAKOVIC NAMED UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR

**G**ordana Vunjak-Novakovic, a Columbia medical researcher who is a pioneer in the field of tissue engineering, has been named a University Professor, Columbia's highest academic honor.

Vunjak-Novakovic is the Mikati Foundation Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Medical Sciences, a joint appointment at the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science and Columbia University Medical Center.

She also directs Columbia's Laboratory for Stem Cells and Tissue Engineering, which is located at the medical center.

An expert on the therapeutic potential of human stem cells, Vunjak-Novakovic has demonstrated through her groundbreaking research how these adaptable cells can be used to grow replacement body parts, to generate tiny pieces of human tissue for use in testing new

drugs, and to improve the safety of organ-transplant procedures (see related story on page 46).

"Yet referencing the impact of these discoveries on society and human health, impressive as they are, provides only a partial account of Professor Vunjak-Novakovic's many contributions to this institution, higher education, and the world beyond," said President Lee C. Bollinger in announcing her new appointment. "Professor Vunjak-Novakovic is an academic partner to

numerous investigators at Columbia and other universities; an adviser sought by government and industry; a mentor deeply admired by junior faculty, clinical fellows, and post-doctoral researchers; and the entrepreneurial founder of three public-spirited biotechnology companies."

A native of Serbia, Vunjak-Novakovic became the first female Columbia professor elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 2012.



Gordana Vunjak-Novakovic

# THE LION OF LEWISOHN HALL

After twenty years as dean of the School of General Studies, Peter Awn says the time is right to step aside

**O**n his first day at Columbia in 1978, Peter Awn, a newly minted assistant professor of religion, looked around the lecture room in Kent Hall and noticed something peculiar: some of the undergraduate students did not look the part. After class, he went to his department chair and said, “Who are those people?” The chair laughed and said, “Go over to Lewisohn Hall and find out.”

Awn went. There he discovered the School of General Studies, Columbia’s liberal-arts college for nontraditional students. Awn was intrigued. At the time, undergraduate studies at Columbia were locked in what Awn calls a “culture war”: many Columbia College partisans saw GS as “Columbia’s backdoor,” Awn says — a diluter of academic standards and a wrench in the College’s recruitment efforts. But Awn believed that GS, which was founded in 1947 in response to the flood of World War II veterans entering college on the GI Bill, could make Columbia’s undergraduate experience richer than any other in the Ivy League. He got involved with GS as a faculty member, serving on committees and advising students. He became dean in 1997. Over the next twenty years, he would transform the school in ways even he could not have imagined.

A self-described Brooklyn kid born to Lebanese Christian immigrants, Awn was ordained as a Catholic priest and earned a PhD in Islamic studies from Harvard before landing at Columbia. This eclectic background made him a perfect fit for GS, which had become a



Peter Awn

haven for career changers and people who had delayed or interrupted their college education. Some had raised families. Some had joined the workforce out of high school. Many were artists — musicians, ballet dancers — who spent their college years on the stage. Shortly after Awn became dean, the dot-com bubble burst and a horde of enterprising twentysomethings who had left school to pursue tech entrepreneurship decided it was time to go back; many came to GS. But it was in 2002, with the US fighting in Afghanistan and clearly gearing up for a major military conflict with Iraq, that Awn and vice dean Curtis Rodgers got together and said, “We should get back to our roots.”

Wanting to spread the word about the extraordinary opportunity for an Ivy League education that GS offers veterans, Awn and Rodgers intensified their veteran-recruitment effort, an endeavor soon aided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Currently, out of 2,100 students, GS has 460 veterans, making it “by far the most robust undergraduate veterans program” in the Ivies, says Awn, adding that reading *The Iliad* with

students who have been to war is just one of the unusual opportunities that GS provides. Awn also speaks proudly of serving students whose education had been postponed due to medical or substance issues, and of formerly incarcerated people “who are enormously talented and who bring incredible value to the intellectual discourse.”

Now, after twenty years as dean, Awn is stepping down. “Part of the challenge of being an administrator is knowing when to pass the baton,” Awn says. “I wanted to pick a time when the school would be in such terrific shape, and the senior administration so supportive, that we’d have an orderly transition. This is that time.”

Things have come a long way since 1997. Under Awn, GS developed sophisticated metrics to evaluate not only whether prospective GS students “can do the work” but whether they will excel in the classroom and be “as good as the traditional students who come from highly selective private schools.” On the curricular side, Awn oversaw the creation of joint BA programs with Sciences Po in Paris, the City University of Hong Kong, and Trinity College Dublin.

Often, Columbia College alumni will tell Awn how much they valued learning with students whose paths were so different from their own. Awn concurs. “Consider,” he says, “that this year’s valedictorian is a Marine veteran, and the salutatorian is a woman in her sixties who raised three children and is a brilliant anthropologist.”

Next year, Awn will take academic leave, and then he’ll return to where he started at Columbia. “I’m going back to the classroom,” he says. “Which I love.”



## Barney: Grove Press and Barney Rosset

By Michael Rosenthal '67GSAS (Arcade)

Michael Rosenthal's entertaining biography of Grove Press publisher Barney Rosset claims that Rosset "was unquestionably the most daring and arguably the most significant American book publisher of the twentieth century." While Charles Scribner, Roger Straus and John Farrar, Bennett Cerf '20CC, and others might joust over "most significant," Rosenthal '67GSAS, in just under two hundred pages, certainly makes a convincing and enjoyable case for Rosset as the most daring.

A touch of hyperbole is almost obligatory in sketching Rosset's "ferocious competitiveness" and "instinctive genius" for risk-taking, both in the books he decided to publish and in the lawsuits he took on to defend them. Rosenthal notes that in the landmark fight over Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, Rosset from his own pocket "funded sixty [trials] in twenty-one states" at a cost of about two million dollars in today's currency, a herculean effort that ended finally in a Supreme Court victory in 1964. "No one

Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* — Rosenthal's clear admiration for Rosset is tempered by seeing his impetuous subject whole. Calling him only "Barney" throughout, Rosenthal achieves both an amused familiarity and an ironic distance that help underline his characterization of Rosset as "eternally young — some might say adolescent," a "radical anomaly" in a conservative business, forever happily suffused with undergraduate enthusiasm. (Rosenthal notes that Rosset first read *Tropic of Cancer* after he bought a contraband copy under the counter at a New York bookshop during his first — and only — year at Swarthmore.)

Rosenthal, who is the former Campbell Professor in the Humanities at Columbia, where he taught for thirty-seven years, has made illuminating use of the Rosset papers in Columbia's Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The narrative goes cradle to grave to suggest the origins and trace the effects of the publisher's unassimilated teenage sensibility, which led to rebellions of every sort, including publishing Victorian spanking literature alongside Nobel laureates. In his own time, Rosset's popular reputation as a cheerful pornographer sometimes threatened to overshadow his visionary taste: Rosset was the first to bring both the unexpurgated Marquis de Sade and the film *I Am Curious (Yellow)* to

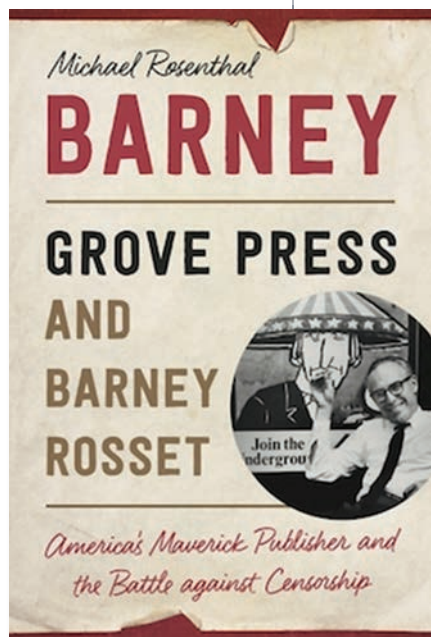
the US, even as he was publishing *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. It was Rosset who introduced American readers

to Samuel Beckett, Pablo Neruda, Harold Pinter, Marguerite Duras, Octavio Paz, Jean Genet, Tom Stoppard, Kenzaburo Oe, and Mario Vargas Llosa.

Rosenthal does not shy away from Rosset the abusive boss, Rosset the sexual adventurer (in and outside of his five marriages), Rosset the inept businessman, Rosset the domineering ("even vicious") husband — all

but Barney could have prevailed," Rosenthal contends. Thanks to Rosset, by the end of the 1960s, American literature had been forever freed from obscenity laws.

In the compelling tale of the three major First Amendment cases that form the book's central triptych of Rossetian accomplishment — *Tropic of Cancer*, D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and William S.



**In his own time, Rosset's popular reputation as a cheerful pornographer sometimes threatened to overshadow his visionary taste.**

the Rossets fueled by an apparently continuous intake of booze. In fact, Rosenthal is often at his wry best when framing some of the more notable excesses of his subject and the era. Describing Burroughs's shooting of his wife in an apparent "William Tell" demonstration at a Mexico City bar, Rosenthal writes, "Unfortunately, alcohol had rendered his hand less firm than he thought and the demonstration ended only by showing that a bullet in the head is likely to prove fatal. Mexican authorities treated it as an accident."

Rosenthal is fascinating on Rosset's role in bringing *Waiting for Godot* to an American audience, though readers may be forgiven for wishing for comparably juicy detail about some of Rosset's other notable acquisitions. But brevity, the soul of this book's wit, is an essential part of its charm; Rosenthal's previous studies of complex cultural figures — Lord Robert Baden-Powell (founder of the Boy Scouts) and Nicholas Murray Butler (Columbia's president for nearly the entire first half of the twentieth century) — were longer and more academic.

"In taking forbidden, offensive, and little-known work and finding an audience for it," Rosenthal writes, Barney Rosset "bestowed gifts on writers and readers everywhere." Michael Rosenthal, in taking a little-known and once-offensive publisher and turning insightful and witty attention on him, has bestowed his own gift on readers everywhere.

— *Harold Bauld '77CC*

## EXCERPT

# There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé

By Morgan Parker '10CC In her second poetry collection, Parker uses pop-culture references to comment on contemporary Black American womanhood.

## AFRO

I'm hiding secrets & weapons in there: buttermilk pancake cardboard, boxes of purple juice, a magic word our Auntie Angela spoke into her fist & released into hot black evening like gunpowder or a Kool, 40 yards of cheap wax prints, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, a Zulu folktale warning against hunters drunk on Polo shirts & Jägermeister, blueprints for building ergonomically perfect dancers & athletes, the chords to what would have been Michael's next song, a mule stuffed with diamonds & gold, Miss Holiday's vocal cords, the jokes Dave Chapelle's been crafting off the grid, sex & brown liquor intended for distribution at Sunday schools in white suburbs, or in other words exactly what a white glove might expect to find taped to my leg & swallowed down my gullet & locked in my trunk & fogging my dirty mind & glowing like treasure in my autopsy

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a website for ten million American dollars. Now he and his wife are leaving their cozy middle-class housing complex in East Delhi for the quiet, cloistered suburb of Gurgaon.

Not surprisingly, things quickly go awry. Mrs. Jha is homesick for her friends and neighbors; she prefers bucket showers to the fancy fixtures in Gurgaon, and she doesn't want to drive the new Mercedes. Mr. Jha, on the other hand, is obsessed with keeping up with the Chopras, the ostentatious neighbors next door. Meanwhile, the Jhas' son Rupak, a middling MBA candidate in America, worries about whether to tell his parents about his white girlfriend. Will his mother be disappointed? Might his newly aspirational father see her as a status symbol?

*The Windfall* is a perfect beach read, a sugary confection of a book that has already been optioned by Paramount for a television show. The repartee is fun and often outrageous, particularly as Mr. Jha and Mr. Chopra become embroiled in an arms race of opulence. When thieves try to scale the wall that surrounds

the Jha house, Mr. Chopra gets jealous: "Not a single thief had tried coming into the Chopras' property. It was worrying." Mr. Jha buys a Swarovski-crystal-studded sofa to impress the neighbors, only to find out that small pieces of glass

are actually not terribly comfortable. And on it goes.

But there is also a profound sadness to the satire. Mrs. Jha's pain is palpable — she

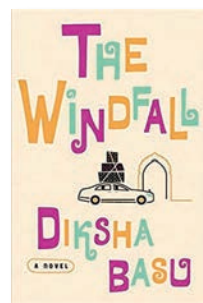
# The Windfall

By Diksha Basu '14SOA (Crown)

"Mr. Jha had worked hard, and now he was ready to live well."

So begins *The Windfall*, a breezy comedy of manners set against the complex social ecosystem of New Delhi. At the beginning of this debut

novel, by travel writer and actress Diksha Basu '14SOA, the Jha family is preparing for a big move. Mr. Jha — fifty-two years old and nearing the end of his career as a computer programmer — has just unexpectedly sold





## BOOKS

never asked for this life and doesn't know how to feel at home in it. Mr. Jha is so riddled with anxiety that even he can't enjoy Gurgaon. He's spent years coveting the shoe-shining machines at Delhi's fancy hotels. But when he buys one and unloads it from his car, Mr. Chopra thinks that he's getting rid of one belonging to the home's previous owner and praises him, calling the machine old-fashioned. Embarrassed, Mr. Jha returns it immediately.

One particularly troubling piece of collateral damage is Rupak. Before the move, Rupak's job prospects had been a source of pride. But Mr. Jha finds that, among the super-rich, it's trendy to discourage your child from getting a job, since it proves that you have enough money to provide for him. Like the shoe-polishing machine, Rupak is an outdated dream.

Basu, a native of New Delhi, is adept at navigating the complicated tiers of a society that has been ruled for generations by a rigid caste system. It's important that this is not a rags-to-riches tale of an untouchable making good. Even before the windfall, the Jhas had good jobs and maids of their own. As Rupak says, when trying to explain his homeland to his American friends: "His India was neither rich nor poor. There were no huge homes and elaborate weddings, nor were there slums and water shortages and child laborers. The middle ground was too confusing to explain to an outsider." But Basu, in this entertaining tale, does so admirably.

— Rebecca Shapiro

# The Death and Life of the Great Lakes

By Dan Egan '12JRN (W. W. Norton)

Earlier this year, Michigan's Department of Natural Resources made a novel offer in the name of environmental stewardship: come up with a plan to keep invasive Asian carp out of the Great Lakes and you could win a million dollars.

Only, to hear Dan Egan '12JRN, a reporter for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, tell it, this was not going to be easy money. The Great Lakes, for all their beauty and wonder, have no natural defenses against bighead and silver carp, which eat so much plankton that they threaten to decimate the food chain of any body of water they inhabit. And, as Egan reports, there is evidence that the carp may *already* have made

it into Lake Michigan, rendering the contest moot.

In Egan's meticulous retelling, the presence of the invasive carp in US waters can be traced to an Arkansas farmer who, in the late 1960s or early 1970s, imported what he thought was grass carp

— a more benign relative that helpfully devours aquatic weeds — to assist in the cleanup of polluted streams. Upon realizing his mistake, the farmer did the right thing and turned his carp stocks over to state fishery workers. But the damage may have already been done.

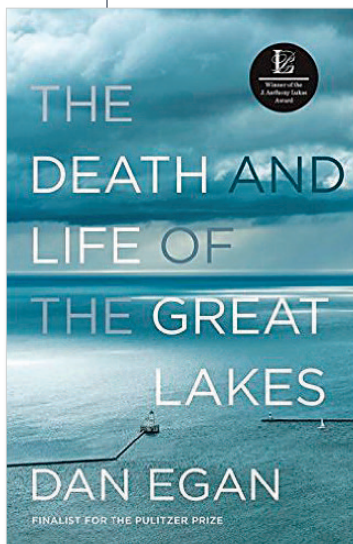
*The Death and Life of the Great Lakes*, Egan's first book and the winner

of the Graduate School of Journalism's J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Award, is full of stories like this one: head-slapping moments of human error, with a whiff of hubris. At the same time, the book emphasizes the difficulty of foreseeing the potentially dire consequences of seemingly innocuous actions.

What makes the Great Lakes — which contain 21 percent of the earth's surface freshwater — unique, Egan argues, is also what makes them uniquely vulnerable. Originally formed by retreating glaciers, the lakes spent the better part of fourteen thousand years completely isolated from other bodies of water. Like Native Americans unprepared for the arrival of smallpox, they were, as Egan puts it, "ecological babies" until the late nineteenth century, when invasive species started wandering up the man-made Erie Canal.

There are now more than 180 non-native species in the Great Lakes. They came by boat, mostly, hiding in the ballast like stowaways. Some, like coho salmon, were even introduced on purpose, to boost the local economy. (It's a lot more fun, apparently, to catch salmon, which put up a fight, than native trout, which have all the resistance "of a snagged rubber boot.") So many mussels have taken up residence in Lake Michigan that they are filtering out virtually all the plankton, a major food source for other lake dwellers. "This nearly vodka-clear water is not the sign of a healthy lake," Egan writes.

Invasive species aren't the only danger the lakes face. For several days in 2014, Toledo lost its entire water supply to a toxic algal bloom. The year before, the water level of Lake Michigan hit a record low, before surging over three feet in just two years, prompting floods



## READING LIST

### New and noteworthy releases

in Chicago. The culprits here are familiar: agricultural runoff and global warming.

Structuring the book geographically, Egan travels from one end of the lakes to the other, a remarkably ambitious narrative project. He's a gifted storyteller, and each chapter can be as entertaining as a good novella. But the overarching theme — the sense of mounting danger each time a new species slips into the lakes — can get swamped by an excess of anecdotes and characters.

Still, Egan — a two-time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in explanatory reporting — draws a vibrant portrait of the lakes and brings a pressing environmental issue to wider attention. This is what good science journalism ought to do: make us aware of problems we didn't even know affected us, rendering the familiar strange and the strange familiar. The Great Lakes are a vital part of American life and lore; but, as Egan demonstrates, there's a lot we still don't know about them, and our ignorance could come to haunt us.

Fortunately, Egan shows that all isn't lost — at least not yet. Thanks to new policies requiring ships to flush their ballasts, the influx of invasive species has all but stopped. Floating docks are helping mitigate the swings in lake level. Genetic engineers are devising ways to render carp infertile. And who knows? Someone may yet claim Michigan's tantalizing million-dollar prize.

— Ian Scheffler '12CC

#### **THE HEIRS** by Susan Rieger

'76LAW The wealthy Falke family is thrown into turmoil when, six months after the death of its patriarch, a woman comes forward, claiming that she had two children by the dead man. The battle over the inheritance gets ugly, with a widow and five grown sons also vying for their shares. But Rieger (a former Columbia associate provost) writes with compassion about these very complicated relationships.

#### **THE FACT OF A BODY**

by Alexandria Marzano-Lesnevich '01CC Marzano-Lesnevich was a graduate of Harvard Law School and a vehement opponent of the death penalty when she took a job as a criminal defense attorney in Louisiana, largely fighting capital cases. But when she met client Ricky Langley — a pedophile and child murderer — she realized that she wanted him to die. In a powerful and unusual hybrid of true crime and memoir, she simultaneously tells Langley's story and her own, which have haunting parallels.

#### **BUILDING THE NEW AMERICAN ECONOMY**

by Jeffrey D. Sachs Our country is more divided than ever, including on the related issues of the economy and the environment. In his latest book (introduced by Bernie Sanders), renowned economist and University

Professor Sachs proposes a plan for sustainable development. He tackles issues like infrastructure, energy, and the national debt, providing both explanations of where America has gone astray and concrete policy recommendations for the future.

#### **GOVERNING GLOBAL HEALTH** by Chelsea Clinton

'10PH and Devi Sridhar It takes a complex network of doctors, donors, data analysts, and others to combat major public-health crises like AIDS and Ebola, and according to Clinton and Sridhar the most effective networks are public-private partnerships, in which NGOs, traditional for-profit companies, and social enterprises work together with government agencies to tackle specific problems. In one of the first major studies of the subject, Clinton and Sridhar use two detailed case studies to evaluate the effectiveness of the public-private model.

#### **THE WOMEN IN THE CASTLE** by Jessica Shattuck

'01SOA Shattuck spent hours interviewing her German grandmother — who was a Nazi — about the complex moral choices that “ordinary Germans” faced during World War II. The result is a compelling novel about three widows trying to find a path forward after their husbands, all Resistance fighters, are killed during an assassination attempt against Hitler.

#### **SWELL** by Jill Eisenstadt

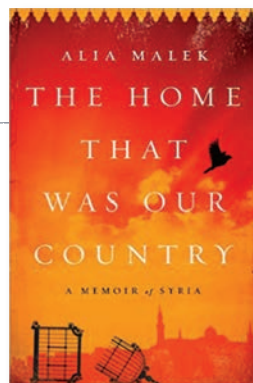
'87SOA Thirty years ago, Eisenstadt published her first novel, *From Rockaway*, adapted from her Columbia MFA thesis. The book became a cult classic, and she and her friends (Bret Easton Ellis, Jay McInerney, and Tama Janowitz '77BC, '86SOA) became known as the “literary brat pack.” Now, Eisenstadt returns to the Rockaways and several of her characters in *Swell*, a loose sequel about a family settling into an old beach house that holds secrets.





# The Road to Damascus

In 2011, Syrian-American journalist and civil-rights lawyer Alia Malek '06JRN returned to Damascus to reclaim her family's home. That trip became the basis of her new memoir, *The Home That Was Our Country*. Here she talks with her former Columbia professor Samuel Freedman.



**Samuel Freedman:** You moved back to Syria as the Arab Spring was beginning. What were your hopes at that time?

**Alia Malek:** I guess retrospectively this appears naive, but I was an optimist. I thought that the stagnation we had all come to associate with the Middle East had finally somehow been broken through. I knew the road would be rough, but I never imagined it would be *this* rough. I thought I was returning to a place that was finally moving into the future. Instead, we're in a place of catastrophe.

**SF:** Why did your family's home in Damascus mean so much to you?

**AM:** It was the apartment my grandmother Salma moved into when it was a new building and she was a new bride and Syria was a new country — a modern, independent nation-state. It was also the apartment my mom was raised in. And as I learned more about who lived in the building and what the relationships were like between the neighbors, I was drawn to it as a literary device. Your country, like your house,

is supposed to be somewhere that you belong and feel safe. It felt like my family was losing both to the same regime.

**SF:** You write beautifully about your multigenerational extended family, but your grandmother emerges as the central figure. What drew you to her as a subject?

**AM:** She was ordinary and extraordinary at the same time. She only had a grade-school education, but she strove to be more than was expected of her. She went out of her way to help people, particularly in areas where the government or other institutions had failed them. People coming to Damascus from the villages came to rely on her to help navigate the system. But then tragedy struck. She suffered a stroke when I was six years old and had locked-in syndrome for almost a decade. Like Syria itself, she was suspended between life and death.

**SF:** While you were writing about your family, you were also working as a freelance journalist. What was it like to be a reporter in an authoritarian country, with a notorious secret-police force, in the midst of civil war?

**AM:** I had to have a cover story for being there. When people first asked me why I was in Syria, I told them I was renovating my grandmother's house, and that was plausible up to a point. But then I also told people that I was interested in writing a book about my grandmother and about the history of Syria — things that sounded sort of innocuous. The reporting that I did for the *Nation* and the *New York Times* was all done in secret, and it was terrifying. The risk of endangering my sources and my family kept me really sober. Eventually, I felt it wasn't worth continuing.

**SF:** You were a lawyer working for the Department of Justice before you went to journalism school. Why did you change careers?

**AM:** I was raised by immigrant parents, and I chose a stable career path to make them proud. I was hired in 1999 under Bill Clinton and Janet Reno to be a trial attorney in the civil-rights division. Just a few months later, I was working under George W. Bush and John Ashcroft. After 9/11, both the rhetoric and the actions of the Department of Justice changed drastically. I kept wondering how it was acceptable for Americans to think about Arabs and Muslims in such general terms. It seemed like part of the problem was that people didn't know any other stories. A huge part of contemporary Arab society felt invisible.

**SF:** What kind of reaction have you had from Syrians, whether people within Syria who took the risk of communicating with you or people from this now vast Syrian diaspora?

**AM:** So many Syrians have contacted me, and initially they're just happy to see a version of Syria that's recognizable to them, one that doesn't just focus on ISIS. They say, 'My family and I, we're all reading the book and we're all doing the same thing: trying to track our family history within the greater national history.' Syria is an ancient and storied place, but the only history that's being taught there is of the last forty years. I started writing to correct Western narratives about Syria, but now I also see writing personal history as an act of resistance to the regime, which for so long has taught Syrian history as the history of Assad, first the father and now the son.

# CLASSIFIEDS

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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**LOOKING FOR AUTHORS:** In business, economics, and finance. Send book proposals to [hclaggett@abc-clio.com](mailto:hclaggett@abc-clio.com). Hilary Claggett '86SIPA, Senior Editor, Praeger.

**SAT/ACT & SSAT/ISEE TUTORING:** Robert Kohen, PhD, Harvard and Columbia grad, provides individualized tutoring for the SAT/ACT and SSAT/ISEE in Manhattan and online. 212-658-0834; [robertkohen@koheneducationalservices.com](mailto:robertkohen@koheneducationalservices.com); [www.koheneducationalservices.com](http://www.koheneducationalservices.com).

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**FIRE ISLAND:** Ocean Beach, AC heritage house for rent/sale, 3 bedrooms, 2 baths. Near ocean/NYC, piano/fireplace, large deck/property, convertible LR/BR. \$3,500 a week, discounts for multiple weeks. Call 917-748-3868.

**ROME:** Spacious, stylish, renovated apartment near St. John Lateran. Two double bedrooms, two baths, Wi-Fi, elevator. \$850/week. [lm603@columbia.edu](mailto:lm603@columbia.edu), 212-867-0489. [www.casacleme.com](http://www.casacleme.com).

**TUSCANY:** Gorgeous apartment in lovely hilltop village of Casole d'Elsa near Siena. 2BR, 1BA, sleeps 4–6. Beautifully appointed. Wi-Fi. Large eat-in kitchen, private garden overlooks 11th-century church. \$650–750/week. Columbia alum owner Lyn '90PH: 404-274-8287, [lyn.finelli@gmail.com](mailto:lyn.finelli@gmail.com), or see photos and details at [www.imagesoftuscany.com](http://www.imagesoftuscany.com).

## RETAIL

**SAPPHIRE DISCOUNT MART:** Discount store near Columbia carries all household items: furniture, bed sheets, pillows, plasticware, cookware, sanitary items, cleaning products, electronics, pet supplies, food/beverages (no alcohol), party supplies, stationery, beauty

products, snacks/candy, and more. 1290 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027. 10% discount with Columbia ID.

## JOB OPENINGS

**INVITING NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO JOIN MEDIA POLICY CENTER (MPC):** A Santa Monica-based nonprofit media company spotlighting social-justice issues seeks new board members with growth in mind. Areas: strategic planning, fundraising, global networking, media distribution, marketing, and succession planning. Operating budget: \$500,000. Current projects: Do No Harm: Opioid Epidemic, VW Emission Scandal, Robert Putnam's Our Kids, and Woodstock's 50th. Founders Dale Bell and Harry Wiland (Ashoka Fellows) have won Christophers, Emmys, BAFTAs, an Oscar, and a Peabody. Contact Harry Wiland '70SOA: [harry@mediapolicycenter.org](mailto:harry@mediapolicycenter.org).

## BOOKS

**THE FABLES OF LA FONTAINE, BOOKS I–VI:** Newly translated by Pearl Hochstadt '56GSAS. Dr. Hochstadt's rhymed translations are "witty, modern and faithful" (Thalia Pandiri, editor: *Metamorphoses: The Journal of the Five-College Faculty Seminar on Literary Translation*). \$16.95 from [iUniverse.com](http://iUniverse.com), [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), or author at [phochstadt33@gmail.com](mailto:phochstadt33@gmail.com).

## PERSONALS

Blond, pretty former travel exec. Seeks a guy 60+ to do things in NYC. You are good company. Thoughtful, funny, and warm. [lless17@gmail.com](mailto:lless17@gmail.com).

Vibrant, alluring Black woman. Psychotherapist. Committed to social justice. Lover of jazz, dancing, biking. Seeking loyal man 60+ with heart for loving relationship. [rversidedrv@gmail.com](mailto:rversidedrv@gmail.com).

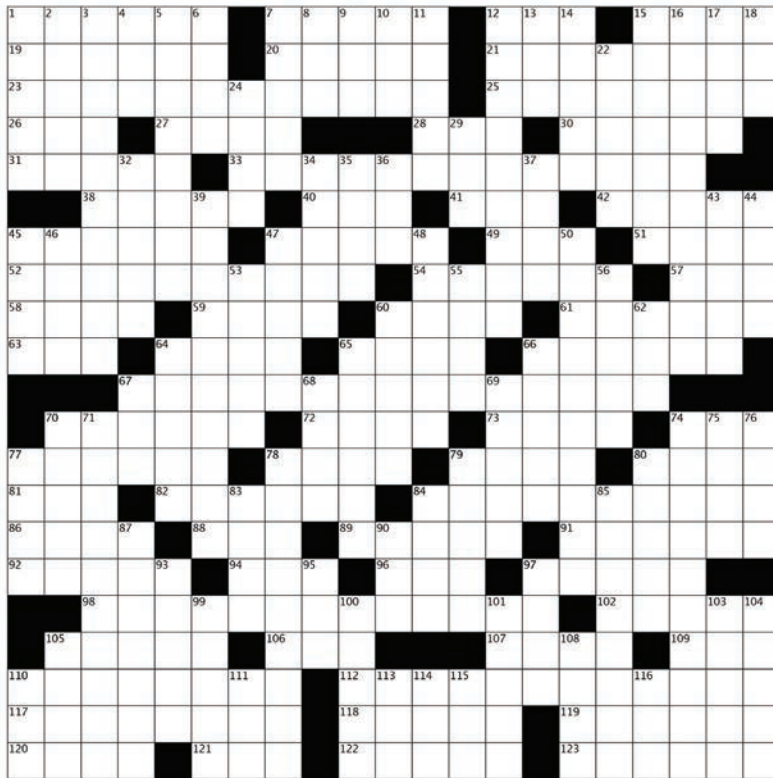
**MATCHMAKER:** NYC matchmaker looking for eligible bachelors for attractive women clientele. Complimentary membership offer. Contact 212-877-5151, [fay@meaningfulconnections.com](mailto:fay@meaningfulconnections.com).



# FINALS

## A Midsummer Night's Read

New York Times crossword constructor Finn Vigeland '14CC scans the bookshelves for some alumni authors



### ACROSS

- 1 Like *True Grit* or *Ocean's Eleven*  
 7 Word with brain or poster  
 12 1989 "Weird Al" Yankovic movie about a local TV station  
 15 College-prep exam  
 19 Oil-rich peninsula  
 20 Like some coincidences  
 21 Autonomy  
 23 Her debut novel was *Swamplandia!* ('06SOA)  
 25 Gives an approving look to  
 26 "... yadda, yadda, yadda"  
 27 Org. concerned with workplace injuries  
 28 Org. that stands between you and the 11-Down 29-Down Lounge  
 30 Cosmic explosions  
 31 Renders hopeless  
 33 Author of the Earthsea fantasy series ('52GSAS)  
 38 Influence  
 40 Imagine Peace campaigner  
 41 Talk, talk, talk  
 42 \_\_\_ Lupin, Harry Potter's third professor of Defense Against the Dark Arts  
 45 Waikiki wear  
 47 Spokesperson's nightmare  
 49 French condiment  
 51 Athenaesque  
 52 Lyndon B. Johnson biographer ('68JRN)  
 54 Maintenance cost  
 57 Word repeated in the postal creed  
 58 Posse in Poissy  
 59 2016 World Series champs  
 60 Girl who was (spoiler!) murdered on *How to Get Away with Murder*  
 61 Not even close  
 63 Setting of the final scene of *The Hairy Ape*  
 64 It's passed down  
 65 Erstwhile app for recording six-second videos  
 66 Geologist's layers  
 67 *March* novelist ('83JRN)

- 70 Facebook connection  
 72 Book-buying category  
 73 Tracy Turnblad's mom in *Hairspray*  
 74 Scientific discovery associated (not enough) with Rosalind Franklin  
 77 Lowest podium at the Olympics  
 78 Comparable  
 79 Knucklehead  
 80 *Iliad* figure  
 81 Oscar-nominated *Cold Mountain* song "You Will Be My \_\_\_ True Love"  
 82 Military band?  
 84 Author who wrote of Columbia's "doubled magic" ('34CC)  
 86 Liver disease, for short  
 88 Black or Yellow, e.g.  
 89 Phenomenon captured by multi-week polling  
 91 Scenic paintings, briefly  
 92 Brew at a sushi bar  
 94 Tolkien creation  
 96 Hook up  
 97 "It \_\_\_ repeating..."

- 98 Ethiopian-born MacArthur winner who wrote *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* ('05SOA)  
 102 #1 #2 who became the #2 #1  
 105 Choreographer de Mille  
 106 Feathery accessory  
 107 Indulge in rodomontade  
 109 Chewbacca's friend  
 110 Full scholarship  
 112 Man Booker-winning author of *The White Tiger* ('97CC)  
 117 1980s hairstyle with a long strand in the back  
 118 Group with mass appeal?  
 119 Key with no sharps or flats  
 120 Start a poker hand  
 121 Jet setting?  
 122 Jabbed in the ribs  
 123 Many a year-end list

### DOWN

- 1 Did some yard work  
 2 Calliope's sister  
 3 2016 also-ran  
 4 Honest \_\_\_  
 5 Old person, slangily  
 6 Mr. Potato Head parts  
 7 Labor chief Chavez  
 8 "\_\_\_ a Rebel"  
 9 Intense anger  
 10 \_\_\_ Wayne  
 11 With 29-Down and "Lounge," place to hang out when connecting in Atlanta  
 12 WWII naval cruiser named for a state  
 13 Do some tailoring  
 14 Summer romance  
 15 Sneak peek  
 16 Author of *Evening* who also adapted it for the screen ('83SOA)  
 17 "Bummer"  
 18 Holiday in Hanoi  
 22 Word repeated in several songs from *Waitress*  
 24 "No dice!"  
 29 See 11-Down  
 32 Some viral images  
 34 Really succeeds  
 35 Ctrl+Z operation  
 36 Cut short  
 37 Weapon allowed into Dodge Fitness Center  
 39 Skimp  
 43 Lady Liberty's land, loosely  
 44 Feudal laborer  
 45 "I'm Yours" singer Jason  
 46 *L'\_\_\_ Vogue* (Italian men's fashion magazine)  
 47 2006 Pitt/Blanchett movie  
 48 Dead broke  
 50 Didn't bring home  
 53 Johnson & Johnson competitor  
 55 West Point newbie  
 56 REI purchase  
 60 It may suit you  
 62 Some John Jay residents  
 64 Gibbons of talk TV  
 65 Drops by  
 66 Whence Lot escaped  
 67 Tom Collins need  
 68 Where Melinda Gates went to college  
 69 Corp. makeover, for short  
 70 In-N-Out offering  
 71 Poet whose work was featured in the 2016 film *Paterson* ('64CC)  
 74 Subtly signals one's intentions  
 75 \_\_\_ Galerie (Manhattan art museum)  
 76 Gives a *Jeopardy!* response  
 77 \_\_\_ Men ("Who Let the Dogs Out" band)  
 78 Danger signal  
 79 Diving hazard, with "the"  
 80 Pulitzer, e.g.  
 83 Persian greeting?  
 84 Make oneself scarce  
 85 March Madness event  
 87 Like 20% of the world  
 90 Sign of puppy love?  
 93 Stagnant  
 95 One in charge of a 69-Down, maybe  
 97 *Hamilton* song in which Eliza destroys Alexander's letters  
 99 87-Down, for example  
 100 Grp. formerly headed by Ben Jealous '94CC  
 101 Car in a Beach Boys hit  
 103 Myopic Mr. \_\_\_  
 104 Eats up, slangily  
 105 Islands of Ireland  
 108 Not much at all  
 110 Monk's moniker  
 111 "What's the \_\_\_?"  
 113 Kappa Delta \_\_\_ (Columbia fraternity)  
 114 Just swell  
 115 Go (for)  
 116 Bad-mouth

# VELOCITY

COLUMBIA'S RIDE TO END CANCER



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
MEDICAL CENTER  
*Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center*

**10/7/17**  
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## THE COLUMBIA COMMITMENT

Working with faculty mentors, Sona Shah '16SEAS and Teresa Cauvel '16SEAS started Neopenda to create low-cost vital signs monitors for babies.

“With our first product, we think we’ll have a significant impact on newborn health.”

That’s a Columbia commitment. Find yours.

[commitment.columbia.edu](http://commitment.columbia.edu)