

SPRING 2013

# COLUMBIA

MAGAZINE



“My name  
is  
**Benjamin  
Todd  
Jealous**  
and I am  
president  
and **CEO**  
of the  
**NAACP**,  
the nation’s  
oldest,  
**largest,**

baddest,  
**boldest,**  
most hated,  
most  
debated,  
most  
notorious,  
and most  
victorious  
civil rights  
organization.”



# NETWORK WITH COLUMBIA ALUMNI

**BILL CAMPBELL**, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, INTUIT  
MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, APPLE  
MEMBER OF THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CLUB OF NEW YORK



COLUMBIA  
UNIVERSITY  
CLUB

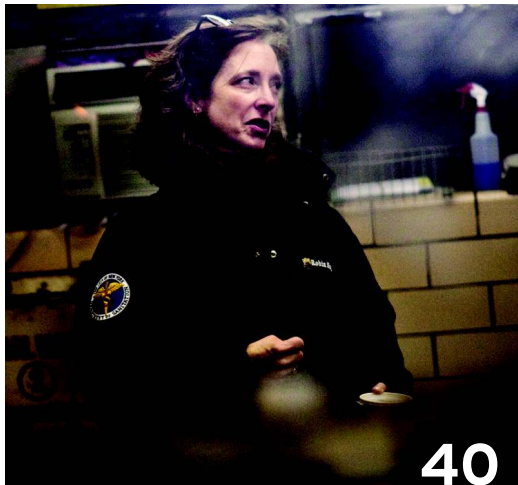
NEW YORK

The perfect midtown location to network, dine with a client, hold events or business meetings, house guests in town for the weekend, and much more.

To become a member, visit [columbiacub.org](http://columbiacub.org) or call 212-719-0380.

*in residence at The Princeton Club of New York*

15 WEST 43 STREET  
NEW YORK, NY 10036



## DEPARTMENTS

### 3 Letters

### 8 College Walk

Mr. Bond goes to Hollywood . . . Mr. Wright goes to Avery . . . A healing memoir . . . Not-so-secret agents (and writers) . . . "On Marriage": a poem

### 40 In the City of New York

Did you thank a sanitation worker today? Anthropologist and garbologist Robin Nagle opens our eyes to what she calls "the most important uniformed force on the street."

### 46 News

*New Yorker* journalist Steve Coll named J-school dean . . . Global Centers open in Nairobi, Rio . . . Ivies share language courses . . . Manhattanville rising . . . CAA undertakes new alumni survey . . . Lessons from Liberia

### 51 Newsmakers

### 52 Explorations

Columbia engineers work to protect the US electric grid from catastrophic attack.

### 54 Reviews

### 62 Classifieds

### 64 Finals

## FEATURES

### 14 Justice's Son

*By Paul Hond*

The NAACP's Benjamin Jealous has become one of America's most forceful and influential progressive voices. So what does he want? (And when does he want it?)

### 22 Looking for the Telltale Gene

*By Claudia Kalb*

Science can now forecast the health risks of children before they are born. Are we ready for that knowledge?

### 30 A Shot in the Light

*By Douglas Quenqua*

Columbia researchers help send a telescope skyward to glimpse the oldest, most distant thing imaginable: light from the Big Bang.

### 36 We Call on Spring: A Short Story

*By Belinda McKeon*

As her mother's illness sets in, a young married woman tries to cope.

Cover photograph of Benjamin Jealous by Jörg Meyer. Quote by Jealous from a February 17, 2013 sermon at Brooklyn's Nazarene Congregational Church.

## IN THIS ISSUE



**Moira Egan** '92SOA has published four poetry collections. Her fifth, *Hot Flash Sonnets*, will be published this spring. She lives in Rome. >> [Page 13](#)



**Belinda McKeon** '10SOA is the author of the novel *Solace*, which won the 2011 Best Irish Newcomer award at the Irish Book Awards and the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize. McKeon is also a playwright, and an arts writer for the *Irish Times*. >> [Page 36](#)

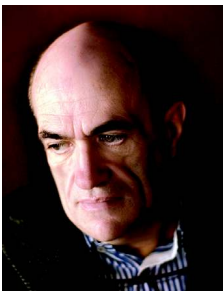


**Amber Miller** is a professor of physics at Columbia, where she also leads the Experimental Cosmology group. She serves as dean of science for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. >> [Page 30](#)



**Jeremy Smerd** '03JRN is the managing editor of *Crain's New York Business*, which he joined as a political writer in 2010. He has also written for the *New York Times* and the *New York Observer*. >> [Page 10](#)

BUCK ENNIS



**Colm Tóibín** is the Irene and Sidney B. Silverman Professor of the Humanities at Columbia and the author of six novels, including *The Blackwater Lightship*, *The Master*, and *Brooklyn*. He has twice been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. >> [Page 58](#)

# COLUMBIA

MAGAZINE

Executive Vice President for University Development and Alumni Relations  
**Fred Van Sickle**

Publisher  
**Tim McGowan**

Chief Editorial Adviser  
**Jerry Kisslinger '79CC, '82GSAS**

Editor in Chief  
**Michael B. Shavelson**

Managing Editor  
**Rebecca Shapiro**

Senior Editor  
**David J. Craig**

Associate Editor  
**Paul Hond**

Copy Chief  
**Joshua J. Friedman '08JRN**

Contributing Editor  
**Eric McHenry**

Art Director  
**Eson Chan**

Assistant to the Editor  
**Julia Heitner**

Editorial Assistants  
**Deaton Jones, Michelle Marchese, Elisabeth Sherman**

Mailing Address  
*Columbia Magazine*  
Columbia Alumni Center  
622 W. 113th Street, MC 4521  
New York, NY 10025  
Tel. 212-851-4155  
Fax 212-851-1950  
magazine@columbia.edu  
www.magazine.columbia.edu

Address and Archive Assistance  
assistmag@columbia.edu  
212-851-4155

To update your address online, visit [alumni.columbia.edu/directory](http://alumni.columbia.edu/directory), or call 1-877-854-ALUM (2586).

**Advertising:**  
Publisher's Representative  
**Bruce Ellerstein**  
917-226-7716

To download our advertising brochure or submit a classified advertisement online, visit [www.magazine.columbia.edu/advertise](http://www.magazine.columbia.edu/advertise).

*Columbia Magazine* is published for alumni and friends of Columbia by the Office of Alumni and Development.

© 2013 by the Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York

 **COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**  
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK



# letters

## **SURGE PROTECTION**

In “Sandy’s Wake,” in the Winter 2012–13 issue, civil-engineering professor George Deodatis describes an option to defend the city against future floods: the construction of three storm-surge barriers in the waterways surrounding New York City. But he says that the “major investment” of \$20 billion or more “to protect a relatively small percentage of the population” will have to be debated. Considering that a few miles of barriers would protect hundreds of miles of exposed shoreline in New York City, the Hudson Valley, and nearby New Jersey, the protected population does not seem that small. Considering that the MTA alone “got hit for an estimated \$5 billion of damage,” \$20 billion does not seem that major.

**Douglas Hill ’58SEAS, ’77SEAS**  
Huntington, NY

I had a feeling of *déjà vu* reading your article about climate change and its impact on New York’s transport infrastructure. In 1999, as a sophomore, I wrote a term paper for Cynthia Rosenzweig’s class about the potential for flooding in the New York City subway. Even then there were plenty of sources indicating that, in certain circumstances, the storm surge of a hurricane could flood the subway system from the Battery to 14th Street and the

East River tunnels. That’s before the added impact of sea-level rise or climate change or more-frequent extreme storms. And, as your article describes, there were also plenty of scientists already working on forecasts and pressing city officials to prepare themselves and the public infrastructure.

I also agree with Klaus Jacob that 9/11 delayed action for years on addressing the potential for natural disasters. I’m sure one could point to numerous reasons for this, but one might be found in the references at the back of my term paper. I cited an interview with an official at the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management who was responsible for preparing contingency plans for hurricanes and nor’easters and directing any evacuations. His office and the emergency control center were located on the twenty-third floor of 7 World Trade Center. It apparently had reinforced, hurricane-proof windows. I’d be interested to know where the city’s emergency control center is now.

**Hannah Budnitz ’01CC**  
Senior Transport Planner  
Reading Borough Council  
Reading, UK

*The Office of Emergency Management is located at 165 Cadman Plaza East in Downtown Brooklyn. — Ed.*

## **BEAT THE RAP**

I am grateful to David Krajicek for acquainting me with Lucien Carr and his central role in the formation of the Beat literary movement (“The Last Beat,” Winter 2012–13). I sense in that account a keen regret that Carr did not amount to more. Surely a young man so untethered by convention, so worldly, and so brilliant was destined for literary greatness. That Carr had a sensational murder under his belt before he turned twenty seems to make him even more a figure of intrigue and dark promise.

A young adulthood of public display and manic angst, a creative flurry culminating in a slim volume of elliptical, unruly poems, then on to madness and addiction, and finally, in Act IV, a tragic exit by needle, bottle, or shotgun’s oral rinse — perhaps this is the literary trajectory we have been denied by Carr’s unfortunate “rehabilitation.” It somehow doesn’t seem enough that Carr, despite heavy drinking, had a long and distinguished career as a news editor, mentored many young journalists, married, and managed to raise three children. (His son Caleb is a successful author and military historian.)

It is worth noting that it is the critics who most enjoy warming their hands around the bonfire of self-immolation. For the tortured artist, life is just that — torture,

## LETTERS

particularly on the backside of the parabola. When, in the Orson Welles film *The Third Man*, Harry Lime sneers at the Swiss — their five hundred years of brotherly love, democracy, and peace, and, yes, their cuckoo clock — it is well to remember that Lime was no da Vinci. He was no Michelangelo. He wasn't even a Borgia. He was just a petty crook.

We all cheered and laughed as Amy Winehouse cried out “No, no, no” to rehab. Then we wept as she was laid to rest. I salute Lucien Carr for giving us all the finger, for choosing life. I even like his 'stache.

**John V. Keller '64CC, '66GSAS**  
Charlotte, NC

I have not set foot on the campus since 1990, nor have I desired to visit New York City, but memories of Columbia came back to me when I read the Winter 2012–13 issue.

In David Krajicek's sanitized article on the Beats, I discern the mythology of literary history at work. Having met many of the Beats in my own journeys across America, I must say that Krajicek might attempt more extended research before idealizing this group of criminal sociopaths. I did more hitchhiking as a boy than Kerouac did in his life, but I was not a dopehead, nor did I indulge in some of the other epicene adventures of the Beat Kultur. Ellis Amburn, whom I never met but whom I often saw on the campus, has written an honest book on Kerouac and the Beats, *Subterranean Kerouac*, which relates the story of the Kammerer death in detail. Lucien Carr should have spent at least twenty years in prison.

**Michael Suozzi '72GSAS**  
La Mesa, CA

David Krajicek's article on Lucien Carr and Allen Ginsberg's fabulous 1944 picture of Carr and Jack Kerouac on campus brought tears to my eyes when I read my copy of *Columbia Magazine*. I consider myself incredibly lucky, because Lou was not only the best editor I ever worked with but also a wonderful, caring, fascinating

man. He mentored scores of journalists in his forty-seven years at UPI, and I was honored to have been among them, working most closely with him during my time on UPI's science desk from 1990 to 1993. His impeccable news judgment enabled him to help me shape crisp, clear health-policy or science stories on deadline. He maintained his role as a mentor and friend to many of us right until the end.

Carr was incredibly low-key. Ginsberg and Burroughs were among the people who phoned or visited Lou from time to time in the newsroom — and most of us had no clue. I do recall how visibly saddened and subdued he was after both of them died in 1997.

**Douglas Levy**  
Chief Communication Officer,  
Columbia University Medical Center

It was good to read a story about Lucien Carr that didn't end with Lou's going off to serve time for murder.

I had not heard of Carr before I joined UPI in 1983, despite many hours spent at the West End and the imperative awareness of Jack Kerouac that comes simply from being at Columbia. But I learned very quickly at UPI that when the voice on the other end of the line cooed, “Hey, babe, what's going on?” you were talking to God.

Lou never talked to us about his past, although it certainly added to his mystique. He did teach us what it meant to be a writer and an editor. He was the center of the UPI universe, both literally and figuratively. Sitting in the middle of our vast newsroom at his slot, in what would now seem like an antiquated ritual, he would hit the send button at 11:00 a.m. every weekday on the daily “sked” that let newspapers and TV and radio stations around the world know what the big stories of the day would be. And then he taught us how to make those stories sing.

Lou was also a stickler for accuracy and, in that light, I offer this correction: Lou never lived on a boat in the Potomac.

Whether inspiring the Beats or inspiring generations of reporters and editors, Lou

really did roar, and those of us lucky to work with him were the better for it.

**Robin Greene Hagey '76BC,**  
**'80SIPA, '81JRN**  
Thousand Oaks, CA

“The Last Beat” should have focused on a more sinister aspect of the Lucien Carr story. The article claims that the thirty-three-year-old former scoutmaster David Kammerer followed Carr for several years to various schools before Carr became a close friend of Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William Burroughs as a nineteen-year-old freshman at Columbia. It also states that one of William Burroughs's friends called Kammerer a “stalker” of the apparently straight Carr.

It is strange for an older man to follow the much-younger Carr around the country, especially in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Kammerer traveled to those schools that Carr attended before Columbia when Carr was perhaps seventeen and eighteen years old, and years earlier Kammerer was suspiciously “kind of a life coach” to Carr.

Was Kammerer a pedophile? Did he make proposals to Carr when he was a boy, long before the “offensive proposal” that led to his death in Riverside Park in 1944? The magazine should not romanticize a pedophile.

**Richard Oshlo Jr. '83BUS**  
Omaha, NE

Your article on Lucien Carr and his involvement with the Beats is an informative take on those fascinating oddballs, but it includes a surprising error. Its author says that on August 14, 1944, Jack Kerouac went from the West End up Broadway and “through the 116th Street gates.” He couldn't have done that: the gates were not installed until long after 116th Street had been closed to traffic a decade later.

**Andrew Alpern '64GSAPP**  
New York, NY

### REMEMBERING BARZUN

I had great pleasure reading John Simon's remembrance of Jacques Barzun in the

Winter 2012–13 issue. Many of us learned to write prose “simple and direct” in that celebrated seminar in which Lionel Trilling was notably gentle and Barzun notably unsparing. “The Unedited Man” recalled for me how at one memorable session it fell out unexpectedly that, quite as a matter of course, Barzun revised his own work five or six times before it came under the eye of an editor, hence his rejection of any changes “down to the last comma.”

Barzun was famed for his breadth of knowledge, but we were all stunned one afternoon when, leaning back in his chair and clasping his hands behind his head, he set forth a lengthy list of sources in various languages on Swedish cultural history in the early seventeenth century — this in response to the contention that there was little or nothing available on the subject. My most vivid memory of Jacques Barzun is of a meeting in his office where I was waxing eloquently discursive on Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*, when he stopped me cold with the rejoinder, “He’s a pedant and a bore.”

Frederick M. Schweitzer ’72GSAS

Professor Emeritus, Manhattan College  
Riverdale, NY

In his touching tribute to Jacques Barzun, John Simon recalls with regret that he never read his copy of Barzun’s two-volume *Berlioz and the Romantic Century* (1950), which he admits never left his shelf before he sold it with a number of other books.

That comment made me recall a letter that Barzun wrote to Columbia’s Gilbert Highet, one of the twentieth century’s most distinguished classicists, who published (only a year before the Berlioz books appeared) *The Classical Tradition*, on the Greco-Roman influences on Western literature. In his letter of April 5, 1950, Barzun extolled Highet’s volume, noticing with pleasure that Highet had connected Berlioz’s music with that of Gluck, while regretting that Highet “had (naturally enough) overlooked the little-known fact that Berlioz was one of the most intelligent readers and users of Vergil.”

**Key to Abbreviations:** Each of the following school affiliation abbreviations refers to the respective school’s current name; for example, GSAS — for Graduate School of Arts and Sciences — is used for alumni of the Graduate Faculties, which became GSAS in 1979. The only code not associated with a particular school is HON, which designates that person the recipient of an honorary degree from the University.

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

Barzun had great respect for Highet, and Highet had great respect for Vergil, and although Highet did not mention Barzun’s “little-known fact” in any of his writings (as far as I have been able to determine), he did go on to publish a milestone book on Vergil: *The Speeches in Vergil’s Aeneid* (1972).

Robert J. Ball ’71GSAS  
New York, NY

*Robert J. Ball is a professor emeritus of classics at the University of Hawaii and the editor of Gilbert Highet’s papers.*

**COLDBUSTERS**

In “Cloudy, with a chance of flu” (Explorations, Winter 2012–13), the following statement caught my attention: “cold, dry air is especially agreeable to flu viruses.”

This would fall just short of a tautology in some people’s minds. But in fact,

cold and dry air causes the transit of the influenza virus into the body. We are all familiar with the phrase “I woke up with a cold.” This is because when night air, which is cold and dry, contacts mucous membranes, it dries out and thus disables the normally protective proteoglycan matrix we know as mucus. The mucous membranes thus become inflamed and damaged, which provides a pathway for viruses into the body.

Why is this important? Because it’s not Zicam, Resveratrol, or Essential Oil of Nirvana that defends us from disease but common sense.

I instruct patients to use a humidifier when the air cools and dries (or when it’s hot outside and they use the air conditioner full-time). This simple maneuver can save a lot of grief and can speed recovery dramatically (as can high doses of cit-

## LETTERS

rus juice, thanks to the citric-acid content and bioflavonoids).

**Attila Mady '92PS**  
Santa Rosa, CA

### NEON'S PERKS

As a retired pharmacist, I found the review of *New York Neon* in the Winter 2012–13 issue to be interesting (“Signs of the Times”). Many pharmacists wanted drug-stores to be well lit up with neon not only to identify the stores, but even more as a deterrent against robbery.

**Julius Lampert '56PHRM**  
Boynton Beach, FL

### DONATION FOR DIVERSITY

In response to Gerald Zuriff’s letter criticizing the University’s effort to increase faculty diversity (Fall 2012), I have gone online to make a donation to Columbia. As a white alum and pre-K–12 school administrator, I am thrilled to see the University follow best practice and do what is right for both students and the larger community. Numerous studies have proved the value of racial diversity on campus; in particular, it increases critical-thinking skills for all ethnic groups, especially white students who may come from more homogeneous high schools. I’m disappointed in Zuriff’s thinly veiled racist

assumption that the University commitment to diversity means hiring unqualified teachers of color. In my experience recruiting teachers of color, most have to be more qualified than their white counterparts to get hired. And because diversity equals academic excellence, teachers of color bring an added value to their teaching, especially when they come from an underrepresented group.

**Elizabeth Denevi '96GSAS**  
Washington, DC

### NOT TALKING ABOUT THE WEATHER

Since I graduated in 2009, I have always looked forward to reading engaging articles in each issue of *Columbia Magazine*; it is a fine way to stay in touch with the network of knowledge I’ve come to enjoy from my experience at the University.

However, I was disappointed in “Stormy Someday” (College Walk, Fall 2012). In it, Douglas Quenqua summarizes a recent climate-forecast meeting of the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) on the Lamont campus and fails to adequately inform the reader of the natural limits of the science and the many advantages of such forecasts. While Quenqua takes a humorous approach, I fear he leaves the reader with the misconceptions that climate is the same as weather and that something is lacking in the forecast meeting.

The article accurately highlights the probabilistic nature of climate forecasts. However, the author’s quip about planning “an outdoor wedding in September” could mislead some readers. Long-term patterns in temperature and precipitation (climate) are, in many cases, easier to predict than short-term changes in the atmosphere (weather), due to the different time and length scales of energy balance in the earth system. Single weather events cannot be predicted from climate patterns — nor is the goal of climate studies or forecasts to predict the weather.

**Matt D’Amato '09GSAS**  
New York, NY

### FRACK ATTACK III

I would like to respond to the second wave of letters on Paul Hond’s article “The Gas Menagerie” (Summer 2012) in the Winter 2012–13 issue.

First, to those who would dismiss the reactions of those in the energy field (me included) as self-serving comments from “entrenched and biased people”: arguing bad faith ignores the fact that the interests of the energy industry are aligned with those of the public when it comes to preventing and avoiding catastrophic environmental damage, since such contingent liabilities can bankrupt companies and wipe out investors.

Second, many commented on the ugly visual impact of the natural-gas extraction process, which is the elephant in the room in this whole debate. Fracking did not become an environmental cause célèbre until the upstream industry set its sights on the Marcellus Shale, which led to the culture shock of introducing oil and gas development into the more populated northeastern part of the country. While it is understandable that people would not want to live next door to a drilling pad with multiple pressure-pumping units, it is intellectually dishonest to manufacture an environmental crisis to obscure a simple not-in-my-backyard argument against economic development.

Lastly, I am troubled by the fact that even the natural-science component of Columbia’s Core Curriculum has now become politicized, with the inclusion of global climate-change theory, along with Al Gore–contributed content that is, by one professor’s own admission, only “largely correct on the facts.” Thirty years ago when I took biology to satisfy my natural-science requirement, there were objective standards, and politics did not come into play. No one in our lab class ever bothered to ask if the fetal pigs that we were dissecting had received a fair trial.

**Paul H. Tice '83CC**  
Managing Director and Energy  
Portfolio Manager, BlackRock  
Short Hills, NJ

**Questions?  
Comments?**

**WE WELCOME THEM ALL!**

SEND YOUR THOUGHTS TO:

Columbia Magazine  
Columbia Alumni Center  
622 W. 113th Street, MC 4521  
New York, NY 10025

OR E-MAIL US AT:

[magazine@columbia.edu](mailto:magazine@columbia.edu)





CAA 2017



## Since President Lee C. Bollinger's arrival nearly 11 years ago, our University has experienced transformative and tremendous growth.

There are now eight Global Centers spanning the world, a new campus being built in Manhattanville, an inspiringly successful Columbia Campaign — and the CAA. The creation of the Columbia Alumni Association in 2005 coincided with the celebration of Columbia's 250th anniversary and renewed the University's dedication to engaging our alumni. Fast-forward to today.

The CAA seeks to build on an alumni culture that is uniquely Columbia. It represents complementary opportunities to increase the engagement of our alumni with their Schools and across this great University. It retains what makes our alumni community diverse and simultaneously celebrates the excellence of all of Columbia.

The CAA has had a strong beginning. We have built a responsive, energetic, and inclusive Board; increased the ways to connect through clubs around the world; shared interest groups, signature events, and leadership gatherings; generated opportunities for alumni of all ages to interact with students, faculty, senior administrators, and other alums across all Schools of the University.

But many still wonder, what exactly is this University alumni organization?

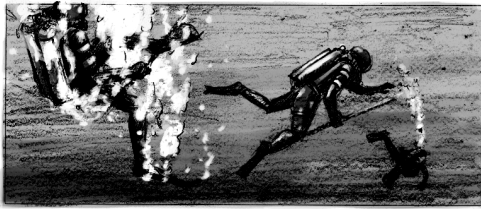
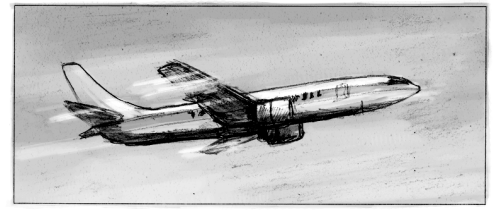
That is where CAA 2017 enters the picture. CAA 2017 stands for an ongoing multi-year effort that started with a broad-themed Task Force report, followed by a draft of a detailed strategic plan prepared over many months last

year. Now a thorough consultation phase is ongoing, as the vision of the CAA in 2017 is discussed in a collaborative environment to ensure that all the University's Schools and areas will partner and benefit.

Join 300,000 fellow alumni and current students to shape the future of your Columbia Alumni Association. Learn more about CAA 2017 at [alumni.columbia.edu/CAA2017](http://alumni.columbia.edu/CAA2017) and be a part of the CAA's growth in the next five years by sharing what's important to you in our brief CAA 2017 survey.

— Brian Krisberg '81CC, '84LAW  
Vice Chair, CAA  
Co-Chair, CAA 2017  
Strategic Planning Committee

## COLLEGE WALK



## For Our Eyes Only

Yes, the tribute to fifty years of James Bond movies at this year's Oscars ceremony was memorable. A soignée Halle Berry, who'd starred in *Die Another Day*, introduced an explosive, rapid-fire action montage: the volcano assault in *You Only Live Twice*, the bobbled battle from *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, the minijet escape in *Octopussy* (you get the idea), after which seventy-six-year-old Shirley Bassey sang "Goldfinger" to a standing ovation.

But no one mentioned Bond creator Ian Fleming. Or Bond producer Albert R. Broccoli. Or Sean Connery, let alone George Lazenby. And it's doubtful that anyone had even heard of Ernest L. Cuneo '27CC, the man who sketched out what would have been the very first James Bond film.

Cuneo, a graduate of St. John's School of Law, started out as a reporter for the New York *Daily News* and later became president of the North American Newspa-

per Alliance (NANA). Described by author Neal Gabler as a "born fixer," he left the newspaper business to serve as law secretary for then congressman and future New York City mayor Fiorello La Guardia (Cuneo's 1955 memoir *Life with Fiorello* inspired the 1960 Tony-winning musical *Fiorello!*), and later became associate counsel for the Democratic National Committee and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's liaison to gossip reporter Walter Winchell, often writing many of Winchell's items himself.

Cuneo was a close friend of Fleming's. The pair met during World War II when Fleming was in British Naval Intelligence and Cuneo was working under Major General William "Wild Bill" Donovan 1905CC, 1908LAW at the Office of Strategic Services. After the war, Fleming saw Cuneo frequently in the States; he drew on their trip to Las Vegas for his fourth Bond novel, *Diamonds Are Forever*, even naming a cab driver "Ernie Cuneo."

"Ian Fleming was the warmest kind of friend, a man of ready laughter, and a great companion (everything James Bond is not!)," Cuneo wrote in the introduction to Raymond Benson's *The James Bond Bedside Companion*.

The birth of the celluloid Bond began with a coincidental connection: Cuneo was the lawyer for another Fleming friend, the English financier Ivar Bryce, his partner in NANA. Bryce had recently tried his luck as a movie producer; in 1958 he financed *The Boy and the Bridge*, the first effort of the Irish filmmaker Kevin McClory. Looking for a follow-up, Bryce and McClory proposed to Fleming that they make an original James Bond movie, featuring eye-catching tropical settings and exciting underwater escapades.

At a meeting in 1959, Fleming, Cuneo, Bryce, and McClory batted around ideas. In a memo dated May 28, Cuneo distilled their discussion into "a basic plot, capable

of great flexibility.” Here are verbatim excerpts from Cuneo’s breakdown:

P.1. Bond is called to British Chief’s Office, M’s, and informed that mysterious radio signals are picked up by a British picket submarine on the D.E.W. [Distant Early Warning] Line, sent from an airplane. Oddly, the only airplane in area is a U.S.O. troupe of British American players on their way to entertain Allied Forces in an advanced U.S. arctic air base . . .

P.5. Bond discovers baggage sergeant on U.S.O. plane is top enemy agent, and that one of the trunks is a shortwave radio transmitter . . . Bond discovers also sergeant is field man on diabolical plot to explode American A bombs on their bases . . .

P.7. British-American Intelligence is electrified when spy-sergeant puts in for transfer to Caribbean U.S.O., and marks his base preference, Nassau. His request is, of course, instantly granted. Nassau is about to fete U.S. Marines on their first scene of action. Miami

entertainers will fly over for the evening – biggest U.S. show names.

P.8. Bond discovers (now in civvies) that a mysterious new company has ordered a fleet of Bahamian fishing boats – for Iron Curtain country – with very peculiar hulls for Grand Abaco trawlers. He studies plans, and discovers that hulls of new small vessels would be water tight – even if trapdoor opened from bottom of ship. A-bombs are to be delivered from enemy subs . . .

P.11. CLIMAX: As Frank Sinatra, Milton Berle, Diana [sic] Shore, etc. etc., pile into plane to take them to Nassau from Miami, British frogmen are dressing for battle. Contrast is maintained throughout underwater fight in Nassau harbour: light and gaiety at the Casino and death struggle under water 100 yards away . . .

The outline was a far cry from the eventual patented 007 formula. At one point, Cuneo suggested that our hero pretend to be a USO entertainer as his cover (“Bond’s efforts to imitate until he finds his métier

can be amusing”). Still, Fleming wrote in a memo that Cuneo’s work — the first-ever outline for a James Bond movie — was “first-class” with “just the right degree of fantasy.” Over the ensuing months, Fleming refined it with McClory and screenwriter Jack Whittingham, even venturing that Cuneo should play the chief villain, Largo, because “he has a more fabulous gangster face than has ever been seen on the films.”

Unfortunately, the necessary financing never came through. For that reason, as well as his growing distrust of the mercurial McClory, Cuneo sold his rights to the memo to Bryce for one dollar.

And there things might have rested had not Fleming appropriated much of the material for his ninth Bond book, *Thunderball* (which he dedicated “To Ernest Cuneo — Muse”). Following a messy legal battle, in which McClory won the film rights to the book, *Thunderball* became the fourth Bond movie, in 1965. Five writers received onscreen credit. Cuneo was not among them.

“I think he would just laugh it off,” said Cuneo’s son, Jonathan ’74CC, an attorney in Washington, DC. “He was always giving things away for a dollar. For him it was easy come, easy go.”

— *Thomas Vinciguerra* ’85CC,  
’86JRN, ’90GSAS

## Driving Mr. Wright

This spring, before the desert sun gets too strong for delicate onionskin dreams in colored pencil, a crew of art movers will roll up to a lozenge-shaped stone building at Taliesin West, Frank Lloyd Wright’s utopian compound in Scottsdale, Arizona, and load the first shipment of the architect’s paper-based archives into the climate-tuned cargo holds of two unmarked semitrailers.

The papers — hundreds of thousands of drawings, sketches, manuscripts, and correspondence — will be driven in their customized crates through a countryside that appears an unchecked expression of a vision Wright described in his 1932 book *The Disappearing City*. “Imagine spacious landscaped highways . . . giant roads, themselves great architecture, pass public service stations, no longer eye-

sores, expanded to include all kinds of service and comfort.”

On, then, to the highways, leading to a faraway city that has yet to disappear; on to the future of Wright scholarship; on to Avery Library!

But not *too* fast: there are potholes on I-40 and memories back in the Sonoran dust. The archive, which Columbia acquired in 2012 as part of an arrangement with the Frank

Lloyd Wright Foundation and the Museum of Modern Art (see the news story in the Fall 2012 issue), was directed for more than fifty years by its founder, Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, who in 1949 became an apprentice to Wright and remained with him until the master's death ten years later.

"Mr. Wright wanted his drawings kept here, but he did not know how much his archive would grow," says Pfeiffer from his office at Taliesin West. His "Mr. Wright," spoken in a New England accent unbleached by sixty years in the desert, recalls a scene from Henry James's *The Aspern Papers*, in which the narrator, noting the designation used by the ancient innamorata of a long-dead poet, says, "I can't tell you how that 'Mr.' touches me — how it bridges over the gulf of time and brings our hero near to me. You don't say, 'Mr.' Shakespeare."

Though to be fair, everyone at Taliesin West refers to the architect as Mr. Wright.

"Mr. Wright," says Pfeiffer, "had a love-hate relationship with New York."

The architect loved staying at the Plaza, loved being recognized and courted, but skyscrapers and density weren't his cup of tea. Just three Wright structures can be found in America's biggest city: the Guggenheim Museum, the Crimson Beech (a prefab house on Staten Island), and, at the corner of East 56th Street and Park Avenue, on the ground

floor of someone else's skyscraper, the Hoffman Auto Showroom. The showroom's interior was originally designed for car importer Max Hoffman's Jaguar business, though by the time the space was completed, in 1954, Hoffman had switched to Mercedes-Benz. The automobiliac Wright owned editions from both car makers, as well as a collection of Cadillacs, Bentleys, and Lincolns.

The showroom, still in operation, has a small spiral display ramp that predates the Guggenheim's giant whorl on Museum Mile. The turntable is mirrored so that "as you look at the car, you're also seeing underneath the car," Pfeiffer says. Above the smooth spiral ramp is a round, mirrored ceiling of triangles and curved trapezoids. "Mr. Wright wanted to create a feeling of motion rather than a flat showroom."

Good tonic for a city whose traffic problem Wright in 1957 called "insoluble."

Pfeiffer, who has devoted his life to preserving and making available the work of America's Architect, is saddened by the archive's transfer, but admits the necessity of providing such a vast, fragile, and precious legacy the most secure and accessible home possible. "It will be safe at Avery," he says. "Safe into perpetuity."

The staff at Avery, having spent the previous six months preparing for the arrival of the treasure-stuffed semitrailers — reconfiguring vault space, ordering and installing

custom furnishings, testing climatic controls, assembling made-to-order cabinets that can hold drawings that are upward of thirteen feet long — will rehouse and reorganize the archive from April to September, according to Avery Library director Carole Ann Fabian. (On May 20, Avery will offer a sneak preview of the Wright collection as part of its annual display of recent acquisitions.)

At Taliesin West, meanwhile, life will go on, in the subtly prescribed way of the fountainhead's ideal. The complex began taking shape in 1937 in the foothills of the McDowell Mountains, and became Wright's winter home as well as an architectural school that is still in operation. Much of the surrounding desert has since filled up with houses, but when the semitrailers, heavy with history, snake down the driveway, their rearview mirrors will frame a lasting vision: desert stone and red beam, buildings low-slung, slanted, cantilevered, ramped, courtyarded, paths and pools, hexagons and triangles, rooms of Wright chairs and Wright lamps and grand pianos, surfaces burnished in Cherokee red, Wright's signature color.

This was the red of one of Wright's favorite cars, a 1940 Lincoln Continental. That car, Pfeiffer recalls, had no rear window.

"Mr. Wright said, 'Well, it's not where I've been that matters. It's where I'm going that counts.'"

— Paul Hond

---

## A Life in Full

Joshua Prager '94CC walks with the aid of a cane and a brace to a bench outside Hartley Hall. He has shaggy hair, a muscular jaw, and piercing blue eyes. A scar remains over his Adam's apple, where a ventilator once connected to his trachea. He sits with his stronger leg crossed over his atrophied left side, just as he did when he lived in the dorm. Back then, he kept his

wheelchair as far away as possible so that girls would think he was just another kid who could throw snowballs on the quad. Once, when an elevator broke, a professor said that he should be carried up the stairs to class by football players.

Prager had had enough. He wrote his first article in a November 1991 issue of the *Spectator* criticizing Columbia's short-

comings in complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act, passed a year earlier. Most buildings on campus were not accessible to wheelchairs, and the ramps that did exist were so steep that they were more useful to skateboarders. Two days after Prager's piece appeared, the school moved swiftly to accommodate the needs of disabled students.

Now his cane, worn down under the crook by his calloused thumb, is never far from him. He's lived longer disabled than not. "My disability is a part of who I am, and I'm very comfortable with that," he says. "I want my cane beside me even if I don't need it."

Twenty-three years ago, Prager was just becoming acquainted with the power of his youthful body. Thousands of pushups had widened his chest. He had grown five inches in eight months and could leap for a rebound and touch the rim. He felt confident in his future. Invincible. He would be a doctor, like his dad. He was nineteen.

But first, a trip to Israel to study Talmud at yeshiva.

On May 16, 1990, Prager boarded a bus in the religious Jerusalem suburb of Kiryat Ye'arim. He thought it was a public bus, but it had been rented by a family. They said, sure, he could come along.

The bus approached a bend in a steep descent outside Jerusalem. Barreling downhill behind them came a large truck. The driver of the truck failed to brake. The vehicles collided. Prager's neck snapped back over his seat and he was flung limply across rows with a force "as loud and violent as a bomb," he would later write. In an instant, he went "from the musk of the young male to the impotence of the quadriplegic."

Doctors fused his third and fourth vertebrae. He lost a few inches from his six-foot-one-inch frame, becoming "a C3-C4 quad — shorthand for a thousand neurological quirks." He lost sensation around his upper chest, but he could feel a pinprick on his buttocks acutely. On a ventilator back at New York's Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, a few miles and a world away from where he grew up playing baseball across the Hudson River in Englewood, New Jersey, a deeper realization set in: *you are now dependent on everyone for everything.*

A few weeks after the injury, the swelling around Prager's spinal cord receded. Partial function slowly returned, first in his right arm and then in his right leg.



He spent four months in the hospital and then four years in a wheelchair, steadily, improbably improving. Prager's greatest fear had proved unfounded: he had metamorphosed into a hemiplegic. His body was divided vertically, like a stroke victim's. His right side was strong; his left was seized with spasticity. It furred and shook. Eventually, he learned to do things himself. If his right arm itched, he rubbed it against chin stubble. To trim his right fingernails he stepped on clippers. To stretch his shoulder he whipped his left arm back with his right as he fell backward onto his bed.

The physical parts he has more or less reassembled. But Prager has struggled for more than half his forty-one years to put together the emotional pieces that shattered that spring day. "I have composed drafts of drafts for twenty years," he writes in his new memoir, *Half-Life*, published as an e-book by Byliner this spring.

Twenty years. In 1992, he made notes about the hospital. Between 1995 and 2009, he researched the accident. In 2011, he confronted the truck driver whose hor-

rendous driving record — twenty-six violations — foretold the tragedy. He located fellow passengers, visited their Hasidic neighborhood of Bnei Brak, and over the years came to realize that they had largely moved on with their lives.

In 1996, Prager joined the *Wall Street Journal* as a news assistant, becoming a senior writer in 1999. There, he typed with one finger on his good hand. He was nominated four times for a Pulitzer Prize and wrote an acclaimed book on the 1951 New York Giants, *The Echoing Green: The Untold Story of Bobby Thomson, Ralph Branca and the Shot Heard Round the World*. Shortly after Rupert Murdoch purchased the *Journal* in 2007, Prager left to write his memoir. "I had to get it out of me," he says.

The term half-life refers to the time needed for a substance to decay by half. In Prager's case, that time was a split second — the moment of impact on the Israeli highway — and the decaying substance was not so much his young, healthy self, but his idea of it.

“All these years I’ve been wrestling with who I am today,” he says on the bench near Hartley. “Am I the result of the crash, or is there something more intrinsic to me that was always in me and remains today? It’s not comforting to think you’re the result of what someone did to you. Luckily, I don’t think I am. I wrestled with that for a long while.”

Maybe it’s his good looks combined with the vulnerability conveyed by his limp, but Prager has a knack for getting

others to confide their secrets in him. He’s made a career of it: a journalistic priest who hears confessions.

In *The Echoing Green*, Prager broke open the long-held secret that the New York Giants stole signs to win the 1951 pennant. At the *Journal* he revealed that Swedish humanitarian Raoul Wallenberg’s parents had committed suicide, and discovered the identity of the only anonymous winner of the Pulitzer Prize, an Iranian

photographer who had depicted a firing squad in 1979, after which the Pulitzer committee immediately invited Jahangir Razmi to New York to claim his award. As a friend put it to him once, Prager reveals “something nobody knows about something everybody knows.”

“People feel now that I will understand them in some way,” Prager says. “And in a lot of ways they’re right.”

— *Jeremy Smerd ’03JRN*

## The Agent Tango

Yardenne Greenspan ’12SOA moves purposefully toward the high round table dotted with wine glasses, around which a cluster of women talk. She stops a few feet away, hesitant to crash the conversation. The tip sheet, e-mailed in advance to the writers attending the annual MFA Writing Program alumni/agents mixer in Low Library, said, *Everyone will feel nervous and awkward (including the agents)*, but Greenspan seems confident enough as she waits for an opening.

“I was nervous when I came in here, but I’ve talked to a number of agents and now I feel good,” she says. It helps that she’s accompanied by her former professor, writer Paul Beatty, who suggested approaching two of the women at the table, who are agents from the Wylie Agency — his agency. *Faculty and staff (also feeling awkward) will be there to facilitate introductions.*

Soon Beatty catches agent Kristina Moore’s eye, and Moore and Greenspan connect. After some introductory chitchat, Greenspan asks if she can talk about her novel. *Have a pitch line prepared. One or two sentences that encapsulate your book.* Moore urges her to go ahead.

“It’s about David, who’s an American expat living in Israel, and he gets contacted

by the daughter of his deceased ex-fiancée — I know it sounds complicated but it’s not. His connection with her brings him back to his hometown of New York, where they get into this strange sexual relationship and he’s forced to deal with his past, his abusive childhood, and also his relationship with his son. So it’s very family-oriented, very character-driven, um —”

“Cool,” Moore breaks in. “Let me give you my card.”

“Yeah, thank you.” Greenspan smiles and slides the card into the front pocket of her dress. She and Moore continue talking, discussing the Wylie client list. Light jazz plays. Aspiring writers wander the rotunda, squinting for white name tags — the color assigned to the agents. (Fiction writers have lavender tags, nonfiction writers peach, poets light green.) If they spot an agent, they slide in or wait on the sidelines.

But conversation can take you only so far with a literary agent. Michelle Brower of Folio Literary, in attendance, says face-to-face meetings are nice, but “if I don’t like what’s on the page, I don’t like it.”

After she finishes with Moore, Greenspan crosses paths with Brenda Bowen from Sanford Greenburger. Bowen listens to Greenspan pitch *The Book of David*, nodding approvingly at the title, only to

gently inform her when she’s done that though it sounds interesting, “I do mostly young adult and some adult fiction, but not much.” In other words, she’s not interested. Greenspan accepts this graciously.

Agents often try to define their specialties clearly enough so that they don’t get besieged by general submissions, while at the same time remaining open to serendipitous finds. Josh Getzler ’95BUS, an agent at Hannigan Salky Getzler, had long favored mysteries and historical fiction but now has a growing list of mommy bloggers. He’s going into the mixer expecting not much of either, guessing there will be “manuscripts about people in their twenties living in Brooklyn, playing in a band, and breaking up with their girlfriends,” as well as a “number of tight-perspective relationship novels,” and he’s open to the possibility he might be intrigued by one of these or find something altogether new.

And actually, there’s a lot more than books about boys in Brooklyn. *Stories from the Roof* by Willa Morris ’90SOA is about “two friends who connect after twenty years,” Morris says. “It’s about the Jewish community in Queens. It’s about love, friendship, betrayal.” Russell Contreras ’02SOA, a journalist, came from Placitas, New Mexico, to suss out interest in his

---

nonfiction proposal about JFK's groundbreaking engagement of Latino-rights groups, *When We Arrive: JFK's Last Night and the Birth of the Latino Vote*.

The first half of the event has a palpable energy, writers rushing to meet as many agents as they can. Then acting writing-program chair Ben Marcus takes the stage to give a brief welcome, and quips to the writers, "We hope you don't feel too nervous or too shy and just go and talk to anyone who is attractive to you." The crowd laughs.

Indeed, there are moments when, despite the evening's grownup hors d'oeuvres, sophisticated music, and impeccable manners, one feels a middle-school-dance vibe. The agents and the writers — around a hundred people in all — sometimes drift to separate corners, like boys and girls to the opposite sides of the gym. Publishing is a small industry and many of the agents know each other. They linger together by the drinks station, talking about how much easier nonfiction is to sell than fiction.

Paul Lucas from Janklow & Nesbit explains that nonfiction is sold on proposal, whereas fiction usually requires a polished manuscript. "With nonfiction, you can work on forty pages before submitting to publishers, instead of four hundred pages. I really like that about nonfiction."

While Getzler, Lucas, and Brower talk about common friends in the business, Carolyn Hill-Bjerke '03SOA comes over. She has a book of poems, but tonight her main focus is on getting representation for her memoir.

"The reason I'm here with the memoir is because I am adopted, and I did recently get my information about my biological family, and basically, with the right film agent, you will sell this as a movie-of-the-week in about ten minutes."

"Oh, wow," Brower says.

Hill-Bjerke goes into more detail, eventually revealing that though she does not remember it, she spent time in an orphanage, "the New Haven Children's Asylum."

"That's the title of your book, right?" interjects Brower.

"No, my poetry book is called *Things I Don't Want to Talk About*. My memoir is called *Mistake*."

"I would love to read your first twenty pages," Brower replies smoothly. "Send me your first twenty."

As the evening winds down, the jazz seems to grow louder. *We hope this evening proves successful for you; we also hope that you enjoy yourselves and perhaps catch up with old friends*. The writers who remain seem satisfied, invigorated even, at having had the chance to talk about works that they've largely labored over in solitude.

"I spoke to about seven people," says Karen Moulding '01SOA. "I perfected my pitch and people seemed really enthusiastic." She's ready for the next step, the follow-up. *They will not remember you; when you do send your manuscript, open the cover letter with the reminder that you met at the Columbia mixer*.

— Maya Rock

---

## On Marriage

So lately come to it, it troubles me  
when someone speaks of "marriage" as a thing  
apart, abstract; some alien entity —  
a separable prefix, a gold ring —

And when I hear "a marriage on the rocks"  
(I'm sorry but) I cannot help but see  
some murky, over-complicated cocktail  
whose bitters have obscured all trace of sweet.

"How goes the marriage?" "It goes swimmingly,"  
I answer, thinking, "You should ask a fish  
to talk about her feelings for the sea,  
the muscling of ebbs and flows, the shifts  
in temperature, degrees of salt and sweet;  
how, if removed from it, she couldn't breathe."

— Moira Egan '92SOA

A man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie, stands with his arms crossed in front of the Supreme Court building. The building's facade is partially covered in white protective scaffolding. The inscription "EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW" is visible on the pediment. The sky is clear and blue.

Justice's

The  
Interconnected  
World of  
NAACP  
President  
Benjamin  
Todd  
Jealous

Son





JÖRG MEYER

*The battle we wage is not for ourselves alone but for all true Americans.*

— W. E. B. Du Bois, 1906

On the morning that a statue of Rosa Parks is unveiled in the US Capitol, hundreds of people gather across First Street outside the Supreme Court Building, its scaffolded marble pillars covered by a veil of netting. The court is in session. It is February 27, 2013, a spring-touched day of sunshine and white bluffs sailing in a thin blue sky. The crowd, at the bottom of the wide, white steps, repeats the words of a black woman at a microphone: “Section 5 Must Stay Alive!”

They’ve come from Atlanta, the Carolinas, Baltimore, Detroit, Indiana, New York, Texas, Mississippi, and around the corner. They’re of all ages, colors, and tax brackets. They hold signs that say PROTECT VOTING RIGHTS and KEEP SECTION 5 ALIVE! and that depict murdered 1960s voting-rights workers Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner. They are college students, civil-rights veterans, UAW guys in ski caps, people in wheelchairs, red-T-shirted members of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, button-wearers from the League of Women Voters and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, and, in high proportion, holding black-on-gold placards of the 104-year-old organization’s scales-of-justice logo, members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Inside the court, Benjamin Jealous ’94CC, dressed in a gray suit and blue tie, sits among the spectators observing the oral arguments for *Shelby County v. Holder*. Shelby County, in Alabama, is challenging the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which outlawed voter-suppression tactics that were being used against African-Americans. At issue is a provision, Section 5, which requires jurisdictions with a history of voter suppression to prove to the Justice Department or a panel of federal judges that any changes to their voting rules are nondiscriminatory. The petitioner claims that the law, which Congress reauthorized in 2006 (the Senate voted 98–0 in favor), is outdated, unfair, and unnecessary.

As Jealous listens, Justice Antonin Scalia utters something so astonishing that people in the courtroom actually gasp. Jealous must decide how to convey what he

By Paul Hond

just heard; for when the session is over, he will exit through the Great Hall, emerge into the sun, walk down the steps, and address the demonstrators.

Outside, the mood is festive but tense. Speakers affirm the dire need to uphold Section 5. A Mexican-American woman tells of the Texas voter-ID law that went into effect last year, requiring voters to show state-issued photo identification (driver's licenses and gun licenses were permitted; student ID was not). More than 600,000 registered voters in Texas lacked the necessary ID. When Texas, which is subject to Section 5, submitted the legislation for review, a federal court struck it down, saying the costs of obtaining ID would impose "strict, unforgiving burdens on the poor." Now that protection hangs by the thinnest thread.

A noise, from up the street — a melody, voices — the clapping of hands — and here they come, after a thousand miles, off the buses, two hundred strong, marching up First Street toward Constitution Avenue, old and young, in yellow shirts that say Freedom Riders for Voting Rights, singing *Got my hand on the freedom plow, wouldn't take nothing for my journey now, keep your eyes on the prize, hold on*. Someone at the podium cries, "Alabama in the house!"

On this day, it's hard not to think of Rosa Parks, or Jimmie Lee Jackson, or the March on Washington fifty years ago. But it's 2013, and behind the cloak of netting, the doors to the Supreme Court have opened, and the spectators, Jealous among them, descend the steps.

## The Speaker

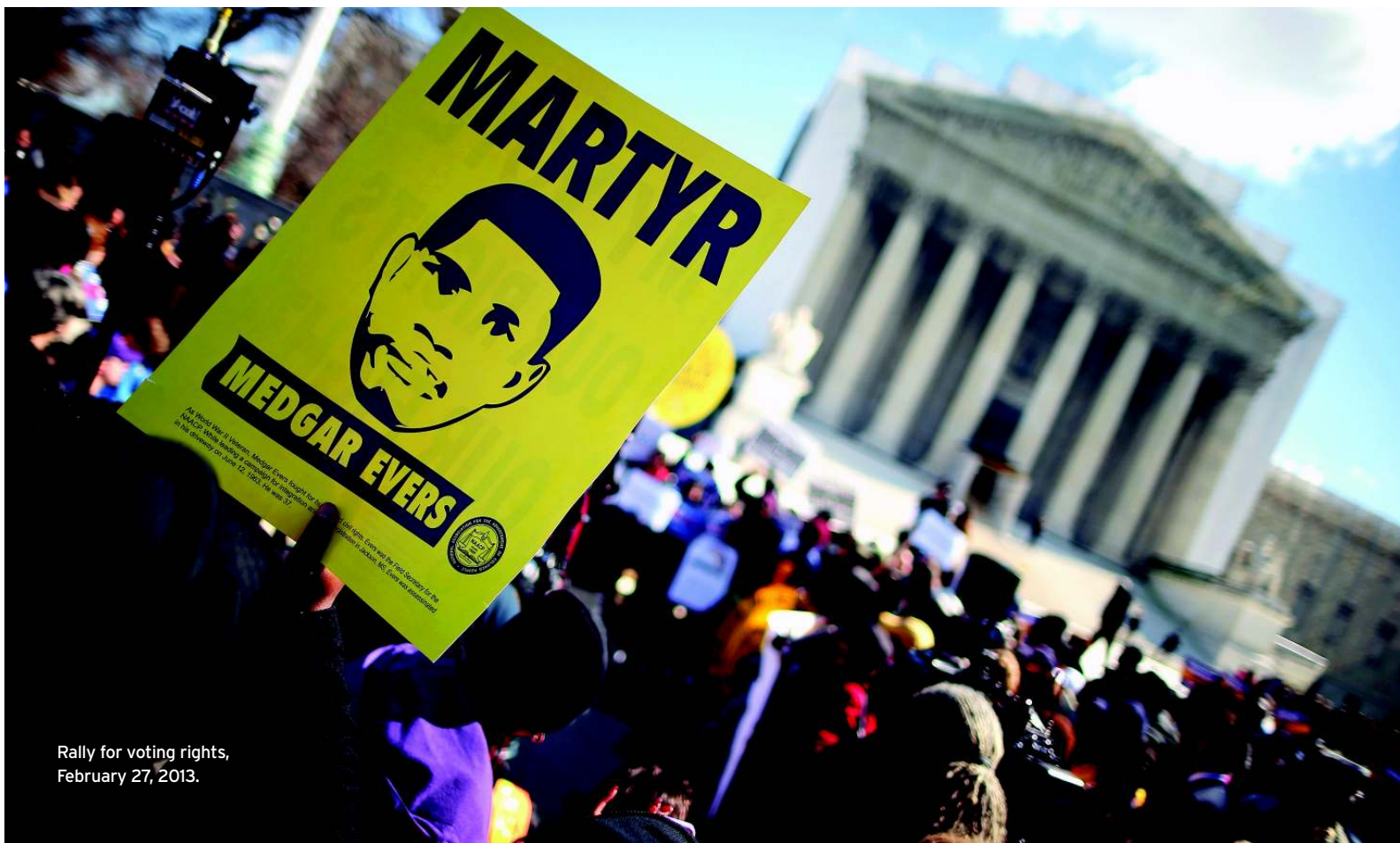
Two weeks before *Shelby County v. Holder*, and the night before President Obama's State of the Union address, Ben Jealous, forty, walks through the football-themed, tiger-mascot-plastered student union of Towson University in Baltimore County, Maryland. In his goatee and with a suit jacket stretched over his broad frame, Jealous could be a bighearted ex-lineman returning for an awards supper. In fact, he's been invited by the school's Center for Student Diversity to give a talk in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.

Inside the Chesapeake Room, three hundred people sit at round tables and in rows of chairs. The school is about 13 percent black and 70 percent white, and so, too, is the audience. Jealous, on being introduced, walks to the lectern to the sort of respectful applause accorded national figures by diffident college kids.

"Growing up in the family in which Dr. King grew up," Jealous says in his forceful baritone, "you would have been taught that the most important use of your education is to make our country better, to advance the cause of justice, to advance the cause of liberty, to make us one nation; to make our Pledge of Allegiance — one nation under God, with liberty and justice for all — not our national aspiration, but our natural situation.

"Tonight," Jealous says, "I want to invite you to think about the interconnected nature of some of our nation's toughest problems."

Jealous has thought about this web his whole life, though it wasn't until college, while he was doing community service and



Rally for voting rights,  
February 27, 2013.

# “Tonight, I want to invite you to think about the interconnected nature of some of our nation’s toughest problems.”

eyeing Wall Street, that a four-year-old girl in a crack-haunted Harlem tenement set him on an activist path. (The girl told Jealous she’d seen a rape in the backyard — her description proved she understood the word — and years later, Jealous, in private conversations, recounts the moment with a hand over his eyes.) That was before his suspension from Columbia; before he was managing editor of the *Jackson Advocate*, Mississippi’s oldest black newspaper; before the Rhodes Scholarship (he studied criminology at Oxford); before he headed the grant-making, human-rights-focused Rosenberg Foundation; and long before 2008, when he became, at thirty-five, the youngest-ever president of America’s oldest civil-rights organization.

“If we’re going to use our education to advance equity, it starts with having a critical mind, and you have to ask the question: why is it that in your lifetime public-university tuition in states across this country has gone up faster than at any point in history?”

Jealous reels off some numbers: in the past five years, tuition in Virginia went up by 29 percent, California by 72 percent, Arizona by 78 percent.

“When I was a child in California in the 1970s,” he says, “we spent 3 percent of our state budget on prisons and 11 percent on public universities, and our schools were cheap and generally considered to be the best in the world. Fast-forward to a couple of years ago. I was with Governor Schwarzenegger and asked him for those same stats, and he said, ‘Ben, today we spend 11 percent on prisons and 7.5 percent on public universities.’ And that’s why tuition has to go up. You can’t spend 11 percent on education if you’re spending 11 percent on prisons.” Jealous scans the crowd. “Fear,” he says, “is sapping our nation of the talent of your generation. Because when tuition goes up 72 percent, somebody isn’t going to school next year. Because when students are defaulting on their student loans, they can’t go to grad school. Because when the state says, ‘Yes, we know it’s seven times more effective to use drug treatment than incarceration for nonviolent drug addicts, but we’re just going to keep locking them up,’ it turns many of them from nonviolent addicts into hard criminals.” Jealous has the room. “Choices are being made, and it’s not just about them. It ultimately impacts all of us.”

The speaker then makes an abrupt pivot.

“How many of you,” he says, “remember the DC Sniper?”

## The Marriage

In 1986, the NAACP moved its headquarters from Lower Manhattan to the fringe of northwest Baltimore, into a brick complex that was originally a Roman Catholic convent. Now called the Benjamin Hooks Building, after the former NAACP executive director,

the structure has been absorbed into a winding office park. The Hooks Building, at the top of the hill, overlooks a stretch of urban woods and maintains a certain monastic seclusion.

Inside, past a corridor lined with historical photographs of NAACP conventions, is a stained-glass-windowed chapel, now the Roy Wilkins Auditorium. It was there, last May, that Jealous made one of the most talked-about statements of his presidency.

The pronouncement was all the more poignant for occurring in Baltimore, city of Frederick Douglass and Thurgood Marshall, once a slave city (the 1840 census counted 5,000 slaves) that was also home to thousands of free African-Americans and fugitive slaves, later a segregated city that Jealous’s parents helped desegregate, and where it was illegal for them to get married until 1967. When they did marry, Jealous’s white father was disowned by his New England family. Jealous grew up close to his mother’s family, the Todds of Baltimore. Though Jealous was raised in Northern California, educated in New York and Oxford, and lives in a Maryland suburb of Washington with his wife, law professor Lia Epperson, and their two small children, he often invokes his Baltimore roots, as he did that day in the Wilkins Auditorium, when he declared the NAACP’s support for same-sex marriage.

“We do this work because of our faith, not in spite of it,” Jealous told a reporter who asked about religious opposition to gay marriage within the NAACP. “With that said, our calling as an organization is to defend the US Constitution. We are here to speak to matters of civil law and matters of civil rights.” He stated that clergy considered any difference of opinion “a difference, not a division,” and then, his voice tightening, he said, “To a one, they understand that there are —” He broke off, bowed his head. “You have to excuse me.” He paused. “I’m a bit moved. My parents’ own marriage was against the law at the time.”

The couple had to get married in Washington before returning to Baltimore, Jealous said. The procession of cars, headlights ablaze, was obliged to travel the fifty miles between the two cities. People who saw it mistook it for a funeral.

## The Penalty

On the morning of March 18, 2009, Jealous arrived at work and received a message that Bill Richardson, the governor of New Mexico, had called. New Mexico was two hours behind, so Jealous knew the call was urgent. He asked his secretary when New Mexico’s death-penalty abolition bill had to be signed.

“By the end of the day today,” the secretary told him.

Ending capital punishment was one of Jealous’s most personal battles. The racial and economic patterns were clear. So were the system’s imperfections. It pained Jealous that every other West-

ern country had abolished executions while the US, the beacon of human rights, was still on a list with Iran and North Korea. Western leaders, when Jealous discussed it with them, all said the same thing: “It’s because of your legacy of slavery. It’s because of your legacy of racism. That’s the difference between you and us.” The NAACP had been formed partly to combat the death penalty’s extrajudicial sibling, lynching. In 1908, riots erupted in Springfield, Illinois, when a white mob, enraged that two black prisoners whom they’d hoped to hang were transferred from the city jail to safety, rampaged through black neighborhoods. The violence in Abraham Lincoln’s town inspired the merger, in the Northeast, of Du Bois’s Niagara Movement — black, intellectual, committed to equality, largely ignored — with a group of white, justice-minded, influential New Yorkers (including brothers Joel Spingarn 1897CC and Arthur Spingarn 1895CC) to form, on February 12, 1909, the centennial of Lincoln’s birth, the NAACP.

A hundred years later, fourteen states had abolished the death penalty. Jealous’s magic number was twenty-six: if more than half the states outlawed capital punishment, the “unusual” part of “cruel and unusual punishment,” as forbidden by the Eighth Amendment, would become actionable.

Jealous called Richardson. Richardson, a Democrat, had always campaigned as a death-penalty proponent. But now, as a governor, he’d really looked at the issue, and was disturbed by it. Richardson wanted to hear Jealous’s best argument for repeal.

“Governor,” said Jealous. “You know the death penalty is used exclusively on poor people.”

“Yes.”

“You know it’s used disproportionately against blacks and Latinos.”

“Yes.”

“Well, Governor, this is what I want you to do: imagine the person you most worry about in trying to explain why you abolished the death penalty. I want you to imagine telling that person this: ‘Every time a prosecutor seeks the death penalty, it pulls hundreds of thousands of dollars, sometimes millions, out of our state treasury. Dollars that therefore cannot be used for anything else. And in our state, like any state, there are places where 30, 40, 50, sometimes 60 percent of the homicides go unsolved every year. I’ve thought long and hard about it, and decided that we as a state would be safer if we spent that money on homicide units rather than killing the killers we’ve already caught and put in cages. So I’ve abolished the death penalty, and I’ve asked the counties to send their savings to the homicide units and get the uncaught killers off the street.’”

This was a snapshot of Jealous’s MO: first, by speaking moral convictions in the idiom of state budgets and public safety, he could reach a wide swath of Americans and forge coalitions, some of them exotic (in 2011 he joined Newt Gingrich in calling for a reduction in the number of prisoners in the US, with the savings going toward education). Second, he would shift the organization’s legal battles, traditionally waged at the federal level, to the states. Third, he would press his case personally at *all* levels.

Richardson thanked Jealous and hung up. Hours later, the governor, in what he called “the most difficult decision in my political life,” signed the bill, and New Mexico became the fifteenth state to abolish the death penalty.

## The Profile

The DC Sniper?

Nearly every hand in the Chesapeake Room goes up. Many of the students were small children at the time of the 2002 killing spree.

“People were being shot daily at rush hour,” Jealous tells his audience, “and there was no suspect description until the police put up a profile. The profile started with certainties and ended with probabilities. Probably antisocial. Probably traveling alone or in a small group. Probably military-trained. Probably male. Probably white. That’s the racial profile of a lone gunman assassin in our country. We say Columbine, we say Newtown, we tend to think of lone white gunmen, and so did the police.

“The police were starting with race and working toward behavior, and people were dying. When John Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo were caught, the police came out and admitted this just once: they had stopped them ten times before they zeroed in on them as suspects.”

A faint, courtroom-like murmur in the Chesapeake Room.

“But that’s the way race messes up our criminal-justice process. My grandfather was a probation officer in Baltimore for thirty years. He would tell you that law enforcement is like anything else: if you focus on one thing, you aren’t focusing on the other. If you focus on race, you’re not focused on the military jacket of the black guy you’re waving through. You’re not getting the dog that’s



Jealous speaks out against capital punishment in Annapolis, Maryland in January. The state repealed the death penalty in March.

“We need for this generation to finally push this country beyond its racial fixation, to call this country out and say,

# ‘Enough.’”

trained to sniff for gunpowder to sniff his car. You’re just saying, ‘Go through, I’m looking for the next white guy.’”

Jealous follows this with the story of Jim Parker, a black man who, at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901, disarmed the assassin of President William McKinley. The Secret Service, Jealous says, was on alert for Eastern European anarchists — the profile was of a swarthy male — and had been focusing on Parker, while the shooter, a white man with a gun-concealing bandage over his arm, got past security unchecked. All of which sets up Jealous’s jeremiad on the NYPD’s stop-and-frisk program, a topic he will expand upon in more fiery fashion next weekend in a Brooklyn church. Tonight, he notes that this form of profiling “loads up the system with people who, when you’re looking for a gun, have a joint in their pocket, and they get upset, and you have to book them for disorderly conduct. That drives up the cost of law enforcement, which competes directly with our budget for public higher education.”

He concludes with an appeal: “We need for this generation to finally push this country beyond its racial fixation, to call this country out and say, ‘Enough. We’re tired of it. It doesn’t work. It never really has.’” Jealous returns to his theme. “Yours must be the generation that insists that our nation make the Pledge of Allegiance our national situation rather than our national aspiration, before you have to stand there brokenhearted as I did at class day at my daughter’s public elementary school two days ago, and listen as your child puts her hand over her heart and says that pledge with conviction, because that’s where she believes that she lives: one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. And life hasn’t taught her yet just how far we have to go. Thank you, and God bless.”

The applause crackles, some people stand, more people stand, everyone stands.

## The Organizer

*Mister Speaker, the President of the United States.*

Ben Jealous stands and applauds as President Obama enters the House chamber to give his much-awaited State of the Union speech. Twice in the last month, Jealous conferred with the president in small, closed-door meetings, where, as Jealous told a reporter before the speech, “I made it very clear to the president that black Americans need to hear that *he* hears *us* when we say the disparity, the gap in employment rates, must be closed. That’s what we’re looking to hear — that he has a plan for lifting *all* boats.”

*Tonight, let’s declare that in the wealthiest nation on earth, no one who works full-time should have to live in poverty, and raise the federal minimum wage to nine dollars an hour.*

Jealous doesn’t doubt that his fellow Columbian “gets it.” It’s an organizer thing. Obama in Chicago, Jealous in New York. At Columbia, Jack Greenberg ’45CC, ’48LAW — arguer of *Brown v. Board of Education*, former director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF), and dean of Columbia College — recommended Jealous for an LDF internship. Jealous worked out of St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Harlem on issues of health care and homelessness.

*Tonight, let’s also recognize that there are communities in this country where no matter how hard you work, it’s virtually impossible to get ahead. Factory towns decimated from years of plants packing up. Inescapable pockets of poverty, urban and rural, where young adults are still fighting for their first job.*

Jealous also formed student groups that ran youth programs and restored apartments in buildings that the University deemed too dangerous for student volunteers. On campus, he fought to save full-need financial aid and need-blind admissions, and when the University announced plans to raze the Audubon Ballroom, site of Malcolm X’s assassination, and replace it with a biomedical research center, Jealous organized a one-day protest that led to his one-semester suspension.

*And for poor kids who need help the most, this lack of access to preschool education can shadow them for the rest of their lives. Tonight, I propose working with states to make high-quality preschool available to every child in America.*

Jealous’s activist strain arose early. Raised to believe, as Du Bois wrote, that “with the right to vote goes everything,” he organized, at fourteen, a voter-registration drive in Monterey County.

*We should follow the example of a North Miami woman named Desiline Victor. When she arrived at her polling place, she was told the wait to vote might be six hours.*

Jealous stands with the rest of the chamber and applauds the 102-year-old black woman who waited hours to vote, and whose concern, says the president, was “not with her tired body or aching feet, but whether folks like her would get to have their say.”

*We must all do our part to make sure our God-given rights are protected here at home. That includes our most fundamental right as citizens: the right to vote. When any Americans — no matter where they live or what their party — are denied that right simply because they can’t wait for five, six, seven hours just to cast their ballot, we are betraying our ideals.*

Jealous speaks of moments — talking with a black farmer who was defrauded of land by the USDA, sitting with Troy Davis, “an innocent man,” on death row (Davis was executed in 2011) — “that sear your soul and redouble your commitment.” Doubtless, President Obama has had many such moments, and Jealous hears this in the president’s address — hears the president hearing.

## The Meeting

When Jealous arrived in 2008, the NAACP was in trouble. Ethics scandals involving presidents Benjamin Chavis (ousted in 1994 for misuse of funds) and Kweisi Mfume (resigned in 2005 amid accusations of sexual favoritism) had battered the image of an organization already considered, by some of its own members, to be averse to change and still living in the glory days of Thurgood Marshall and *Brown*. Membership had dropped. Revenues had fallen. The operation had been in the red six years running. The staff had shrunk from 140 to 40. In May 2008, Jealous, backed by then board chairman Julian Bond to succeed out-of-favor telecom executive Bruce Gordon, was elected by a 34–21 margin. Some old-timers weren't sure about the California youngster. Never led a business *or* a church. But under Jealous, an experienced nonprofit fundraiser, the NAACP has been profitable every year. The staff has grown to 170, with field directors in every region — a key success in the midst of what Jealous calls “the most aggressive attempt to roll back voting rights in over a century.”

The final day of the NAACP's annual meeting on February 16 at the Marriott Marquis in Times Square is a southern-tinged affair, a huge family reunion. Multitudinous are the carved wooden canes and Movement-era faces. Overcoats. Hats. Red dresses. There's New York State Conference president Hazel Dukes. There's board chairman Roslyn Brock. There's chairman emeritus Julian Bond, arrested days earlier at the White House during a protest against the Keystone XL oil pipeline. Cheers and songs punctuate testimony from regional leaders of new members signed up, of youth chapters established, of a police-brutality settlement in Denver, of the South Carolina boycott (Confederate flag, state house), of the pardon of the Wilmington ten. *Fired up, ready to go!*

President Jealous steps to the lectern.

“We have transformed this nation,” he says. “You ain't burned out, you might be a little burned up.” Laughter. “But you're burned up because you've been in the fire” — *that's right!* — “and you've taken this country through the fire, and we're coming out on the other side.” Loud applause. “Thank you, Chairman Brock, thank you to the board of directors, members of the special contribution fund, board of trustees. May we have a hand for the national staff of the NAACP?” Jealous beckons the staff to rise. “The most important number of the NAACP is about 25,000 — the number of active leaders of our 1,200 units across the country. Can we have a hand for them? Because they are the heroes. Thank you, heroes and sheroes — and honestly, it's more sheroes than heroes.” Wry chuckles from some knowing female veterans. “Oh, I *know* who I work for,” Jealous says. “And if I forget, my ninety-six-year-old grandma, who's a third-generation member of the NAACP, reminds me. Y'all should know this story: about five years ago, in May, I called my grandmother. It was the anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and I'd just been appointed, and I told her. And you know, you'd expect your grandmother to come to the phone excited and proud.” A pause. “My grandmother was a feminist before we called them feminists.” Scattered

laughs. “Delta since 1936.” Cheers for Delta Sigma Theta. “Her best friend was AKA, so don't start.” Laughter and groans. “But she got real quiet. And I said, ‘Grandma?’ And she said, ‘Well, son. I've belonged to this organization for a very long time. And if it *had* to be a man? *Again?* I'm very proud that it's you, son.” Big laughs, rich with release. “So I know who I work for. Brothers and sisters, I am proud to report that the state of the NAACP is strong.”

Jealous talks more numbers: the NAACP registered 444,676 voters for the 2012 election, up from 124,000 in 2008; turned out 1.2 million voters; and killed voter-suppression laws in fifteen states. Connecticut abolished the death penalty (that makes seventeen, with Maryland next), and same-sex marriage passed in Maine, Maryland, and Washington State.

“And in less than two weeks,” Jealous says, “the very heart of voter protection in the country goes on trial in the US Supreme Court. And we need everyone to get there. We need folks to get in cars and get to the Supreme Court. Because if this goes the wrong way” — Jealous exhales — “we go back.”

## The Preacher

It's Sunday morning at the 140-year-old Nazarene Congregational United Church of Christ in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. Step into the nave, with its high ceiling and rows of brown wooden pews, its tall, sunny stained-glass windows composed of squares of blue, green, red, and yellow. You're early. An older woman in a hat sees you and beckons you, a stranger, to the front rows, where she and her friends welcome you and talk about the grace of the small gesture, the smile that can make all the difference in someone's day; and now the blue-gowned choir files to the front, and the young pianist and drummer and choir director perform “I've Got Peace Like a River” and “Trouble Don't Last Always,” and the pastor, the Reverend Conrad Tillard, nods to Jealous on the altar. “Ben is an Episcopalian, but I saw him tapping his feet.” Tillard recalls meeting Jealous as “a mili-

Father's Day 2012: Tens of thousands march in New York City during an NAACP-cosponsored protest against stop-and-frisk.



# “I’m deeply disturbed

that in this greatest of all nations there lies a troubling reality: **not all of our children have the same access to democracy or justice.**”

tant student on the campus of Columbia University,” a young man of “brilliance and tremendous insight,” brought up in the tradition of social justice. “I want our young people to meet a young man who can graduate from Columbia and go on to become a Rhodes Scholar, because just as he has done, they have the potential to do.” Applause. “You got to meet giants in order to be a giant.” *That’s right.* “So I’m glad that he’s in Bedford-Stuyvesant today.”

Jealous takes the pulpit.

His sermon, he says, is inspired by St. Augustine’s notion that even as we seek the City of God in Heaven, we must build the City of God on earth. “Indeed,” says Jealous, “our own nation’s founding fathers were inspired by that vision.” *Amen.* “I’m deeply disturbed that in this greatest of all nations — a nation founded on the principles of democracy and justice and universal human dignity — there lies a troubling reality: not all of our children have the same access to democracy or justice.”

But it is only when Jealous leaves Augustine’s New Jerusalem for Bloomberg’s New York that the flame flies up and the hammer drops.

“I was prepared to talk about jobs today, but then Mayor Bloomberg couldn’t help himself,” Jealous begins. “In the State of the City speech a couple of days ago, he felt the need to evangelize what he sees as the value of stop-and-frisk.” Jealous’s voice rises. “The gall, to stand up and preach fear to our city, and our nation, and indeed — because this city stands first among all others in this greatest of all nations — the world. Preach fear of our children, New York’s children, *all* of our children, whether they are white and wearing a hoodie or black and wearing a tie and going to church.”

*Yes. All right.*

“Kids in this city are too afraid of the very people who are sworn to respect and protect them. And the mayor needs to understand and finally have the courage to admit that he has been wrong for a decade.” Applause. “That he inherited Giuliani’s radical practice and took it to an unimaginably high level” — *Amen* — “and has, therefore, distracted law enforcement, endangered every citizen of the city, and driven a wedge of division between the people who have sworn to respect and protect the entire city and the neighborhoods that often need their help the most.” Jealous goes to the stats. “In 2011, there were 700,000 stop-and-frisks. About 90 percent of the people were innocent. About 90 percent were people of color. And 99.9 percent didn’t have a gun. Literally. 700,000 stop-and-frisks resulted in 700 guns off the street. This was in a year. 700,000 people humiliated. 630,000 innocent. 630,000 people of color.” Jealous thunders: “More stop-and-frisks of young black men in New York City than there *are* young black men in New York City.” Applause. “We’ve been running this test in this country for ten years, and the results are in, and they are not just clear, they are crystal clear. New York City’s

ability to reduce crime is between 50 percent and 100 percent *less* than major cities that *don’t* have stop-and-frisk.” Jealous falls to a pained whisper. “So why would you want to do it?”

Long silence.

“Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Kelly act like they don’t know why crime is going down faster in other cities. But we do. It’s called common sense.”

When Jealous is finished, Tillard makes some announcements and baptizes two babies. Then everyone stands, holds hands, and joins in the recessional, “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” The stained-glass lozenges blush with winter light. The church doors open.

## The Vote

*Alabama in the House!*

The first full-bodied statue of an African-American woman is dedicated in the Capitol’s Statuary Hall, and throughout the day, people will point out that Rosa Parks, the mother of the civil-rights movement, wasn’t some saintly old lady in Montgomery too tired to get up from her seat that day in 1955, but rather a forty-two-year-old NAACP stalwart, secretary of the Montgomery branch for twelve years, shrewder than you thought — while across First Street, behind the draped scaffolding, *Shelby County* has been heard, and at the foot of the white steps the Freedom Riders for Voting Rights in their yellow shirts wait with the rest of the assembly to hear from the president of the NAACP.

The mood is no longer buoyant. Previous speakers have already revealed Justice Scalia’s stunner. Scalia, trying to explain the Senate’s 2006 vote of 98–0 to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act, said, “I think it is attributable, very likely attributable, to a phenomenon that is called perpetuation of racial entitlement.”

Jealous keeps his own comments brief.

“Scalia today got it wrong, dead wrong,” he says. “He tried to act like democracy was something trifling. I won’t dignify his comments by repeating them, but join me in saying:

“The right to vote”

*The right to vote*

“is an *American* entitlement.”


*is an American entitlement.*

“The right to vote”

*The right to vote*

“is an *American* entitlement.”

*is an American entitlement.*

Shortly after Jealous speaks, the crowd disbands in the afternoon sun, back to the trains, the cars, the buses. The court’s decision in *Shelby County* is expected in June. But for Jealous, there are many miles to walk before then. 



Trishia Bermudez and  
her son, Matthew



A new genetic test allows parents to peer into their unborn children's medical future. Are we ready for this knowledge? A Columbia study looks for answers.

By Claudia Kalb

Photographs by Jörg Meyer

Trishia Bermudez was thrilled to find out that she was pregnant last spring. She loved her baby bump and her expectant glow. And she was delighted by the sense of awe and possibility that her growing baby inspired in family and friends. “Everyone is excited for you about the new life you’re bringing into the world,” she says.

During a routine ultrasound at about twenty weeks, Bermudez’s doctor noticed a potential problem. The baby’s kidneys appeared to be enlarged, which is sometimes a sign of a kidney disorder. In the worst case, it could mean death in the womb or within the first year of life.

Bermudez’s doctor sent her immediately to the Center for Prenatal Pediatrics at Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC), one of the nation’s premier institutions for treating high-risk pregnancies.

There, another ultrasound suggested that her baby’s kidneys were fine, having swelled only temporarily. But it revealed a

missing nasal bone, an enlarged placenta, and a shortage of amniotic fluid around the fetus. These were likely signs of a chromosomal abnormality in the baby. Bermudez sat down with Ashley Mills, a genetic counselor who specializes in translating complex information about a fetus’s DNA to parents. Mills offered Bermudez a routine procedure known as amniocentesis, which requires inserting a long needle into the abdomen to collect amniotic fluid. It is unpleasant and somewhat risky — about one in three hundred amniocenteses results in miscarriage — but it would allow doctors to examine her baby’s DNA.

Bermudez agreed, despite her fear of needles. A physician extracted amniotic fluid, created a cell culture, and examined the stained cells under a microscope. The results were encouraging: no genetic mistakes could be seen. This ruled out the possibility that her baby would have Down syndrome, Turner syndrome, or any of the dozens of other conditions that are caused



looking  
for the telltale  
gene



by the sorts of genetic mistakes that are easy to spot on a slide.

But Mills also offered to analyze Bermudez's baby's DNA using a computer-based technique that probes even deeper into the genome. Microarray analysis, as it is called, can detect mistakes in genetic code that are one hundred times smaller than those seen under a microscope. These tiny deletions and duplications are the sort that have been linked to autism, developmental delays, schizophrenia, and many other complex conditions. The test therefore provides parents a more detailed picture of their baby's health than has ever been available before.

"I thought if we went ahead with the test, maybe we'd get some concrete answers about what was going on with my body and my baby," says Bermudez.

Bermudez agreed to the test. This time, scientists did find something alarming: a missing piece of DNA on chromosome 3. This was a bad sign, but precisely what it meant for the baby was unclear.

"I sat with her for a very long time delivering the news," says Mills. "I explained that I would have to do lots of research to give her some reliable information."

Over the next several weeks, Mills studied the area of the genome where Ber-

ics labs around the country, asking if any other researchers had come across a similar case. Again, no luck.

"This meant that I couldn't give her percentages or statistics on the likelihood that anything in particular would happen," says Mills. "All I could say was that, based on the location and size of this deletion, the child would almost certainly have health problems. But what kind of problems? And when? What will he be like when he's two? When he's five? It was impossible to say. That's very difficult news to deliver."

Mills and Bermudez discussed the baby's prognosis over a series of visits. They became close, and spent some of their time just chatting and laughing. But the heart of the meetings consisted of Mills preparing Bermudez for the likelihood that her baby would have special needs.

"Every time I went back for a visit, it was something sad," Bermudez says. "I was coming home and crying and telling my fiancé about it. He felt like we couldn't enjoy what the pregnancy was really about, which was bringing a new life into the world."

Over the next few years, more and more women will face the decision of whether or not to test their unborn children for genetic abnormalities. The new test comes with emotional risks because it will sometimes

purpose of his study is to determine if this test generates information that is useful to doctors and parents, and therefore should be offered to all expectant mothers.

"This might mean that a doctor is able to diagnose a genetic disorder in the womb and treat it properly as soon as the child comes into the world," Wapner says. "Or it could mean helping a mother make a more informed choice about whether or not to continue with her pregnancy."

A more difficult question, however, is this: will parents be glad they received this information? Or will they regret ever having peeked at their baby's DNA?

### Searching for signs

Prenatal genetic testing emerged in the 1970s, when obstetricians started to recommend amniocentesis for pregnant women over the age of thirty-five. The first common condition that scientists learned to preemptively diagnose was Down syndrome, which stood out because it is caused by the presence of a whole extra chromosome. Soon, they were also spotting the large chromosomal anomalies that cause Tay-Sachs disease, sickle-cell anemia, and several disorders of the neural tube, which is the embryo's precursor to the brain and spinal cord.

Wapner, a sixty-five-year-old obstetrician who came to Columbia from Drexel University in 2005, has been trying to improve prenatal diagnosis his entire career. In the early 1980s, he was instrumental in developing chorionic villus sampling (CVS), a procedure in which fetal cells are extracted from a woman's placenta rather than from her amniotic fluid. CVS can be done at an earlier stage of pregnancy — in the first trimester, versus the second — and is now a popular alternative to amniocentesis, although some women still get amniocentesis because it is easier for physicians to administer and is more widely available.

Wapner's most important contribution, though, may turn out to be his advancement of microarray analysis, the genetic test that Bermudez underwent last summer. The idea is simple: rather than limit-

"Some people are afraid of change,  
and they are afraid of new information."

— Ronald Wapner

mudez's baby had a deletion. There were nine genes in the region that were particularly worrisome, having been implicated in autism, diabetes, cataracts, abnormal blood clotting, epilepsy, leukemia, lymphoma, Parkinson's disease, and obesity. To narrow down the prognosis, Mills pored over medical literature in hopes of finding references to other people with a DNA deletion that resembled this one. She found none. So she telephoned genet-

pick up oddities in a baby's DNA that are too subtle for geneticists to base any firm conclusions upon, thus leaving parents feeling anxious and helpless.

Ronald Wapner, the director of reproductive genetics at CUMC and vice chairman for research in the department of obstetrics and gynecology, is leading a federally funded study that has provided thousands of women with the powerful new genetic test that was used on Bermudez's baby. The



Ronald Wapner

ing oneself to what can be spotted visually, why not use computers to identify the minutest discrepancies in a baby's DNA? The technology is not new. By the time Wapner proposed examining fetal tissue this way in 2006, physicians had been analyzing the DNA of sick children by microarray for a few years. The technique was especially useful in spotting rare disorders that pediatricians had trouble diagnosing any other way.

"Say you have a youngster with a seemingly random combination of learning difficulties and physical problems, like a heart

defect and cleft palate," says Wapner. "If you do the microarray, you may discover he has a small piece of chromosome 22 missing. That indicates it's DiGeorge syndrome. And it means he's got a 25 percent chance of developing schizophrenia. So now you can be on the lookout for that, too."

With such a sophisticated tool, however, came thorny ethical questions. Obstetricians knew from experience that many pregnant women who opt for genetic testing are those who, after having received a troubling result on an ultrasound, are considering abortion. The method of analysis using microscopes,

which is called karyotyping, was generally considered a useful tool for helping them to make this decision because it identified large, clearly defined genetic defects. The microarray test, on the other hand, would detect not only the genetic signatures of rare diseases like DiGeorge syndrome but also many other DNA flaws whose impact on the body were not yet fully understood. This raised the possibility that babies could be aborted for having slight, potentially harmless DNA irregularities.

At the same time that Wapner and several other scientists were developing a prenatal version of the test, however, rapid progress was being made in linking subtle DNA mistakes with specific conditions. These advances emboldened Wapner — a tall, wild-haired native of Wilmington, Delaware — and a few of his influential colleagues, including Baylor University's Art Beaudet, Emory University's David Ledbetter, and Washington State University's Lisa Schaffer, to articulate a new vision for prenatal genetic testing, one driven not merely by the desire to help women decide whether or not to abort high-risk pregnancies but also by the hope of diagnosing and treating a number of disorders as early in life as possible.

"Imagine if parents and doctors knew from day one that a child was going to be susceptible to autism," Wapner says. "They might catch it sooner and provide him early intervention, which can be critical. There are all sorts of things a physician can do with this information."

In the spring of 2007, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development awarded Wapner a \$5.4 million grant to lead the first-ever clinical study on the use of microarray testing for pregnant women. The project, based at CUMC and involving twenty-eight partner institutions, would enroll 4,400 women to be tested. All participants would have a reason for needing special testing, such as advanced age (over the age of thirty-five), an indication of Down syndrome, or aberrations on an ultrasound. They would stipulate upfront how much



information they wanted researchers to disclose to them. For instance, a woman could say that she wanted to learn about her baby's genetic susceptibility to conditions that would affect him or her as a child but not adult-onset conditions like Alzheimer's or heart disease. They could also ask researchers not to inform them of genetic flaws whose health ramifications were a total mystery.

"We knew this was going to be a stressful and anxiety-inducing situation for people," says Wapner. "We didn't want to needlessly upset them."

The final results, long awaited by obstetricians and genetic counselors, were published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* this past December. They showed that the microarray test caught dangerous genetic errors in 6 percent of fetuses who appeared to be developing abnormally in ultrasound images but for whom a karyotyping test indicated no broken DNA. "That's a lot. That's huge," Susan Klugman, director of reproductive genetics at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, told the Associated Press. Even among fetuses who appeared healthy in both ultrasounds and karyotyping, the new test found that 1.7 percent of them actually had at least one genetic error that has been linked to disease.

On the basis of those results, which were widely reported last winter, Wapner and his colleagues at CUMC's Center for Prenatal Pediatrics are now offering the microarray to all pregnant women who request a genetic test.

"Lots of people are now asking for it," he says. "We find this exciting. It will make a big difference in how we can counsel patients."

#### Guideposts to care

December 5, the day the Columbia study was released to the public, was busy and triumphant for Wapner. In his office that morning, surrounded by framed diplomas, orchid plants, and a bag of potting soil, he reflected on the dramatic advances that have taken place in his field.

"When I started practicing in the early 1970s, we didn't even have ultrasound," says Wapner, who still sees patients two days per week. "Now I'm decoding babies'

they can handle. His job, as he sees it, is to dig up every bit of data he can provide them. "When they sit down and face their own situation," he says, "I find they really are able to comprehend it and deal with it."

Ana Zeletz, a former pediatric nurse from South Orange, New Jersey, didn't think twice about participating in Wapner's study. When she was thirteen weeks pregnant, an ultrasound had revealed extra fluid behind her baby's neck, which sometimes indicates Down syndrome. A standard chromosomal test had come back normal, which ruled out Down syndrome as an explanation. But the new microarray test found a small DNA deletion that has

The new test will sometimes pick up oddities  
in a baby's DNA that are too subtle for geneticists  
to base any firm conclusions upon.

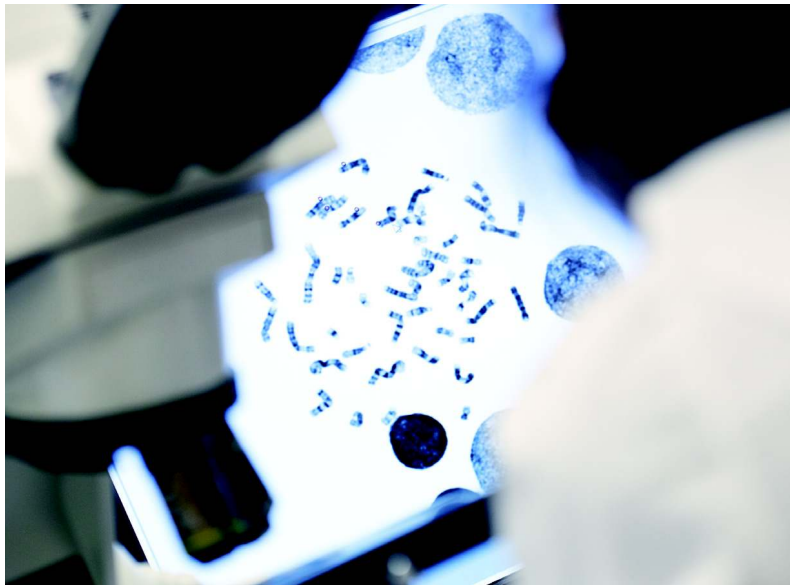
genomes. And with change comes fear, of course. Some people, practitioners included, are afraid of change, and they are afraid of new information."

One lesson Wapner has learned over the years, he says, is that you can never predict how people will respond to the prospect of having their baby's genome read. Some prefer as little information as possible, even if their baby is at high risk for disease. Others request every detail and agonize over the odds. Wapner says that it is up to his patients to decide how much information

been linked to kidney problems, diabetes, cognitive and developmental delays, and reproductive-system malformations.

Nobody could tell Zeletz precisely how her child would be affected, or even if she would be. "It was definitely heartbreaking," says Zeletz. "But my husband and I decided we could deal with this."

Jillian was born in October 2010, nearly seven pounds and, by all appearances, healthy. But the parents and their doctors were on the lookout for any signs of trouble. Eventually, they found some: Jillian



displayed problems walking independently in her second year. So Zeletz and her husband, Stu, enrolled her in physical therapy when she was just seventeen months old. They say the microarray-test results encouraged them to seek those services, whereas they might otherwise have shrugged off Jillian's motor delays as an example of the natural variety that exists in the timing of child-development milestones.

"I feel like it did help," says Zeletz. "If other issues come up, I won't be having to say to someone, 'No, there really is a problem; she won't grow out of it.' It will give me more confidence in my gut instincts, and we won't ever be chasing the problem. We'll always be ahead of it. That does offer peace of mind."

### A science in its infancy

Human DNA is notoriously imperfect. Everyone's genes contain typos, and most are harmless. In the Columbia study, 88 percent of the deletions and duplications detected in the genome were known to be benign.

Now that more and more DNA flaws are being linked with diseases, a new question arises: what are the chances that a flaw will lead to its associated disease? Few DNA mistakes harm us in ways that are consistent and easily traceable, like the way an extra copy of chromosome 21 will cause Down syndrome. Consider the tangled web of genetic factors involved in autism, for example. Scientists now suspect that variations in more than two hundred genes

can contribute to the disorder. A child need not have all these genes to develop autism; nor does it seem likely that the presence of any one of them can ensure that he will be afflicted. Rather, a child may develop the condition only if he is carrying one or more of these broken genes and then is exposed to certain pollutants, viral infections, or chemicals that amplify the genes' pathogenic effects.

One day, scientists hope, we will understand how these factors interact. Then a pediatrician may be able to tell a parent, based upon a child's unique genetic profile, which environmental risks to most carefully avoid.

Wapner clearly sees his work as contributing to this future of personalized medicine. "Microarray testing will help us get to the point where we'll be able to alter the course of a child's health before any illness is even apparent," he says.

Scientists are nowhere near this point yet, however. Neurological and developmental disorders in particular are proving difficult to trace to their genetic origins. In the case of autism, for example, geneticists have so far identified only 10 to 20 percent of the total number of genes thought to be involved in the condition. None of these genes is understood well enough to base any prognoses upon.

"There are limitations to what we can predict," says Ashley Mills, the genetic counselor. "That is true of nearly all genetic conditions. We cannot completely predict how that baby is going to develop and live."

Few of the women who took part in the Columbia study were prepared to deal with this type of ambiguity. This is apparent from follow-up interviews that the researchers conducted with some of the seventy-nine women whose unborn children were found to be carrying potentially dangerous mutations. In the interviews, many of the women said that when they agreed to participate they had failed to appreciate how murky the results could be.

"You know, they're telling me there's something wrong, but they can't tell me what," said one woman. "We wanted to know what that would mean for our son in the future. And they really couldn't tell us."

Said another: "I started to get really panicky that the child that I was carrying was going to be severely autistic, with seizures and schizophrenia. I would look online, and I met with a geneticist and talked to an autism expert. And frankly, nobody could really tell me. I ended up going to a crisis counselor because it was very stressful."

About one-quarter of the women who received troublesome results would terminate their pregnancies. Of those who carried their baby to term, many now say they regret having learned about their child's genetic flaws because the knowledge gives them so much anxiety.

"They watch their babies like hawks, always waiting for the other shoe to drop," says Barbara Bernhardt, a genetic-counseling expert at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine, whom Wapner hired to conduct the follow-up interviews.

## looking for the telltale gene

These comments worry Paul Appelbaum, the director of CUMC's division of law, ethics, and psychiatry. He wonders: if parents are constantly watching to see if something is wrong with their child, will this affect the natural bonding process? And what are the implications for parents' psychological well-being?

"These are questions that nobody has ever confronted before," he says. "We essentially have no data yet. So we need to proceed cautiously."

Over the next few years, Wapner and his colleagues will be keeping track of the families whose children they identified as having dangerous genetic abnormalities, in part to answer these types of questions. And they are now providing more lengthy counseling sessions to people who request microarray tests, to make sure they are comfortable with the prospect of receiving vague results.

"We definitely had to improve some parts of our process, which is probably no surprise, given that nobody had ever done this before," Wapner says. "Now we're explaining to parents the test's limitations, as well as its benefits, much more carefully up front, before they take it."

Some physicians have suggested that the microarray test ought to be reserved for specific circumstances, such as following a troublesome ultrasound, until more research is done. But Wapner bristles at the notion of limiting the test's availability in any way.

"Were people who found out there was something wrong with their baby nervous and upset?" he says. "Yeah, of course they were. But what's the solution? To deny adults information that is readily available about their baby? That's ridiculous. Clearly, this isn't right for every woman. But I firmly believe that the test should be offered to every woman so that she can make that decision for herself."

### Exaggerated risks?

Most babies are genetically healthy. In the Columbia study, no dangerous genetic flaws were detected in 98 percent of cases.



Wendy Chung

"You know what the response of these parents is?" says Wapner. "Happiness and excitement. That's what most people are getting — reassurance that their baby is OK."

The same December day that his study made news, Wapner left his office, ate a quick lunch with his staff, changed out of his gray-striped button-down shirt and into blue scrubs, and extracted placental tissue from Maria Lopez, thirty-six and pregnant with twins, for a microarray analysis.

Maria and her husband, John, whose names have been changed for this article, wanted the test performed because they were concerned about their twins. John's

nephew is on the autism spectrum, and Maria's mother has schizophrenia, leaving her unable to function socially or to develop deep bonds with her children and grandchildren. "I would not wish it upon anyone," says Maria.

Thankfully, the test showed no significant abnormalities. Had the microarray results suggested a chance of either autism or schizophrenia in their unborn children, Maria would have considered termination.

Wendy Chung, a genetic researcher and pediatrician at CUMC, understands this. Chung treats children with special needs, some of whom can't walk or talk, and she

has witnessed the strain on parents. Babies suffer, parents get divorced, families are financially ruined. Like Wapner, she believes that parents deserve to get as much information as they want about the health of their unborn children as soon as they want it.

“Many couples have said to me, ‘I wish I had had the opportunity to understand this earlier,’” says Chung.

But the question on many scientists’ minds is this: will parents decide to terminate pregnancies based on imperfect information?

Much as Chung supports prenatal genetic testing — she is now collaborating with Wapner to improve microarray tests for heart disease, obesity, and diabetes — this is an issue that troubles her deeply. She worries, for instance, that genetic counselors and physicians who translate test results for parents may be inadvertently exaggerating children’s risks of health problems.

“A lot of the genetic data that is available has come from children who showed signs of health issues and were tested as

turn, have implications for the public funding of special-education services?

“We’re entering a brave new world that I’m not sure we’re entirely ready for,” Klitzman says. “To me, there’s a large question about whether we should do more research before we now offer this to absolutely everyone, regardless of whether the fetus or future child may be at any risk.”

Today, the prenatal microarray test is offered at dozens of medical institutions around the country, many of which are participating in Wapner’s research: every time a woman receives a positive result on a microarray test at one of these partner clinics, the woman is given the choice of taking part in his study. Those who agree may be interviewed about their experience, and if they bring their baby to term, its health may be tracked for the first few years of life.

“This is going to generate more information about what effects those tiny DNA deletions and duplications have on a child’s

Watch video of Columbia researchers discussing prenatal genetic tests.  
[www.magazine.columbia.edu/genetest](http://www.magazine.columbia.edu/genetest)



want the peace of mind that comes with knowing their baby is healthy.


“I’ve seen women who are afraid to have a baby because their first child has a severe disorder,” Wapner says. “Often I’m able to report back to them: ‘This baby is fine; he’s not carrying the same gene.’ So that’s a life that might not have entered this world if it weren’t for the test.”

Leaning forward in his swivel chair, folding his hands as he reflects, Wapner says: “I think that overall, the good dramatically outweighs the harm.”

### Tomorrow never knows

For Trishia Bermudez, the good may well have outweighed the harm. The information she received about her baby was upsetting, but it didn’t derail her pregnancy. Bermudez feels strongly that even the most sophisticated science cannot forecast human destiny. “You can have all these speculations and run all these tests,” she says, “but you can’t really tell how a child will turn out until he’s out of the womb.”

On October 24, 2012, Bermudez became a mother. Matthew weighed three pounds, fifteen ounces. He has his mother’s mouth and his father’s curly hair. Dad has already signed him up to play for the Knicks. As for Bermudez, “I’m just looking for him to be a happy and healthy kid and to enjoy life as it’s meant to be. That’s all I hope for.”

Nobody can say for certain how sick or healthy Matthew will be tomorrow or decades in the future. For now, he is cooing and smiling, and his mother is drinking in every minute. “I love him dearly, no matter what the situation turns out to be,” she says. “He’s my son, and I love him unconditionally.” 

*Claudia Kalb is a freelance writer living in Washington, DC. She was a senior writer at Newsweek and has contributed to Smithsonian and Scientific American.*

“How many people in the general population have these same DNA mistakes and yet are perfectly healthy? We just don’t know.”

– Wendy Chung

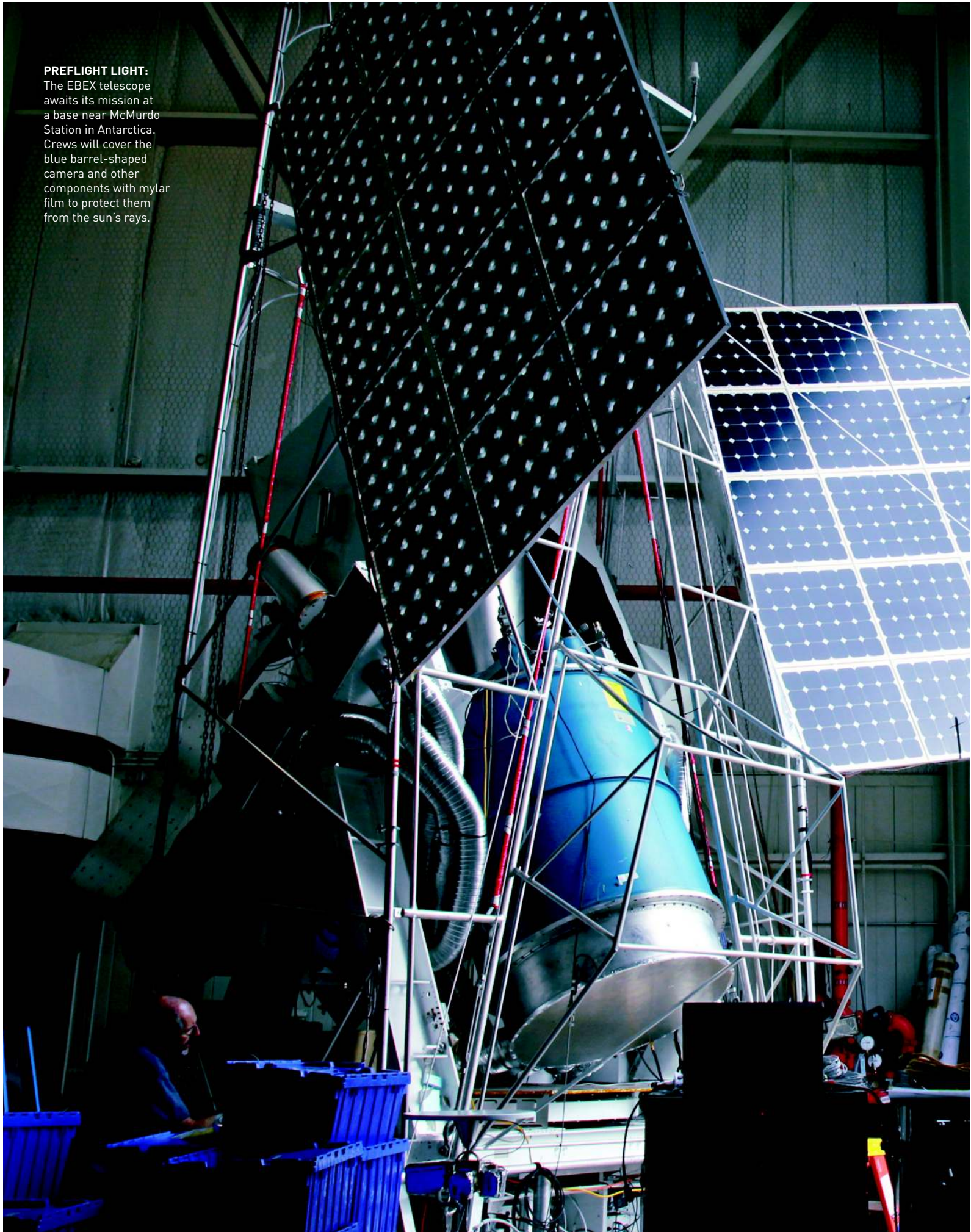
a result,” she says. “So you have to ask: how many people in the general population have some of the same DNA mistakes and yet are perfectly healthy? We just don’t know. And that means our data is biased toward the worst-case outcomes.”

Robert Klitzman, a prominent bioethicist and clinical psychiatrist at CUMC, is similarly worried that parents may abort babies who might have grown up healthy. And he raises other concerns. If genetic testing becomes more widespread, will there eventually come a time when the parents of children with special needs will be regarded as irresponsible for not having tested them in the womb? Could this, in

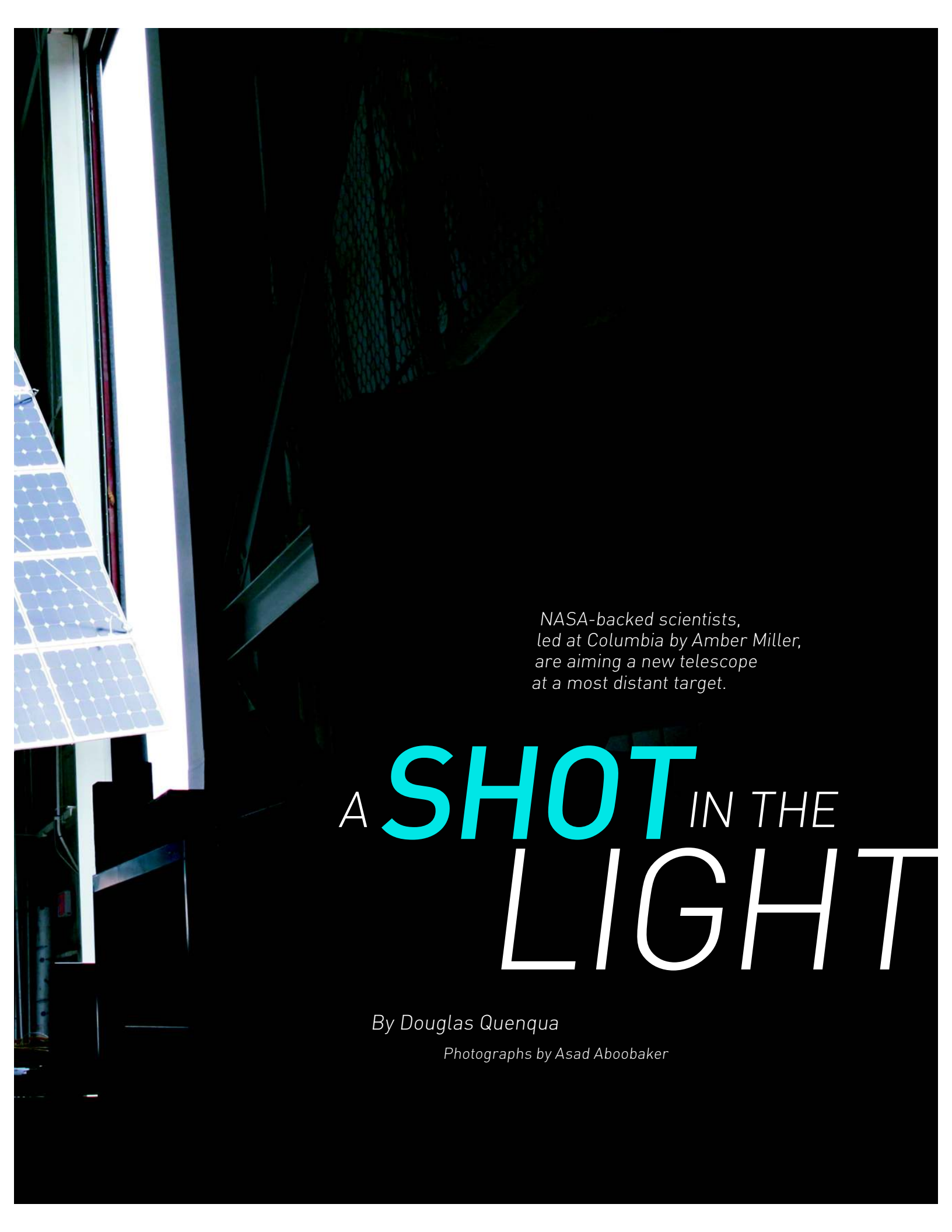
health,” Wapner says. “And then, five or ten years from now, there will be fewer and fewer DNA mistakes about which we can’t make predictions. We’re studying this topic from every angle possible.”

In the meantime, Wapner’s own staff at CUMC’s Center for Prenatal Pediatrics continues to provide the test for ten to fifteen women per week. Some of these women arrive because a doctor spotted something mysterious on an ultrasound. Others have a history of illness in their family and seek assurance that their baby won’t inherit the same disease from which relatives have suffered. Others are simply meticulous information gatherers and

**PREFLIGHT LIGHT:**  
The EBEX telescope  
awaits its mission at  
a base near McMurdo  
Station in Antarctica.  
Crews will cover the  
blue barrel-shaped  
camera and other  
components with mylar  
film to protect them  
from the sun's rays.







NASA-backed scientists,  
led at Columbia by Amber Miller,  
are aiming a new telescope  
at a most distant target.

# A **SHOT** IN THE LIGHT

By Douglas Quenqua

Photographs by Asad Aboobaker

It was the night of December 13 when the C-130 military transport carrying Amber Miller and a group of other researchers entered the frigid airspace over Antarctica. Miller had been traveling for nearly ninety-six hours. Still, she kept her eyes glued to the window, where a serene light was waiting to greet her. The approaching tundra was suffused in the eerie glow of the midnight sun.

“It’s spectacularly beautiful,” she says. “You can see the glaciers and the snow flowing like a river down these big mountains, and you can see icebergs and ice floes, and everything is white, white, white.”

Miller had come to Antarctica looking for light, but not the kind one sees from a plane. The light she’d come looking for was about 13.3 billion years old, and potentially more revealing, at least to cosmologists, than any other light in the universe. This light was created milliseconds after the Big Bang, and

Miller was one of the prime architects behind a 6,000-pound, balloon-borne telescope. Depending on what that telescope sees, it could either prove or disprove a key group of ideas about the universe and its origins.

“We want to actually observe what happened in the first  $10^{-35}$  seconds after the Big Bang,” she says. “Just that instant of creation.”

The ideas in question are known collectively as inflation theory, and they address several long-standing mysteries. For example, when viewed over a large distance, why does the universe appear flatter than it should? And why does the universe seem to be much larger than it should be, based on the rate that it’s currently expanding?

The answer, according to the most basic understanding of inflation theory, is that the universe hasn’t always expanded as slowly as it does now. Instead, for the briefest of moments following the Big Bang, the universe actually expanded faster than the speed of light.

If inflation theory is accurate, then that rapid expansion would have left a unique but faint signature on the cosmos. “The universe would have undergone a period of superluminal expansion during which space-time would have been stretched and compressed,” Miller says. “That produces gravitational waves, and those waves then travel through space-time.”

At the time inflation supposedly took place, the brand-new universe was too dense and hot for any light to escape. And it stayed that way for about 380,000 years. But the gravitational waves created by the rapid expansion would have left an impression on light that was emitted when things began to cool down. That light, cosmic microwave background radiation (CMB), is known to exist because scientists have already detected and photographed it, although not with instruments sensitive enough to detect the imprints of those gravitational waves.

EBEX is equipped with detectors capable of sensing the faintest hint of these impressions.

“If you can detect this very special signature,” says Miller, “you’re actually looking at information that comes from the instant that the universe was created.”

Much like a twenty-megapixel camera will produce detail on a photo that a ten-megapixel cam-



AMBER MILLER

**TOUCHING DOWN:** Researchers arrive in Antarctica after their eight-hour flight from New Zealand.

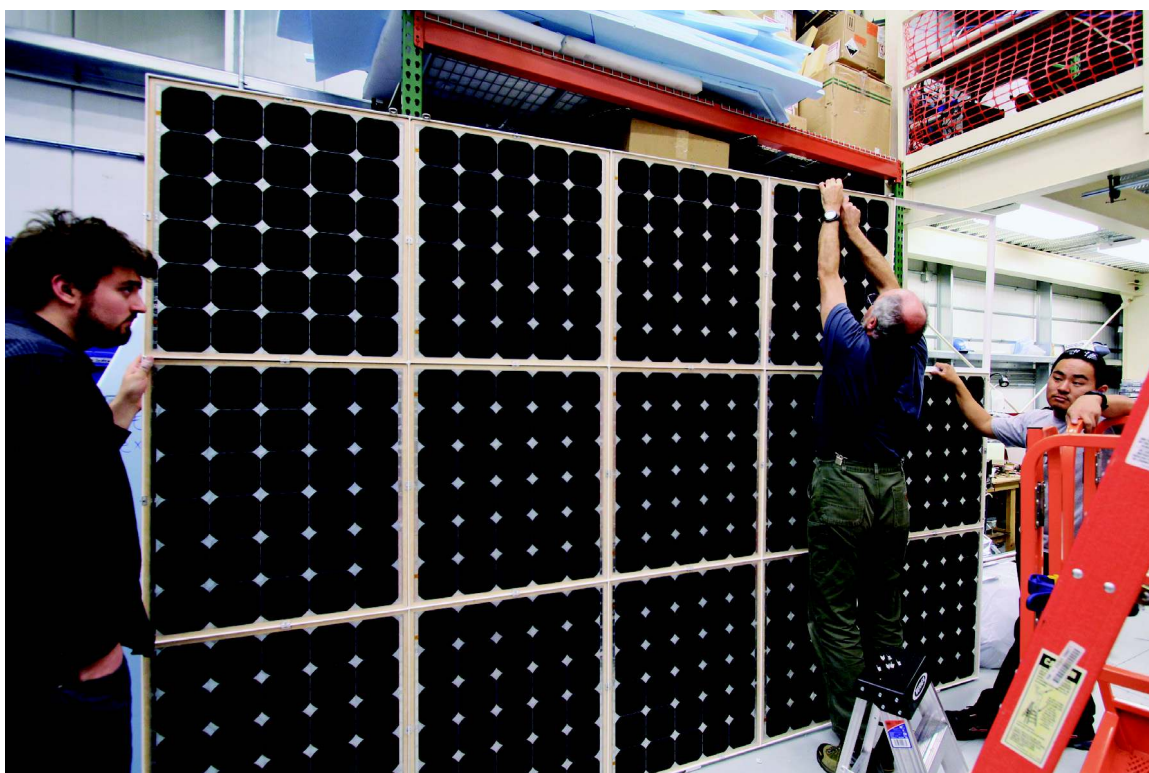
for the past seven years, Miller, an experimental physicist and the dean of science for Columbia’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences, had been leading the effort at Columbia to build a telescope that could detect it.

“We’re talking about a light from so far away that it has taken the entire history of the universe, from before galaxies ever formed, to get here,” she says. “We’re seeing the edge of the observable universe.”

As head of the Columbia team working on the E and B Experiment, better known as EBEX,



**EARTH TO EBEX:** (Above) Researchers conduct tests at the telescope's base to ensure that NASA instruments can speak to EBEX instruments. The dryer hoses near the top of the photo contain and protect data cables.



**POWERING UP:** (Left) Researchers and graduate students at McMurdo Station assemble the telescope's solar panels.

**TAIL FEATHERS:** The balloon, parachute, and cables trail from the telescope shortly before liftoff.



**CAMERA READY:** The helium-filled balloon will soon lift the telescope's three-ton body skyward.



era never could, the EBEX telescope represents a technological leap forward, an instrument sensitive enough to read eons-old fluctuations that were previously undetectable.

“We’re looking for a small signal in a big background,” says Britt Reichborn-Kjennerud ’10GSAS, a postdoctoral fellow who worked closely with Miller on the project.

While the scientists could have done this work elsewhere — CMB exists in every part of the universe — Antarctica proved to be the friendliest environment, in part because the Antarctic winds blow in a circle, so the telescope could finish its journey more or less where it began. “You need your experiment to come back to a recoverable place,” says Miller. “You can also get a long flight without having to fly over anything you’re not allowed to fly over.”

Building the telescope required the collaboration of seventeen institutions, chief among them the University of Minnesota, which built the camera that took the pictures, and NASA, which funded the project and managed the launch. For seven years, Miller’s team constructed, tested, and adjusted the telescope, as well as the camera and the gondola to carry it. Late last year, the entire instrument and fifteen members of the crew made the journey to Antarctica. For some members of the team, Antarctica became home for more than four months.


On December 28, the flight crew prepared for the launch. The temperature had dropped to minus nine degrees. For nine hours the crew waited on the ice for just the right conditions. Finally, the balloon billowed upward, casting a shadow that grew and swept rapidly across the ice, lifting the EBEX telescope high into the atmosphere. “It was timed so perfectly that EBEX seemingly just gracefully slid off the pin and floated upward,” wrote a member of the crew on his blog.

With a seven-month-old infant at home, Miller had to leave Antarctica a week before launch. “I was watching it over the Internet and on the phone and on the computer,” she says. “It was heart-wrenching.”


For two weeks, the polar-vortex winds carried the telescope in a circle above the South Pole as it collected data. It landed on January 24, completing a nearly month-long journey around the pole.

Fully analyzing the data will take years, and it will be at least several months before scientists will know whether they found the elusive signals they sought.

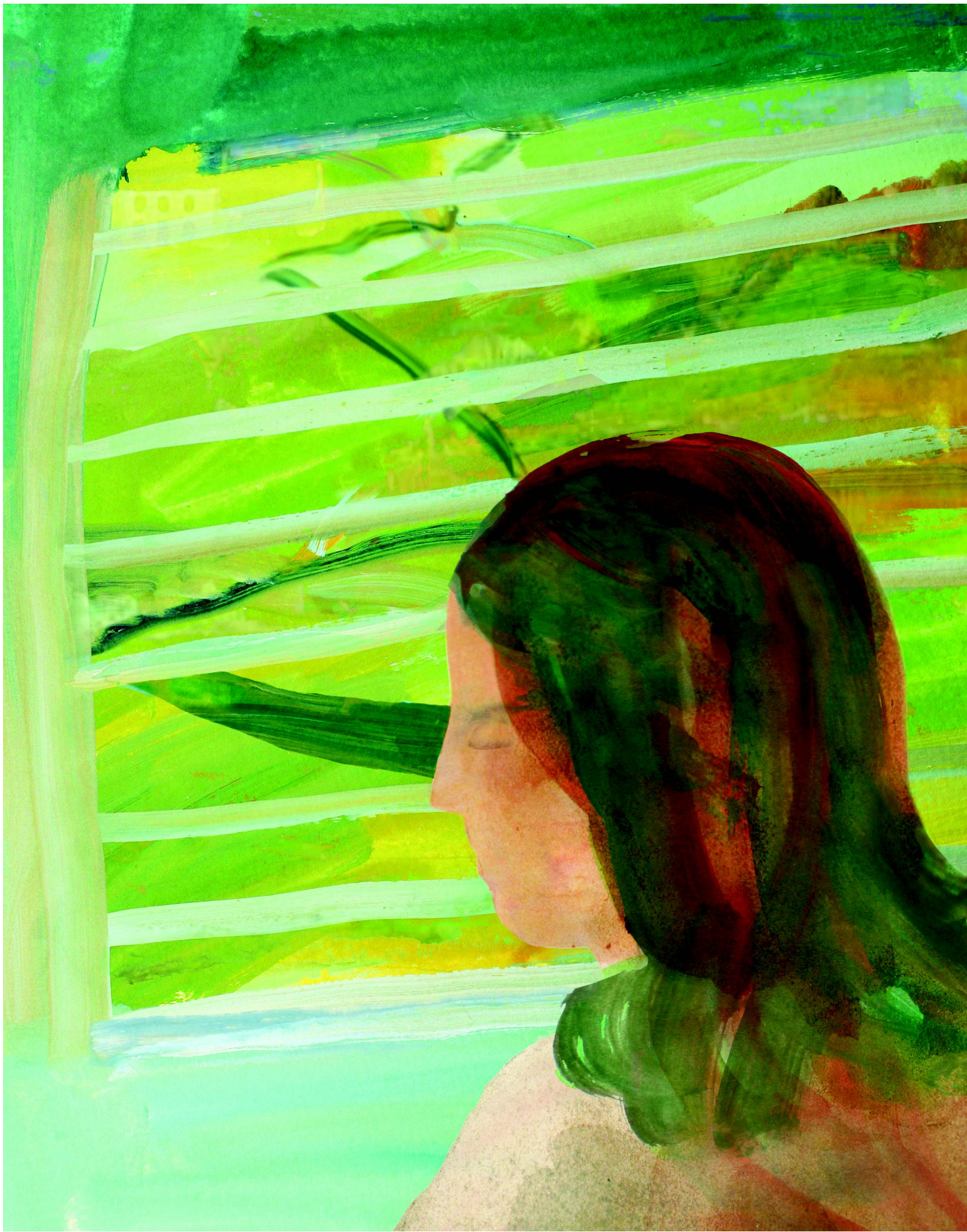


Watch video of the EBEX space telescope’s launch.   
[www.magazine.columbia.edu/ebex](http://www.magazine.columbia.edu/ebex)

“If the signals are there,” says Miller, “it’s a smoking gun for inflation, because there’s no other reason they should be there.”

If the signals aren’t there, that will be valuable, too. “Different inflationary models predict different amplitudes of signal,” she says. “So not finding the specific signal we’ve been looking for would at least narrow down the possibilities of how the universe began.” 

*Douglas Quenqua is a freelance writer living in Brooklyn. His work has appeared in the New York Times, Wired, and the New York Observer.*



---

# WE CALL ON SPRING

---

Fiction by  
Belinda McKeon '10SOA

“It’s probably going to take a long time, you know,” Michael says. “That’s what the doctor told you, isn’t it?”

It can be a long old road: those were the doctor’s words. A long *auld* road, actually. The doctor grew up in my mother’s part of the country, and he seemed, yesterday morning, to need to gift her with occasional reminders of this fact by tripping, at intervals, from his golf-club grandiloquence — *at the present moment, Mrs. Cabill, the matter we must most urgently consider is this* — into the kind of colloquialism that might have had him at the mart, leaning onto a mucky railing, muttering about animals. *Take it bandy* — that was another of his counsels, and my mother nodded, the way you’d nod if you were at work, in the boss’s office, and he’d just called you in to say your hours are being cut, but it’s nothing to do with your performance, and we value you, and we need you, we’re just doing this to you, and it can’t be helped.

“I don’t like that doctor,” I say to Michael again, and he leans in closer to me, and puts his lips to my shoulder. We are back in Dublin now, in our house, the house we bought — sing it — at exactly the worst moment, five years ago, but that doesn’t matter because — second chorus — we bought it as a home, not as an investment. We bought it to live in, not to sell on. That is the line, and no further questions are allowed. Neither are terms like *in it for the long haul*, which we used a lot at the beginning; yes, maybe this is why I took such issue with the doctor’s words, but really, a long *auld* road? The news that her mind has already started to take a nail scissors to its own seams, that this has been going on behind our backs for maybe, already, three years, and then, *a long auld road*?

“Fucker,” I say to Michael, and he nods, and also — and I don’t let on that I have noticed this — burps slightly, and quickly turns it into a cough. We had Indian for dinner this evening, picked up from Namaste down the road, because a day like this does nothing if not take you off the hook for cooking. The debris is glaring back at us from the coffee table now — a day like this also allows you to eat your dinner on the couch — and I know he wants to have the poppadums I didn’t finish, I know he is partly looking at them, partly thinking about them, while trying very hard only to look at and think about me, but I just don’t have the energy to shove them over to his side of the table. I could use my foot, even; just a slow slide of the plate. But no. The whole strain and rottenness of the day has come down to bear on those poppadums, on the matter of those poppadums, and they will not be moved. I will crush them with my heel, get the greasy yellow bits of them caught up in my sock, before I will move them, or share them, or do anything with them which resembles easiness and normalcy. None of this is normal. The poppadums will remain uneaten on that plate.

**Required, now, are the details** which made today so trying, and so particular; they are as follows. My mother has, for a while, suspected that something is not right. I visit my parents once a month, sometimes more often, driving down there from Dublin on a Friday evening or a Saturday morning, and so you would think that I might also have suspected that something has not been right, but I have a talent for denial in the face of the unpalatable — this does not relate to the poppadums, ordinarily I love poppadums — and, given that I

---

Illustration by Vivienne Flesher



have inherited this talent from my mother, this morning's visit to the doctor's surgery was an interesting one for us both. She, of course, was further along the road, the auld, etc., of realization than was I; she had asked me to be with her when she got the results, so obviously she had already made the initial visit and the follow-up visit without telling anyone, as is her thing. Topics, for example, discussed by my mother and me during our phone call of October 5, the night after the initial visit: *Downton Abbey*; the length of time you can drive a car with an out-of-date NCT disk; the question of whether we are by now too late into the camel-coat trend for it to make sense to buy a decent one; and a murder that was in all the papers that week. Awful. Now that I think of it, my mother mentioned something about that murder which was news to me, and which I was impressed at her knowing, given that I thought I had devoured everything about the case that was to be found online; did she just make that up, I wonder now? Is that part of it? Embroidering already unbelievable things with still more grotesquery, still more incongruity? But no; she must have heard it somewhere, from some of the girls — the girls! — at work. They gossip; they bring rumors and discoveries to one another's desks like buttered scones. When will that be taken from her? When will she no longer be able, listening to a story, to widen her eyes and shake her head and store it up for the next time I phone?

On the Friday night that my mother asked me to come to the doctor's with her the next morning, and explained the purpose of her visit, I burst into tears, and my mother looked sharply at me and said, I don't know what *you're* getting so upset about; I'm the one it's happening to, and I'm the one who has to tell your father — which is something, incidentally, which has yet to be done. That is my mother down to a tee, to phrase it in a way that perhaps might help the doctor to more easily understand her — or to understand her at all, which quite clearly he does not, going on the way he spoke to her yesterday, as though she was an old woman and not my mother, who is fifty-seven, and has skin of the kind I'd quite like to have now, actually; no, I'm serious. And also — have I mentioned this? — my mother is on Facebook. Properly on it, too, with a proper, witty Facebook persona, not in the way that most people's parents are on there, either lurking wordlessly as at the door of a room containing their teenage children, or running off at the mouth in all lowercase or all rowdy caps, with the punctuation skills of a fly.

**What I mean is: this must be a mistake.** “That doctor,” I say now to Michael. “That doctor. I don't know about him.”

“But he did talk to other doctors,” Michael says.

“Well, who knows anything about them?” I say, and this time I do push, with a toe, at a poppadum. Michael looks at it: he can't help himself. He went to a boarding school, and he has never been able to approach mealtime as anything other than a race for seconds.

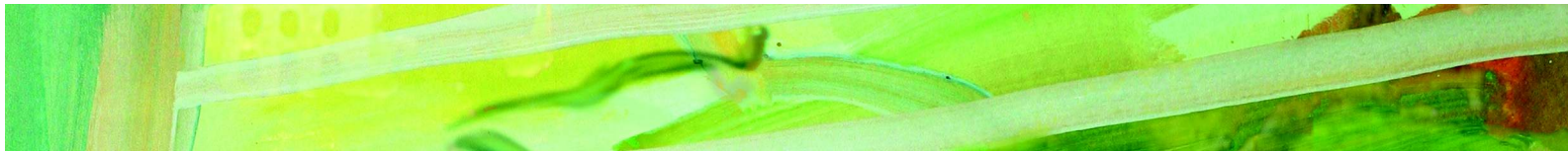
“Do you want those?” I say, nodding toward the poppadums. “I just got these socks. They're new. I only put them on this evening for the first time. They haven't even been inside my shoes.”

“No, no,” says Michael, and he smiles at me, and he reaches a hand to my cheek, and he strokes me there: softly, so tenderly. *God*, it strikes me. He thinks I'm being nice. He's thinking how lovely I am, at a time like this, for thinking of him.

**Michael: I got him at a party.** I took him for myself; he'd come there with my friend. My then friend, I should say, but what odds; she and Michael were only together a couple of weeks, and she and I weren't close friends anyway, and now we're Facebook friends, so it's as though nothing ever happened. Something did happen, though, and it happened at that party; it was in a narrow room, with a back door that spilled out into a narrow yard, and I was in the yard, where the smokers and the hanging outdoor lights and the barbecue smells were, and I glanced for some reason into the house, and he was taller than anyone else in the room, and he was handsome, properly handsome, not just cute the way most boys of my acquaintance were at that stage, which was to say, they were good-looking for as long as the good looks of their early twenties would last: Michael's looks were carved into him, and when, months later, I met his father and his brothers, I understood why, and how. Which is to say, yes, I was shallow, and I went after him for the way he looked, and everything else — and there was, it turned out quite to my astonishment, so much else — was a bonus.

Michael and I still look odd together, though we have by now both grown into the way we look, blurring the edges a fair bit, but back then, ten or twelve years ago, there were a number of people who were ready to believe that our being together was some kind of performance art. Because I am what the Americans call *homely*, which I discovered when an American told me I was homely and then went to great trouble to correct my misunderstanding that this was to do with a fondness for cushions and interiors magazines. I'm just ordinary-looking, the fact is; I did not get my mother's skin, as I've mentioned, and I did not get her cheekbones, and I did not get her frame. I got most things from my father, including his charm, which is what I put to work on Michael that night, and how I found myself, three years later, walking up an aisle with one of those men and back down the same aisle with the other one. Charisma: people have it wrong, I think, when they talk about it, that business of being able to convince someone, in the moment that you're speaking to him, that he's the only person in the world. It's not that. It's not about focus, or intensity, or effort. It's about a kind of shape shifting; it's the ability to turn yourself, for those two minutes or ten minutes or two hours or twelve years — though it runs on empty a bit at the twelve-year point, admittedly — into precisely the kind of person your interlocutor is seeking, even — especially — if he doesn't know it himself. It's about reading cues at such a deep and constant level, and so unthinkingly, that you're doing something which must, surely, be meant for a marsh or a mountain forest, not for a pub or a party or a funeral meal, or wherever my father and I are to be found in our natural habitats.





And then sometimes we forget for a moment and we charm one another, my father and I. We let a bug get into the system. And these are the dangerous moments; these are the moments when the air in a room feels made out of tiny points of fire. Once upon a time, when I was new to him and when my having a mind of my own was only a source of darling comedy, this alignment of the mirrors must not have been a problem, but it is now, and Michael knows how to get me out of it; Michael knows how to catch my eye and remind me that over there is the door. And so Michael knows, too — of course he does — what is frightening me most about all of this.

“That’s a long way off yet,” he said to me this evening in the car.

“Look, your father will manage,” he also said, but he didn’t look at me as he said it.

And then, almost to himself: “You never know,” a note of hope tilting his tone upward, and in the instant after the words came out of his mouth he seemed so locked into the shock of having said them that my first response was to tell him to watch the road, and asking him what he had meant — though we both know what he had meant — came second. He did not answer me. How could he answer me? These are the kinds of things we must be careful never to put into words.

Of course I am the one who should tell my father; or, at least, I should be there when it happens. My mother is waiting until next weekend to do it, because all this week my father will be under such pressure at school. My father is not at school, he is the headmaster of a school, and as they have been doing for the last twenty-five years at that school, they are adding on more rooms, they are expanding on the school’s footprint, and it is my father’s responsibility, this week, to see to it that the grant application for the newest addition is properly written, and properly submitted. He will be retired before they finish it, this new part of the school, but he is determined to get it started. He probably thinks that they’ll name it after him.

Actually, they probably will.

**When we first moved into this house**, Michael and I, the previous owners had left their blinds on all the downstairs windows. They were Venetian blinds, the plastic white kind, and even before we brought our furniture in, I said it to Michael, I said, those blinds have to go. Michael nodded. Oh, yeah, he said, we’ll get rid of them. But I meant they had to go straightaway, and so as soon as the first of the kitchen chairs was carried in through the door, I was up on it and I was lifting the first of the blinds out of their fixtures

These  
are the  
moments  
when  
the air  
in a room  
feels  
made  
out of  
tiny  
points  
of fire.

at the top of the window frames. I could not imagine spending even a day in the house with them, they reminded me so strongly of that school. Of weekday afternoons in the eighties, when it was my job to turn the rod and ease the room into darkness so that the projector could be turned on, and we could have the *combra*, that clicking through the illustrated slides with which the teachers, one of them my father, had the job of teaching us to be able to string together a sentence — any sentence, sentences about shops and ice creams and fictional school days and fictional families — in the language they were duty-bound to force on us, the language we would drag with us until we were eighteen, when we could leave it, neglected and exhausted as an old mule, at the exam-hall door.

My God, what am I talking about: Irish? What does it matter whether I speak Irish or not? I wanted to get rid of those awful, off-white blinds; they were miserable-looking, they were mean. We replaced them with these wooden ones, or ones which, as the Argos catalogue put it, had the look of wood. And they do. They’re brown. They’re grained. They’re closed, now, against the night.

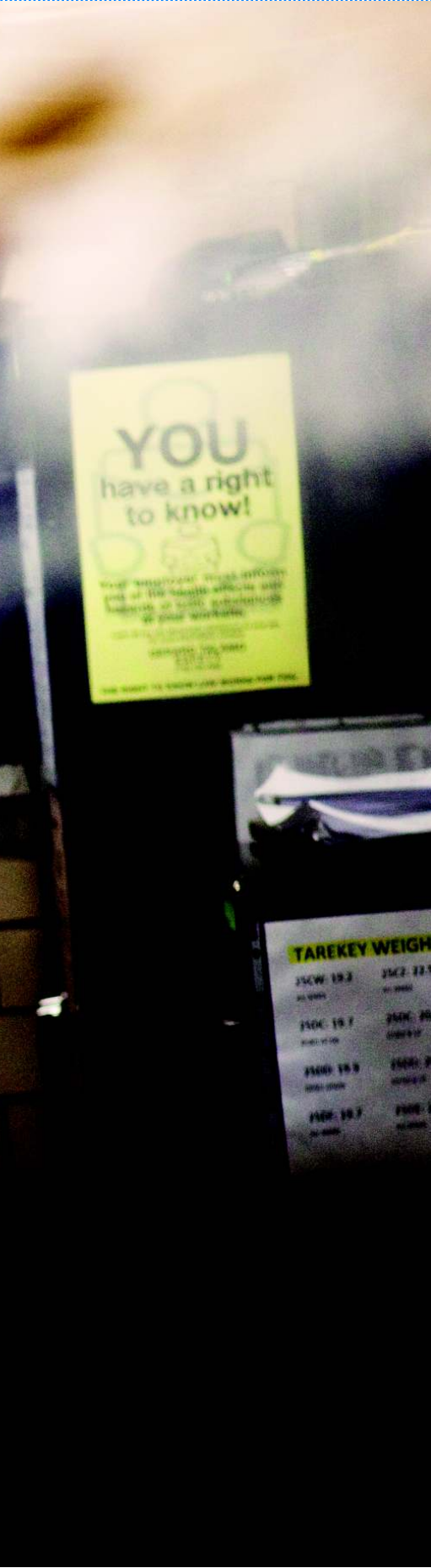
**I think — it’s almost ten** — that Michael would like to watch television, and so would I, but there is a thickness to our silence at the moment — there is a heartbeat to it — and I do not want, yet, to be without it. I pick, with a fingernail, at a piece of rice or something lodged between my teeth, and Michael sighs; perhaps he thinks I am biting my nails, out of stress, out of nervousness, out of fear. He leans forward a little so that he can see my face more fully. Naturally enough, he is waiting for me to cry. That would certainly make things — not easier exactly, but clearer. The moment would become the kind of moment with which we would both know precisely what to do. I would cry, and he would do things with his arms, his strong arms, his arms he has been taking to the gym every Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday night. In other words, he has been in training for this moment for years: am I not going to give it to him? Cry it out, cry it flat, this thing, this broiling. But I can no more cry right now than I can sit down at a piano and play a concerto, or a symphony, or whatever it is that people play; whatever they decide to play, I suppose. What is actually worrying me is that I almost feel I could laugh. At what, exactly? But there it is, yes, there I can feel it again, coming up in me like carsickness. And not gateway laughter, either; I do not mean the kind of laughter that will dissolve pitifully into a vale of tears. I mean the giggles; I mean something extremely undignified and extremely wrong. I mean something appalling, so now I am acting the way I do when I am carsick: I am taking deep breaths, and keeping my eyes closed, and turning toward the living-room window beside me as though it is the window of a taxi, and I am leaning into it, counting down the streets to home. There is a wheel, and it will turn. <sup>u</sup>

*Belinda McKeon, an award-winning playwright and journalist, grew up on her parents’ farm in Ireland and now lives in Brooklyn with her husband. She is the author of a novel, Solace.*

## IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK



Robin Nagle (center)  
at a DSNY garage  
in Manhattan.



LAUREN LANCASTER

# The Pickup Artists

What does trash tell us about ourselves? Anthropologist Robin Nagle put on the uniform and found out. // By Paul Hond

To contain Robin Nagle's ardor for garbage in five pages of recyclable magazine print requires acts of consolidation worthy of the mashing hydraulics of New York City's 2,030 white sanitation trucks, whose two-person crews collect about 11,000 tons of municipal waste each day (and nearly another 2,000 tons of recyclables), so let's cut to the chase: Morning-side Heights, 6:10 a.m., midwinter, 14° F. Blueberry darkness. Nagle '94GSAS strides up Broadway with a hiker's gait, wearing a spruce-green jacket on whose back is written, in white letters, DSNY ANTHROPOLOGIST. Her head is covered with a beet-red, cylindrical wool hat that she knit herself. She's here at this hour to help us better understand an event so commonplace, so essential, so successful, that we notice it only when it fails to occur — which is just one form of waste-related invisibility that Nagle breaks down in her new book, *Picking Up: On the Streets and Behind the Trucks with the Sanitation Workers of New York City*, a compact volume jammed with observation sharp as the peeled-back license plates that cut workers' calves as they move between curb and street, fragrant with a poetry of putrefaction (a garbage transfer station, with its mounds of rotting waste, is "nothing less than the juicy, pulsing, stench-soaked center of the universe"), colored with history and lingo and tough, gloves-on research.

"When people learn I was a uniformed New York City sanitation worker, they're astonished," Nagle says into the lunar freeze as she crosses West 111th. "If they found that out about *you*, they might or might not be astonished, but they'd be less so because you're a boy. But in certain circles, there'd be people who'd say, '*You* did that work?' Because *you* are supposed to fit into a different category of labor. And *you* are supposed to have different opportunities. And *you* are representative of that class that would never *choose* work that's so physical and smelly. And 'Oh, sanitation workers are' — fill in the blank — 'not bright, not ambitious, not capable.' None of which is true."

"Why do people think that?" we say.  
Nagle pauses a long second. "I'm going to get wonky."  
"Please."

"There are categories of labor that are focused on materials or functions that culturally we segregate. And we collapse those materials or functions with the people who have to deal with them. So if we disapprove of, or stigmatize, or don't want to think about certain infrastructures and behind-the-scenes processes, we also disapprove of, stigmatize, or don't want to think about the people responsible for those processes."

"We don't see them."  
"We learn not to see them."  
"Does guilt figure into this? We don't see them because on some level we're ashamed

that they're picking up our droppings, so to speak?"

"Yes. We do feel guilty, and we need a scapegoat, and sanitation workers are very convenient, because they're out there every day. 'I don't like that pile of trash in front of my house, and they're actually touching it and handling it, so they're bad guys.'"

"And maybe I'm a bad guy for generating it. But that's so buried, probably."

"Buried, and also: 'My little bag of trash is just such a little bitty piece in a *big pile*. I'm not responsible for that *big pile*.'"

One summer, when Nagle was ten, she went hiking in the Adirondacks with her father. As she walked through a green forest unspoiled by humanity, she happened upon a big pile: an unauthorized dump. The sight shocked her, and raised a few questions in her future-social-scientist's brain. Where does garbage go? Who takes it there? Why do we make so much of it? In the early 2000s, while researching *Picking Up*, Nagle, by then a professor of anthropology at NYU, decided that to really understand the job she had to *do* the

tion trucks aren't due until seven, but out on Broadway, the private carters — the green trucks — gobble pyramids of dark-bagged commercial waste. All this trash will leave the city. Since the closing of Staten Island's Fresh Kills landfill, the world's largest, in 2001, New York's waste has been shipped at great cost in dollars and diesel emissions to New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, South Carolina.

"We have to recalibrate how we live," Nagle says. "And to do that, we have to understand as much as possible about all the systems — oh, a broom! There's a broom!"

"Where?"

"See the blinking yellow lights? That's a broom. Let's go up there."

Nagle walks briskly toward West 113th and those yellow lights, past still-shuttered shops and scraps of trash on the sidewalk that eluded capture. She picks up her thread.

"In order to recalibrate, we need to understand as best we can all the systems on which we rely to sustain this lifestyle. Garbage creation. Garbage collection. Garbage management. These are huge factors in cli-

think that's nuts) and you have an array of dials and gauges around you for things like how much water you have, though when it's this cold you're not going to use water because it'll freeze. But water suppresses dust beautifully, so when you're sweeping it's much more effective if you can spray water in front of you."

Nagle, during her sanitation career, spent many a solitary hour in the cockpit.

"There are two of these round brushes on the side — they look like big pizza pans with bristles. They're at an angle that is carefully calibrated. You control the speed and the force. There's a real skill to operating a broom. It takes a while to learn. More accidents happen with the broom than the truck, because the broom operator is constantly monitoring her mirrors and her gauges as well as the street." The broom sits idle, waiting for the parked cars in front of the NO PARKING signs to move. "Brooms have a narrow window of time in which they can legally go in and sweep," Nagle says. "Cars still at the curb can get a ticket. But without an enforcement agent, a broom can't make anyone move. The operator can honk but can't write a ticket." The broom swings into a space between cars, sweeps, maneuvers back out. "That's called sniping." Nagle's voice rises in empathy. "That broom can't wait. If it waits for everyone to clear, it'll never finish this stretch before that narrow window is closed."

It's time to thaw out before the trucks come. Nagle goes into Nussbaum & Wu (blessedly open since six), orders tea, and sits at a table facing the glass doors so she can watch for a white truck. Two feet away stands a swing-lid trash bin with a paper plate stuck in its maw. Nagle sips from a paper cup. No absurdity is lost on her, even at this hour.

"We're sitting here at a coffee shop with paper containers of tea and coffee," she says. "I have a bagel wrapped in wax paper on a paper plate, with a paper napkin. I'm going to throw it all out when I'm done." It almost sounds brazen. "But if I save it and recycle it and make sure that no piece of

### **"There's a lot of attention given to garbage as a problem to solve, but almost none given to the human beings who make the system of garbage management work."**

job. She took the test and was hired. After a few months, the difficulties of balancing two full-time jobs and a family caused her to resign, but she sought to stay connected. She remembered Mierle Laderman Ukeles, DSNY's artist-in-residence since 1977, and came up with the idea of an anthropologist-in-residence, a nonpaying position that would allow her to continue her work with the department, which includes an oral-history project and plans for a sanitation museum. She has held the position since 2006.

Now, as she stomps up Broadway, Nagle glances down the side streets, where supers and porters have already lugged their buildings' contributions to the curb. The sanita-

mate change and environmental crises of all kinds. There's been a lot of attention given to garbage as a problem to solve, but almost none given to the human beings who make the system of garbage management work. If we have a better grasp of what this is all about, then we can understand — perhaps — how to change it in a way that is effective and positive. OK, now that's a broom. Let me tell you about the broom."

The broom. A boxy white street-sweeping machine with a quirky aura of modesty and cleverness, like a Pixar character.

"Its nickname is the bumper car," Nagle says. "You don't drive a broom; you operate a broom. You sit in what I call the cockpit (nobody calls it that — they would

the leftover goes into the garbage, I've just done a good thing for the planet. Right?"

"Um —"

"No. It's too small. If I went back to the factory that manufactured the paper and found a way to make sure that the production of this paper plate — the bleaching process that makes it white, the machines that make the crimping around the edge — was carbon-neutral and that it was a zero-waste plant, would *that* make a difference? To the planet?"

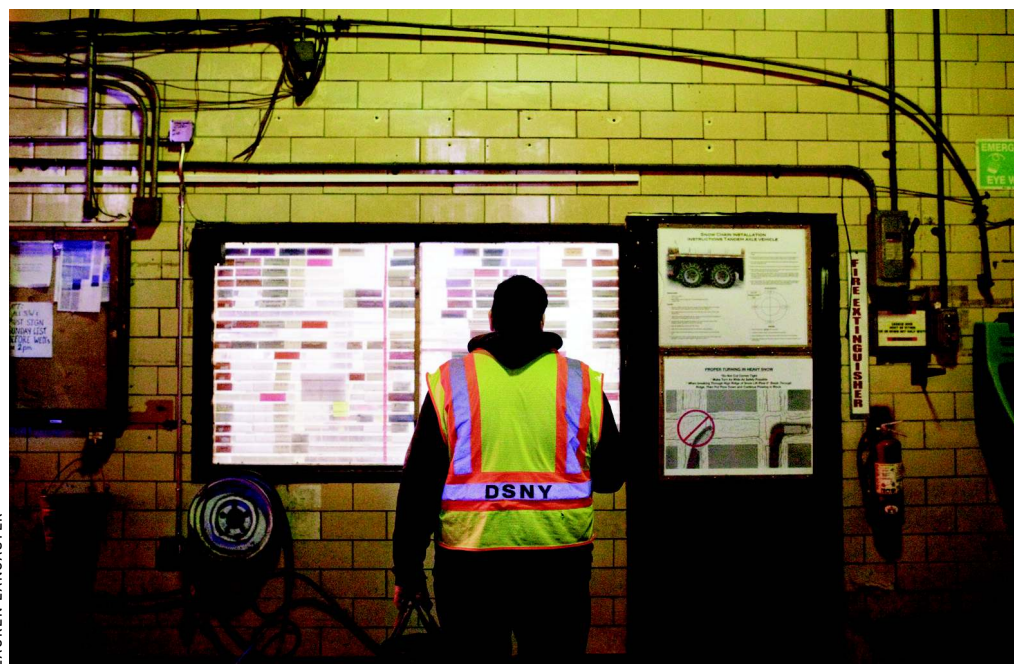
"Well —"

"No. Because it's still too small. If you took every paper manufacturer in the US and they all calibrated to be zero-waste and carbon-neutral, would that make a difference to the planet?"

"Er —"

"In a tiny, tiny way, yes. But enough to begin to tilt the scales and really address climate change and the particulates in the air? Not yet." According to the EPA, Nagle says, municipal solid waste accounts for 3 percent of the nation's waste stream. The other 97 percent is mainly industrial, commercial, medical, manufacturing, agricultural, construction and demolition (C&D), and mining. That paper cup is a grain of sand. "When we talk about New York City generating 11,000 tons of garbage per day, that's just household waste. C&D is approximately another 11,000 to 13,000 tons. So is commercial waste. That means New York City generates something close to 40,000 tons a day. Yet there's a lot of attention and resources given to municipal curbside recycling, and it *is* important, but not as important as we teach. We tell children, 'When you recycle that plastic bottle, you save the planet.' Nonsense."

Nagle pulls from her bag a ball of yarn the same red as her hat and begins knitting. She grew up in the Adirondack village of Saranac Lake and spins her own yarn. Once, while on collection on the Upper East Side, she found, by the curb, a bag of pure wool of the highest quality, over a hundred dollars' worth. That was serious mingo. *Picking Up's* glossary defines



LAUREN LANCASTER

mongo as "(n.) objects plucked/rescued from the trash; (v.) to take objects from the trash." It's against DSNY regulations to mingo, Nagle says, but workers quietly indulge. Lamps, books, air purifiers, microwave-oven plates. "A bag tipped over, a ball of yarn fell out, and I understood why guys who mingo tell you, 'The street gives you things that are yours.'" Nagle is open to cosmic suggestions. Primo yarn? How could she *not* mingo? "That would be like refusing a gift from the universe," she says. "Which is rude."

While Nagle is comfy on academic panels theorizing and psychologizing about consumption and disposal, *Picking Up* is told from the trenches. And it's not just about the street: Nagle examines the "eye-crossing" paperwork of the DSNY bureaucracy and the folkways of a thoroughgoing male culture that was slow to warm to a female newbie professor. It wasn't until 1986 that women were admitted to the ranks. Of today's 7,000-strong force, about 220 are women. Nagle reports that gender attitudes have improved, at the expense of macho assumptions about what it takes to be one of New York's Strongest. Still, she encountered locker-room skepticism of a woman's ability

to lift and heave bloated bags, operate trucks and mechanical brooms, endure extreme weather and rats and maggots (AKA "disco rice") and the intense stink that, at its transfer-station apotheosis, attains, for Nagle, a kind of olfactory purity. "It's easy to think of the smell as abhorrent," she says, "but at the same time, you have to let go. It's like the cold. Or the heat. At some point you have to stop fighting it."

Gag-inducing odors, disco rice, bone-snapping cold — these are among the job's gentler dispensations. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics places sanitation consistently among the top-ten most hazardous jobs. *Picking Up* enumerates the perils: projectiles shooting from the hopper ("bolts, nails and screws, plastic bottles, cans, shoes, mattress springs, wood fragments, glass shards"), noxious materials ("It would be difficult, if not impossible, to catalog all the toxins to which sanitation workers are exposed"), and, of course, traffic. More sanitation workers in the US are killed on the job per labor hour than police officers or firefighters — which makes one wonder why there isn't, to Nagle's knowledge, a municipal monument to sanitation workers. Nagle's museum would address this deficit: it would educate visitors on the

human side of sanitation and introduce them to figures like Colonel George E. Waring Jr., the engineer who, having designed Central Park's drainage system and led the Fourth Missouri Cavalry in the Civil War, became, in 1895, New York's Commissioner of Street Cleaning. (The Department of Street Cleaning, founded in 1881, is the forerunner of the DSNY.) Waring achieved what was generally considered to be impossible: he raised an army of broom-carrying, white-uniformed men (white to signify hygiene) and sent them into battle against a gigantic, waist-deep, vermin-crawling, disease-spawning enemy that festered in the reeking streets of a city plagued by yellow fever and cholera. Like no one before or since, Waring cleaned up this town. "San men were heroes," says Nagle. "There were Broadway plays about them." So what happened? "We got used to it being done well. We take it for granted that they're out there every day. We don't have to worry about it, because they're out there."

But one recent event — a historic storm last fall — brought sanitation workers more credit than they'd received since Colonel Waring's men subdued the Five Points.

**"I was astonished how completely invisible I was, and how easy it was to become invisible. You put on that uniform and you will achieve invisibility."**

"Not only did Sandy slam the city and create instant debris," says Nagle, "it hit neighborhoods where lots of sanitation people live. In many cases, the workers who responded in the Rockaways, Belle Harbor, Breezy Point, Staten Island, and Red Hook live in those places, and their own homes were destroyed. I don't mean their basements flooded. I mean their homes were turned into kindling. But they couldn't tend to that because they had to be on the frontlines twelve, thirteen, fourteen hours a day, seven days a week, for all those weeks, answering the city's need to clean up."

Nagle speaks with an emotional hitch of the WE ♥ DSNY signs painted on the sides

of flooded houses, and of a news photo of President Obama shaking hands with a san man.

"The workers carried an extraordinary burden. And they got real kudos."

Even so, invisibility remains the rule. Nagle connects our blindness to the death fear: trash as a reminder "that nothing lasts, not even ourselves." Why wouldn't we want to avoid everything about it?

"I was astonished how completely invisible I was, and how easy it was to become invisible," Nagle says, knitting away. "You put on that sanitation-worker uniform and you will achieve invisibility. I did occasionally get looks going to or from my work site if I traveled in uniform, because I don't fit the stereotype. But once I was working, in the truck or the broom, I was, at the most, an obstacle to be navigated by motorists. Walking on the street in uniform, or standing behind the truck, I'm like the weather. I'm just there. I will come and I will go. If things have been rescheduled for snow, my truck will get to my pickup a little later than usual, which is a variation in the pattern that, if anyone notices it at all, is just

a blip. You're almost an element of the city as foundational and unthoughtworthy as a stop sign or a fire hydrant. You're like moving street furniture."

"How did that feel?"

"Alarming. Bemusing. Liberating. I had a certain sense of freedom because I realized nobody gave a *shit* about who I was or what I was doing, so long as I didn't get in their way and I was in and out of their block fast. There's a truck."

White elephant. Crossing Broadway, headed west. Nagle puts away her knitting, drops her trash in the bin, goes outside into the whip-cold morning, and turns the corner.

The street slopes down to Riverside Park, overlooking a sweep of the park's bare trees, stark against pearly river and milk-blue sky. The truck is the groaning, hungry creature of a frigid dawn. It hugs the hill. The south side of the street is peaked with piles of dark bags. Two sanitation workers, male, clad in bright chlorophyll-green vests, work in silence: one tosses the heavy bags from the curb to the street, two at a time; the other lifts those and throws them into the hopper, then works the handles on the side to activate the compactor blade, which descends inexorably on the load. Bags burst. Pop! Pop! *Pop-pop-pop!* Mists exude from ruptured objects. The truck keeps gorging. "The specs are for a max load of roughly twelve tons, but you can squeeze fifteen if you have the right conditions," Nagle says. "That requires water, which helps things squish together better."

"A chair — a chair just went in there."

"Sure," says Nagle. "See the mirror? I've seen those shatter into a bajillion shards of gorgeous little flying knives."

The mirror, a pristine, above-the-mantel heavyweight, is devoured without incident. The driver tosses more bags from curb to street.

*Splat!*

"OK, that bag broke," says Nagle, "but its contents did not fly out in the street. When that happens, it's called 'spillage.'" The driver hops into the cab and backs up while his partner guides him with clear and simple hand signals. The two are in constant communication, little of it verbal. "People who have been doing this together for a long time don't need to talk much," Nagle says. "They know each other's rhythms so well that it becomes a kind of choreography." The truck stops, the driver gets out, and the men resume their dance: bags fly two by two, land, lift again, and plop into the hopper. In minutes, with deceptive speed, the duo has conquered the block.

The truck rounds the corner at Riverside. Nagle, at the crest of the hill, watches it disappear.



MARK STEELE

## Visit Columbia Magazine at our digital home!

At [magazine.columbia.edu](http://magazine.columbia.edu)

- How much should we know about our unborn children's future health? Join the conversation online.
- Watch a video of the launch of the EBEX space telescope over Antarctica.
- Today, Benjamin Jealous '94CC heads the NAACP. Learn how Columbia Law School students and faculty helped power the organization earlier on.
- Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.
- Get up-to-the-minute bulletins via RSS and Columbia news feeds, and more.

Check out what's new at  
[magazine.columbia.edu](http://magazine.columbia.edu)

[facebook.com/columbiomag](https://facebook.com/columbiomag)



[twitter.com/columbiomag](https://twitter.com/columbiomag)



# NEWS

## Nairobi and Rio bring Global Centers to eight

“Almost fifty years ago, when Kenya gained independence, the founding father of our nation, the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, declared that the greatest challenges that the new Kenya faced were poverty, disease, and ignorance.”

Mwai Kibaki, the president of Kenya, spoke at the opening of the Columbia Global Center in Nairobi on January 14. He said the new center, by promoting academic collaborations between Columbia scholars and their Kenyan counterparts, will help his country achieve its own ambitious development goals, which include making Kenya a middle-income country by 2030.

Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger said the benefits will be mutual: “Each opening of a Columbia Global Center holds great promise, not only for new academic partnerships in the host nation and region but also for the continuing reinvention of Columbia’s home campuses in New York City, where our scholarly mission demands a global presence.”

The Global Center in Nairobi now belongs to a network of eight overseas academic hubs that the University has established since 2009; the latest, in Rio de Janeiro, was publicly inaugurated in March. Other centers are based in Amman, Beijing, Istanbul, Mumbai, Paris, and Santiago.

“The driving principle of the Columbia Global Centers always has been to foster academic collaboration across national bound-

aries, discover new knowledge, and address challenges facing our society by connecting students and faculty on our home campuses in New York City to partners around the world,” said Bollinger at the opening of the Rio center on March 18.

The centers are set up in countries where Columbia already has a strong presence in the hopes of building on that momentum.

In Kenya, for example, many Columbia economists, agriculture specialists, engineers, hydrologists, and health researchers lead sustainable-development projects. Some are affiliated with a program organized by the United Nations and Columbia’s Earth Institute for eradicating rural poverty in Africa, the Millennium Villages Project, that has a regional outpost in Nairobi. The outpost is run by Belay Begashaw, a Columbia development expert and former Ethiopian agriculture minister who is now also serving as director of the Global Center in Nairobi. His professional network and his facilities are thus available to any Columbia faculty and students wishing to work in the region.

Ideas for new projects will come from conversations that Columbia faculty have with African scholars. “We have no preconceived notions and don’t pretend to have answers,” said Safwan M. Masri, Columbia’s vice president for Global Centers. “We’re here to learn from you.”

The Global Center in Rio de Janeiro, inaugurated with a series of panel discussions and special events attended by Bollinger, Provost John Coatsworth, and several deans from March 18 to 20, occupies 2,500 square feet of office space in the city’s commercial center. It is directed by Thomas Trebat, a Columbia expert on Latin American economics who has lived and worked in Rio.

The center is exploring possible collaborations with Studio-X, an experimental design studio that Columbia’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation operates in Rio. The center also plans to facilitate Brazilian projects for Columbia Law School, Columbia Business School, Columbia University Medical Center, and the School of International and Public Affairs. Columbia’s School of the Arts is looking to launch film projects in Brazil, and the Global Scholars Program also seeks a Brazilian component.

“From almost any perspective — economic, political, social, cultural — Brazil exudes vibrancy and growth and has enormous contributions to make to the global community of nations,” Trebat says. “With its national focus now turned squarely toward improving education for all its citizens, and expanding knowledge in all fields, Brazil and its iconic city of Rio de Janeiro are absolutely perfect hosts for this, the newest Columbia Global Center.”

>> Visit [globalcenters.columbia.edu](http://globalcenters.columbia.edu).



DIANA NGILA / NATION MEDIA GROUP

At the opening of a Columbia Global Center in Nairobi on January 14, Kenyan higher-education minister Margaret Kamar, Ethiopian prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn, and Kenyan president Mwai Kibaki listened to Columbia economist Jeffrey Sachs discuss water-safety issues.



## Pulitzer winner named to head journalism school

Steve Coll, a staff writer for the *New Yorker* and a two-time recipient of the Pulitzer Prize, has been named dean of the Graduate School of Journalism. He will succeed Nicholas Lemann on July 1.

“Steve Coll is one of the most experienced and respected journalists of his generation,” said President Lee C. Bollinger in a statement.

Coll is a former managing editor of the *Washington Post* and past president of the New America Foundation. He won a Pulitzer in 1990 for reporting on the Securities and Exchange Commission, and in 2005 for his book *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. He has written six other books.

Coll takes over a school that has been substantially rethought and modernized over the past decade, a period that saw the near collapse of the traditional model for news coverage and delivery. “One of the things that Columbia and Nick Lemann did so well was

to strike a voice that was confident about the enduring values and role of journalism at a time when there was so much disruption in the confidence of newspapers and broadcasters,” says Coll. “The University’s commitment to depth, ethics, and accountability in journalism has proven itself as a basis to tackle the big changes and what they mean for students and for the school.”

In the age of social media and smartphones, the journalism school and the profession are wrestling with the very question of who is a journalist. “That technology,” says Coll, “has made everyone a witness, everyone a source. It has democratized access to the public square. I think that is fundamentally good for our democracy, but that is not the same thing as professional journalism. One of the challenges professional journalism faces is how to adapt its own values, practices, and skills.”

Coll sees an expanded role for the J-school in the University’s global and



DAVID S. HOLLOWAY / GETTY IMAGES

digital growth. “Because the school has to grapple with how the digital revolution has changed the practice of professional journalism and the business models that surround it,” he says, “we will be in a position to help Columbia think about how digital disruptions may create new opportunities in the classroom as well, which is a big subject in higher education these days.”

## Manhattanville, ready to rise

Since construction began on the Jerome L. Greene Science Center in Manhattanville in 2011, most of the work has taken place at street level or below, out of view of passersby: workers have created an underground slurry wall to keep water from seeping beneath the building’s foundation; they have put a steel grid down upon the building’s footprint; and they have poured an enormous concrete slab that will form its main floor.

Now the Greene Science Center is about to rise. And it will rise quickly: between April and October, workers will bolt and weld into place its entire steel framework, reaching approximately 200 feet in the air, as they install its nine floors, one by one.

“We expect to have a topping-off ceremony in the fall,” says Joseph Ienuso, the University’s executive vice president of facilities. “This is how large projects typically proceed: for a while, it might seem that not a lot of progress is being made, and then one day you look up and suddenly the building has taken shape.”

Once the Greene Science Center’s structural steel is in place, workers will need another two and a half years to bring the Renzo Piano–designed glass and metal structure to completion. But the assembly of its big steel beams will represent a milestone for everybody involved, from the architects to the welders to the brain scientists who will eventually reside in it.

“It’s a moment of clarity,” says Ienuso. “You look and think to yourself: ‘This is really happening.’”



The site of Columbia’s future Manhattanville campus, pictured on March 18, facing northwest.

## Columbia Portraits to inform alumni programming

Columbia is about to get smarter — or at least better informed when it comes to its alumni. A new survey, slated to hit inboxes this spring, will create a more complete picture of the alumni community by gathering information on interests, attitudes, and activities.



CHRIS TAGGART

**Be counted:** Would you like Columbia to organize more alumni events at museums, or offer more online resources? By participating in a new survey and updating your contact info at [alumni.columbia.edu/directory](http://alumni.columbia.edu/directory), all Columbians can influence the programs offered to graduates.

“We all know there is no typical Columbian,” says Donna MacPhee ’89CC, vice president for alumni relations and president of the Columbia Alumni Association. “By taking a careful look at what’s important to our alumni, we can start deeper conversations to help us deliver more programs they want. We hope alumni will take this opportunity to express themselves.”

The survey will go to all alumni for whom the University has e-mail addresses. Alumni will be asked what they do in their spare time, their attitudes toward Columbia, how they prefer to communicate with friends and colleagues, and much more.

The results of the survey project, which is called “Columbia Portraits,” will help inform events, programming, and communications at the University. In particular, insights from the survey will help the University connect like-minded alumni based on their passions and interests.

“The goal is to have alumni educate us, so we can know who they are today, which is often very different from who they were as students,” says Tim McGowan, deputy vice president for alumni and development marketing and communications, who is spearheading the effort. “By listening, we can learn to be better partners.”

» [Update your info at alumni.columbia.edu/directory](http://Update your info at alumni.columbia.edu/directory).

## Yoruba spoken here: Ivies share access to rare language courses

It was in some ways a typical beginner’s language class at Columbia: undergraduates spoke haltingly as their instructor gently corrected them. After one student pronounced a phrase particularly well, another asked how to say “show off.” As laughter broke out, the instructor wrote *asehan* on the whiteboard.

The students were learning a West African language, Yoruba, that had not been offered at Columbia in several years. More unusual was that their instructor was two hundred miles away — at Cornell. There, in a classroom in Ithaca, seven Cornell undergraduates occasionally shifted their gaze away from their professor toward a large monitor and spoke with three other classmates participating via videoconference from Morningside Heights.

This novel arrangement is part of an effort by Columbia, Cornell, and Yale to give one another’s students an opportunity

to study languages that might otherwise be unavailable at their own university because of low demand. The program is made possible by a two-year, \$1.2 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

“It’s a way to optimize our resources,” says Stéphane Charitos, director of Columbia’s Language Resource Center. “Each of our institutions has a few faculty who are experts in languages that are not commonly taught. It only makes sense to share our courses so that we can offer all our students access to the broadest range of language and cultures possible.”

The grant from the Mellon Foundation — which could double if the program is successful — comes after years of government cuts in Title VI funding, which supports foreign-language instruction. Universities rely on Title VI funding to subsidize the teaching of languages with low enrollment.

The course-sharing program began last fall with Columbia beaming its entry-level Tamil and Romanian classes to Yale, while students here got to learn Yoruba from Cornell. In future semesters, Columbia may transmit Catalan, Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian, Tibetan, Ukrainian, and Wolof courses, among others, to its Ivy partners, according to Charitos; Columbia students may gain access to IsiZulu, Khmer, and Sinhala classes.

While the shared classes are made possible by digital technology, they are not massive open online courses, or MOOCs, which have gained popularity over the last year. Classes are limited to twelve students. Instructors and students interact in real time through remote-controlled cameras and seventy-inch, interactive whiteboards.

“You have to come to class on a regular schedule,” Charitos says. “This is not ‘I’m sitting in my dorm room in my PJs and doing my French class at four in the morning.’”

## Learn Africa, says Nobel laureate Leymah Gbowee

The Liberian social worker and peace activist Leymah Gbowee, winner of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, had a strong message for audience members at a World Leaders Forum event in Low Rotunda on February 18.

Gbowee, forty-one, who led a nonviolent women's movement that helped end the Second Liberian Civil War (1999–2003), discussed Africa's leadership crisis — in part the product, she said, of a citizenry with insufficient education to hold their leaders accountable and a hypocritical West that bolsters corrupt leaders for its own purposes. She spoke of the sacrifice African women have made for human rights, and of a need to “change the psyche” of African leadership. “It is important for us to showcase those leaders who see their role as mending fences and building bridges instead of perpetuation of the old order of ethnic division and the social-class system,” she said.

During a Q&A, a Nigeria-born student asked Gbowee how Africans educated in the West should work to effect change in their native countries if they return.

“Please do not adopt a mentality that ‘We are going back to save them,’” Gbowee pleaded. “Look at me. Even with your Columbia education, can you save me? Honestly?”



Liberia's Leymah Gbowee addresses students in Low Rotunda in February.

“Child, don't try it when you go to Nigeria. Go with an attitude of wanting to learn, wanting to serve, and not that ‘I've lived in New York and I come back with a Columbia education.’ Or you will come running back to the US.”

Columbia lecturer Mona Momescu, who teaches elementary Romanian, says she tried to build a sense of community between her two Columbia students and their three Yale classmates in a course this past spring by pairing students from different schools on class projects.

“Except for the distance, it's a regular classroom,” says Samuel Sudanandha, a Columbia lecturer whose Tamil class last fall included a Yale student. “The technology is well advanced, so there are no jarring audio problems, which helps in language teaching, where you need clear sound.”

Columbia College students Omoyeni Clement, Anu Akinbamidele, and Danielle Benson used videoconferencing equipment to participate in a Yoruba language class taught at Cornell this spring.



Omoyeni Clement, a Columbia sophomore, says studying Yoruba has drawn her closer to her Nigerian family. Born in Canada to immigrants who spoke only English at home, she says her first trip to Nigeria as a child “was one of the biggest culture shocks in my life.” Relatives teased her for not understanding her native language.

Many in the program are students from immigrant families who want to forge a stronger connection to their own heritage. “They are interested for emotional or identity reasons,” Charitos says.

For Clement, a premed student who hopes to one day practice tropical medicine in West Africa, the Cornell-taught course has not only given her a crucial professional tool but allowed her to “finally talk to my grandmother,” who only speaks Yoruba. “It is so much more to me than just fulfilling that curriculum requirement.”

— Andrea Stone '81JRN

## Staging history, as Kennedy would like it

A new drama award honoring the late Senator Ted Kennedy and administered by Columbia University Libraries was presented for the first time in March.

The Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama Inspired by American History, known as the EMK Prize, went to Dan O'Brien's *The Body of an American* and Robert Schenkkan's *All the Way*. The playwrights will share a \$100,000 award, making the EMK Prize one of the most generous for creative writing in the United States.

The prize was created by Jean Kennedy Smith, a former US ambassador to Ireland and the late senator's sister, to commemorate what she describes as Ted Kennedy's twin passions: art and history.

"My brother loved the arts — museums, books, the performing arts," she says. "Music was perhaps dearest to him, but he and I shared an enjoyment of theater —

especially, for Teddy, musical theater. He was also a great student of American history and made it come alive for many of us in the Kennedy family."

The inaugural winners found innovative ways to bring history alive for audiences. O'Brien's *The Body of an American*, which premiered at Portland Center Stage in Oregon last year, is about the playwright's friendship with war photographer Paul Watson, who took an infamous photo of a dead American soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu in 1993. The play describes the emotional toll the event took on the photojournalist. Schenkkan's *All the Way* recounts Lyndon B. Johnson's tumultuous first year as president, when the Texan was trying to push John F. Kennedy's civil-rights legislation through Congress. It is told partly through the eyes of Martin Luther King Jr., George Wallace, J. Edgar Hoover, and Hubert Hum-

phrey. *All the Way* opened at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival last summer.

The University's Center for New Media Teaching and Learning is now creating websites that will feature study and teaching guides, historical research, and scholarly discussions related to the plays.

"There is something of critical importance to human memory — to the way that a society remembers — that drama uniquely supplies," said Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner '78CC at a March 4 prize ceremony at Low Rotunda attended by several members of the Kennedy family. "This hybrid of memory and imagination, of systematized recall and the tumult of dreams, is essential to the health of society, of human community, and hence consonant with the progressive political legacy of a great legislator."

>> Visit [kennedyprize.columbia.edu](http://kennedyprize.columbia.edu).

"Give back to  
Columbia.  
Because it's  
something we  
can do, and  
should do . . ."

—KENNETH FORDE '59PS



THE 1754 SOCIETY

### "A SURGEON'S SURGEON."

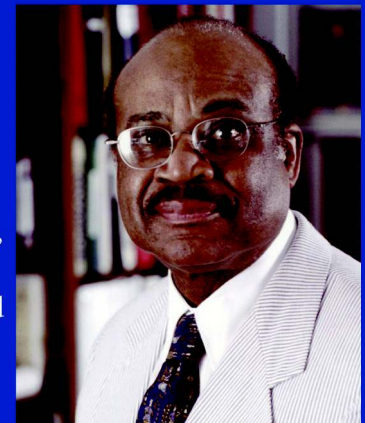
Kenneth Forde, M.D., a pioneer in the field of colon cancer, has educated and inspired generations of Columbia doctors.

Dr. Forde likes to say, "At Columbia, I've gone from applicant to student to intern to resident to professor and now to Trustee."

Now, he is leading by example once again—by including Columbia in his will.

Join Dr. Forde and others in the 1754 Society, a group of alumni and friends who have made bequests and other planned gifts to the University.

To learn more about Dr. Forde and planned giving, visit [giving.columbia.edu/plannedgifts](http://giving.columbia.edu/plannedgifts) or call 800-338-3294.



# NEWSMAKERS

## What's in the cards?

**Beau Willimon '99CC, '03SOA** made television history with his adaptation of the BBC miniseries *House of Cards*. The American version, which Willimon developed and produced, was released as an entire season



FRAZER HARRISON / GETTY IMAGES

Beau Willimon '99CC, '03SOA

on February 1, becoming the first original Netflix series. Within a month it was the most-watched content on the popular streaming service . . . **Michèle Stephenson '95LAW** and her partner, Joe Brewster, won a Sundance Festival special jury award for their documentary film *American Promise*, which follows their son Idris and his best friend, Seun — two African-American boys — from kindergarten through high-school graduation at an elite Upper East Side prep school.

## Inform, reform

Bloomberg News correspondent **Janet Lorin '95CC, '96JRN** won the George Polk Award for national reporting. Her series on abuses in higher-education financing, cowritten with John Hechinger, led to new federal debt-collection regulations as well as reforms at colleges and universities.

## Mapping stars

The White House named **Rafael Yuste**, a Columbia professor of biological sciences and neuroscience, as an adviser to the Brain

Activity Map project, a ten-year, multi-billion-dollar initiative aimed at charting for the first time the complex network of neurons in the brain. President **Barack Obama '83CC** mentioned the plan, which is modeled after the Human Genome Project, in the State of the Union address . . . **Gordana Vunjak-Novakovic**, the Mikati Foundation Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Medical Sciences, was selected to serve on the first board of directors of the Center for the Advancement of Science in Space, which promotes and manages research on the International Space Station.

## All's fair in art

**Razi Ahmed '11SIPA** organized the inaugural Lahore Literary Festival, in Pakistan, which attracted sixty authors and more than 30,000 attendees and was covered by the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the BBC. The festival followed a similarly popular event in Karachi; both are considered groundbreaking because of the restrictions that religious conservatives have placed on similar cultural events in Pakistan in recent years . . . The Armory Show, a prominent contemporary and modern art fair held annually in New York, this year chose **Liz Magic Laser '08SOA** as its commissioned artist, responsible for establishing the fair's visual identity and design-



J. COUNTESS / GETTY IMAGES

Liz Magic Laser '08SOA

ing its catalog. Laser is known primarily for participatory performance, theater, and installations, and was the first in the show's history to employ focus groups to advise on her artistic strategy.

## Appealing choices

Governor Andrew Cuomo nominated **Jenny Rivera '93LAW** to the New York State Court of Appeals. A former clerk for then US district-court judge Sonia Sotomayor, Rivera is the founder and director of the Center on



Jenny Rivera '93LAW

Latino and Latina Rights and Equality at the City University of New York School of Law, where she is a professor . . . **George Canellos '89LAW** has been named acting director of the US Securities and Exchange Commission's enforcement division after serving as its deputy director for the previous eight months. Canellos, a former federal prosecutor in the Southern District of New York, served as the director of the SEC's New York office for three years.

## CFO.com

**Kristina Salen '03BUS** recently became the first chief financial officer of Etsy, the online craft marketplace, now valued at nearly \$900 million. Salen comes to Etsy from Fidelity Investments, where she ran the media, Internet, and telecommunications group.

# EXPLORATIONS

## Protecting the grid from the bomb

The US electric grid is designed to keep power flowing to customers by almost any means necessary. But its flexibility may prove to be its downfall.

Because the grid allows power plants to send electricity over multiple routes to any destination within a few hundred miles, it has obvious advantages: if one power line fails, a computer will reroute its load to parallel lines so that the lights stay on. The danger is that if those lines become overburdened, a vicious cycle of “load shifting” and line failures can quickly spiral out of control, causing a widespread blackout.

Daniel Bienstock, a Columbia professor of industrial engineering and operations research, has spent years studying this problem, which is known to power-industry insiders as a cascading failure. By designing computer models that simulate how electricity will flow through the grid in different circumstances, he can identify which sections of the grid are most vulnerable to cascades. Power companies rely on this information to take preventive measures: they may increase the carrying capacity of certain lines or install elaborate monitoring systems in the most vulnerable locations.

This past fall, Bienstock, along with Gil Zussman, a Columbia associate professor of electrical engineering, and MIT’s Eytan Modiano, received a \$1 million grant from the Pentagon’s Defense Threat Reduction Agency to study how a cascading failure might be avoided in the worst circumstance imaginable: a nuclear strike intended specifically to start one. The engineers aim to help the government protect the grid against a so-called electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack, an oft-hypothesized yet never before attempted military maneuver that involves detonating a nuclear warhead in outer space above an enemy country in order to gener-

Gil Zussman and Daniel Bienstock are investigating how the US electric grid could be protected against a nuclear attack.



ate a wave of electromagnetic energy that overloads and destroys its grid.

“Our job is to see if you might contain that surge,” says Bienstock, “before it causes the largest cascade we’ve ever seen.”

### It starts with a spark

The largest blackout in US history occurred in August 2003, when a power line sagged too close to a tree limb in Walton Hills, Ohio, and shorted out. Workers at the local utility failed to redistribute power appropriately, and within a few hours this minor incident had grown into a massive outage, with fifty million people losing electricity in eight Northeastern states and southern Canada.

“That was a classic cascade,” says Bienstock. “People lost power not because of any shortage of electricity in the system but because the utilities allowed the lines to become overloaded.”

A blackout caused by a nuclear explosion high above the American heartland would likely be worse in every way, he says. For starters, it could affect a much larger area: perhaps one-third of the United States.

“The US grid is actually divided into three sections: the eastern, western, and Texas interconnections,” Bienstock says. “A well-executed EMP attack could easily wipe out one of them.”

But the most important difference, he says, is that an EMP attack could inflict severe and long-lasting physical damage to the electric grid.

In the case of the 2003 blackout, he says, many people lost electricity not because any power lines or transformers malfunctioned in their area but because a utility company preemptively shut off power to protect its infrastructure. As a result, power was restored in many areas within a few hours, after Northeastern power plants temporarily reduced their output and brought the system back into equilibrium.

An EMP attack, Bienstock says, could send a burst of electricity coursing through the grid too quickly for utility companies to contain. This is the idea behind an EMP attack: electrons would be knocked loose from air molecules and hurtle downward to the Earth at nearly the speed of light, causing a brief but ferocious electrical storm. This wave of energy would penetrate a huge swath of the grid, in a circle tens of miles in diameter or more, and then emanate outward in all directions, burning up every power line and blowing up every transformer, generator, and substation in its path.

“This means it could take forever to fix,” says Bienstock. “Some of that equipment, especially the transformers, would need to be custom-built. You could be looking at a full year or more before it all got replaced.”

### Old idea, new threat?

Scientists first realized that an explosion in the sky would generate a burst of electricity in 1962, when the US conducted a nuclear test above the Pacific Ocean. In Hawaii, lights went out.

For many decades, the idea that any nation might attack the US by raining down electrons upon us was dismissed by national-security experts as too far-fetched to warrant serious concern. Why would any country do that, the thinking went, when it might instead lob a warhead at a city?

As our society has become increasingly reliant on information technology and digital communications, however, the prospect of a foreign power taking direct aim at the US grid has come to seem less outlandish. In fact, a recent report by the National Academy of Sciences concludes that the grid’s ricketiness is a national-security risk. The report, which is the most thorough ever on the topic, offers a frightful vision of life following any shutdown of the grid that lasts a few weeks or more:

food distribution, water supplies, health care, emergency services, energy systems, and transportation would stop.

To prevent this from ever happening, Bienstock and his colleagues are now designing computer models that can simulate how a cascade resulting from an EMP attack would travel through the grid. The analytic tools they are creating will help government engineers answer questions such as these: what would be the best way for utility companies to contain the surge? Could this be done by shutting down all power stations in the vicinity, or would it require more drastic action, like preemptively tripping lots of power lines around the periphery of the attack? What types of new monitoring and communications systems would be necessary to coordinate a rapid response? And how might cell-phone networks and the Internet be kept functioning during a widespread blackout?

“It will take years to address these questions because they are so complicated,” says Zussman, who is the project’s principal investigator. “Part of the challenge is that nobody has ever looked into them before, since the prospect of an EMP attack was considered too slim to worry about.”

He says the group’s work is applicable to other threats, too, including powerful releases of energy from the sun, called solar flares. A solar flare caused six million people to lose power in Quebec in 1989.

“Strictly from a science and engineering perspective, this project is exciting because it gives our research teams a fresh set of problems to look at,” says Zussman, whose role is to investigate the impact of an EMP attack on the Internet. “If you punch a big hole in the middle of a complex system, what happens? Is there a way to fix it? Our work could have theoretical implications for making lots of systems more robust.”

— David J. Craig

# REVIEWS



© RICHARD MISRACH, COURTESY OF PAGE/MACGILL GALLERY, NEW YORK; FRANKELE GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO; AND MARC SELWYN GALLERY, LOS ANGELES

Richard Misrach, *Cypress Swamp, Alligator Bayou, Prairieville, Louisiana, 1998.*

## A Terrible Beauty // By Joshua J. Friedman

### ***Petrochemical America***

Photographs by Richard Misrach, *Ecological Atlas* by Kate Orff (Aperture, 216 pages, \$80)

Louisiana's Great River Road follows the Mississippi southeast for 140 winding miles from Baton Rouge to New Orleans. Once fertile fishing ground for Native Americans, the land was portioned into long, slender lots by French settlers in the 1700s and worked by African slaves. But no greater change has marked the land than the mid-twentieth-century boom of the oil industry, which burrowed deep into the earth and built high into the air, fracturing riverbank settlements and transforming a fishing and farming region into a national petrochemical center. Today, along Cancer Alley, as some call it, one-story homes stand in the shadow of giant industrial plants. Pipelines cut through swamps and fields. In the town of Norco, a pure-white

cumulus cloud fortified with volatile hydrocarbons hovers permanently above a Shell refinery.

*Petrochemical America*, a collaboration between the artist Richard Misrach and the landscape architect Kate Orff, surveys this land in all its imperfections. Misrach is a landscape photographer, but he belongs to a movement that attempts to reinvent the genre for the man-altered world. Between the 1970s and 1990s, Misrach documented the desert of the American West in a series called *Desert Cantos*. Turning away from the idealized landscapes of Ansel Adams, Misrach captured a desert transected by roads and power lines and punctuated by controlled burns and animal-burial pits,

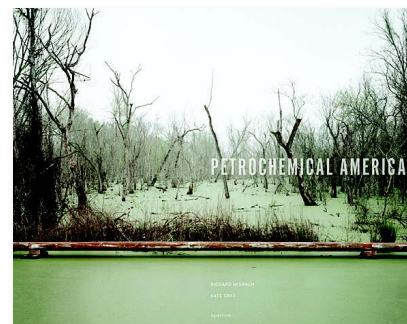


creating images that were sometimes elegant, sometimes grotesque, but always honest. Misrach's desert is "the real desert that we mortals can actually visit," wrote the critic Reyner Banham. "Stained and trampled, franchised and fenced, burned, flooded, grazed, mined, exploited, and laid waste. It is the desert that is truly ours, for we have made it so and must live with the consequences."

What better exemplar of our fallen age than Cancer Alley? Here, rather than animal corpses and spent bombshells, there are toxic releases, explosions, and abandoned towns. The physical record of these traumas often presents itself as an absence: the footprints of former houses in the Morrisonville settlement, now Dow Chemical; a warning sign on a fence with nothing behind it but wildflowers and trees. It's a subtle story, so *Petrochemical America* tells it twice: first through Misrach's photographs, and second through an artistic presentation of data by Kate Orff, who as a Columbia professor integrates the earth sciences into the graduate design curriculum. The two sections are designed as complements, but they might equally be viewed as competitors. Which discipline is better equipped to capture the essential?

Misrach tells his story on a human scale, though his photographs are virtually unpeopled. Religious monuments sit by the side of the road, staying fast where believers have moved on. Those who have remained endure a peculiar landscape: an Archer Daniels Midland plant rises next to a modest front yard with a spindly rosebush and a small Christ statue. A swamp has turned a foamy green; sickly cypress trees protrude from the bayou. Even Misrach's desert was more colorful than hazy Cancer Alley, which is painted from a limited spectrum of grays and greens. One is left with the impression of a place under quarantine, tranquil yet unnerving.

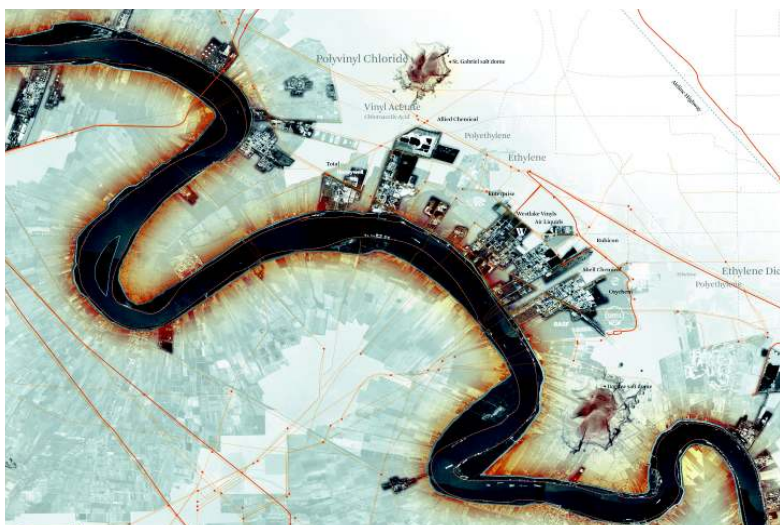
In her ecological atlas, Orff tries to diagnose the underlying problems, often by connecting them to large-scale systems. She traces the development of the petroleum industry, beginning with prehistoric algae deposits in the Jurassic period, and parses the effects of oil and its derivative chemicals on the earth and living creatures. In a clever design feature, Orff reproduces Misrach's photographs in miniature and expands their boundaries to include explanatory illustrations. For example, she extends Misrach's swamp pipeline to meet cross sections of drilling equipment on one end and chemical plants on the other. In geospatial maps, we see the pipeline stretch along the Mississippi and into the Gulf of Mexico, branching out and multiplying, with a red circle marking the site of the 2010 Deep-



water Horizon explosion. Orff's project is part academic, part political: she wants to restore people's instinctive connection to the land and draw their attention to the ways that ordinary economic choices can ripple out to touch every part of the country.

At times, Orff's ambition leads her to stray too far from local conditions and practicable solutions. Layers of information sprawl like suburbs, as if the atlas's purpose were not to explain their order but to prove them unorderable. The most moving section of the atlas keeps its focus on this particular expanse of Louisiana land. Along several maps of the river, Orff charts selected incidents in the histories of affected communities. In Reveilletown, after an accident at a Georgia Gulf plant, vinyl chloride found its way into local children's blood. In Morrisonville, fear of lawsuits led Dow Chemical to preemptively relocate the entire town in two pieces, sending one north and one south.

Amid such damage, it is occasionally shocking to notice how Misrach has looked at this compromised land and found beauty. One photograph of the water-covered batture north of Port Allen resembles a Dutch Golden Age painting, with textured sky and lush trees and shrubs reflected in the river. Images of destruction have a double pull, repelling and compelling at once, as in a sugarcane field that yields to a complex monochrome of gray sky, silver geometry, and dissipating smoke. By capturing beauty as well as hardship, Misrach implicitly makes a case for this land's survival. "The world is as terrible as it is beautiful," Misrach has written, "but when you look more closely, it is as beautiful as it is terrible."



Kate Orff traces the ethylene network along Cancer Alley.

## By All, For All // By Kenneth Anderson

### ***Governing the World: The History of an Idea***

By Mark Mazower (Penguin, 416 pages, \$29.95)

The idea of a world government has captivated people since the prophecies of Isaiah, who was one of the first to articulate what is instinctive to many: that our shared humanity requires a universal political community. But the challenge of turning this ancient vision into a reality has been raising and dashing hopes for centuries.

In *Governing the World: The History of an Idea*, Columbia historian Mark Mazower works his way forward through wars, diplomacy, and social movements to document the intellectual history of this impulse and its manifestations. He begins in the era of the Concert of Europe — the loose collective of European monarchies that sought to maintain political stability in the hundred years between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the start of World War I. Under the shelter of this European great-power peace, the nineteenth century saw a flowering of internationalism. Indeed, much of the global activism and advocacy that today we associate with post-Cold War globalization originated in these nineteenth-century movements.

These parallel periods, Mazower points out, were enabled by like conditions: the rise of new communication technologies; faster, cheaper transportation; and the spread of literacy, books, and periodicals. The nineteenth century saw the blooming of what we might think of today as international social movements and nongovernmental organizations, including the Red Cross, founded in 1863 by the Swiss businessman Henri Dunant. These movements often sprang from Protestant Christianity and its missionary activity, but social activism was already well on its way to becoming secularized. The seeds of modern international law, including the Geneva Conventions and contemporary laws of war, were planted in the diplomatic conferences and multilateral treaties of the same period.

Mazower introduces a whole cast of characters with internationalist and supranationalist visions, ranging from the sober to the ecstatic. He might have written a book simply from these colorful personal histories. Yet Mazower keeps his focus on his two goals: to tell an intellectual history of the ideal of world governance, and to offer a distinctive analytic framework through which to understand the interplay of international

organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and the rise of the human-rights movement.

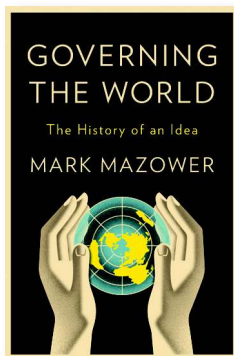
Central to this analysis are the complicated, ambivalent relations between the United States and the United Nations, dating back to its origins in the League of Nations, as the US seeks to control the organization to ends that are sometimes idealistic, sometimes self-interested. Mazower, with his original analysis, places himself in the company of other ambitious young historians of the postwar intellectual environment — in particular, his Columbia colleague Samuel Moyn, author of *The Last Utopia*.

*Governing the World* interprets the UN through the lens of the rising postcolonial world, and so — quite unusually — devotes serious energy to questions of international economic development and the world economic order. Few historians of diplomacy and politics feel comfortable taking up the history of international development or addressing mechanisms of global economic coordination; human rights and world peace are, frankly, a lot easier. It is a great strength of this book that it deals directly with these agendas that have so much to do with the interests of the world's poorer nations.

Mazower is, in the end, a liberal internationalist — someone who looks to international law and institutions to overcome the anarchic power relations of sovereign states. He sees the United States very often as a spoiler, happy to use the United Nations where it can further its agenda but willing to undermine it for the same purpose. He also defends universalism — universal human rights, universal governance by all for all — as a bulwark against states' parochial self-interest and often wicked sovereign prerogatives. Even if the US, in Mazower's view, is not the most wicked or self-interested in maintaining its sovereign prerogatives, it is the great enabler of states unwilling to give up sovereign power to an international rule of law.

I don't share Mazower's conjoining of universalism and internationalism. It's a mistake to assume that international institutions are the natural repositories of universal values just because they are not tied to a particular geography. Perhaps universal human values have thrived, to the extent they have, not on account of the UN or international organizations or law but instead under the sheltering sky of a loose American hegemony.

Despite his jaundiced view of the US, Mazower is no starry-eyed UN partisan. On the contrary, he has an admirable tough-mindedness toward it that allows him to describe plainly its many dysfunctions, as well as to put squarely on the table reasons for its problems that lie as much within the institution itself as without it.



---

Mazower's ideal of what supranational governance might look like finally seems to draw less from the United Nations and more from the European Union. Yet the final chapter of *Governing the World*, which examines the Eurozone debt crisis and its implications, is much more pessimistic than what comes before it. Global finance and global capital markets, Mazower comes close to saying, are today the

true authors of governance. In such a climate, Mazower writes, the very idea of governing the world is becoming "yesterday's dream."

*Kenneth Anderson, a professor of international law at American University, is the author of Living with the UN: American Responsibilities and International Order.*

---

## Paint It Red // By Daniel Asa Rose

### **The Flamethrowers**

By Rachel Kushner (Scribner, 400 pages, \$26.99)

If you were ever tempted to give a book only fifty or eighty pages to make its case before you move on to another, here's proof of why you mustn't. You could miss one that's as gloriously good as this.

*The Flamethrowers* begins with a soldier in the Italian motorcycle squadron of World War I braining a German soldier, which initially seems unconnected to the rest of the book, set in the 1970s. Scores of pages later, we discover that the Italian soldier is the founder of a contemporary character's family fortune. It's a leap, but between here and there, if we're patient, we find an astounding book. Not so much because of the plot, which traces the misadventures of a recent art-school grad from Reno who gets led by her heart into the treacheries of New York's downtown art scene, and then into the treacheries of Italy's old-money scene, and then into the lice-filled treacheries of Rome's street-hardened Red Brigades scene. Good as it is, the plot is merely the delivery system for setting after setting so precisely informed and tone-perfect you won't believe that Rachel Kushner '01SOA (born in 1968) wasn't there personally to taste and smell and see them.

Everything is more vivid than this morning's breakfast. Back in our narrator's grim Nevada childhood, her uncle Bobby, done hauling dirt for the day, "sat inexplicably nude watching TV and made us operate the dial for him, so he wouldn't have to get up." Once she escapes to Manhattan, driving her fancy Italian motorcycle across the country, she finds shelter in a walkup apartment above a Chinese family; because they slaughter chickens in their apartment, "the smell of warm blood filled the hallway." (Notice Kushner doesn't waste a second adjective on the blood; "warm" is evocative enough.)

It's the era of Warhol's Factory, and things get very dark very quickly. It takes no time for the narrator to crash into downtown hipsters who are all derelict in one sense or another, damaged but not fatally, and with such a shrewd take on life you can't help but want to be beguiled by them yourself. Or at least listen to them soliloquize for hours. "It's up here on the roof where all the good stuff is taking place," a man says, "narrating the New York skyline" for

her a few minutes after meeting her in a bar. "Women walking up the sides of buildings, scaling vertical facades with block and tackle. They dress like cat burglars, feminist cat burglars. Who knows? You might become one, even though you're sweet and young. *Because you're sweet and young.*"

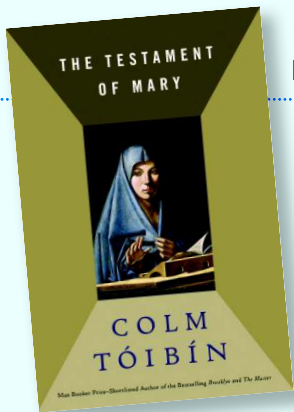
This is how even minor characters chat in this cryptobohemian world. Impossibly feckless and fake, except when they're not, they sometimes consider giving up the art scene to become chauffeurs for the Mob or to go to mortuary school — as a lark but also more than a lark. Everyone's irony is so practiced, and so layered, that it's pointless to object.

"Is any of it real?" our narrator asks about a certain monologist. "He's complicated," she is advised. "You have to listen closely. He'll say something perfectly true and it's meaningless. Then he makes something up, but it has value. He's telling you *something.*"

Within this ardent miasma, Kushner's descriptions are piercingly accurate and fresh. "I heard the sonic rip of a military jet, like a giant trowel being dragged through wet concrete." "Only a killjoy would claim neon wasn't beautiful. It jumped and danced, chasing its own afterimage." The protagonist meets her principal lover on a "cold, damp November day on which the sun shone and rain fell simultaneously, the strange, rosy-gold light of this contradiction intensifying the colors around us as we walked." Given all this, it's perfect (and prophetic) that the lotus paste bun they sample on their first date "has more fragrance than flavor."

*The Flamethrowers* is not without faults. The Red Brigades scenes are not quite as alluringly rendered as the others. Kushner can occasionally be facile: by way of underscoring the pope's





## BOOKTALK

# The Conversion of the Mother

The book: *The Testament of Mary* (Scribner)

The author: Colm Tóibín, Columbia humanities professor

**Columbia Magazine:** In 2012, you released two books: first, the beautiful collection of essays *New Ways to Kill Your Mother*, and then *The Testament of Mary*, a small and luminous novel that reimagines the experience of the ultimate mother, the Virgin Mary. Was the novel an outgrowth of the essays?

**Colm Tóibín:** No. Well, maybe only in the very strange way that ideas come together. It may have been on my mind for a while, but I didn't know that. I simply mentioned to a friend of mine who is the director of the Dublin Theatre Festival that there was one great part for an actress that was unwritten — the part of Mary. This was late at night at a party and we were just talking, but he turned to me and said, in the usual Dublin way, "Will you write that for us?" But then he wrote a formal letter to commission me.

**CM:** Is this why the novel is only eighty-one pages — because it was intended for the stage?

**CT:** No, if read in full onstage it would still last about four hours; it has to be distilled. It's not so much about length, but novels allow for journeys and sidetracking. A novel is an empty space you can fill with funny things. In theater, every single line has to signify and do something. It was first performed on the stage in Dublin in 2011. I wrote the novel in the summer of 2009 into the autumn, but I am still working on it, getting it ready for the opening on Broadway this March. Emotionally, it has taken four years to write.

**CM:** How does it feel as a writer to have your work performed onstage, especially Broadway?

**CT:** In a way, the director Deborah Warner and the actress Fiona Shaw are the ones under pressure, so I don't think how I feel is of any interest to anybody. Really, for an actress to go onto Broadway is tremendously exciting. Every time Fiona works she puts so much into it. All I'm doing is making sure she has everything she needs from me. The real difference will be in the interpretation.

**CM:** The theme of interpretation runs heavy through *The Testament of Mary*. At a critical moment in the story the disciples press Mary to accept their version of the crucifixion. They essentially ask her to take fiction as truth.

**CT:** I think the book enacts two methods of storytelling going against each other. One is an attempt to put shape on things and the other is truer to voice. They are hitting against each other in a

way that has enormous implications, of course. The novel itself is about the process of fiction, of fictionalization.

**CM:** In one of my favorite lines from the book, Mary says, "Memory fills my body as much as blood and bones." Does this reflect your own relationship with faith?

**CT:** If you come up against Catholicism in childhood in the way I did, and if you were as receptive to it as I was, then you can believe what you like as an adult, but the ritual, the words, they stay with you. They nourish you in a way that is very strong and that you would be foolish to think could fade.

**CM:** This question of belief is key in the book: Mary does not believe Jesus is the Son of God or that his death somehow saves the souls of everyone in the world, a characterization that some have obviously considered heretical. What does it mean to be from Ireland and write a book like this?

**CT:** It means you are absolutely aware that you have an audience. Normally, while writing it pains me to think of audience, or about Ireland, or any larger question than, does this work? But there are Irish people in Ireland brought up the same way I was, and all of us are wrestling with these things. There may even be a larger nation of Catholics in other countries, including the US, wrestling with these ideas. In so many countries in Europe, Sunday is an ordinary shopping day now. When the play was on in Dublin, people understood I was serious. I was not involved in the mockery of faith or putting on a play for my own entertainment at their expense. It was full every night. No one walked out. I'm very grateful for that. Ireland has changed.

**CM:** Do you still spend much time in Ireland?

**CT:** Yes, I still split my time. There is usually a wonderful weekend in May in New York City when everyone is in shorts sitting outside the cafés, and I spend it wandering around the Upper West Side. The following weekend I usually go home to a house on the Irish Sea in Wexford, where I'm from.

**CM:** And people aren't wearing shorts in Wexford in May?

**CT:** No! Though from June you can swim in the Irish Sea if you're brave. I'm brave.

— Kelly McMasters '05SOA

---

hypocrisy, she says he makes his plea for peace “with a giant bullet propped on his head.” She’s even sentimental at times: a gust of wind loosing pear blossoms from the trees is likened to “invisible hands [stripping] branches of their little white pearls.” But mostly she is brilliant in her specificity, nailing scene after scene in milieus

both high and low, and creating a protagonist who is a woman on the verge, constantly becoming yet never quite there.

*Daniel Asa Rose is the author of Larry’s Kidney, named a best book of 2009 by Publishers Weekly.*

---

## Fatal Flaws // By Caroline Moorehead

### **The Injustice System: A Murder in Miami and a Trial Gone Wrong**

By Clive Stafford Smith (Viking, 368 pages, \$27.95)

### **Manifest Injustice: The True Story of a Convicted Murderer and the Lawyers Who Fought for His Freedom**

By Barry Siegel (Henry Holt and Company, 400 pages, \$28)

At the end of 2012, there were 3,146 people on death row in the United States. Of the forty-five people executed last year, thirty-nine had been on death row more than ten years. In the last twenty-five years, the Innocence Project reports, at least eighteen death-row inmates have been exonerated and released.

Krishna Maharaj is seventy-four, a former Trinidadian millionaire of Indian descent who made his fortune importing bananas into Britain and spent it on Rolls Royces and thoroughbred horses. William Wayne Macumber is seventy-seven, a former engineer and the founder of a desert search-and-rescue team. Both men were put on death row for double murders. Both, according to new books, are innocent. Both are victims of a legal system so manifestly unfair that it inevitably fails.

At midday on October 16, 1986, a Jamaican entrepreneur, Derrick Moo Young, was shot dead, along with his twenty-three-year-old son, in room 1215 of the Dupont Plaza Hotel in Miami. The man immediately arrested for their murder, Krishna Maharaj, was Moo Young’s former business partner, but their partnership and friendship had recently ended over mutual accusations of swindling.

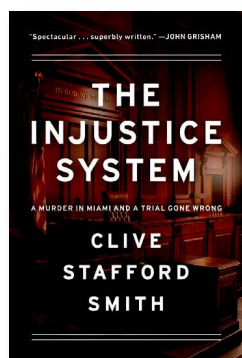
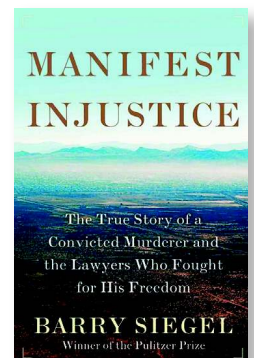
The prosecution had an excellent case: a gun, fingerprints, a witness turned state’s evidence, and a motive. The jury took no time to find him guilty of firearms possession, kidnapping, and murder. For the kidnapping, they recommended life imprisonment; for the murder, execution. It was election time in Florida and not a time for mercy. The judge gave Maharaj a death sentence.

In 1994, by which time Maharaj had been on death row for seven years, Clive

Stafford Smith ’84LAW agreed to take his case. For the past thirty years, first in Atlanta and then in New Orleans, Stafford Smith has been a pro bono defender of poor people charged in death-penalty cases. Maharaj, now penniless, had reached the end of the appeals process and appeared to have very little room to maneuver. But there was just enough for Stafford Smith to suspect that justice had not been done.

It did not take long for Stafford Smith to realize how profoundly unjust the verdict was. The more he dug, he writes in *The Injustice System: A Murder in Miami and a Trial Gone Wrong*, the more incompetence and skulduggery he found. Maharaj, sure that he would be acquitted, had hired his defense lawyer, Eric Hendon, because he was cheap. Hendon, says Stafford Smith, was inexperienced and idle; he and bits of useful evidence had “passed as ships in the night.” The prosecution, by contrast, had been canny and diligent — and corrupt. Key witnesses had been coaxed, details altered, testimony cleaned up, evidence suppressed or distorted. A first trial judge was charged with bribery in another case and stood down. A second proved indifferent and lazy.

Stafford Smith’s investigations took him to Panama and the Bahamas, into the world of drug cartels, laundered money, the trade in gold ingots and bonds, and finally to the conviction that the truth of the murder lay not with his client but in a complicated drug hit. The problem was how to prove it, given that it lay far in the past and involved a web of criminal associations in other countries. Though severely hampered by lack of funds, he did eventually secure a new hearing. In 1997, Maharaj was removed from death row.



## REVIEWS

But he was not freed. Further appeals ran afoul of a byzantine system of rules and laws “better suited to medieval law courts than to the 21st century.” Judges obfuscated and stalled. The case was rejected by the US Court of Appeals. As of March 2013, Maharaj, despite a wealth of fresh evidence of his innocence, the incompetence and corruption of earlier trials, and weighty testimonials from both sides of the Atlantic, remains a prisoner. No evidence ever seems quite enough. Unless dramatic fresh evidence is produced, and much new money raised, he will spend the rest of his life in prison.

William Macumber’s story is no less disquieting. On May 24, 1962, the bodies of Tim McKillop and Joyce Sterrenberg, both shot in the head, were found by their car, parked in the desert north of Scottsdale, Arizona. They were both twenty. There was talk of jealous suitors, robbers, enraged drivers, roving thrill seekers. Then a teenage addict came up with a story about a drinking and drug party at which a man had shot the two lovers. Two years later, Ernie Valenzuela, a twenty-year-old arrested on a charge of joy riding, confessed to the murders. However, through a combination of lack of evidence and police inertia, no further steps were taken.

Then, in 1974, Carol Macumber, in the throes of leaving her husband, approached the local sheriff’s office and claimed that he had confessed to the crime. She recalled a night in 1962 when he had come home with blood on his clothes, ostensibly from a brawl. William Macumber was arrested, released on bail, and brought to trial. As with Maharaj, there were large discrepancies over witnesses and evidence, as Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Barry Siegel ’72JRN recounts in *Manifest Injustice: The True Story of a Convicted Murderer and the Lawyers Who Fought for His Freedom*.

Ernie Valenzuela was now dead, killed in a prison fight, but before he died had again confessed to the murders. Yet because of technicalities governing what evidence was admissible, the county attorney was able to keep the confession from the court. Two attorneys and a ballistics expert, all in a position to exonerate Macumber, were not allowed to testify. The trial fell during the 1972–76 US moratorium on the death penalty, and Macumber was sentenced to life without parole. The diary he kept during these years is a painful record of fear, loneliness, and betrayal. Above all, he missed his three young sons, estranged from him by his wife, his letters to them returned unopened.

Macumber, again like Maharaj, was fortunate in attracting the attention of a nonprofit law project. He was represented by a remarkable and dedicated attorney named Larry Hammond and teams of young lawyers who succeeded each other over the years, passing down the baton along with a growing pile of new evidence. Macumber is clearly a likable man. His otherwise bleak existence was improved when a humane prison director allowed inmates to start sports groups and education projects, and he quickly rose to represent them on various state and national bodies. Not for long, though: a new director closed down the projects, saying that he did not believe in “coddling” prisoners. Macumber filled the long, lonely hours writing novels, poems, and local histories.

Eventually, the persistence of his defense team paid off. Though they were unable to secure release on grounds of a miscarriage of justice, a judge agreed that, in exchange for pleading no contest to two charges of second-degree murder, he would be freed under what is called postconviction relief. Macumber, who has arthritis, emphysema, prostate problems, and a heart murmur, will not die in jail.

Both Maharaj and Macumber can be called lucky: they attracted the attention of tireless, clever, dedicated lawyers willing to spend hundreds of hours working for free on their cases. Even so, one of the men has spent twenty-six years in prison and remains there, and the other is free only after thirty-eight years. What makes these stories especially disturbing is the speed and ease with which the accused were convicted, on scant and often false evidence; their vulnerability in the hands of incompetent lawyers and chronically overworked public defenders; and the near impossibility of subsequently proving their innocence. When

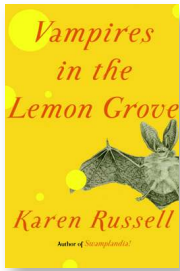


Krishna Maharaj, painted by artist and death-penalty activist Claire Phillips.

Columbia Law School professor Jim Liebman conducted a study of all 4,578 capital appeals heard between 1973 and 1995, he found serious errors in 68 percent of them. How many of the 3,146 people currently on death row are as innocent as Maharaj and Macumber?

As Stafford Smith argues, the lapses in the legal system do not happen by accident but because the system itself is arcane and flawed. Both books are not only gripping to read, but they present powerful arguments for fundamental reform. What they put on trial is America’s highly political, often corrupt, biased, inefficient, and unfair process that can lead a person to death. If either of these stories has an upside, it is in the dedication and selflessness of the dozens of men and women — lawyers, paralegals, neighbors, reporters, law students — who stepped forward to put the legal system itself in the dock.

*Caroline Moorehead is a biographer and human-rights journalist. Her book A Train in Winter: An Extraordinary Story of Women, Friendship, and Resistance in Occupied France was recently published in paperback. She lives in London.*

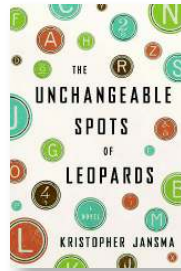


### **Vampires in the Lemon Grove**

By Karen Russell  
(Knopf, 256 pages,  
\$24.95)

Karen Russell's accolades go beyond the wildest imaginings of most thirty-one-year-old writers: nods from the National Book Foundation and the Pulitzer Prize board, to name just a couple. But wild imagination is Russell's specialty. Her first two books, *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves* and *Swamplandia!*, were praised for their remarkable blurring of fantasy and reality. Now, with *Vampires in the Lemon Grove*, a collection of dark, often wickedly funny stories, Russell '06SOA again proves herself a master of the bizarre. Here, a group of beautiful young women are sold into slavery in a Japanese silk factory and find themselves morphing slowly into actual silkworms. Cantankerous horses in a stable turn out to be the reincarnated spirits of Presidents Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, and Warren G. Harding. A sweet old man sitting on the edge of a lemon grove is actually a vampire trying to keep his thirst for blood at bay. And in a particularly haunting tale, a lone scarecrow out of place in a New Jersey suburb looks a lot like a missing boy. Narrated by one of the boy's tormentors, it is the most real and the most sinister of the bunch. Russell has strayed in this collection from the Southern gothic of her first two books, and readers may find it jolting to travel quickly between the very different worlds of her stories, but Russell maintains her lovely, moody prose and her inventiveness, both at perhaps their strongest here.

— Rebecca Shapiro



### **The Unchangeable Spots of Leopards**

By Kristopher Jansma  
(Viking, 253 pages,  
\$26.95)

"Tell all the truth but tell it slant." The words are Emily Dickinson's, but Kristopher Jansma '06SOA embodies them in his dazzling circus of a debut novel, *The Unchangeable Spots of Leopards*. He invokes them, too, lending them early in the book to a writing professor advising the unnamed narrator, his student. The words, as it turns out, are particularly important to that student, for whom truth is negotiable at best. Elusive and unreliable, he changes identity by the chapter, advancing the story without ever revealing his true self — or, at least, his unslanted self. He is a broke twentysomething living off wealthy friends in New York, a bored plagiarist making his way across Sri Lanka by selling term papers on the Internet, a disgraced teacher escaping scandal in a far-flung Middle Eastern post, a biographer chasing his subject from the dusty corners of Ghana to the frozen tundra of Iceland. All his incarnations, though, share three characteristics: a desperate desire to be a writer; an all-consuming jealousy of a friend and more successful creative rival; and, of course, a love for a woman. The friend and the woman do some shape shifting too, as seen through the narrator's eyes, but the complicated entwinements among the three are consistent, as are the raw emotions that go along with them. In less capable hands, this could have felt like an MFA exercise gone awry. But Jansma pulls it off admirably, with a winking tone and enough substance to carry the smoke and mirrors.

— RS



### **How to Get into the Twin Palms**

By Karolina Waclawiak  
(Two Dollar Radio,  
192 pages, \$16)

Can anyone possibly be lonelier or more homeless than the narrator of *How to Get into the Twin Palms*, the brilliantly disquieting debut novel from Karolina Waclawiak '10SOA? Technically, she has shelter — a stucco Los Angeles apartment with a rotting mackerel (a misguided gift from a neighbor) in the refrigerator, a bare mattress (dirty from an unfulfilling affair with a married man), and a collection of items left behind by previous tenants (bobby pins, hairballs, packets of ramen-noodle soup). But she couldn't be less settled. She feels no connection to Poland, where she was born, or Texas, where she was raised, or most of Los Angeles, where she has been driving around aimlessly since losing her job. Only one place fascinates her: Fairfax, the Russian neighborhood where she has inexplicably landed. From her balcony, she watches the garish Twin Palms nightclub, where gangsters shuffle in nightly with fur-swaddled mistresses, and obsessively latches onto the idea of getting in. No Pole or American would make it through the door, and so, in a defiant shedding of her conflicted identity, she dyes her hair, buys a push-up bra, changes her name, and becomes Russian: "I am starting to make sense to them. I am taking off all my American skin." The plan doesn't go smoothly, but the newly minted Anya gives a desperate and often deeply comic voice to the members of the so-called "1.5 generation," who immigrated to the US as children, and her weird, bleak world is impossible to forget.

— RS

# CLASSIFIEDS

## Books

**HOW TO AVOID THE OVER-DIAGNOSIS AND OVER-TREATMENT OF PROSTATE CANCER** BY ANTHONY H. HORAN, MD '65PS is now available at Amazon.com, BN.com. For an e-book or hardcover go to [dranthonyhoranmd.com](http://dranthonyhoranmd.com).

**HUMANS: AN ENDANGERED SPECIES** BY JASON G. BRENT '57BUS, '60LAW. Our exploding population is using the earth's resources at an unsustainable rate, which must cause the complete destruction of civilization in the very near future. Leaders of humanity are afraid to even discuss the coming destruction. The book explains/analyzes all the facts/problems that are causing the destruction and provides the only course of action that will decrease the number of deaths. Go to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) to purchase the book or [www.jgbrent.com](http://www.jgbrent.com) to learn more about the book, read reviews, purchase the e-book or hard copy. A must-read for anyone concerned about the problems currently facing humanity.

## Events

**SACRED WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL:** Fes, Morocco — June 6–16, 2013, <http://www.rightbrainleftbraintravel.com/>

## Professional Services

**CAREER TRANSITIONS AND EXECUTIVE COACHING:** Judith Gerberg: MA, LMHC — International career expert (quoted in *NY Times*, *WSJ*, *Newsweek*, NPR) and Columbia grad — has built her reputation guiding Ivy Leaguers to find the careers they love, manage stress, and create meaningful lives. Call and see what she can do for you: 212-315-2322; [judith@gerberg.com](mailto:judith@gerberg.com); [www.gerberg.com](http://www.gerberg.com).

**EXPERT MATH TUTOR:** Extensive experience, proven track record, excellent references. Available in Manhattan and NJ to help students grades 6–12 with schoolwork, standardized test prep, enrichment, and mastering math concepts. Master's; certified. Please call Mel: 732-603-9521.

**EXPERT VIOLIN INSTRUCTION:** All levels. Juilliard- and European-trained professional musician. 212-877-5549.

**HANDWRITING EXPERT:** Certified graphologist. Personality profiles, personnel selection, marriage compatibility, career guidance, court of law reports for forgeries/questioned documents. Columbia grad. Strict confidentiality guaranteed. Bernie Kastner, PhD; 718-710-4776; [bdk15@caa.columbia.edu](mailto:bdk15@caa.columbia.edu); [www.drbbkastner.com](http://www.drbbkastner.com).

**HIGH-LEVEL PERSONAL ASSISTANT NEEDED:** Seeking highly intelligent and organized individual for high-level personal/executive assistant role, with responsibility for keeping a busy professional and parent on track professionally and personally. This person will help oversee a small staff and assist in managing day-to-day operations and long-term projects. Duties will include researching and producing “bottom-line” reports for principal, managing communication and information flow to/from principal, and helping to coordinate staff activities. Strong project management, communication, and research skills are a must; previous managerial experience is a plus but not required. This is a year-round, full-time position with excellent compensation and benefits. Please email your resumé and cover letter to [hlparecruit@gmail.com](mailto:hlparecruit@gmail.com).

**LOW-FEE PSYCHOANALYSIS:** The Columbia University Psychoanalytic Center offers diagnostic consultations and psychoanalysis at very low fees. The evaluation includes a research component in addition to the clinical consultation. If psychoanalysis is not appropriate at this time, referrals to other treatment are part of the consultation. For further information and to request an application, please call the Columbia Psychoanalytic Center: 212-927-0112; [www.columbiapsychoanalytic.org](http://www.columbiapsychoanalytic.org).

**PERSONAL ASSISTANT:** Highly intelligent, resourceful individual with exceptional communication skills and organizational ability needed to support a successful entrepreneur. Primary responsibilities include coordinating a complex schedule, assisting with travel, and providing general office help in a fast-paced, dynamic environment. An active approach to problem solving is essential. Prior experience assisting a high-level executive is a plus. We offer a casual atmosphere in a beautiful space, working as part of an extraordinary group of gifted, interesting individuals. Excellent compensation and benefits, with significant upside potential and management possibilities. Please e-mail your resumé to [execruiter@gmail.com](mailto:execruiter@gmail.com). Please note that, due to the high number of respondents, we will unfortunately be unable to reply to every inquiry.

**PERSONAL/CHILD-CARE ASSISTANT; HOUSING INCLUDED.** New York — Devoted professional couple with three wonderful school-aged children seeks highly intelligent, amiable, responsible individual to serve as part-time personal assistant helping with child care, educational enrichment, and certain other activities at various times during afternoons, evenings, and weekends. Assistant will have a private room (in a separate apartment with its own kitchen on a different floor from the family's residence), with private bathroom, in a luxury doorman apartment building, and will be free to entertain visitors in privacy. We would welcome applications from writers, musicians, artists, or other candidates who may be pursuing

other professional goals in the balance of their time. Excellent compensation, including health insurance and three weeks of paid vacation, and no charge will be made for rent. This is a year-round position for which we would ask a minimum two-year commitment. If interested, please e-mail resumé to [nannypst@gmail.com](mailto:nannypst@gmail.com).

**RESEARCH ASSOCIATE/PERSONAL ASSISTANT:** New York City. Highly intelligent, resourceful individuals with exceptional communication skills sought to undertake research projects and administrative tasks for a successful entrepreneur. We welcome applications from writers, musicians, artists, or others who may be pursuing other professional goals in the balance of their time. \$90–\$110K/year to start (depending on qualifications). Resumé to: [rapany@gmail.com](mailto:rapany@gmail.com). Please note that, due to the high number of respondents, we will unfortunately be unable to reply to every inquiry.

## Real Estate

**BOISE, ID:** Idaho Real Estate, [www.buyidahorealestate.com](http://www.buyidahorealestate.com) [www.startpackingidaho.com](http://www.startpackingidaho.com)

**CATSKILLS, NY:** Charming restaurant/bar. High traffic, off NYS Thruway exit. Four seasons, access to Windham/Hunter ski area. Stone fireplace, outdoor dining in season. Owner ready to sell/consider lease with option to purchase. 3/4 acre. Asking \$349,900. Call 518-727-1784 for information.

**DEER VALLEY, UT:** [www.DeerValleyRealEstateGuide.com](http://www.DeerValleyRealEstateGuide.com) [www.ParkCityRealEstateGuide.com](http://www.ParkCityRealEstateGuide.com) 1-800-485-0218

**FORT LEE, NJ:** Close to NYC. Large family apartment, 3-bedroom, 2-bath, terrace. Two minutes from GW Bridge. Onsite grocery, cleaners, gym, etc. Sports for all ages, incl. pool, tennis, playground. Bus on site to NYC or school. Owner sale — viewing welcome. Residents all ages and ethnicities. Asking \$200,000. Call: 201-694-9190, rebates available.

**MANHATTAN REAL ESTATE:** Buyer specialist; Columbia MBA '94. Up to \$3,000 closing credit and no broker's fee for new clients closing on Manhattan purchases during 2013. Six years, prior experience with major NYC brokerage. Steven Kalachman, Licensed Real Estate Broker. 646-285-3493; [skalachman@gmail.com](mailto:skalachman@gmail.com). [www.nycrealestatebuyersbroker.com](http://www.nycrealestatebuyersbroker.com).

**NANTUCKET, MA:** Homes by the sea or in town, for sale or rent, for families of all shapes. Pat Carr Calabrese: [patcc@compassroserealestate.com](mailto:patcc@compassroserealestate.com); 917-655-4642.

**NORTH PENSACOLA, FL:** 2 lots, 3+ acres each. Surveyed, utilities in. Paved lane. [providenceacres.com](http://providenceacres.com).



PARK CITY, UT:  
www.parkcityluxuryrealestate.com  
www.deervalleyhomesforsale.com

PUNTA GORDA, FL: 2 parklike adjoining lots. Desirable community, boat ramp, water access to Gulf. Established area close to downtown amenities. marymtav@gmail.com.

SANTA CRUZ, CA:  
www.adrhomes.com  
www.realestatesantacruzca.com  
www.realestatefelton.com  
www.realestateinaptos.com  
www.realestateinscottsvally.com  
www.realestatecapitolaca.com  
www.realestateinaptos.com  
www.realestateinnaplesflorida.net  
www.monterey-realestate.net  
www.santacruzrealestatebroker.com  
www.realestateapptos.net  
www.realestatecapitola.net  
www.realestatescottsvally.net

TENNESSEE: Own in Tennessee. Music City — www.nashvillehomesforsale.org  
Mortgage — www.nashvillemortgageadvisor.com

WASHINGTON, CT: High, dry, 4.52-acre residential meadow. Parklike, ready to build. Views, low taxes. \$225,000. www.flirtationavenue.com.

## Vacation Rentals

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK, MAINE: 8-bedroom, 7.5-bath waterfront estate in Northeast Harbor with pier and deep-water moorings. Monthly, May through October. 650-450-8413; neh2012@hmail.com.

DEERFIELD BEACH, FL: Lakefront, 2-bedroom, 2-bath villa, fenced backyard, near I-95, beach. Weekly/monthly. Contact: ABinNY@aol.com, 914-722-2757.

FORMER BAPTIST CHURCH (1889), now a comfortable family home, overlooking Little Narragansett Bay. Perfect for weddings and reunions, or a relaxed family vacation. 9BR/5BA. Unique details include: stained glass windows, a cavernous nave with 30-foot ceilings, wisteria-draped porch, and enclosed garden. Historic Stonington Borough offers fine dining, antiques, and easy access to swimming, sailing, and paddleboarding. \$5K/wknd; \$7K/wkly. Please contact Henri Gourd 914/954-3897. henrigourd@prudentialct.com.

MANHATTAN: Furnished luxurious vacation and business rental apartments: info@my-ny-home.com; 646-465-5902; www.my-ny-home.com

MOUNT DESERT, ME: Near Acadia National Park. Vacation luxuriously. landmark lighthouse, oceanfront home. Weekly starting Saturday (July–October),

\$2,500–\$3,300, 4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, impeccable accommodations. Happily sleeps 10. Spectacular views of working Bass Harbor. No ownership/maintenance expense. Details, photos: HomeAway, “Centennial Homestead & Family Lighthouse” 376334. 207-479-4030.

PARIS, MARAIS: Luxury rental in center of Paris. Close proximity Picasso Museum, Centre Pompidou, and other historical sites, as well as gourmet shops of rue de Bretagne. See owner’s website at www.parischapon.com.

ROME: Spacious, stylish, renovated apartment. Living room, 2 generous double bedrooms, 2 baths, kitchen/breakfast room. Central location near St. John Lateran. \$850 weekly. 212-867-0489; www.casacleme.com; Lm603@columbia.edu.

SANTA MONICA, CA: Architectural masterpiece. Perfect for vacations, family reunions, romantic getaways, long-term housing. Beautiful Santa Monica Canyon, walk to beach, shops, dining. 4 bdrms, sleeps 8, 5 baths, pool, spa. *CA Home & Design* cover story, 9/2012. Featured property, Venice Art Walk 2010. Photos/Info: vrbo.com/332932; 310-383-5191.

SINGLE, DIVORCED, WIDOWED? Hamptons, NY summer house. Educated, athletic, fun-loving group, 50s–60s, seeks new members. Pool, tennis court. May–September. Walk to beach/town. Near Jitney/LIRR. Photos available. mtc01605@gmail.com.

SLOVAKIA: Holidays cottage, ancient forests, walking, birdwatching, fishing vacations. www.SlovakiaHolidays.org.

TUSCANY: Gorgeous apartment in lovely hilltop village of Casole d’Elsa near Siena. 2-BR, 1-BA, sleeps 4–6. Beautifully appointed. Wi-fi. Large eat-in kitchen, private garden overlooks 11th-century church. \$650–750/week. Contact Lyn (PH ’90): 404-371-8287, info@imagesoftuscany.com, or see photos/details at www.imagesoftuscany.com/apartment.htm.

TORTOLA, BVI: 3-bedroom house 60 feet above Long Bay Beach. 646-526-7111; ewinghouse@gmail.com; www.ewinghouse.com.

YORK BEACH, MAINE: Two-bedroom tasteful summer rental located 5-minute walk to beaches, restaurants, and children’s activities. www.oceanway-york.com. ajl30@columbia.edu.

## Web

EXAMINE AND EMPOWER COLLEGE INSTRUCTION: Columbia PhD has developed a method to strengthen and evaluate classroom instruction. This new evidence-based method allows instructors and students to jointly evaluate classroom instruction using the same behavioral criteria. Instructors also write their own items for student feedback. Download free at www.facultyimprovement.com.



Featuring author  
Ben Stein

The AIER  
C. Lowell Harriss Summer  
Fellow Scholarship Dinner

**AIER**  
AMERICAN INSTITUTE  
for ECONOMIC RESEARCH

Thursday April 18,  
6pm  
\$250 per seat

(888)-528-1216 x0 • www.aier.org/events



# ADVERTISE HERE!

Columbia Magazine reaches  
270,000 of the brightest,  
most enterprising people  
in the world. Wouldn't it be  
smart to place an ad with us?

Contact:  
Bruce Ellerstein at  
917-226-7716 or  
be2187@columbia.edu

# FINALS



## Card, Discard

In room 310 of Butler Library, the great wooden cabinets of the card catalog stand like massive, many-windowed dwellings, the windows actually little alphabetized drawers stuffed with index cards that bear the human stamp of words and numbers (typed, printed, or handwritten) of the world's great system for classifying and locating library books.

Columbia's card catalog hasn't been updated since 1985, when the University introduced its computerized CLIO catalog. By the end of this summer, the three freestanding cabinets will be removed — a scene that's been repeated over the past two decades at libraries throughout the world. At Columbia, however, it will have a special poignancy. From 1883 to 1888, the school's chief librarian was Melvil Dewey, inventor of the system that revolutionized library science. In the *First Annual Report of the Chief Librarian*, dated May 31, 1884, Dewey pitched an innovation to stand alongside the Dewey Decimal System in improving the way we navigate the bibliographic universe:

The cards will contain the best advice the librarians and professors can give. They are never “out to lunch,” or “just gone home,” or “too busy” to answer questions . . . The most skilful librarian in time dies or resigns, and his accumulated wisdom and good advice to readers go with him, leaving his successor to begin, not where he left off, but where he began before, a generation earlier. But with our new catalogue, each librarian stands on the shoulders of his predecessors. Every reader is told that he shares the responsibility of finding errors or notes that should be brought down to date, and thus the catalogue grows each day more and more valuable. Old librarians and workers in libraries who have examined our plan uniformly predict for it the foremost place on the score of practical utility to readers.

Dewey, who died in 1931, lived to see that prediction fulfilled, even if his other crusades for efficiency and simplification — the metric system and spelling reform (Melville to Melvil, e.g.) — were less successful. In room 310, meanwhile, the liberated space will be filled by Columbia's Digital Humanities Center: new computers, new applications, new seating.

That sounds like an upgrade that Dewey would have approved.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL B. SHAVELSON

EDITH PIAF AT THE COLUMBIA MAISON FRANÇAISE, 1947.

# Celebrate a Century

COLUMBIA MAISON FRANÇAISE 1913 > 2013

100 YEARS OF FRENCH CULTURE AND IDEAS AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN NEW YORK

THE MAISON FRANÇAISE IS CELEBRATING ITS CENTENNIAL IN ITS NEWLY RENOVATED HOME IN BUELL HALL WITH A SERIES OF SPECIAL EVENTS THROUGHOUT 2013

SEE OUR WEBSITE FOR PROGRAM DETAILS AT [WWW.MAISONFRANCAISE.ORG](http://WWW.MAISONFRANCAISE.ORG)  
CENTENNIAL EXHIBIT  
SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2013 IN BUELL HALL  
CENTENNIAL PARTY  
OCTOBER 2013

BEST WISHES FROM THE COLUMBIA MAISON FRANÇAISE CENTENNIAL SPONSORS

**PLATINUM**



The Florence Gould Foundation

**SILVER**  
Paul LeClerc and Judith Ginsberg  
Maurice I. Parisier Foundation

**BRONZE**




Crédit Industriel et Commercial



CORPORATE & INVESTMENT BANK

BUILDING TOGETHER  
TEAM SPIRIT SOCIÉTÉ GÉNÉRALE



AXA Foundation  
Domna C. Stanton

**CENTURY** 1913 2013 COLUMBIA MAISON FRANÇAISE

212.854.4482 | [WWW.MAISONFRANCAISE.ORG](http://WWW.MAISONFRANCAISE.ORG)

“CAA seeks  
to build on an  
alumni culture  
that is uniquely  
Columbia.”

BRIAN KRISBERG  
'81CC, '84LAW  
VICE CHAIR, CAA  
CO-CHAIR, CAA 2017



# BE ON THE MOVE WITH THE CAA



Look inside for more about the  
CAA's 5-year planning process.

Visit [alumni.columbia.edu/CAA2017](http://alumni.columbia.edu/CAA2017)  
and let us know what your alumni  
association means to you.

COLUMBIA *alumni* |   
ASSOCIATION | CAA