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# COLUMBIA

MAGAZINE

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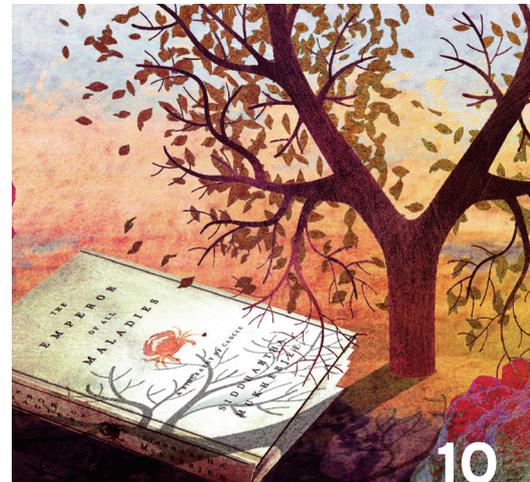
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**Montana Ray** is a poet, translator, and Columbia PhD student in comparative literature. She is the author of five chapbooks and artist books; *(guns & butter)* is her first full-length collection. >> [Page 8](#)



INGRID HERTFELDER

**Lolis Eric Elie** '86JRN was a columnist for the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* when Hurricane Katrina hit and the levees failed. A native of the city and a former story editor for HBO's *Treme*, Elie co-produced the documentary *Faubourg Tremé: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans*. >> [Page 38](#)



SABRINA BUCKWALTER

**Donald P. Green** is a Columbia professor of political science. He is the author of several books on voting behavior, partisanship, campaign finance, and research methods, including *Partisan Hearts and Minds*, written with Bradley Palmquist and Eric Schickler. >> [Page 54](#)



ALAN CARAS

**Sara Nović** '14SOA is the fiction editor of *Blunderbuss Magazine* and teaches writing at Columbia University and the Fashion Institute of Technology. *Girl at War* is her first novel. She lives in Queens. >> [Page 58](#)



NANCY CRAMPTON

**Morris Dickstein** '61CC is a distinguished professor emeritus in English and theater at the CUNY Graduate Center. His most recent books are a memoir, *Why Not Say What Happened: A Sentimental Education*, and a new edition of *Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties*. >> [Page 60](#)

# COLUMBIA

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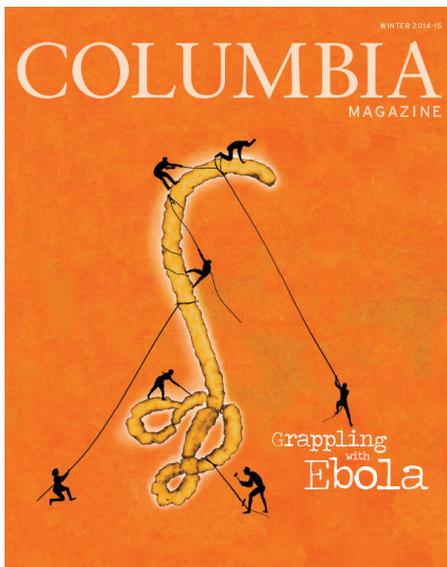
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# letters

## HE'S ON BOARD

Your Winter 2014–15 issue is beyond praise; its content is exemplary and outstanding, especially Paul Hond's exhaustive article "The Ebola Web." It told me more about Ebola and the dedication of the people fighting the disease, including numerous Columbia alumni, than all that had been published in the national press. Meanwhile, the Explorations article "Necessity's inventions: design challenge takes aim at Ebola," informed me of the interdisciplinary work of a diverse group of faculty and student volunteers who are creating better protective clothing for the public-health workers on the infection scene, and

better ways of disinfecting such clothing after use.

When, added to that, I found Robert O'Meally's study of Romare Bearden's *Odyssey* art, the essays by four Indian writers, some fascinating book reviews, and various other material of interest, I was lost in contemplation of beautiful and serious work by serious folk presented in a most attractive format. You have reached a new peak of excellence!

I write this as a member of the initial editorial board, to which I was appointed for no apparent reason other than my contemporaneous alumni-affairs involvement, as I had never been involved in any liter-

ary efforts at all. But you make me truly proud to have played a small role in getting *Columbia Magazine* off the ground.

Thank you, thank you!

Joseph B. Russell '49CC, '52LAW  
New York, NY

## LIFE AS WE (DON'T) KNOW IT

As someone with a deep interest in our origins, space, and life beyond this planet, I appreciated the article "Whose Galaxy Is It?" by Caleb Scharf (Winter 2014–15). It was encouraging to read the discussion about the possible variety of unknown life forms and speculation about how living organisms could be transported from one planet or moon to another. I have always wondered why so many scientists keep focusing on discovering life as we know it, with the emphasis on water as a fundamental component in any search. Rather, it seems to me — and the article suggests as much, too — that life may exist in utterly unfamiliar forms. For example, life may exist of which energy is the fundamental component. Could a methane sea combined with the energy of volcanism support a life form so strange that it indeed gives "alien" an extraordinary meaning? Saturn's moon Titan may reveal such a possibility.

I have often imagined that our universe is a garden and the planets are flowers, with



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# Discover the heritage of Chile's indigenous communities

Meet the Aymaras of the Atacama Desert, the Mapuches of the central-southern region of the country, and the Rapa Nui of Easter Island in Chile, the land of contrasts.

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## AYMARA CULTURE

The Aymaras inhabit the northern region of Chile, and as it happens with other tribes from the Andes plateau, the Aymara have preserved their mountain culture, distinctive language and unique handicrafts. Some of the Aymaras in Chile continue living a very traditional agricultural life, breeding llamas and alpacas for wool, milk and meat. A visit to the Andean villages of Socoroma, Tignamar, Chapiquiña and Putre allow travelers to experience a particular way of life bound to the Aymara tradition.



## RAPA NUI CULTURE

The identity of the Rapa Nui people is deeply rooted in preserving ancestral traditions and complete geographic isolation from the rest of the planet, making them one of the most noted cultures worldwide. Rapa Nui (Easter Island) is the most remote inhabited island in the world, located 2,299 miles from the coast of Chile, and one of the most striking tourist destinations of the country. To learn more about their culture, visitors are encouraged to travel to the island during the Tapati, the most important Rapa Nui festival.



## MAPUCHE CULTURE

The Araucania, in southern Chile, is the cradle of the Mapuche people. Their customs and knowledge are still very much alive, especially in areas close to Temuco, Lake Budi, Villarica, Pucon, Curarrehue and the Galletue and Icalma lakes. Learn more about this interesting culture while sleeping in a ruka, a traditional housing, and indulge in local cuisine where the piñon (the araucaria tree pine nut) is the star.



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## LETTERS

asteroids and comets serving the function of bees in a garden by pollinating planets with organisms and other life-supporting material throughout the universe. The universe is a living, thriving ecosystem; size should not blur that vision.

When Carl Sagan stated, many years ago, that there are more stars than grains of sand on all the beaches on Earth, it was hard to grasp that immensity. There are surely more planets than there are stars, and it is very likely that life, in whatever form, exists by sheer force of numbers. Will we be able to recognize it?

G. Lynn Thorpe '77LAW  
New Rochelle, NY

### HARD COPY

Your Web-only feature about the 1964 murder of Kitty Genovese ("Gray Gardens," [www.magazine.columbia.edu/graygardens](http://www.magazine.columbia.edu/graygardens)) should have been in the hard copy of the magazine. It was far more interesting and relevant than half the articles you did publish.

Rabbi Hillel A. Cohen '63CC  
West Hempstead, NY

### NUMBERS GAMES

All lives matter ("Students respond to racially charged grand-jury decisions," *News*, Winter 2014–15). Department of Justice (DOJ) statistics may help put some

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

racial grievances in context. They tell us that for at least the last three decades, interracial homicide in America has been mostly black on white, by a ratio of two or three to one, or even higher if we restrict ourselves to homicides by strangers.

The DOJ charts I found only go back to 1980, but I suspect the trend is older than that.

Taras Wolansky '74CC  
Jersey City, NJ

ing Wexford) and the writing of *Tóibín*, I found McMasters's review first-rate. She has poignantly portrayed the loneliness of Nora Webster and the confusion of Donal.

My kudos to Bill, McMasters, and *Columbia Magazine*.

John D. Hardy '58LAW  
Gloucester, MA

### COOKBOOK DIPLOMACY

Thank you for the Finals article "Bake, Lion, Bake!" in the Winter 2014–15 issue. Though it was somewhat bitter to read about my alma mater's involvement in the fundraising effort for a war that caused the suffering of civilians, including my (now happy) grandparents, it was illuminating to learn about the human side of Americans during World War II. I cannot stop thinking about what would or would not have happened if civilians of the opposing powers knew each other. I'm glad I went to Columbia and got to know so many nice Americans, an opportunity my grandparents' generation missed. I'm proud of it, and so are my grandparents.

Aiko Setoguchi '12GS  
Saitama, Japan

### IRISH EYES

A brief comment on two items that appear in the Winter 2014–15 edition of *Columbia Magazine*. The first: a letter from William Claire '58CC. I have been a friend of Bill's for almost half a century, and an initial subscriber to his literary magazine *Voyages*, which to my knowledge is still the only serious publication of its genre ever published in our nation's capital. His letter was, in my view, a fine reminiscence about his teacher, mentor, and friend Mark Van Doren.

The second is directed to the excellent review of Colm Tóibín's latest novel by Kelly McMasters. As someone more than a little familiar with life in Ireland (includ-

## Questions? Comments?

WE WELCOME THEM ALL!

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Letters may be edited for  
brevity or clarity.

## PRIMARY SOURCES



COURTESY OF JOAN JONAS

**MIRROR PIECE** by Joan Jonas '65SOA, from a performance in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, in 1969. Jonas, a sculptor and pioneer of video and performance art, is representing the United States at the 2015 Venice Biennale, which opened in May.

### Model Teacher

*By Brad Gooch '73CC, '86GSAS, from his 2015 memoir Smash Cut, about his life in New York with his boyfriend, film director Howard Brookner '76CC. Gooch, a writer, professor, and former fashion model, was a graduate teaching assistant in Edward Taylor's Shakespeare class at Columbia.*

Ted Taylor was a compact cube of a man, tirelessly devoted to maintaining his reputation on campus as an entertaining brainteaser of a professor. He was lecturing one spring afternoon on *King Lear* to a packed classroom of eighty or a hundred. At some moment in his meditation on the cruel ironies of old age, Taylor looked out at his listeners and said, "You're all nineteen years old. Not one of you understands what I'm saying. None of you believes he is going to die." His voice cracked. I'd heard the same lecture as an undergrad and caught the same crack in the voice, the gazing out into the lecture hall, the poignant breaking of the fourth wall, but the studied repetition did not detract from the melodrama. (The only other lecturer in Columbia's English Department who commanded rapt student awe was Edward Said, who wore dark-blue tailored suits and used the word "power" dozens of times in each lecture. I'd once snarkily counted.)

### A Presidential Test

*From remarks by Mohammad Ashraf Ghani '81SIPA, '82GSAS, the president of Afghanistan, at a World Leaders Forum event on campus on March 26.*

The type of situation that I face is leadership under conditions of near total uncertainty. I don't know which days of the week I will be holding mangled bodies of children in my arms. I don't know which days of the week women walking to school are going to be murdered. I do not know which day of the month a natural disaster will fall, creating a wide shroud around some of my people. So the first test here of leadership is not one of privilege but one of sacrifice.

---

## Laser Vision

By Charles H. Townes, from his 1999 memoir *How the Laser Happened*. Townes, who taught at Columbia from 1948 to 1961, won the 1964 Nobel Prize in physics for his work developing the laser. He died on January 27, 2015.

Any devoted scientist develops a deep intimacy with the problems, concepts, or devices in his field. As for me, starting somewhat at Caltech, more and more at Bell Labs, and most richly at Columbia, my career brought growing familiarity and fascination with molecules. How molecules absorb and emit energy, their motions, and the behavior of their electrons and nuclei — all those things, while never actually seen by anyone, became real for me and easily visualized. When I try to figure out how

a molecule behaves under particular circumstances, it seems almost like a friend whose habits I know. Ammonia, without a doubt, has been my favorite. Its simple arrangement of a single nitrogen and three hydrogen atoms has been pivotal in many important moments of my career. I have met this very familiar molecule in the insides of masers, as the mainspring of atomic clocks, in clouds among stars at great distances from Earth, and in the atmospheres surrounding some stars.

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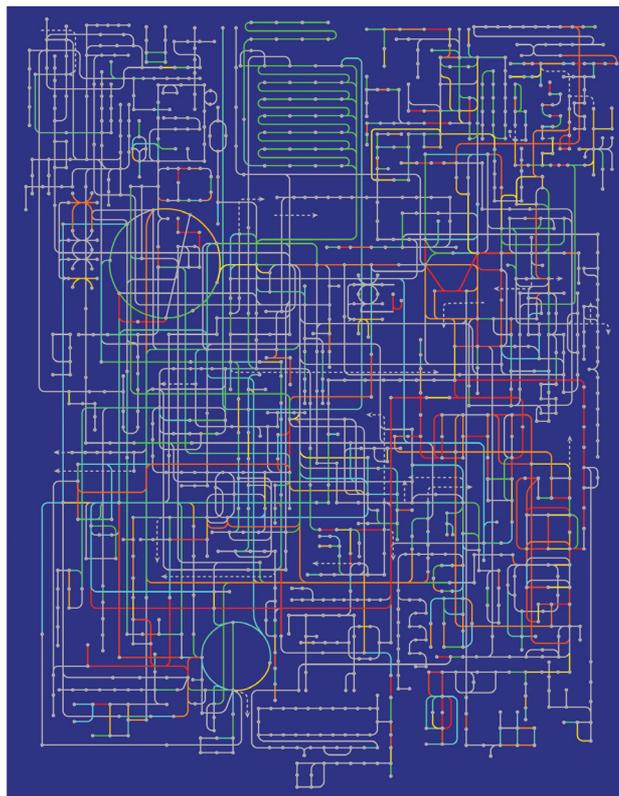
## Journalism Review

From a report published by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism on the failings of *Rolling Stone's* November 2014 story "A Rape on Campus," by Sabrina Rubin Erdely. *Rolling Stone* managing editor Will Dana asked Steve Coll, the journalism-school dean, to "investigate any lapses in reporting, editing and fact-checking behind the story," which centered on a University of Virginia student's alleged rape by a group of fellow students in a fraternity house.

The particulars of *Rolling Stone's* failure make clear the need for a revitalized consensus in newsrooms old and new about what best journalistic practices entail, at an operating-manual-level of detail.

As at other once-robust print magazines and newspapers, *Rolling Stone's* editorial staff has shrunk in recent years as print advertising revenue has fallen and shifted online. The magazine's full-time editorial ranks, not including art or photo staff, have contracted by about 25 percent since 2008. Yet *Rolling Stone* continues to invest in professional fact-checkers and to fund time-consuming investigations like Erdely's. The magazine's records and interviews with participants show that the failure of "A Rape on Campus" was not due to a lack of resources. The problem was methodology, compounded by an environment where several journalists with decades of collective experience failed to surface and debate problems about their reporting or to heed the questions they did receive from a fact-checking colleague.

Erdely and her editors had hoped their investigation would sound an alarm about campus sexual assault and would challenge Virginia and other universities to do better. Instead, the magazine's failure may have spread the idea that many women invent rape allegations. (Social scientists analyzing crime records report that the rate of false rape allegations is 2 to 8 percent.) At the University of Virginia, "It's going to be more difficult now to engage some people . . . because they have a preconceived notion that women lie about sexual assault," said Alex Pinkleton, a UVA student and rape survivor who was one of Erdely's sources.



**LIFE LINES:** An image from a massive study analyzing cancer gene expression led by researchers at Columbia University Medical Center. Looking at twenty-two tumor types, researchers were able to identify multiple metabolic expression changes and hundreds of potential drug targets that could cut off a tumor's fuel supply or interfere with its ability to grow. Dennis Vitkup, associate professor of systems biology and biomedical informatics, and postdoctoral researcher Jie Hu generated and provided the image.

## PRIMARY SOURCES

### Fresh Air

By Thomas Merton '38CC, '39GSAS, from his 1948 memoir, *The Seven Storey Mountain*. Merton, who died in 1968, was born one hundred years ago in January.

Columbia was, for the most part, stripped of fancy academic ritual. The caps and gowns were reserved for occasions which, as a matter of fact, nobody really had to attend. I only got mixed up in one of them purely by accident, several months after I had acquired my degree, rolled up in a cardboard container, through one of the windows of the post-office-like registration bureau in University Hall.

Compared with Cambridge, this big sooty factory was full of light and fresh air. There was a kind of genuine intellectual vitality in the air — at least relatively speaking. Perhaps the reason was that most of the students had to work hard to pay for every classroom hour. Therefore they appreciated what they got, even when there was not much in it to appreciate. Then there was the big, bright, shiny, new library, with a complicated system of tickets and lights, at the main loan desk: and there I soon came out with a great armful of things, books which excited me more than I now can understand. I think it was not the books themselves but my own sense of energy and resolve that made me think everything was more interesting than it was.

### The Social Fabric

By Sven Beckert '95GSAS, from his 2014 book *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. *In March*, the book won the Bancroft Prize, which is administered annually by the trustees of Columbia and largely considered the most prestigious award in the field of American history.

The reason for America's quick ascent to market dominance was simple. The United States more than any other country had elastic supplies of the three crucial ingredients that went into the production of raw cotton: labor, land, and credit. As *The Economist* put it in 1861, the United States had become so successful in the world's cotton markets because the planters' "soil is marvelously fertile and costs him nothing; his labour has hitherto been abundant, unremitting and on the increase; the arrangements and mercantile organizations for cleaning and forwarding the cotton are all there." By midcentury, cotton had become central to the prosperity of the Atlantic world. Poet John Greenleaf Whittier called it the "Haschish of the West," a drug that was creating powerful hallucinatory dreams of territorial expansion, of judges who decide that "right is wrong," of heaven as "a snug plantation" with "angel negro overseers."

### Lock, Stock, and Stanza

(don't give up on him) (take the moon) (we created it from  
our sorrow) (& it hangs in there) (I lug him upstairs) (I make soup) (call the home-  
opath on Thanksgiving) (the exterminator on Xmas morn.) (perform the necessary  
exorcisms) (someday I'll get high on a mountaintop) (take  
time to do me) (his odds are good) (says a gal pal)  
(he's half ur genes)  
(well, shit) (we created  
a telepathic sociopath) (I never shudda)  
(done ur mushrms) (on a full moon)  
(been moved by, my god, ur tears!)  
(when I told u  
Amiri Baraka)  
(stops listening)  
(to any sentence  
that starts, I feel)

(MOONCHILD) by Montana Ray '12SOA from her new collection, *(guns & butter)*.

In her book, Ray, who is also a PhD candidate in literature at Columbia, pairs a series of gun-shaped poems with family recipes, exploring the link between violence and domesticity.



**SUMMER IN THE CITY:** Beachgoers at Coney Island in July 1919, from the Frederick Fried Coney Island Collection. Columbia’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library recently acquired the collection, which consists of photographs, memorabilia, blueprints, and other resources.

## A Legal Pioneer

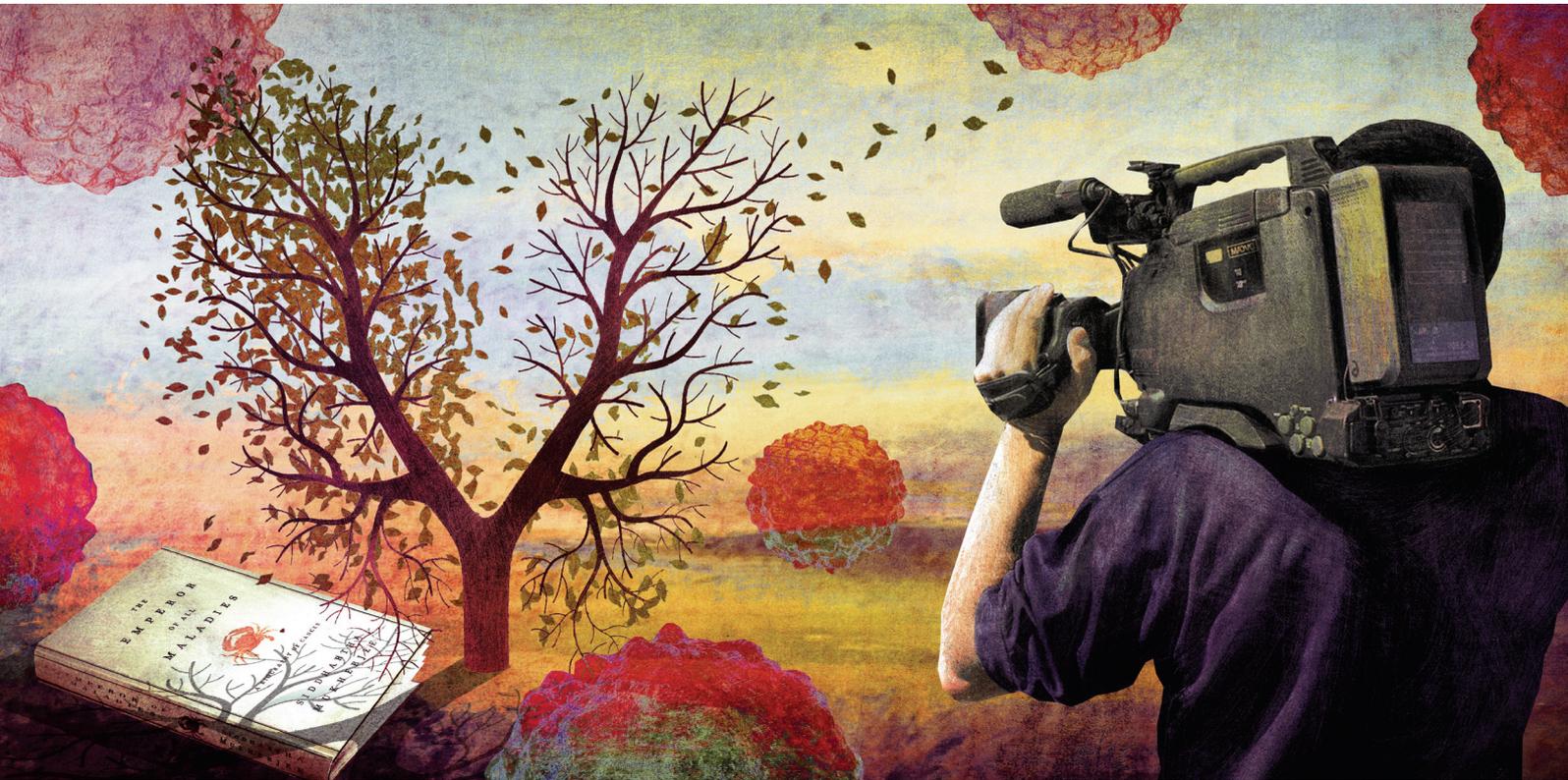
*From a March 16 decision by the California Supreme Court to posthumously admit Hong Yen Chang 1886LAW to the California State Bar. The court had rejected Chang’s application in 1890 under the federal Chinese Exclusion Act, whose passage California had lobbied for.*

Understanding the significance of [this court’s 1890] two-page decision denying Chang admission to the bar requires a candid reckoning with a sordid chapter of our state and national history . . . Hostility toward Chinese labor, together with cultural tensions and xenophobia, prompted the California Legislature to enact a raft of laws designed to disadvantage Chinese immigrants. Many of the era’s discriminatory laws and government actions were upheld by this court. Anti-Chinese sentiment was a major impetus for the California Constitutional Convention of 1879. As ratified by the electorate in 1879, the California Constitution denied the right to vote to any “native of China” alongside any “idiot, insane person, or person convicted” of various crimes. It also included an entire article titled “Chinese,” directing the Legislature to enact laws to combat “the burdens and evils” posed by Chinese immigrants . . .

It is past time to acknowledge that the discriminatory exclusion of Chang from the State Bar

of California was a grievous wrong. It denied Chang equal protection of the laws; apart from his citizenship, he was by all accounts qualified for admission to the bar. It was also a blow to countless others who, like Chang, aspired to become a lawyer only to have their dream deferred on account of their race, alienage, or nationality. And it was a loss to our communities and to society as a whole, which denied itself the full talents of its people and the important benefits of a diverse population . . .

Even if we cannot undo history, we can acknowledge it and, in so doing, accord a full measure of recognition to Chang’s pathbreaking efforts to become the first lawyer of Chinese descent in the United States. The people and the courts of California were denied Chang’s services as a lawyer. But we need not be denied his example as a pioneer for a more inclusive legal profession.



ALE+ALE

## Capturing the Emperor

On his first day in the recording studio, the narrator collapsed. The director, Barak Goodman '86JRN, rushed into the booth and helped the man to his feet. Was he OK? Goodman noticed that his face was swollen. After a moment, the narrator, Edward Herrmann, in the warm, intelligent voice that Goodman loved, explained his situation. Now Goodman had a decision to make.

Goodman was used to the challenges that come with monumental projects. In his documentary work for PBS, he had tackled far-reaching topics like the My Lai massacre, the women's movement, and the colorful political life of William Jefferson Clinton. But his latest film, a six-hour adaptation of *The Emperor of All Maladies*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning book by Columbia assistant professor of medicine Siddhartha Mukherjee, was Goodman's most intricate assignment yet.

The documentary, which aired in March and April, would take on the history and science of cancer, and was slated to be one of PBS's biggest broadcast events of 2015. Goodman could not risk any setbacks.

Herrmann, a venerable actor best known for his portrayals of FDR and his role as Richard Gilmore on TV's *Gilmore Girls*, spoke with a self-possession that left a mark on Goodman. He revealed that he had stage-four glioblastoma — a brain tumor. (The facial swelling was from steroid treatments.) But Herrmann was resolved to narrate *The Emperor of All Maladies*. He assured Goodman that he could do it.

Goodman was reluctant. "I didn't know if we would finish, and we were on a tremendous deadline at that point," he says, seated in his dark-wood-paneled Brooklyn office. "But I rolled the dice, because I love the guy so much."

Goodman, fifty-one, has wide, frost-blue eyes and the keen, engaged manner of a perpetual student. His films are immersive journeys into American history, eloquent and absorbing, and what he loves most about his job is the chance to dive into a topic and learn. The son of academics, he grew up in Berkeley and Philadelphia, studied US history at Harvard, and then went straight to Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, where he was the youngest member of his class.

"That was the year I woke up," Goodman recalls. "I immediately thought: 'This is it.' I had great teachers who completely turned me on to journalism." Among them was Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times*, who co-taught a class in constitutional law and journalism. "I wanted to be Tony Lewis," Goodman says.

He took a step in that general direction by getting a part-time job at a Long Island

newspaper, where, to his impatience, he had to cover things like local town-planning sessions. Meanwhile, some of his Harvard classmates were already at the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*.

One day, shortly after graduating, Goodman was visiting J-school interim dean Frederick Yu in his office when Yu's phone rang. It was a TV station in Philadelphia. The station was looking for a young associate producer for a documentary series. Yu looked at Goodman and said, "You're from Philadelphia, aren't you?"

Goodman had never considered television. But he knew the station, knew the city, and decided to apply. He got the job and went back to his hometown.

The situation was not as advertised. The producer was hardly there, and the bulk of the responsibility fell to Goodman. "It was the craziest year," Goodman says. "I had to come up with the stories and shoot them. I learned on the go. And I came to love all the tools in the toolbox. Music, visuals, writing: you could do all these things and put them together, and there it was. I was really converted to documentaries."

Goodman returned to New York and got a job adapting the books of former *Times* Washington bureau chief Hedrick Smith for TV. (His exposure to Capitol Hill would serve him years later on his 2012 PBS film *Clinton*.) "It was a great education," Goodman says, "but somewhere in the middle of it I decided I wanted to do my own thing."

His catalyst was a 1985 documentary about Louisiana politician Huey P. Long, made by the filmmaker Ken Burns (with an assist from his brother Ric Burns '78CC, '83GSAS). Goodman saw *Huey Long* in 1989 and thought it was brilliant. Inspired to attempt something similar, he searched for a colorful character who hadn't been covered in film and hit upon Richard J. Daley, the former mayor and Democratic Party machine boss of Chicago. Daley was just the sort of complicated, morally ambiguous figure that appealed to Goodman. After recruiting Burns's cinematographer, Buddy Squires, and his writer, Geoff Ward,

Goodman made his pitch to the National Endowment for the Humanities and got the funding. The film, titled *Daley: The Last Boss*, aired on the PBS series *American Experience* in 1996. Says Goodman: "Everything started with that film."

Goodman embraced historical filmmaking. "You could make something moving and beautiful in a way you couldn't with news," he says. In 1996, he and his wife, Rachel Dretzin, a producer and director for PBS's *Frontline*, formed a production company called Ark Media. Two of their PBS documentaries — the Emmy-winning *Scottsboro: An American Tragedy*, about the rape trials of nine young, innocent black men in 1930s Alabama, and the Peabody-winning *The Lost Children of Rockdale County*, about teens in an Atlanta suburb who fall into a subculture of sex — sealed Ark's stature. When Henry Louis Gates Jr. asked Ark to produce his series *Finding Your Roots* (2012–), the outfit went from a small boutique production house to a company of fifty people.

In 2013, Goodman got a call from WETA in Washington, DC. The station was developing a major PBS program — a Ken Burns project based on *The Emperor of All Maladies*. Burns, known for his multi-part sagas like *Jazz*, *Baseball*, and *The Civil War*, had lost his mother to cancer when he was eleven, so the project had particular meaning for him. He would executive-produce the film and bring in a director he liked.

After a long search, the Burns team had zeroed in on Goodman. Would he be interested in the job?

Goodman, who lost a grandmother to cancer, was intrigued. For one thing, the cancer-research fundraising organization Stand Up to Cancer was involved, and the group's connections to the entertainment industry meant significant public attention for the project. Then Goodman read Mukherjee's self-proclaimed "biography of cancer" and was floored by both the quality of the prose ("one of the best-written nonfiction books I've ever read") and the sprawling ambition of the historical nar-

rative. "Sid has this elegant way of translating science into metaphor that is so convincing and clear," Goodman says. "It's very impressive." Goodman took the gig.

The demands facing the filmmaker were considerable. The *Maladies* team wanted to incorporate stories of current patients and update the ever-evolving science (the book was published in 2010). They embedded film crews at hospitals and looked for the doctors who would make the best characters. Through those doctors, they found the patients. They juggled multiple stories whose arcs they could not predict. (One outcome, involving a child, shocked everybody, including the doctors.)

The difficulties inherent in such a weighty undertaking extended, naturally, to the film-



BEN MEADORS

Goodman sees the documentary not just as a historical survey of cancer treatment but also as a witness to its future promise.

making itself. "Weaving history, contemporary stories, and a lot of science all into one film was very tough," Goodman says. "I've never seen a project done this way."

Throughout the process, Mukherjee worked closely with the filmmakers. "Sid

## COLLEGE WALK

certainly kept us honest sciencewise, but he also had lots of opinions about narrative structure and what emphasis to place on the different stories and characters,” Goodman says. “He saw cuts of the film and gave us notes. I’ve never involved an author of a book that closely in filmmaking. We didn’t always see perfectly eye to eye, and, as with Ken and me, we both sometimes had to compromise. But we definitely wanted his advice and listened very carefully to him — no one knows his story better than he does.”

Along the way, Goodman gained a new respect for scientists. “Ninety-nine percent of the time, they fail. It’s that one percent that makes all the difference. They have to have this unbelievable drive and commitment and resilience. Sure, they’re after fame and

glory, but they’re also buried in their labs, trying to advance humanity’s knowledge.” And, Goodman adds, they’re getting results. “With cancer, we’re approaching a survival rate of two-thirds of diagnosed cases.”

Edward Herrmann, too, was driven and committed and resilient. But he was not a survivor.

“It was hard,” says Goodman, his feeling for Herrmann softening his voice. “There were days when he was slowed down by chemo. We had to struggle through the narration. The recording took twice as long as it normally would. He gave it everything he had and did a tremendous job.” Goodman pauses. “We said goodbye, and six weeks later he was dead.”

Anyone who has been touched by cancer knows something of the plunging terror,

the wild anxiety, the knee-buckling blow of the irrefutable word. But Goodman, who has seen front-line science and terrible grace, desperate agony and humbling recovery, wants to demystify the disease and take some of that fear away. He sees the documentary not just as a historical survey of cancer treatment but also as a witness to its future promise.

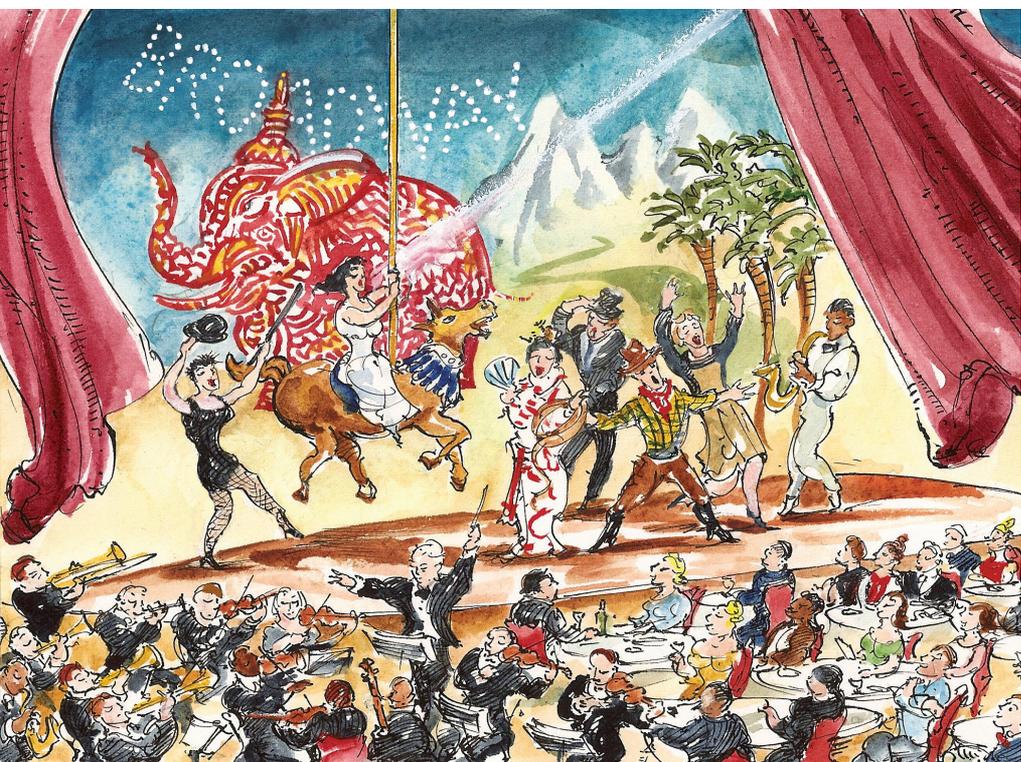
“I hope people aren’t as terrified of cancer after seeing the film as they were going in,” Goodman says. “Cancer is punishing. It’s difficult. But more and more patients are getting through it.”

— Paul Hond

To learn more about the series, visit:  
[www.cancerfilms.org](http://www.cancerfilms.org)



## Some Enchanted Evening



It was a rainy Tuesday night in March, the kind of dismal late-winter storm that turns street corners into lagoons and sends unrelenting sheets of stinging water that outmatch even the strongest umbrellas.

But at 54 Below, a Broadway supper club that sits beneath Studio 54, the legendary palace of 1970s disco, the crowd was in high spirits. Spotlights flickered over red-velvet-covered walls as a hundred-odd guests settled into booths and four-top tables, ordering cocktails and french fries, and waving at friends across the room. The lights dimmed, and, behind the piano, Rick Hip-Flores '02CC struck the first notes of “Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered,” by Richard Rodgers '23CC, '54HON and Lorenz Hart. After just a few jaunty measures, the message to the weather seemed clear: This is Broadway. There are no rainy days here.

The crowd was gathered for the first annual “Columbia Songbook,” a celebration of show tunes written by faculty and alumni. If that

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sounds like amateur hour, consider some of the shows that followed the Great White Way down from Morningside Heights: *Pal Joey* (Rodgers and Hart); *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, *The Sound of Music* (Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II '16CC); *Cabaret*, *Chicago*, *Fosse* (John Kander '54GSAS and Fred Ebb '57GSAS); *M. Butterfly* (playwriting professor David Henry Hwang); and *Next to Normal* (Tom Kitt '96CC and Brian Yorkey '93CC), to name just a few. Without Columbia composers and lyricists, we would never have heard Ella Fitzgerald sing “My Funny Valentine” or Julie Andrews list her favorite things. No one would know the joy of Chita Rivera’s snapping fingers in *All That Jazz* or Frank Sinatra’s signature song, “New York, New York.”

In short, says Danielle Gautier, who conceived of and produced the show, “There was an embarrassment of riches. Picking the song list was a humbling exercise.”

For Gautier, it also required a crash course in Columbia’s musical-theater history. The idea of uniting the greatest hits of Columbia show tunes in one performance had been floating around the theater department for years, but Gautier, who is a first-year student in the School of the Arts’ theater management and producing

program, had been on campus for less than a month when she started working on it.

“It really just started with the requirement,” she says. “All MFA students have to produce or manage something using Columbia talent. Most people work on a campus show, but I really wanted to do something that incorporated the whole Columbia community.”

Gautier teamed up with musical director Hip-Flores, a conductor on the US tour of *We Will Rock You*, and director Laura Pietropinto '00CC, who was the assistant director of *Next to Normal*.

Most of the night’s performers, too, were Columbians, starting with Donna Vivino '00BC, better known to some as the green-skinned witch Elphaba in the national tour of *Wicked*. Several were MFA candidates in musical theater; still others were recent alums just getting their start in the business. Between songs, they gathered together at the bar, blowing good-luck kisses to each other and whistling loudly after solos.

“I was hoping that it would have that kind of reunion vibe,” Gautier says. “Everyone involved has been through so many of the same experiences at Columbia.”

Richard Rodgers often said that he came to Columbia specifically because he hoped it

would give him the kind of experience that would prepare him for a career on Broadway. As he wrote in his 1975 autobiography: “There were experienced directors, a beautifully equipped stage with good lighting situated in the heart of the Broadway theatre district, and best of all, professional musicians in the pit. Here, certainly, were near-ideal working conditions; here, possibly, was an opportunity that could be of incalculable help in furthering my career.”

Forty years later, looking out from behind his piano, Tom Kitt echoed that very sentiment: “When I was a senior, I was deciding whether to take a job in finance,” he said with a visible shudder, “or to do what I really loved. It was a big decision, but being at Columbia, and working on the Varsity Show, made it easy.”

He started to play the finale from the 1996 Varsity Show, *Devil in a Light Blue Dress*, about a bunch of graduating seniors who decide not to sell their souls. Some might have been surprised that he didn’t pick something from *Next to Normal*, the show that won him his Pulitzer and made him famous. But on this rainy, wonderful night, it wasn’t about that show — it was about the place that made it all possible.

— Rebecca Shapiro

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## A Doctor’s Living Legacy

In 1936, when the Works Progress Administration commissioned black artists to paint murals for Harlem Hospital Center, Gene-Ann Polk Horne '68PH was a little girl growing up in Roselle, New Jersey. Just ten years old, she probably wouldn’t have appreciated the full significance of the murals, which depicted African-American life from slavery to the early twentieth century. By the time Dr. Polk (as her patients knew her) completed her pediatrics residency at Harlem Hospital Center in 1955 — she was the insti-

tution’s only black female physician — the murals were already fading.

But Polk’s prospects were only getting brighter. In 1956, Polk, who was also an accomplished cellist who had studied music at Oberlin College, became the first black doctor on staff at Lenox Hill Hospital, on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. “She served quietly, but very effectively,” a friend recalled in Galilee United Methodist Church in Englewood, New Jersey, during a public memorial service for Polk, who passed away in Janu-

ary. “She served earnestly and purposefully. She served sincerely, and she served godly.”

And her service to Harlem never faltered. While working at Lenox Hill, Polk continued her relationship with Harlem Hospital, where she taught residents, conducted pioneering research on neonatal drug addiction, and developed a blood-transfusion program for newborns. In 1962, Columbia University, newly affiliated with Harlem Hospital, named Polk the hospital’s first professor of clinical pediatrics.



One of a series of vignettes from Georgette Seabrooke's restored mural "Recreation in Harlem"

On the surface, it may seem like Polk's career was fated. Her father, Charles C. Polk, was a physician who ran a private practice from his home for more than sixty years. Her mother, Olive Bond, committed her life to social service through volunteerism. And her godmother, Myra Smith Kearse, was the only woman in her graduating class at Howard University College of Medicine in 1925.

But Polk's success was in no way predetermined. Instead, she faced doubt that fueled her resolve. "It was surprising how many people said, 'Oh, you'll never make it. You'll get married. You won't make medical school,'" she recalled in an interview with the Foundation for the History of Women in Medicine shortly before her death. "And every time somebody said, 'You can't,' I said, 'I can.'"

In 1968, as Polk and her husband were raising their two children in Englewood, she was promoted to director of pediatric ambulatory care. Every day at work she'd walk

past the WPA murals, whose faded glory would not have escaped her notice. Though her hands were full with her family and the hospital, Polk still found time to give back: she mentored young black women in medicine through the Susan Smith McKinney Steward Medical Society, and remained an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. In her interview, she noted, "I think the women who go into medicine have a certain resilience and stamina [because] they want to succeed."

Though most people in Harlem don't know Polk's name, many of them are acquainted with her legacy, which extends beyond her work in health care. One trip to Harlem Hospital's \$325 million Mural Pavilion makes this clear.

Polk spent the latter part of her career as director of ambulatory care, and from 1988 to 1994 was the chair of the hospital's cultural-affairs committee, where she devoted herself to protecting the hospi-

tal's rich history. Part of that undertaking included restoring the once-vibrant murals. Two months before her death at eighty-eight, Polk, who was battling cancer, visited the Mural Pavilion to accept an award for her contribution to the project.

"I was amazed to see how [the murals] had [been] restored," she said. "It's just mind-boggling. If you ever get to Harlem, you've got to see it."

It's almost impossible *not* to see it: etched on the building's glass façade at the northeast corner of Malcolm X Boulevard and 135th Street are massive reproductions of three of the murals, reaching five stories high and spanning a full city block. It's impossible, too, not to feel the magnitude of the history on display.

Fittingly, Polk's award reads: "We will always remember and celebrate the shoulders upon which we stand."

— Lauren Savage

# Happy Hour at the Salad Bar

Stepping into John Jay Dining Hall on a Thursday shortly before final exams, you get the feeling that not much has changed since the days of McKim, Mead & White. Light enters through leaded-glass windows, rich wood paneling covers nearly every surface, and students commune at long tables. These walls have absorbed thousands of debates and opinions, many about the food.

Complaining about dining-hall food is a collegiate tradition, and John Jay has been serving students since 1927, when an orchestra accompanied dinner and higher forces controlled student portions. A testy item published in the *Spectator* in 1937 invites dining-hall manager Alberta McFarlane to try eating “a full bowl of cold cereal in the John Jay Dining Hall embellished by the small amount of cream she gives as a maximum supply.” By the 1980s, the dining hall was all-you-can-eat, and the pendulum of student opinion gradually swung the other way: in 2005, a *Spec* editorial titled “Not So Nutritious” demanded the dining hall “provide a host

of pamphlets, flyers and posters about nutrition [and] portions” and not just a few “token fruit stands.”

Ten years later, students have more than a pamphlet: they have Christina Lee, who was hired in January as Columbia’s first full-time dietitian. In the face of a growing number of students with food allergies (and others interested in healthy eating), Columbia brought Lee to Morningside Heights to guide on-campus eaters toward wellness, which Lee defines as “eating balanced meals, getting enough sleep, and making healthy lifestyle decisions.” This may explain the availability of strawberry-mint-infused water and chia seeds and flaxseed at the yogurt bar.

The hurried-looking student diners don’t seem to be complaining. When pressed, a young couple on their way out takes turns describing the food as “relatively healthy” and “diverse.” A visitor named Turner says John Jay is “consistent and above average” compared to other schools, and perhaps his own. That opinion has been confirmed by the food website *The Daily Meal*, which ranks Columbia dining third among American colleges.

Certainly the dining hall is getting healthier. Lee’s nutritional tour of John Jay begins at the Nut Zone, where peanut butter is isolated for the safety of allergic students. A sign reads “Sometimes you feel like a Nut! Sometimes you CAN’T.” Lee also keeps a clear labeling system for dietary preferences: *V* for vegetarian, *VN* for vegan, *GF* for gluten-free, even *L* for local.

As an undergraduate at NYU, Lee switched her major from economics to nutrition. Her interest in the subject was partly influenced by her mother, who emphasized healthy eating when Lee was growing up (“my mom only bought soda if we had guests”). Lee cooked for herself in college, went to bed early, and still managed to advise friends in a way that was caring and helpful rather than irritating. She is a dedicated omnivore and thinks about the USDA “MyPlate” guide each time she eats — basically, she says, “your plate should be half fruits and veggies,” with some room left for grains, protein, and dairy.

At John Jay, she points out the burgers and soda as well as the salad bar and baked fish, and makes assurances that it’s fine to eat any of those things in her presence. It seems wise to head for middle ground: the Chinese pork loin and a plate of three different salads.

“I’ve had a student come in and say, ‘I need more energy. What do I do?’” says Lee over lunch. “A couple of kids have come to me and asked, ‘Can I eat carbohydrates?’”

“Of course you can” is her answer to the latter question — “you need them.” For the student concerned about energy slumps, she advised carrying brain-food snacks, like nuts rich in omega-3s. When students share concerns about the “freshman fifteen,” she suggests simply checking the dining website and deciding what to eat ahead of time. (The website, which Lee helps maintain, allows visitors to calculate the caloric costs on-screen: six ounces of Chinese pork loin equals 205 calories). Eat carbs, she says — just swap the refined grains for whole grains.

**RAISING THE BAR:** Christina Lee helps herself (and others) to healthier dining.



KARSTEN MORAN / THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

JONATHAN LATTIF

Meal plans are still required for the first year at Columbia, and Lee's goal is to help make eating away from home feel more like home. "I want people to feel comfortable here," she says. Lee e-mails weekly with a small group of students to plan their special diets. She accommodates those restrictions due to allergies, and also those directed by religious belief.

Her days begin before breakfast, when she checks menus, updates Twitter, and works on a blog called *Christina's Course*; in the afternoon she counsels students individually; and, a few evenings a month, she meets more of the student body through events like the National Nutrition Month dinner in March, Chip and Dip Day, and a yogurt-parfait tasting.

"I don't believe in depriving yourself. I don't believe in dieting," she says. "I believe in moderation."

Perhaps those who challenged Miss McFarlane to scarf down her own cold, dry cereal would be pleased to see Christina Lee by the yogurt bar. The dietitian eats in John Jay twice a day.

— *Phoebe Magee*

## The Controversy of Art

When Victor Navasky first heard about the murderous attack in Paris last winter on the staff of *Charlie Hebdo*, he was watching television at his home in New York City. Within days, reporters from as far away as Moscow began contacting the Columbia journalism professor to get his take.

Navasky had some perspective on the matter. Two years earlier, he had published *The Art of Controversy*, a history of political cartoons whose argument for their enduring power now looked prescient. "I had not expected the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, but it was not a surprise in the sense that cartoons have stimulated emotional and inappropriate responses down through the ages," Navasky says. His first thought after hearing about the attack was of the Danish Muhammads, a collection of political cartoons commissioned by the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* that ten years ago resulted in international protests and cartoonists receiving death threats. (Lately, there has been discussion in Denmark about publishing the cartoons in textbooks — a move that Navasky supports, since the cartoons "were worldwide news and are easily found on the Internet.")

Violent reaction to journalistic expression is precisely what led Navasky to become a founding member of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) in 1981. The global organization investigates

attacks on the press, tracks violations of press freedom, and even negotiates with regimes to get journalists out of prison.

While the primary focus of the CPJ is on far-flung reporters working under oppressive conditions, Navasky's interest in press freedom is tied closely with the political cartoon. His obsession with these cartoons and the "visual journalists" who create them started while he was at Yale Law School, where he cofounded a satirical magazine called *Monocle*, publishing cartoonists like David Levine, who became known for his pen-and-ink caricatures in the *New York Review of Books*. (Levine would also draw many pieces for the *Nation* when Navasky was editor and then publisher there.) "Our work influenced a lot of op-ed pages," says Navasky. "In particular, the way the *New York Times* op-ed page handled art in a satirical way."

While certainly similar to *Charlie Hebdo* in its mocking attitude, *Monocle* was different. "*Charlie Hebdo* prides itself on having no politics," Navasky says. "They are an equal-opportunity attacker. *Monocle* had some of that spirit, but we did come down more on one side than the other in certain instances." For example, *Monocle* was clearly against the Ku Klux Klan and racial segregation.

Navasky identifies himself as a free-speech absolutist, but there are some lines he wouldn't personally cross. "If I were alive in Germany in the 1930s and I was not Jewish

and I was the editor of *Der Stürmer*, I still wouldn't have published the anti-Semitic cartoons they did," he says, referring to a series of caricatures of Jews as vermin. "I believe it shouldn't be against the law, but in that particular cultural and religious environment, it was immoral to publish them." Navasky is careful to note that each case should be judged individually; no person or group is off-limits, but there is a line between cartoons that criticize and cartoons that incite hate.

Navasky says that as an editor, he would refrain from publishing cartoons construed as attacking a particular ethnic or religious group. But in the case of *Charlie Hebdo*, Navasky feels that the *New York Times* and CNN and other news outlets that chose not to run the controversial cartoons, which include crass depictions of the prophet Muhammad, failed at covering the news.

"I understand that they may not want to offend whole groups of people," Navasky says. "But it is not enough to simply describe what is in the cartoons. Cartoons can't be paraphrased any more easily than poetry."

As a law student in the 1950s, Navasky intuited the power of cartoons, but never imagined he was risking his life by printing provocative images. "Like *Charlie Hebdo*, *Monocle* had a lot of fun," says Navasky. "But no one ever killed any of us. That is the clearest difference."

— *Kelly McMasters '05SOA*



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# *The* Hippocratic *Overture*

By Paul Hond

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Students at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons  
are getting ready to practice.

Will it make them better doctors?

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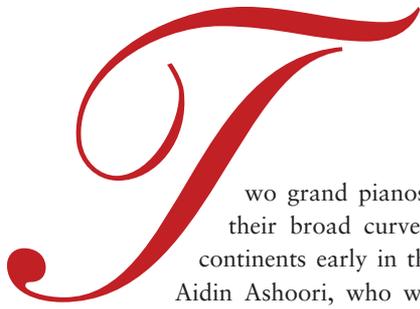


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Photographs by Jörg Meyer



THE CUMC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA,  
WITH HANJAY WANG CONDUCTING



Two grand pianos face each other, fitted along their broad curves but not touching, like two continents early in their separation. At one piano, Aidin Ashoori, who weeks earlier had played Chopin at Carnegie Hall, adjusts his bench. At the other, Stephanie Chen, a Juilliard graduate, lifts her arms. Chen and Ashoori are set to attack Gershwin's Concerto in F, the grand finale of an evening that included violinist Jeremy Ying sawing a Bach partita and pianist Devon Joiner sculpting a Chopin ballade.

Several factors make this recital curious. First, there's the venue: Bard Hall Lounge, which by day is a study area in the Bard Hall dormitory on Haven Avenue and West 169th Street, on Columbia's medical campus. Second, the performers — there are a dozen on the night's program — are all medical students. Third, the audience of more than sixty is made up of medical students and faculty, and most of *them* are musicians. Fourth, this evening in the fall of 2014 is a "Musical Monday," one concert in a long-running bimonthly series that is among many student-run musical events presented throughout the academic year, covering classical, pop, and musical theater.

Fifth, there's the Steinway that Ashoori is playing. Legend has it that it once belonged to the composer and pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff. We'll get to that.

Ashoori and Chen go to work, rattling the room's windows with a burst of trembling octaves. The harmonic vibrations in Bard Hall Lounge clash loudly with popular notions of medical-school life — the stress, burnout, and anger that the *New York Times* once described as "the misery of the med student." To be fair, most of the performers this Musical Monday have yet to enter Major Clinical Year, or MCY, a period of clinical rotations that at any school is extremely taxing — a 2013 *Slate* article called it "The Darkest Year of Medical School" (subhead: "Students come in altruistic and empathetic. They leave jaded and bitter"). And while the *Slate* piece didn't mention Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons (P&S), it's still odd to hear, inside Bard Hall Lounge, not weeping and gnashing of teeth, but Vivaldi.

So how did all these concert-level musicians end up at P&S? Last year, of some 7,800 applicants, the school enrolled 160 future doctors, more than a third



of whom were as comfortable with operettas as operations. While skilled musicians aren't a rarity in the medical profession — both occupations require, after all, high doses of discipline and ambition — the rate in the student body at P&S is striking. Is there some other influence at play?



“I was a loud baby. Difficult. I threw tantrums. The only way my parents could shut me up was to play music.”

Thus Aidin Ashoori's fixation with music and the mind took root at an early age.

Still, it's hard to imagine this gentle, formidable pianist as a screaming infant — his outbursts come so dressed in rippling triplets and *sforzando* bolts.

Ashoori was born in Japan, where his parents worked as biomedical researchers. His mother was from China, and would take her son on her bicycle through the streets of Kyoto to his piano lesson. His father was of Persian descent and moved to Japan in 1979.

When Ashoori was seven, the family relocated to Houston. Ashoori's parents saw his skill at the piano and pushed him. “My frontal lobes hadn't really developed, so I didn't have conscious awareness of what was going on,” says Ashoori, a neuroscience buff. “I could be stubborn, but I felt that I should do what was expected of me.”

It wasn't until he was twelve and encountered Arthur Rubinstein's recordings of Chopin that all the hard work he'd put into piano began to make sense. Now he had a model to emulate. He won awards, and was recommended to a famous teacher. “He was very strict, very harsh. He'd call you names, slap your wrist. I practiced out of fear. I dreaded every lesson.”

When Ashoori was fifteen, his parents split up. Ashoori sank into a depression. “I felt hopeless about everything, and I worked those feelings out through music.” Music, skateboarding, chess — those things saved him from falling under some bad influences, he says.

Around that time, he was invited to perform at a hospice. As he played, he watched in amazement as the glum, apathetic audience came to life. “It was the most appreciative crowd I've ever played for. Some people even cried. I thought, ‘This is interesting.’ I realized there's a huge connection between music and the mind.”

Inspired, Ashoori sent e-mails to top neurologists and neuroscientists saying he was a musician interested in collaborative research. He heard back from Joseph Jankovic, a Parkinson's researcher at Baylor College of Medicine. Jankovic, who did his residency at the Neurological Institute of New York — an affiliate of Columbia



AIDIN ASHOORI

“When they told me they had the Rachmaninoff piano, I knew I wanted to come here.”

University Medical Center — was a former conservatory pianist. He asked Ashoori to help him investigate if Mozart had Tourette's syndrome (which is thought to involve an excess of the neurotransmitter dopamine), and whether this had any connection to his creativity.

Ashoori studied the composer's life. The result was a paper by Jankovic and Ashoori titled “Mozart's Movements and Behaviour: A Case of Tourette's Syndrome?,” published in the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery & Psychiatry* in November 2007. Ashoori was seventeen.

Meanwhile, Ashoori was playing in piano competitions, where a name kept popping up. “Who's this Stephanie Chen?” he wondered. He knew she was one of the best young pianists in Texas, but they had never competed head-to-head, and he had never met her.

In 2009, Ashoori, by then a junior at Rice University, won a piano competition that put him on a Carnegie Hall

stage for the first time. But he had no illusions about a career. “There’s very little demand for classical performers,” he says. “It’s sad, but that tradition is dying.”

He wanted to study medicine after college, preferably in Texas. But he applied to Columbia anyway, and was interviewed by John Truman, who is professor emeritus of clinical pediatrics and also a harpsichordist. The conversation, to Ashoori’s surprise, focused on music. One detail in particular leaped out.

“When they told me they had the Rachmaninoff piano,” he says, “I knew I wanted to come here.”

“Surgery is an ensemble: nurses, surgeons, everyone has a role, and they need to interact with each other.”



PORTIA SIRINEK

For the past two summers at CUMC, Ashoori has worked in the neuroscience lab of Nobel laureate Eric Kandel. There, as the only med student in a pool of postdocs, he studies things like the neurobiological processes of posttraumatic stress disorder. “We’re finding all these neurobiological correlations with the behaviors we see in psychiatric illnesses,” he says.

It’s been a time of connections for Ashoori — in the lab, in the classroom, and in Bard Hall Lounge, performing Gershwin with Stephanie Chen.

“It was funny,” Ashoori says. “Stephanie and I finally met at med school, and the next thing we know, we’re playing Musical Monday together.”

‡

According to *The Guinness Book of World Records*, one of the two most difficult instruments to play is the French horn. Portia Sirinek’s parents probably realized that when they chose it for her.

“The French horn is perfect, and I love it,” says Sirinek, who seems exactly the sort of self-assured, proficient person the French horn would produce. “I wouldn’t pick anything else.”

Sirinek’s parents both work at the Metropolitan Opera. Her mother plays the oboe (the other most difficult instrument, says *Guinness*). Her father, who is now the orchestra manager, played the trumpet. They started Sirinek on the French horn in the fifth grade.

Growing up, Sirinek played in youth orchestras in New Jersey and New York. She also saw many fine musicians — her mother’s private students — struggle to get jobs. “My mother said, ‘You shouldn’t be a musician unless you can’t see yourself doing anything else,’” Sirinek says. “I could always see myself doing other things, and I did do other things.”

She studied chemistry at Yale, and after applying to P&S, she heard from the dean of admissions, Stephen Nicholas. “Dr. Nicholas called me to tell me I got in. ‘If you’re a musician,’ he said, ‘you really can’t go anywhere else besides P&S.’” Sirinek would soon understand what he meant. Shortly after arriving at P&S in 2012, she was playing in the pit orchestra for the Bard Hall Players’ production of *My Favorite Year*.

Now she toots her horn off-campus with the Park Avenue Chamber Symphony and is leaning toward becoming an eye surgeon.

“Surgery seems like performance: you prepare, then you go in and do it,” she says. “The performance comes, and everyone is focused on the same thing. Surgery is an ensemble: nurses, surgeons, everyone has a role, and

they need to interact with each other. Everyone has a common goal.”

Last fall, at a Musical Monday, Sirinek played a piece for solo horn by the twentieth-century composer Bernhard Krol. From her instrument’s flared bell came a soft, warm tone, a five-minute plainsong that the hornist embodied.

“When you play a piece by a composer, you end up understanding something about their experience or what they’re trying to convey,” Sirinek says. “You develop a certain empathy. Just thinking in that way may influence how you approach things as a doctor.”

‡

To witness Stephanie Chen play Beethoven is to feel someone feeling. Her fingers hop, her head keeps low, absorbed in the notes, bouncing to the scampering frolic, the thundering crash.

“Beethoven speaks to me,” Chen says. “He seems to have this deep understanding not only of beauty but of struggle and conflict. He makes you feel emotions in a very raw way.”

When Chen was four, she climbed onto the piano bench at her home in Austin, Texas, and picked out a tune. At six she began taking lessons. At nine she made her orchestral debut with the Austin Civic Orchestra, playing Mozart’s Concerto no. 23.

By high school, medicine began to interest her. But music was her love. She auditioned for Juilliard and got in.

Musically, she was touching the upper ether. But something was missing. In her first year she began performing in hospitals and found that the spiritual healing of music fed a desire to have an even more direct and tangible effect on people. She took science classes at Columbia through the Columbia–Juilliard Exchange, a program that allows selected students from each school to take classes at the other. By her senior year she decided to go into medicine.

In 2013 she entered P&S and became president of the Musicians’ Guild, the group that oversees musical events. The guild, like all student activities, falls under the canopy of the P&S Club, which calls itself “the most comprehensive student activities organization in American medical education.” She also started Artreach, a concert series for hospital patients at CUMC.

During her first year, Chen practiced a few days a week. Second year is different. At P&S, students start their clinical rotations in the second half of their second year, requiring a musician to do something entirely new: drastically limit her musical pursuits.



To mark the transition, Chen put on a concert in January in “celebration of the end of classroom lectures and the beginning of hospital rotations.” A bravura sendoff, borne through the bones of the gaping Rachmaninoff grand. Chen played a Chopin polonaise, the Ravel piano trio (with Jeremy Ying on violin and Chris Hoeger on cello), and Beethoven’s Piano Sonata no. 23 in F Minor (*Appassionata*), an immense and turbulent edifice of precipitous difficulty.

Chen scaled it, pinned aloft in clouds of beauty, struggle, and conflict. Then she came down in a furious, flurrying march, ended on three hammer blows, and took a final bow.

‡

“My musical involvement on campus is a little pathological,” says violinist Jeremy Ying, who came to P&S straight from Harvard. “I never have enough.” Ying is a *caprice*, a human *pizzicato*, all vivacity and pluck. He signs up for everything, and has opinions on nearly that much.

*The string quartet is the kingpin of chamber music.* Thus began Ying’s essay for his med-school application. “That contentious statement got me in trouble with a few inter-

viewers,” Ying says, referring to some woodwind players. “My entire essay was based on my experience in a string quartet. Being on a medical team is like being on a musical team.” *The string quartet is a conversation between instruments, Ying wrote, and for an elegant conversation to take place, one must have a full understanding of the language. In this case we had to control our instruments as if they were bodily extensions and play together in a concert . . . This teambuilding exercise prepares me well for physician consultations and the intricate dance in the surgery room.*

Ying loves to communicate, sometimes provocatively — he does salty standup comedy, too — and ties his sociability to his instrument. “Not to harp on pianists,” he says, “but they’re more lone wolves. They can be very introverted and standoffish. Violinists are usually social chameleons, because they almost always play with others.”

Ying grew up in Plano, Texas, near Dallas, and displays a Texas-sized capacity for spreading himself out. There he is, dressed in black, leading the five-member beatboxing vocal group the Pentamedix; and there, directing CUMC’s a cappella group, the Ultrasounds; and there, in a tux and orange bow tie, conducting the pit orchestra for the Bard Hall Players’ production of *The Music Man*. He says music makes him “more in touch with the human condition,” and now that he isn’t trying to go pro (“If you don’t break at sixteen, there’s very little chance that you’ll make it”), his relationship with music is “much more fun.”

“Music brings people together,” he says. “Last night, we had a Pentamedix rehearsal in my apartment. We chatted, we had snacks, we sang, and it sounded great. I just love music — for my own pleasure, for school functions, for my friends.”

Ying has to go. Another packed day: lunch, study, and his Internet book club (he’s reading *The Brothers Karamazov*). He knows now, in the fall, that his activities will be curtailed in the spring, when he starts his rotations. Perhaps, like a bear before hibernation, Ying is fattening up.



Jessica Means likes to cut through a good barrier. At Harvard, she was the first female conductor of the Hasty Pudding Theatricals, a student group that has been putting on burlesque shows since 1844. She also has a gift for sight-reading. When she moved to New York in 2009, she went around to the Broadway theaters, handing out her résumé, saying, “I sight-read. I’ll play for you.”

One night, Alice Ripley, the Tony Award-winning star of the musical *Next to Normal* (written by Tom Kitt ’96CC and Brian Yorkey ’93CC), was standing outside the Booth Theatre on West 45th Street signing autographs, when Means broke through the force field of fame and said to Ripley, “I’m your new accompanist.”

Ripley hired Means on the spot. During Means’s four years between college and P&S, she and Ripley created two solo shows, which they took on the road. Around that time, Means met a neurosurgeon who, in exchange for piano lessons, agreed to let Means shadow her in the operating room.

“The second I got into the OR I knew: I have to be a surgeon,” says Means. “I had never been in an OR. Had never met a female surgeon. I had no idea what to expect. I’d imagined very delicate, tiny movements, and was stunned by some of the almost *brutality* of the surgery. What she did with her hands was so beauti-



JEREMY YING

ful. The idea that you can use your hands to heal — I watched her take out a massive tumor right in front of me. I had never felt electric about anything in my life besides music. I felt that way about this.”

As with other musical students, Means’s interview at Columbia, which was conducted by psychiatrist Donald Kornfield, was less medicine than Mendelssohn, less pleurisy than Debussy. “In my entire interview with Dr. Kornfield,” she says, “we didn’t talk about medicine at all. He wanted to know everything about music. He thought it was wonderful.”

Now Means is about to start her rotations. So far, she has pulled off a kind of double life. “It’s amazing, because I can go downtown, play a show, come back up, and go to class the next morning. I bring my notes and study backstage. It works.” She also plays events like Musical Monday and its shaggy cousin, the pop-centric beer-and-music-filled evening known as Coffee House.

“It blows my mind how talented these people are,” Means says of her schoolmates. “Musical Monday is conservatory-level.”

⋈

So how *did* all these musicians end up here?

The trail leads straight to Stephen Nicholas. If anyone can enlighten us, it’s Nicholas, who has been on the P&S admissions committee since 2001, and who became admissions dean in 2010.

Nicholas is a tall, kindly Wyomingite who loves photography. His walls are covered with decades-old photographs of pediatric AIDS patients. His patients.

“We have one highest desire: to find people who will make great doctors,” Nicholas says. “The question facing all medical schools is, ‘How do you find those individuals?’ Some schools use metrics; some look at undergraduate majors. Those things are important, but they’re not what make this place tick. We think there are a lot of surrogate measures that can help students become the sort of doctors who will be passionate, who will be listeners. Music is one of them.

“Let’s start with listening: the trouble with physicians is that we go through a process that tells us we’re experts. I’m a pediatric AIDS *expert*.” (Nicholas came to Columbia in 1981 for his pediatrics residency and later started the pediatric AIDS project at Harlem Hospital.) “One of the great pediatricians of our time, T. Berry Brazelton [’43PS], stumbled onto this idea of questioning expertise. It took him a long time to understand that while we have expertise, we are not the expert on a baby. The mother is. The father is. In time, the child



JESSICA MEANS

“It’s amazing, because I can go downtown, play a show, come back up, and go to class the next morning.”

grows up and becomes an expert on herself. One thing Brazelton taught me was this importance of shutting up and listening. If you’re a musician, you’ve got to listen, you’ve got to watch, you’ve got to be very involved and observant. These traits matter. If you’re attuned to what other people are doing, you’re probably going to be a better doctor.

“Then there are traits like compassion and selflessness. We have a sacred relationship with patients: we hear their secrets, we invade their bodies to make them better. It’s all part of an agreement. So we certainly want people who have an ability to *feel*.”

This depth of emotion resonates from the strings and brass tubing and ringing voices of the students: one hears it in the glass-bell clarity of the CUMC Choir’s first note, as the conductor, Jessica Buesing ’13GS, who founded the group, threads a needle in the air; one feels it in the velvet lushness of the CUMC

Symphony Orchestra performing Mozart's Symphony no. 40 and Tchaikovsky's violin concerto, featuring soloist Elliott Huang '11CC, under the baton of Hanjay Wang, who is also a pianist; and one sees it in the power of Artreach, as on a recent evening, when five people in wheelchairs were parked a few feet from an upright piano in the Milstein Building, listening as Juilliard graduate Devon Joiner, a first-year, knuckled down on Beethoven's 32 Variations in C Minor. Joiner's rendition elicited particular delight from an eighty-four-year-old cinnamon-skinned woman with bobby pins in her sea-salt hair. "This is my fourth concert," she said. "They're just wonderful." A pianist herself, she'd had a stroke that affected her arm and leg. "Now look," she said, wagging her limbs. "Piano

is part of my therapy here. I'm so happy to move my fingers. I cried and said, 'Thank God.' All my doctors play instruments. I said, 'I'm in the right hospital.'"

As the woman notes, the musical spirit is not confined to the students. On any given Musical Monday you're liable to find, in the audience, faculty members like neurological-surgery professor/trombonist Donald Quest '70PS, or retired professor of medicine/composer Kenneth Altman '54PS. There are musical administrators, too: CUMC's vice dean of academic affairs, Anne L. Taylor, studied cello at the Manhattan School of Music. Artists are found here in proportions that bespeak a tradition stretching back to 1894, when John Mott, a young YMCA leader and future winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, founded the "YMCA at P&S," later renamed the P&S Club.



## Quartets on the Cortex: *Neuroscience at Play*

*Violinists and virologists, pianists and pathologists.* The surprising confluence of music and medicine raises an inevitable question: do physicians and musicians have similar brains?

David Sulzer is a professor of neuroscience at Columbia University Medical Center. He is also a composer, violinist, and guitarist who was a rock of the downtown avant-garde music scene in the 1980s and '90s.

"Voluntary movements in every part of the body are controlled by a specific region of the motor cortex," says Sulzer. "When you learn a musical instrument, you're changing your brain, in part because you're devoting more area of the motor cortex and striatum to particular muscles and habits." This sort of training, says Sulzer, especially on instruments that require a high degree of manual dexterity, develops the fine motor control so crucial for surgeons.

Sulzer's lab studies the synaptic connections in the cortex and basal ganglia that give rise to memory, learning, and behavior. It's in the learning process itself — "the figuring out of what's possible" — that Sulzer sees music's imprint on the scientific mind.

"When you learn a musical instrument, you undergo a change in neural computation: if something doesn't work, you try another way. If that doesn't work, you try again." Sulzer says this process strengthens the synapses, the structures that carry electrochemical signals between neurons.

Some effects can be seen explicitly when you record brain activity with an EEG. "One of the features you'll find," says Sulzer, "is an 'event-related potential,' or ERP, which occurs when a person hears, for example, a syntactical error," such as *Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a fall great*. "With music, if you give people an even rhythm and then you alter it, every lis-

tener will get an ERP. Musicians, however, will get bigger ones. So you really are changing the brain by learning music."

Michael Shadlen, too, sees a musical-medical connection. Shadlen is a professor of neuroscience at CUMC, a neurologist, and a leading researcher in the field of cognition. He also plays jazz guitar.

"What is the consilience between musicality and being in medicine?" says Shadlen, like an improviser posing a melodic question. "It's the sense that stories have diversions along the way.

"The brain," he says, "is built for aesthetics. We are built to try to find structure, we are built to try to find meaning. Similarly, in medicine, we try to find the diagnosis."

Could it be that doctors and musicians have a shared approach to creativity, one rooted in the brain's primal need for story?

"You can think of creativity as directed exploration, with an aesthetic twist," Shadlen says. "The artist, for example, communicates an idea that has an implied completion; the aesthetic twist is that there's a sense of what a completion will mean. The musician plays something that establishes expectations in the listener, and then he teases you just a little bit — not so much that things begin to sound like chaos, but enough to take you to a few places, and tell a little story, before he finally delivers the goods.

"Now let's go to medicine. In medicine, you have the facts, and you have the patient in front of you. You've got, ultimately, a story; you have a sense of how things *should* end, but you're ready for surprises along the way. If you're a good doctor, you're always prepared to be wrong — things don't always go from A to B and back to A. It's the same style of thinking: directed exploration. We want to make a diagnosis. We want to solve a problem. We want to see this story have an end. We're driven to do that. And that's part of the fun and the intellectual challenge in medicine."

“The P&S Club was founded during a period when there was a lot of discussion about professionalism,” Nicholas says. “Mott was aware of a narrowing process that you go through. He thought that if you’re not careful, you could lose balance as a person. If we don’t encourage students, as they’re going through professionalization, to hold onto balance, they’re going to be narrow individuals, and not the doctors they want to be.”

This ethos of extracurriculars holds the key to the musical bounty at P&S: the arts culture has become, over time, self-perpetuating.

“Like attracts like,” says Nicholas. “The secret is that these wonderful musicians attract other wonderful musicians, year after year.”

But if Mott provided the music scene at P&S with its origin story, it was another figure that bestowed it with something like mystique.

“You’ve heard about the Rachmaninoff piano,” Nicholas says, and holds up a printout of a 2006 *Times* article that probed the piano’s link to Rachmaninoff, and found no paper trail to support or refute it. In the petri dish of inconclusiveness, then, the story flourishes: Columbia pathologist Jay Lefkowitz ’76PS, a music lover who gave his own piano to the med school, tells a version in which Rachmaninoff, afflicted with problems in his hands, is treated at the Neurological Institute and has a Steinway brought up to his floor so that he could compose. “When he went home, he wasn’t going to take the Steinway with him,” says Lefkowitz, “and it was consigned to the medical students. The whole question in the *Times* was, is the story apocryphal or aggrandized?” Lefkowitz answers lawyerlike. “I think that’s not an impossibility.”

Stephen Nicholas, in any case, can vouch for the piano’s sound. “When you hear Aidin Ashoori playing that thing,” he says, “it’s just incredible.”

Spring 2015, and some of our students have entered MCY. These months hold a test for people so used to practicing and performing. It’s true that they have chosen to become doctors and not professional musicians. Covenants of the soul have already been made. But what will happen to their fingers, their lips, their vocal cords, their technique, their psyches, their hearts? Will they be too busy to even think about music?

Internal medicine is one of the most intense and difficult rotations, and it’s the first for Jessica Means. She wakes up at 5:00 a.m.; walks her dogs, Phantom and Cosette; and goes to the hospital. “I am loving internal medicine,” she says. “I did three weeks on oncology.

It was incredible. I saw such a wide range of cancers. And the strength of family — how cancer affects whole families. The love is so tangible. Cancer is so brutal, and you really feel like you’re part of the fight, right there. Even as a student, I felt I was doing a lot.”

There’s a piano on the ninth floor of the hospital, and sometimes Means goes up there and plays a song or two. Then, later, at home, she plays her keyboard. “That keeps me totally happy,” she says. “I don’t feel like I’m missing out on music at all.”



Aidin Ashoori’s first rotation is surgery.

“I’ve never learned so much in such a short time,” he says. “I helped guide the scope for laparoscopic surgery. I was in a five-hour operation for pancreatic cancer and helped suture some of the guts together. I’d never sutured on a human before.”

If his fingers have been busier lately on patients than on the piano, Ashoori doesn’t mind. He’s in a composing phase now (he’s been writing music for video games since high school), which he can do in his room.

Nor is he worried about a diminution of his technique: as all the students point out, once you reach a high level, your chops don’t fade so easily. The anatomy remembers.

For Jeremy Ying, MCY has been “stressful, but in a good way. I feel like I’m growing in leaps and bounds.”

One evening, in the midst of his neurology rotation, we spot the violinist Ying in a Bard Hall practice room, behind a Steinway. Lately, when he can, he has been teaching himself piano, and he can plink-plunk his way through some short pieces that he enjoys.

For Ying, the work–life balance isn’t brain surgery. “If you set time aside for something you love,” he says, “it will never go away.”

# The New Rules of NETWORKING

In today's economy, you need to use all the tools technology offers to build your professional network, strengthen your Columbia connections, and advance your career. Sree Sreenivasan, one of the foremost experts on the use (and abuse) of social media, shows you how it's done.

This spring, as Columbia's 261st academic year draws to a close, almost eight thousand students are packing up their books and polishing their résumés. Most of the Class of 2015 will be looking to launch their careers; others will have earned an advanced degree that will further their established professions. Almost all will enter a volatile and competitive job market alongside 2.8 million other ambitious graduates. Will a degree from an Ivy League university give our graduates an edge? Absolutely. But according to social-media guru Sree Sreenivasan '93JRN, Columbia graduates will also benefit from a vast network of alumni connections that could have enormous value for the rest of their lives.

Sreenivasan, a former faculty member of the Graduate School of Journalism who is now chief digital officer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has spent more than twenty years studying and speaking about the promise of digital and social media, the power of connectivity, and the value of networking. He is still actively involved in the Columbia community, and as a self-described "digital evangelist," he says everyone should learn how to use social media to advance his or her career and build a professional network for the long term.

In May, as the Commencement bleachers were being assembled on Low Plaza and students were collecting phone numbers and e-mail addresses from their classmates, *Columbia Magazine* asked Sreenivasan to download some of his wisdom.

BY KATE LAWLER // ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVIDE BONAZZI

**You're an expert on navigating not only the promise of social media, but its pitfalls. Do you have specific ideas on how we should use social media in our professional lives?**

There are so many opportunities for us to connect with folks who can help us with our careers. It's unfortunate that people don't try them all, or even know about them. In my twenty years of working with both students and more established professionals, I've seen networking evolve. But not everyone has evolved with it. To really capitalize on the new tools and new opportunities available online, you have to understand the technology and use it — not just in your professional life but in your personal life. Basically, you have to be networking all the time. I don't think there's any difference between in-person and digital networking. It's all just networking. It may not be instinctual, but it can be taught.

**What are some of the ways that social media has improved the way people network professionally?**

For years, the only way to reach out to people was when you wanted something. You wouldn't write a note to a mentor or a prospective employer just to say, "Hi. I'm thinking of you." You had to ask for some-



thing. Now social media allows you to have what I call “low-touch networking.” By liking a photo on Facebook, retweeting an item on Twitter, or following a company on LinkedIn, you’re not making any requests or demands. People in positions of power are always being asked for something — a job, a speech, a foreword for a book. Low-touch networking is a very gentle way of connecting. You’re basically saying, “I notice you. You’re great.” That’s all, and that’s completely OK. Don’t wait until you need something from somebody to make a connection. I say to people, “Don’t be an ‘ask’ on social media.” There’s a *k* in there, but if they mishear me and don’t hear the *k*, that’s OK, because you don’t want to be the other thing on social media either.

### So is there a misperception that you only need to network when you’re looking for a job?

Oh, yeah. The best career management is to build your networks when you don’t need them so they’re there when you do. Right now you should be using social media to show that you can be helpful, informative, relevant, credible, even entertaining. Get

comfortable with LinkedIn and its etiquette, style, and language. I tell people that it’s too late to figure out LinkedIn when your company has layoffs. You’ll just come across as desperate, and desperation does not work in any social situation, whether it’s LinkedIn or JDate or eHarmony or Match.com. You don’t want to be desperate. You want to be confident — someone people want to talk to, not avoid.

### Should we focus on networking with people who are in senior positions, or is that a mistake?

You should connect with people at all levels. In fact, people who are just starting out can be very helpful to you. They have access, and might be more willing to show you how to navigate a particular company or profession. At Columbia I used to tell my peers,

“Be nice to your students, because you’re going to work for them one day.” You often find that the most helpful people are not the presidents of companies.

### What kinds of things do people get wrong with social media?

In 2015, there’s absolutely no reason you shouldn’t have a recent, recognizable photo of yourself on LinkedIn. Not you as a child, not you *with* a child, not *of* your child, but a recent, recognizable photo. I go to so many conferences where I meet people I know on Twitter, and they have a photo from twenty years ago, and they don’t look anything like themselves.

### How about e-mail etiquette?

I’d say that while everyone is always talking about social media and mobile media, e-mail still makes the world go round. Make sure you are a good, clear communicator on e-mail. If you’re wishy-washy or have poor spelling, grammar, or punctuation, those things are going to come back to bite you. I would also say that in a world of so much e-mail, one of the ways to stand out when you’re networking is to send a handwritten thank-you note after you meet someone. I also have an etiquette rule: never call anybody to ask for help without e-mailing them first. You never know if someone has had a bad morning, or if his or her kid has a fever. If they’re active on social media, you could check their social-media posts before you make that call and get a clue to how they’re feeling; for the first time in history, people are signaling what they’re feeling publicly.

### Is it ever OK to ignore someone’s LinkedIn request?

My own policy on LinkedIn is to say yes to people who I already know, who I’d like to know, and who I should know. That may sound overly open, but it’s sort of what you already do in real life. If you’re at a cocktail party and someone approaches you, you’re not going to say, “Oh my God, stay away.” The fact that you’re at the same cocktail party gives you the sense that maybe this person is worth saying hello to.

### Is face-to-face networking still important?

A hundred percent. That’s why events and conferences count.

### Where do you stand on the value of Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest for professional networking? Should we keep the personal and professional separated?

It’s very subjective, and there are no rules. Be on the network that makes the most sense to you and that fits into your life. And then get comfortable. It’s very hard to separate your personal and professional life, though. Some people say, “Well, Facebook is for personal and LinkedIn is for professional.” But what do you do when your best client asks to be your friend on Facebook? Are you going to say “no, thanks”? No. But you should actively



DEIDRE SCHOO

## SREE SREENIVASAN BY THE NUMBERS



FACEBOOK  
226,000+ FOLLOWERS



TWITTER  
65,000+ FOLLOWERS



LINKEDIN  
12,000+ CONNECTIONS



INSTAGRAM  
3,000+ FOLLOWERS

**You have to understand  
that true networking  
is not about tit for tat.  
You can't think,  
"Gee, what am I going  
to get from this?"  
The more you do  
for the world, the  
more you get back.**



manage your Facebook page. Facebook has great privacy features, and you can put people in different lists so they can't see as much of your stuff.

**You have more than 200,000 followers on your personal Facebook page. But you also have a second Facebook page called SreeTips, where you regularly post digital-job leads. Is this a way of giving something back?**

It's a tough economy, and people need help. You want to give people a sense of all the opportunities out there, and that's why I do it. And I get nice notes from people telling me when they've applied for a job. I'm really humbled when that happens. If we can all help each other, there's nothing better.

**You're well known in the Columbia community for throwing parties at your apartment where you encourage guests to make connections. Tell us more.**

I think it's wrong to gather people together and not introduce them to each other. My wife and I have an annual holiday open house where we invite about three hundred people to stop by between the hours of 4:00 and 11:00 p.m. In the course of the evening,

we stop the party four times and have everybody introduce themselves. People can't believe it; they've never seen anything like it. People are shocked, and sometimes they're put on the spot, but they make great connections.

**You got your master's degree in journalism at Columbia, then spent twenty years teaching at the journalism school and a year as the University's chief digital officer before you took your current job at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Can you speak to the power of your Columbia network?**

I arrived at twenty-one and left at forty-three, so I've been completely shaped by my Columbia experience. Even though I'm no longer a member of the full-time faculty, I'm super excited to help in any way I can. I think all alumni should get involved, go back for reunions, sign up for the newsletters, join the LinkedIn groups, and so on. People who don't use the networks are making a mistake. Everything I've gotten is from having Columbia connections, and I'm forever grateful for it. 

For more networking tips from Columbia staff, faculty, and alumni, as well as a list of career resources at Columbia, visit [www.magazine.columbia.edu/networking](http://www.magazine.columbia.edu/networking).



Daniel Lalinde  
on his farm in  
the Maldonado  
Department of  
southeastern  
Uruguay.



As climate change creates agricultural instability around the world, Columbia scientists are testing a seasonal forecasting system in Uruguay to give farmers a fighting chance.

# Seeds of Hope

By David J. Craig

Daniel Lalinde doesn't need a climate scientist to tell him that the sun shines hotter and brighter than it used to. At El Coraje, his farm in Uruguay's Garzón hills, he can feel the difference on his face and arms, which burn more easily now. To protect himself, he no longer works his fields between eleven in the morning and four in the afternoon. His cattle are suffering, too: they cling to the edges of their pasture, seeking shelter beneath the tree canopy.

"The summer is very hot, and the winter isn't as cold. It isn't even winter," says Lalinde, who works alongside his wife, Margarita, and a few part-time farm hands, growing vegetables and raising cattle for beef. "We see extremes in rainfall, too. Either there's too much rain or not enough. There is no middle ground."

The Lalindes dug a small reservoir on their land so that the livestock have enough to drink during dry spells. They diligently follow the weather reports on local television, looking for hints about how much water they ought to preserve on any given day. The daily reports are useful, but the Lalindes say that longer-term forecasts would serve them better. If they knew their pastures were likely to wilt in the summer, for instance, they might buy fewer calves in the spring, to ensure that the cattle

they do raise get enough grass to eat. Even minor miscalculations can prove costly: packaged feed is expensive and will eat into their profit margin.

Farmers across the globe must grapple with extreme weather fluctuations, but in Uruguay, a country where more than 80 percent of the land is devoted to raising animals and growing crops, these challenges are felt acutely. This is why the Uruguayan government is working with Columbia's International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) to create one of the most sophisticated agricultural information networks in the world. The country's new National Agricultural Information System, funded by a \$10 million loan from the World Bank, and developed in partnership with scientists at Uruguay's National Agricultural Research Institute and the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture, and Fisheries, will help farmers prepare for each new season by generating remarkably precise climate forecasts that predict temperature and rainfall patterns up to three months in advance. The forecasts will be unusual in their geographic specificity, providing different climate scenarios for about forty distinct regions in this country the size of Florida. The climate data will then be translated into terms useful to farmers — for example, by visiting a website and clicking a map to indicate where

Photographs by Francesco Fiondella '01GSAS, '01JRN

he lives, a cattle farmer will learn how much rain is likely to fall on his land over the summer, whether it will be spread out evenly over the season or arrive in a few torrential bursts, and how this could affect groundwater levels and the lushness of his fields.

“If the fields are going to dry out, maybe he’ll invest in new irrigation equipment instead of buying lots of new calves,” says Walter Baethgen, a Columbia agronomist and environmental scientist who is overseeing the ten IRI researchers who are working on the project.

And if heavy storms are expected on Uruguay’s western coastal lowlands, where flooding has often caused corn, sorghum, and soybean seedlings to wash away?

“Maybe they’ll wait out the rains before they plant,” Baethgen says. “The idea is to provide farmers with cutting-edge climate data in terms that anybody can understand.”

The new seasonal forecasting service could be transformative for Uruguay, a small democracy of three and a half million people wedged between Brazil and Argentina on the southeast coast of South America. Farm products represent more than two-thirds of Uruguay’s exports, but in recent years the changing climate has led to poor harvests. While the country has staved off widespread hunger, thanks to ample grain reserves and a modern food-distribution system, it has suffered financially. The last major drought, which occurred in 2008 and lasted almost a year, affected not only farmers but also truckers, storage-facility owners, grain-processing-plant employees, dockworkers, shippers, exporters, commodities investors, and financiers.

“A nation whose economy is based upon agriculture will see its fortunes rise and fall on the shift in the winds,” says Baethgen, a

“The idea is to provide farmers with cutting-edge climate data in terms that anybody can understand.”

— Walter Baethgen



Walter Baethgen in Las Brujas, Uruguay, where he has established a field office for Columbia’s International Research Institute for Climate and Society.

Uruguayan farmers commonly dig watering holes on their land to capture rainfall during the wet seasons.



native Uruguayan who came to the United States in 1984 to earn a PhD in crop and soil environmental sciences at Virginia Tech. “That’s the way it’s always been.”

Baethgen, sixty, has devoted much of his career to helping South American farmers survive these shifts. He began this work in the early 1990s, when, as a researcher for the International Fertilizer Development Center, an Alabama-based nonprofit, he conducted some of the first studies showing how annual yields of wheat, barley, rice, corn, soybeans, cotton, coffee, and many other crops in South America were likely to be affected by climate change. His research, which employed a novel combination of computer-based climate- and crop-simulation models, carried dire warnings: food production on this continent was likely to drop off and to become less consistent from season to season.

“It wasn’t obvious to people at the time that global warming was going to be bad for agriculture in this part of the world,” says Baethgen. “A warmer atmosphere was certainly going to increase

precipitation overall, which you’d think would be good for crops. But the science showed that fluctuations in the weather were going to hurt most farmers.”

Baethgen soon published papers describing how farmers could minimize crop losses in extreme weather by adjusting their soil chemistry, planting schedules, and irrigation strategies. He became frustrated, though, at how difficult it was to change behavior. Part of the problem, he found, was that farmers had trouble drawing clear lessons from seasonal climate forecasts. This was understandable because the forecasts available at the time were vague instruments, offering only predictions of whether the average temperature and total rainfall for an entire season would be low, normal, or high. Baethgen also realized that many of his fellow scientists did not effectively communicate their recommendations to farmers: too often they would advise farmers to make certain tilling, planting, or fertilizing decisions based upon a single climate variable. The farmers tended to shrug them off.



“Farmers make decisions based on all sorts of factors — the weather, obviously, but also market prices, production costs, fertilization requirements, the risk of disease to crops,” he says. “They think about these factors holistically, and often quite intuitively. If you tell a farmer there’s a 40 percent chance of getting more rain than normal, and a 20 percent chance of getting less rain than normal, how is he supposed to use that information? He’s trying to decide whether to plant soybeans or maize. You need to give him information in a way that helps him answer that question.”

In 2004, Baethgen was recruited by Columbia to be part of the IRI, an interdisciplinary unit within Columbia’s Earth Institute whose mission is to help people adapt to climate change, especially in developing countries. The IRI’s forty-member staff includes climate scientists, as well as researchers who, like Baethgen, specialize in making climate data accessible and relevant to people working in agriculture, public health, urban planning, economic development, ecology, and other sectors.

“The IRI is the only place I know of that has made a science of turning raw climate data into actionable knowledge,” says Baethgen. “It’s a place where a Columbia professor can tell a public-health official in Bangladesh if floods are likely to cause cholera epidemics anytime soon. Or, in my case, whether farmers ought to be worried about their cattle going thirsty.”

Since coming to Columbia, Baethgen has contributed to IRI agriculture projects throughout the world. He has worked on efforts to discover which types of corn are most likely to withstand rising temperatures in West Africa, how rice crops will react to new rain patterns in India, and what potato varieties might survive drought conditions in Tanzania. Baethgen’s research in Uruguay, meanwhile, has benefited from the cross-disciplinary contributions of IRI climate modelers, economists, management experts, psychologists, sociologists, ecologists, and financial analysts. His access to the University’s intellectual resources, he says, has enabled him to undertake increasingly ambitious projects in his home country, many of them supporting the National Agricultural Research Institute (known by its Spanish abbreviation, INIA), a research and development agency

with close ties to Uruguay’s agriculture ministry. In 2007, for instance, Baethgen helped to organize a collaboration between INIA and IRI scientists to create a system for monitoring soil-moisture levels across Uruguay; electromagnetic images of the soil captured by NASA satellites are now analyzed regularly by Uruguayan scientists to see if drought conditions are imminent. “The country’s agriculture officials appreciate this, because it can validate their request for relief funds if, say, they want to provide emergency credit lines to farmers for purchasing water,” says Baethgen, who in 2010 received the Morosoli de Oro, a prestigious award given to

Uruguayan citizens for service to their country. “A lot of trust has been built up between Uruguay and Columbia over the years.”

The relationship deepened last year when INIA allotted the IRI \$1.6 million to lead the development of its new seasonal forecasting and information service. Baethgen quickly assembled a group of Columbia scientists with the expertise to build the necessary climate-modeling technologies and to present the results in a way that was useful to farmers. He set up an IRI office in Las Brujas, a small town thirty miles outside of Montevideo, to accommodate the large numbers of Columbia faculty, researchers, and students who would be traveling to Uruguay to work on the project.

“We now have a steady stream of Columbia scientists coming here,” says Baethgen, whose role on the project is to coordinate

**“If a farmer tells the website where he lives, how he irrigates, and what fertilizers he uses, he’s going to get individualized feedback about what his crop yield could look like.”**

— Catherine Vaughan



the collaborations between Uruguayan scientists and their Columbia partners. “Eventually, the new IRI office will be promoting the involvement of Columbians on similar climate-risk-management efforts throughout the Southern Cone region of South America.”

The first Columbians to work on the project were climate scientists led by Paula Gonzalez, an associate research scientist at IRI who specializes in operating computer models that generate seasonal forecasts. These computer models, Gonzalez explains, are similar to those used to create the daily weather forecasts delivered by TV meteorologists. The main difference is that whereas meteorological forecasts are based solely on analyses of the planet’s current atmospheric conditions, seasonal forecasts also incorporate predictions of how sea-surface temperatures are likely to change over the next three to six months. Scientists have learned to anticipate sea-surface temperatures this far in advance, Gonzalez says, by observing the atmospheric cycles known as El Niño and La Niña, which cause predictable changes in water temperature across the eastern tropical Pacific and, in turn, affect weather patterns around the earth.

According to Gonzalez, the computer models that she and her colleagues are developing for Uruguay’s National Agricultural Information System (SNIA) will produce seasonal forecasts that will in some ways be the most sophisticated in South America. In addition to being geographically precise — the Lalindes, for instance, will get different forecasts than will cattle farmers in neighboring districts — the forecasts will describe the future climatic conditions of each region in unusual detail. Rather than simply predicting average temperature or rainfall accumulation for the next season, for example, they will indicate whether intense heat waves or dry spells may be coming.

“This is what climate scientists call ‘weather-within-climate’ predictions,” says Gonzalez, whose team is also training Uruguayan technicians to operate the models. “We can’t possibly say what the weather will look like on any given day, or any given week, months in advance. But we can get an idea of how wet and dry periods are likely to be distributed, based on the patterns of high- and low-pressure systems that are appearing in our simulations.”

A separate group of IRI researchers led by Catharine Vaughan ’09GSAS, an environmental scientist who studies how people make decisions related to climate change, was recruited by Baethgen to develop the Web portal that farmers will use to access SNIA’s climate forecasts. This portal is the most distinct aspect of SNIA’s service, according to Vaughan; never before, she says, have seasonal climate forecasts been made available to people in a form as user-friendly and practical. In addition to telling a farmer what climatic conditions to expect next season, the portal will also tell him how these conditions could affect the yields of his crops. It will do this, Vaughan says, by analyzing the farmer’s climate forecast against a database containing huge amounts of information on past harvests.

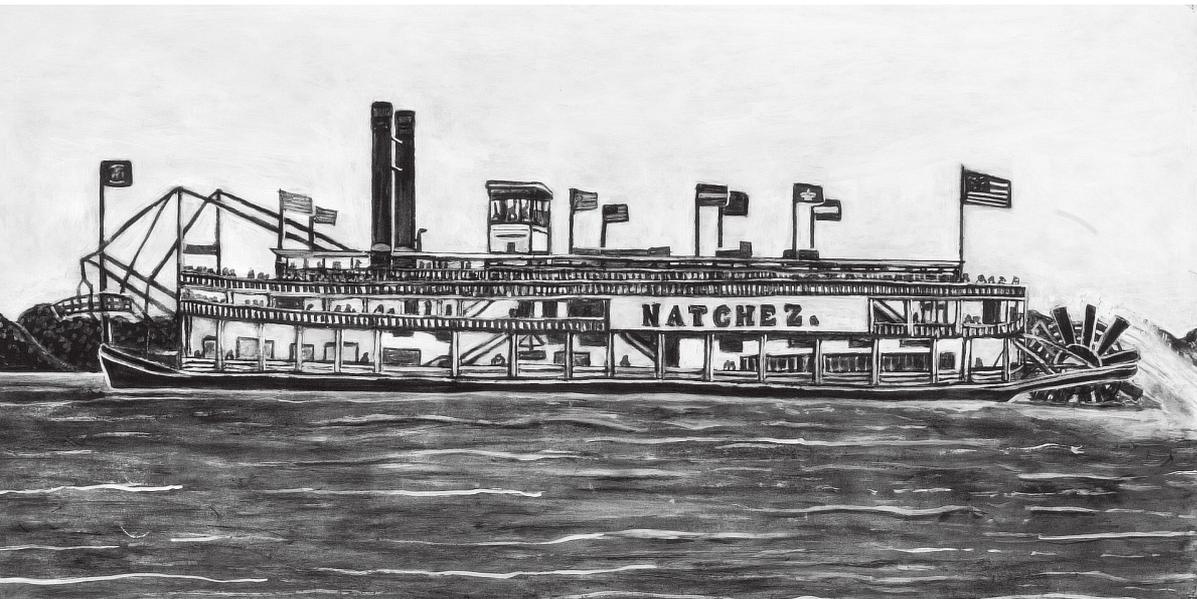
“If he tells the website where he lives, what type of soil is on his land, how he irrigates, and what fertilizers he uses, he’s going to get individualized feedback about what his crop yield could look like,” says Vaughan, who is working with Uruguayan social scientists and agriculture experts in creating the portal. “Maybe he’ll see what the predicted outcome is for corn, and then get a similar analysis for soybeans so he can compare the two.”

To Baethgen, a lot is riding on the project’s success. He believes that if large numbers of Uruguayan farmers use the forecasting service — and if this has a demonstrable impact on their productivity and livelihoods — other countries might implement similar forecasting systems. The approach could be effective, he says, anywhere people have Internet access and a well-functioning agriculture ministry.

“The reason you don’t see systems like this operating in the US or Europe is because wealthy countries have government-subsidized insurance programs that bail out farmers whenever there is a bad harvest,” says Baethgen. “As a result, there’s not much demand within the agricultural industry for something like this. Developing countries, on the other hand, can’t afford expensive farm subsidies. But they can afford to give their farmers the information they need to pursue efficient, climate-smart agriculture.” ☞

*Francesco Fiondella contributed reporting to this article.*

■■■■■■■■■■  
Farm scenes  
in southern  
Uruguay.



ARTWORK BY WILLIE BIRCH

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COURTESY OF ARTHUR ROGER GALLERY / CONTEMPLATION: YESTERDAY, TODAY, 2005

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# After the Deluge

Ten years after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans has attracted a flood of people, money, and attention. But is the Big Easy really better off?

One writer reflects on the future of his city.



BY LOLIS ERIC ELIE '86JRN

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**The streets were quiet then.** Few people. No dogs.

More random wandering chickens than ever, though.

There was a curfew, but there weren't enough cops around to enforce it.

Still, there was that vague feeling that you could be pulled over while following your headlights through the stench of receded floodwaters and dead things, en route to a nighttime gathering of the "huddled masses," as one friend called the guests at her post-K potluck suppers.

We happy few.

We believed then and ever in New Orleans as a special place. We who had houses and jobs and means felt we had to hold the ground until the rest of our people could make it back home to join the fray.

There were lots of meetings then.

There were official white-collar meetings of experts and politicians and financiers. We watched those mostly from the cheap seats. Then there were the meetings we held among ourselves, plotting strategy

to combat the Disneyfication and diminishment of our city, which is what we were certain the experts and politicians and financiers were plotting to thrust upon us.

In the winter of 2006, Loyola University held a series of forums on post-Katrina New Orleans. I sat on a panel with John Biguenet '03CC, the poet and playwright. "The great enemy of New Orleans culture is American culture," he said. In other words, our brass bands, Creole architecture, and neighborhood restaurants are at war with pop music, mirrored-glass condos, and Happy Meals.

Oh, what a rallying cry that statement was for us who felt so abused and abandoned by the greater nation. New Orleans was different from America! Better than America! If the United States can boast of its God-ordained exceptionalism, then certainly my proud city-state can do likewise. "Buy us back, Chirac!" proclaimed the Krewe du Vieux in that first Mardi Gras season after the federal levees failed. The national media didn't necessarily buy into the superiority part, but they expended much ink and airtime explaining how different we were from America proper: how much poorer, how much blacker, how much — how shall I put this? More quaint? Less sophisticated? Less modern?

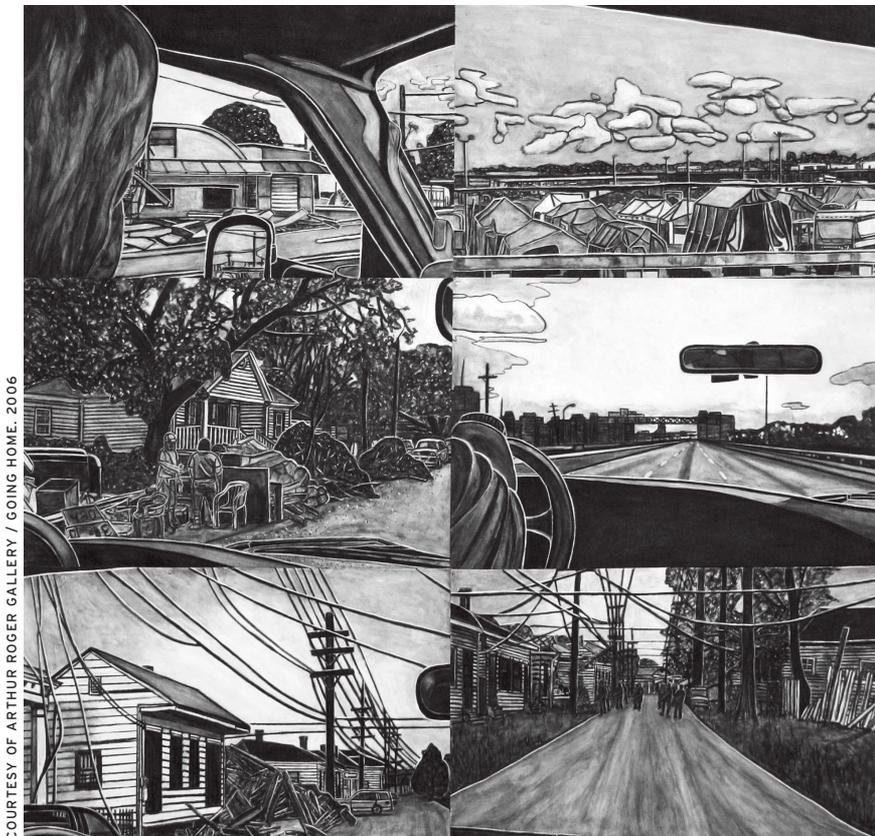
I've quoted Biguenet's statement often. But even as I write this, my old understanding of what happened to us on August 29, 2005, is giving way to a new view, a view less exceptional. We New Orleanians have our own ways and rituals, but, alas, our situation was and is American — all too American.

The failure of the federal levees during Hurricane Katrina was the worst disaster to hit my city since the Supreme Court's 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, which upheld segregation under the doctrine of "separate but equal." But to relegate the flood-related events and their aftermath to the corner of the national memory reserved for those rare, outlying exceptions is to do a great disservice to the country. For as has flooded New Orleans, so has flooded the nation.



Growing up, we never evacuated during storms.

I wrote that in my *Times-Picayune* column in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Cindy, roughly two months before Katrina hit. After reading



COURTESY OF ARTHUR ROGER GALLERY / GOING HOME. 2006

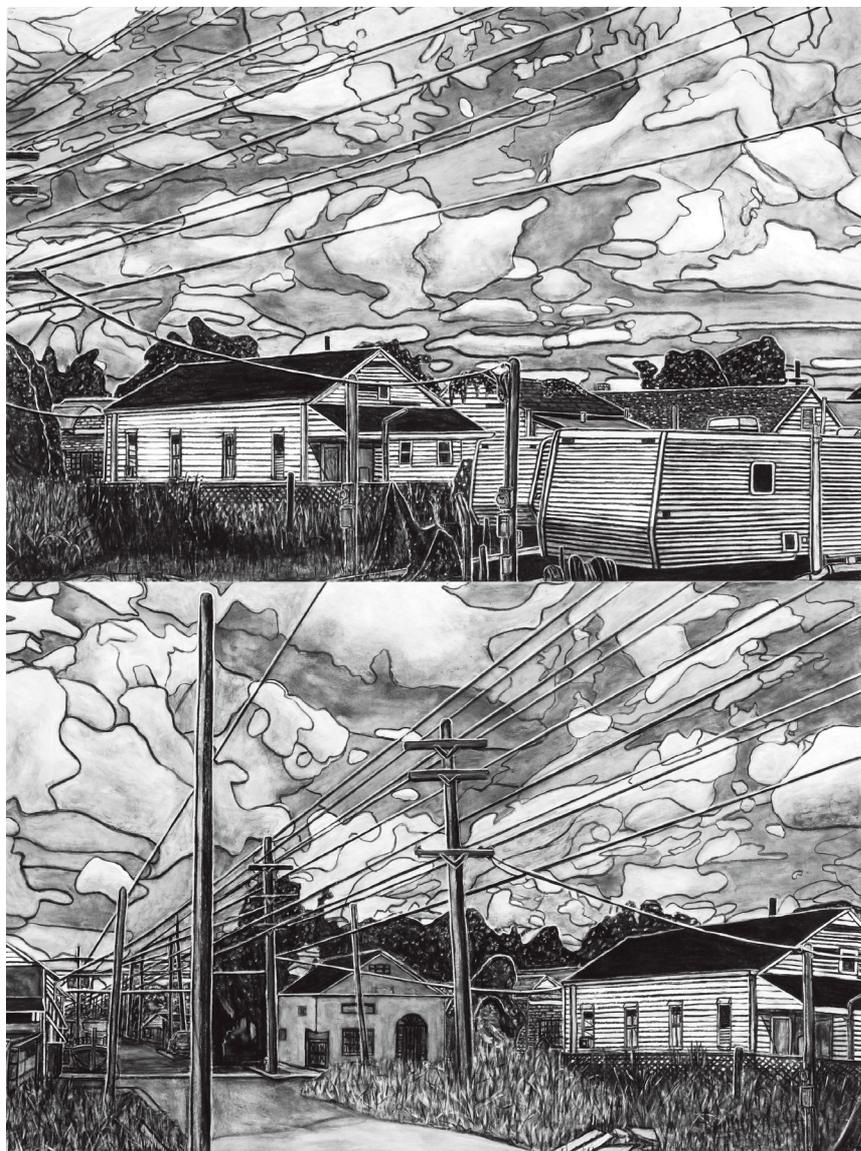
those remarks, Sidney Fauria, a coastal-oceanographer friend, showed me what had changed. Driving through St. Bernard Parish, an area that borders both the city of New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico, I saw the coastal erosion. Wetlands and cypress swamps had given way to dying tree stumps and open ocean. Hurricanes gain strength over water and lose strength over land. The ocean's encroachment is a major factor in the increasing strength of hurricanes in recent years and the increasing vulnerability of coastal and even inland populations. Since 1932, Louisiana has lost an area of land roughly the size of Delaware. The land that remains continues to erode.

And then there are the petroleum and pipeline companies. In 2013, one of the levee boards charged with overseeing flood protection in much of coastal Louisiana sued ninety-seven of them, charging that they had failed to repair the damage done by the canals they had dredged for their oil pipelines. Those canals allow salt water to creep in and destroy the vegetation that holds the land together. A federal judge threw out the lawsuit earlier this year. It is being appealed, but whatever the outcome, it's clear that Louisiana is vanishing into the Gulf of Mexico. Add to that rising sea levels, which result from global warming and the melting of the glaciers. These factors leave Louisiana particularly at risk, but we are not alone.

The flooding that happened on the East Coast during Hurricane Sandy was intensified by sea-level rise. Please forgive me if I saw a glimmer of a silver lining in the misery and devastation that befell the hardest-hit communities. Maybe, I thought, if the East Coast media and financial centers feel the effects of environmental degradation firsthand, they might move the nation to more aggressive action.



I returned to New Orleans about a week after Hurricane Katrina hit. I had two missions. I was working with filmmakers Dawn Logsdon and Lucie Faulknor to complete a documentary, *Faubourg Tremé: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans*, about one of the city's historic neighborhoods. I was also trying to salvage what I could from my mother's home. I did the same for a friend who lived a mile or so away, near the



COURTESY OF ARTHUR ROGER GALLERY / AFTER THE STORM, 2007

London Avenue Canal. The house was nowhere near any beach, but to get to it I had to trudge through three-foot sand drifts. It was in that way that I learned that there was sand several layers beneath the ground and that one of the reasons the forty-year-old floodwalls had failed was that they hadn't been dug deep enough, hadn't been anchored beneath the layers of soil and sand into something solid.

In his 2010 film *The Big Uneasy*, Harry Shearer interviews engineers and other experts to determine why New Orleans flooded. Their conclusions form a damning indictment of the work done by the US Army Corps of Engineers. These

We New Orleanians have our own ways and rituals, but, alas, our situation was and is American — all too American.

views parallel those reached by the Corps itself. “The hurricane protection system in New Orleans and southeast Louisiana was a system in name only,” the Corps said in its report. “Corps Takes Blame for New Orleans Flooding,” the *Washington Post* headline read on June 1, 2006. “Army Builders Accept Blame Over Flooding,” the *New York Times* said. Still, most narratives about the near death of New Orleans have everything to do with natural disaster and nothing to do with man-made catastrophe, engineering failures, or fatal budget cuts. *The Big Uneasy* is a smoking gun, a national call to action to improve the way the Army Corps operates. Yet the film and its message were largely ignored.

It has taken some retraining, but I’ve learned to avoid the words “Hurricane Katrina” when talking about what befell my city. This isn’t a choice born of political correctness; it’s a matter of scientific fact. The storm that hit the coastal areas of Mississippi and Louisiana in 2005 was so powerful that it leveled neighborhoods, leaving little more than cement steps in places where homes had been. When I returned to New Orleans, which lies between Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River about a hundred miles from the Gulf of Mexico, there were very few houses that had been similarly flattened. It was floodwaters, not storm winds, that doomed my city. It was the failure of the levees, designed and constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The hurricane occasioned those failures. But that flood-control system was supposed to be able to withstand a storm even stronger than Katrina.

In early 2007, the US Army Corps of Engineers reported that there were 122 poorly maintained levees in twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. That statement, released less than eighteen months after Hurricane Katrina, is the kind that one would expect to provoke an uproar around the nation.

It didn’t.



If you’d asked my grandmother, she would have told you that she earned her living “scrubbing floors.” And she’d also have told you how proud she was that her daughter had finished college and, at her insistence, chosen a very practi-

cal career in teaching. A practical woman, my mother made sure that her house had all the requisite insurances and that she kept appropriate receipts for big-ticket purchases. So she was optimistic that, if fairly evaluated, her losses would be fairly compensated. Repeated calls to her insurance company resulted in little more than insults gently phrased. Then she hired a lawyer and — voilà. One carefully crafted letter later, she got most of what she asked for, though still less than what she deserved.

Imagine the various circumstances of Katrina evacuees, scattered to distant cities with little access to phones or social networks, let alone legal representation. Imagine if they had the disadvantage of sounding uneducated or “black” or “Cajun” on the phone. People in the worst of these circumstances, no matter how legitimate their claims, might have become so frustrated at the refusal of the insurance companies to honor their policies that they would have settled for the lowball offer. No need to imagine it. That’s what happened to many people. Too many people. Our experience with the insurance companies was not exceptional: “FEMA has taken the unprecedented step of reopening all Superstorm Sandy flood claims because thousands of homeowners said insurance companies intentionally lowballed damage estimates,” reported NPR in March.



Public education in New Orleans, outside the magnet schools, was bad. Even before the flood, the state had enacted a policy that would allow it to take over “failing” schools. After Hurricane Katrina, the state moved even more aggressively to take over most of the Orleans Parish public-school system. It stopped paying teachers shortly after the storm. In December of 2005, while our people were still looking for missing relatives, burying their dead, and trying to keep body and soul together, the Orleans Parish School Board fired all its teachers. All.

My intellectual deficits render me incapable of understanding how anyone could improve a school system by firing the mothers, fathers, neighbors, and cousins of the very students they professed to want to educate. When public-school students returned in larger numbers than

Rather than rush to follow us, the nation would be wise to first determine if we are going in the right direction



expected, the state's new Recovery School District found itself overwhelmed. Students were served frozen sandwiches. In some schools the emphasis was more on security than instruction. Inexperienced young teachers proved themselves to be inexperienced and young. Since then, many of the fired teachers have been rehired.

Most of the schools in New Orleans are now privatized. Fans of charter schools have rushed to proclaim their success in turning around a failing school system. Research on Reforms, a watchdog organization that analyzes the reported progress of New Orleans public schools, takes a dim view of the claims of success: "Despite the 'achievement gains' reported during the past nine years by the ardent supporters of this 'reform'

movement, the RSD-NO still performs below the vast majority of the other districts at the 4th and 8th grades on LEAP [the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program]."

The New Orleans charter-school system, made possible by Hurricane Katrina, is often cited as a model to be emulated by school systems around the nation. But rather than rush to follow us, the nation would be wise to first determine if we are going in the right direction.



When I moved back to New Orleans in 1991, after a ten-year absence, I wanted to live in an old New Orleans neighborhood. A friend who lived

in the French Quarter told me, “There are ten reasons not to live here, and seven of them revolve around parking.” So I moved to Faubourg Tremé, a neighborhood that looks like New Orleans, with its Creole cottages; feels like New Orleans, with its houses close to each other and close to the street; and sounds like New Orleans, with its street parades and neighbors talking loudly on their porches. My house is two blocks from the

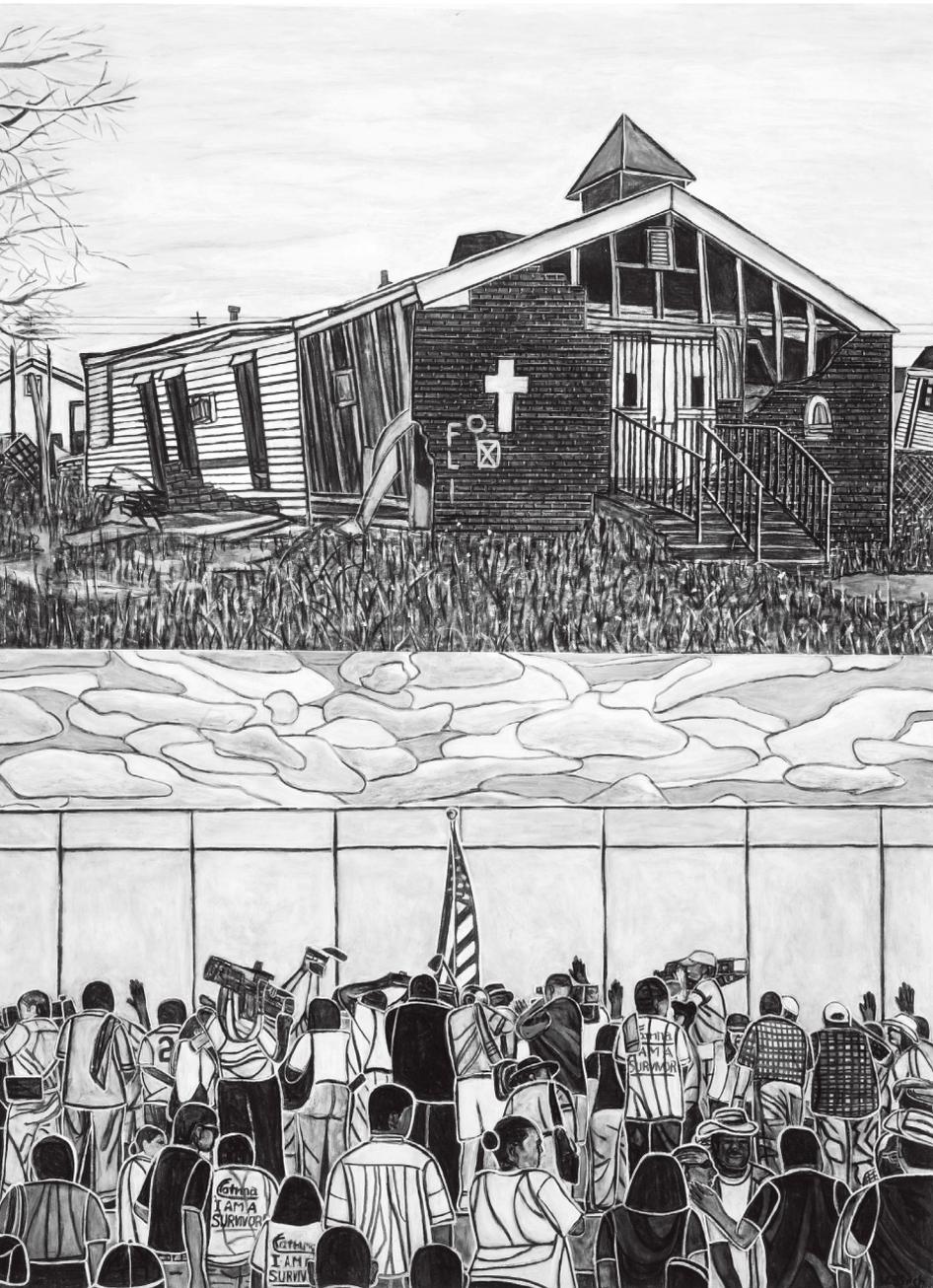
French Quarter, and before the Katrina influx, the only time I had trouble parking directly in front of my door was during Carnival season and on the occasional night when there was a particularly big event in the French Quarter. These days, I often have to park down the street or around the corner.

New Orleans has seen an explosion in the population of immigrants from Latin America, many of whom were recruited from as far away as Brazil to do cleanup work after the flood. These workers were necessary because the government that had flown New Orleanians off rooftops and out of the state didn’t have any interest in flying them back to clean up their own city. But it is not the immigrants from Honduras or Guatemala that are taking up the parking spaces. For Tremé residents in search of parking, and everyday New Orleanians in search of normalcy, the great adversary has been the swarms of hipsters that have descended on our city.

For millennials, volunteering in postdiluvian New Orleans was like a domestic Peace Corps. It was hot, faraway, and foreign. But it had cell phones, air conditioners, cable TV, and English-speaking residents. YURPs — young urban rebuilding professionals — came in droves. Many stayed. And why not? The city has always held a certain bohemian attraction.

Contrary to popular myth, New Orleans has never been entirely insular. Many natives and most politicians would gladly bulldoze a historic neighborhood for the promise of a new Walmart or water park. Many New Orleans chefs and musicians continue to cook red beans and play “When the Saints Go Marching In,” but restaurants like Commander’s Palace have always looked beyond the Creole canon for culinary inspiration, and Ellis Marsalis’s first album was, among other things, a modernist tour of time signatures. We dutifully ripped out most of our streetcar tracks like all the other modern American cities, making way for the exhaust fumes of city buses. If you go to a Saints or Pelicans game, you’ll hear the same rock anthems that they play at every other sporting event in the country. We are not unaffected by the national culture.

But for the natives and immigrants who have found “their” New Orleans among the many cultures, places, and possibilities of the city, there is



COURTESY OF ARTHUR ROGER GALLERY / REMEMBERING KATRINA, 2007

a fear that the new immigrants will change the city, will make it Brooklyn or San Francisco or one of the many urban American areas where gentrification has moved out all the working-class (read “black”) residents. If it were not for the influence of our West African and Haitian ancestors, New Orleans culture would be a pale, bland approximation of its greatness. But many of these descendants are being forced out as rents increase and as the city continues its policy of bulldozing historic buildings rather than renovating them.

*Land of Opportunity*, a 2010 documentary by Luisa Dantas about the rebuilding and gentrification of New Orleans, carries the tag line, “Happening to a city near you.” Sure enough, the 2009 New Orleans International Human Rights Film Festival featured *Some Place Like Home*, a film about the gentrification of Downtown Brooklyn, which, due to our own influx of these same East Coast trend chasers, is suddenly a city nearer to us than ever.

Post-Katrina émigrés were not the first wave of Americans to my city. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Americans flocked here to make New Orleans the great economic engine that Napoleon had only dreamed about. They sought to systematically destroy Francophone New Orleans and the antebellum black middle class as steps toward making the city the hub for cotton, sugar, and other trade goods. Fast-forward to 1857. The Mistick Krewe of Comus, the first of the city’s Carnival parade crews, is formed, thus giving birth to the city’s modern Mardi Gras celebration. But these founders were not native New Orleanians. They were Americans who had come to the Creole city. Ironically, these immigrants, rather than Americanizing New Orleans, were Creolized by it. There is hope for the city, in that there is hope that the power of our culture can turn these American hipsters into New Orleanians.

As for the Latino immigrants, there is promise there as well. When you read books about Creole cuisine, often the authors, dilettante historians at best, refer to the “Spanish” influence on our food. It took me a while to realize that Spain, in the 1700s and 1800s, included those Spanish colonies in the Caribbean. Much like the Haitians who provided our city with its last influx of Francophone culture after their revolution, I hope that the Hispanophone immigrants from the south — our

South — can reinvigorate our connection to those other places from which our ancestors came.



What the nation wants more than anything from the tenth anniversary of the levee failures is closure. America would like to take a minute to reflect on the challenge of Katrina and the imperfect initial response. Then we’d like to sing a long congratulatory chorus, celebrating the triumph of American gumption over horrific circumstances. The politicians and businessmen boast that they have achieved this kind of closure. They are not entirely wrong. There has been a lot of verifiable progress in the past few years. New construction. New residents. New hope.

But I feel like a character in Jean Paul Sartre’s play *No Exit*. I know what the nation wants to hear, what the nation needs to hear, but I find myself incapable of saying the words. For if the disaster of the levee failures was a disaster felt most acutely by our poorest residents, then an evaluation of our success or failure must, of necessity, evaluate the post-Katrina condition of these very residents. But the poor were generally left out of our recovery schemes. The state’s Road Home program was designed to assist homeowners in their effort to rebuild and return to the city. It even helped owners of rental properties. Yet it made no provisions for the renters themselves.

If you drive the streets of the Lower Ninth Ward, the poster child for the Katrina disaster, many blocks look as if it has been ten months, not ten years, since the catastrophe. As for all the people the government flew out of the city in the weeks after the flood, many have returned — some have not — but there’s no accurate count. The 2010 census didn’t even ask if you were a Katrina evacuee stranded away from home.

While the flood-protection system is stronger now than ever, it’s still not capable of handling a Category 5 storm. Coastal erosion continues virtually unabated. According to Restore Louisiana Now, it could cost \$100 billion to save our coast. The state’s entire budget for fiscal year 2014 was \$24.7 billion.

I can’t offer closure. I can offer lessons.

I know. You’d rather have closure. 

*Lolis Eric Elie is a former columnist for the Times-Picayune and a former story editor for HBO’s Treme. He is a contributing writer to the Oxford American.*

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 If it were not for the influence of our West African and Haitian ancestors, New Orleans culture would be a pale, bland approximation of its greatness.  
 .....

# NEWS

## University bestows inaugural Global Freedom of Expression Prizes

The eleven judges who sit on the Constitutional Court of Turkey found themselves in the international spotlight last year after the Turkish government tightened its grip on the Internet. Free-speech advocates around the world waited anxiously to see if the judges would side with prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his allies, whose government had banned Twitter and YouTube for hosting leaked recordings of officials purportedly engaging in corruption.

Instead, the judges ruled unequivocally against the government. They overturned the bans, and, in a related case, found that the government lacked the authority to block websites or keep track of Internet users' activity without first obtaining court orders. In lifting the Twitter ban, the judges called the government's actions "illegal,

arbitrary, and a serious restriction on the right to obtain information."

For these decisions, the Constitutional Court of Turkey was recently awarded the Columbia Global Freedom of Expression Prize, a new honor the University is bestowing upon jurists, lawyers, and activists whose actions strengthen international norms of free speech. The two other recipients of the inaugural prizes are the Constitutional Court of Zimbabwe and the nonprofit Media Legal Defence Initiative.

"Judges and lawyers around the world routinely display great courage by standing firm in their commitment to free expression and the open sharing of information, often under harsh attacks against their independence," said President Lee C. Bollinger in announcing the awards. "These individuals

are creating a new set of global legal standards essential for safeguarding speech and the press in our modern society."

The prizes were given March 11, at the close of a two-day conference hosted by Columbia's Global Freedom of Expression and Information initiative, a new University-wide effort that promotes faculty and student research on free-speech laws around the world. The conference saw eighty prominent judges, attorneys, human-rights activists, and legal scholars from twenty nations come to Columbia to discuss recent trends in freedom of expression. A recurring theme in their talks was that wider recognition of international legal standards for protecting free speech — such as stated in Article 19 of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights — is likely to occur as the world becomes more interconnected economically and culturally.

Agnès Callamard, a prominent human-rights activist and scholar whom Bollinger recruited to direct the new initiative, said to those in attendance, "I think your work demonstrates that the world has a common language when it deals with freedom of expression. Yes, the standards are disputed, but they are known, and they are relied upon by journalists, by activists, and increasingly by judges and lawyers."

In Turkey, this was evident when judges on the constitutional court, in their decisions involving the government's Internet restrictions, quoted extensively from the European Court of Human Rights. "These decisions took courage and helped preserve for the people of Turkey their last bastion of independent information," said Joel Simon, executive director of the US-based nonprofit the Committee to Protect Journalists, who nominated the court for the award.

Similarly, the Constitutional Court of Zimbabwe was recognized for adhering to international legal norms in overturning the criminal convictions of two newspaper journalists who



EILEEN BARROSO

Nani Jansen 'Oglaw and Peter Noorlander, both of the London-based nonprofit Media Legal Defence Initiative, receive the Columbia Global Freedom of Expression Prize on March 11. Looking on are Lee C. Bollinger, Columbia's president; Agnès Callamard, director of the University's Global Freedom of Expression and Information initiative; and Lydia Cacho, a Mexican investigative journalist and human-rights activist who presented the award.

had been found guilty of defaming a member of Zimbabwe's ruling political party. The journalists had reported that a hospital run by this official, Munyaradzi Kereke, was mismanaged; Kereke claimed they got their facts wrong. The high-court judges concluded that the journalists, regardless of any mistakes they may have made, should not have been charged with crimes, because defamation is a matter for civil courts; allowing criminal charges against journalists in such cases, they said, would silence journalists generally.

"In a country that has suffered from state-sanctioned attacks on the media, arbitrary arrests of journalists, and forced closures of newsrooms, this judgment for Zimbabweans cannot be overestimated," said Dario Milo, a South African attorney and legal scholar who nominated the court for the award.

Another prize went to the London-based nonprofit the Media Legal Defence Initiative

(MLDI) for defending a journalist charged with criminal defamation in Burkina Faso. Lohé Issa Konaté, editor of the newspaper *L'Ouragan*, was imprisoned for one year after publishing a story accusing a prosecutor of corruption. When the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights reviewed the case last summer, MLDI petitioned the court to rule in accordance with free-speech precedents established by the European and inter-American human-rights courts; the African court did so, directing the government of Burkina Faso to reform its criminal-defamation laws. The ruling was the African Court's first in a free-speech case and is expected to be widely influential, as it provides a new interpretation of the human-rights charter ratified by thirty-six African countries.

"I hope this judgment is a starting point," said Nani Jansen '06LAW, legal director for MLDI, who was on hand to accept the award.



© BULENT SELCUK / DEMOTIX / CORBIS

Turkish citizens protesting a restrictive Internet law in Istanbul last year.

"I think it underlines that the African Court is a tribunal that has enormous potential for being a progressive human-rights court."

>> To watch video of the ceremony, visit [magazine.columbia.edu/freespeechprize](http://magazine.columbia.edu/freespeechprize).

## School of Continuing Education gets new dean



Jason Wingard

Jason Wingard, formerly the chief learning officer at Goldman Sachs, has been appointed the new dean of the School of Continuing Education. Wingard's deanship begins July 1.

"Jason Wingard's leadership has been demonstrated in the academy, in a variety of innovative private-sector roles, and in the books he has authored," President Lee C. Bollinger said, in announcing Wingard's new appointment. "He is an ideal person to build on the record of innovation and growth that

has occurred at the school under dean Kristine Billmyer, who will be returning to our faculty at the end of this academic year." Billmyer announced last August that she would be stepping down.

At Goldman Sachs, Wingard oversaw Goldman Sachs University, a continuing-education program in which employees take financial-training courses and are immersed in the culture, principles, and history of the firm. Previously, he led executive education at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, where he was also a senior fellow of the Wharton Sports Business Initiative.

Wingard graduated from Stanford, completed master's degrees at Emory University and Harvard, and earned a PhD in education, culture, and society at the University of Pennsylvania. His latest book is *Learning to Succeed: Rethinking Corporate Education in a World of Unrelenting Change*.

"I am privileged and honored to join a faculty and community at Columbia that is dedicated to best-in-class excellence in scholarship, thought leadership, and practical application," said Wingard. "The objective, during my tenure, will be to continue to improve upon the quality and innovation of the academic program, deepen and extend internal and external partnerships and stakeholder engagements, and secure Columbia as one of the most eminent global leaders in interdisciplinary professional education."

## Score, Lion, score: Columbia hires new athletic director, football coach

A new era for Columbia athletics began earlier this year as Peter Pilling, an executive from the nation's largest collegiate sports-marketing company, IMG College, was hired as the University's athletic director and Al Bagnoli, the former Penn head coach, was recruited to lead the Lions' football squad.

As a vice president at IMG College, Pilling oversaw multimedia rights and corporate-sponsorship deals for many Division I athletic departments, including those at Brigham Young University, Texas Christian University, Baylor University, and the US Air Force Academy. The job gave him an intimate look at how sports programs at those and other schools are run, he says, and thus helped prepare him to direct his own athletic department. He had been working toward that goal since holding senior positions in the athletic departments at Brigham Young and Villanova in the early 2000s.

Peter Pilling began revamping the Lions' football program immediately upon being named Columbia's athletic director in January.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JONATHAN LATTIF

"It has always been my dream to serve as an athletic director at a great university," says Pilling, who holds a master's degree in sports administration from Ohio University. "What I've found at Columbia is an extraordinary opportunity to bring together the highest achievements in teaching, learning, and research with a commitment to excellence in athletics."

Said President Lee C. Bollinger in announcing Pilling's hire: "Peter has spent his career working at several of the most respected college sports programs in the country . . . I'm confident that his wealth of knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm will help us build on a strong record of achievement and reach the new levels of excellence that we expect in everything we do as a great university."

Pilling, fifty-six, succeeds M. Dianne Murphy, who served as Columbia's athletic director for eleven years, a period during which the Lions enjoyed some of their most successful seasons ever. In the spring of 2014, for example, the Lions won their second-straight Ivy League baseball crown, earned an undefeated league championship in men's tennis, won the men's Ivy golf title, and brought home a national championship in lightweight rowing. Last winter, the Lions had nationally ranked teams in men's and women's tennis, men's and women's squash, and men's and women's fencing — with both fencing teams finishing the regular season ranked number one in the country.

A notable exception to the Lions' success under Murphy, however, has been the football team. The Light Blue football squad ran through four different head coaches while winning a total of just twenty-three games during Murphy's tenure. The last of these head coaches, Pete Mangurian, resigned in December, following a second-straight 0–10 season; Murphy had announced her intention to step down earlier in the fall.

Pilling says that he began identifying potential candidates to replace Mangurian soon after being interviewed for the athletic-director position in December. "It

was obvious that addressing the football situation had to be a big priority," he says. "So I compiled a list of coaches with the experience to build up all aspects of a football program — from recruiting to game preparation to student-athlete development, combined with success on the field."

At the top of Pilling's list was Al Bagnoli, who, over the course of twenty-three seasons leading the University of Pennsylvania Quakers, had compiled nine Ivy titles and a league record of 112–49, making him the second-winningest head football coach in Ivy history. Bagnoli had retired from Penn just two months earlier but was rumored

**"I said: 'Al, just imagine for a moment that I become Columbia's new athletic director and that you miss being on the field.'"**

– Peter Pilling

to be regretting his decision to step away from the game.

"I heard from an old colleague, Villanova head coach Andy Talley, that Al might be interested," says Pilling. "So I called him up and said, 'Al, just imagine for a moment that I become the new athletic director at Columbia and imagine that you miss being on the field.' I sensed his passion to continue coaching. For the next hour, we talked about what would need to happen for Columbia to have a successful football program."

On February 23, the day after Pilling officially began his new job, the University held a press conference to announce that Al Bagnoli would be its next football coach.

"My first goal is to make football fun again, and I mean that," said Bagnoli, a spritely and affable sixty-two-year-old, as he addressed a few dozen reporters, admin-

istrators, and Lions football players at Faculty House. “I say that to our kids, and you’ll hear me say this all the time. Practice ought to be the best two hours of your day.”

### Body and mind

During his time at Penn, Bagnoli earned a reputation as a fierce competitor, one capable of coaxing extraordinary performances out of his players and finding ways to beat teams that, man for man, might have been expected to overpower the Quakers. He was also regarded as an unusually gracious leader, who, in post-game interviews, would blame himself for every loss and credit his players for every win. In the locker room, after schooling his players in Xs and Os, he would often stick around to chat with them about the stresses of schoolwork, planning a career, or being away from home for the first time.

“He finds a good balance between being supportive and getting down to business,” says Billy Ragone, a former Quaker quarterback who won Ivy League titles with Bagnoli in 2009, 2010, and 2012. “Come Saturday, you’re expected to win. That’s the attitude. He instills in everybody the belief that you can win every game.”

Pilling says he recruited Bagnoli as much for his character as for his win–loss record. “He’s someone who’s concerned about victories on the field, victories in the classroom, and victories in life — and his players really see that,” says Pilling. “I had an opportunity to talk to his former players, former coaches, his former athletic director, and that was the consistent message.”

At a recent workout session at the Campbell Sports Center, the Lions’ training facility at the Baker Athletics Complex in northern Manhattan, members of the football team talked about how Bagnoli’s arrival has inspired a new sense of optimism in their clubhouse.

“Everybody is excited,” said Cameron Molina, a junior running back who was the Lions’ leading rusher last fall. “Going 0–10 the past couple of years was extremely painful, there’s no question about it. And when



Al Bagnoli was recruited as Columbia’s head football coach within months of retiring from Penn, where he had won nine Ivy League championships in twenty-three years.

things go bad like that, it’s inevitable that a team’s morale will drop. Now we feel like we have something to look forward to again.”

Anders Hill, a sophomore quarterback who played well off the bench in several games last fall, said the Lions are eager to prove how much better they are than last season’s record suggests.

“The guys on this team have been winning football games their whole lives and still have a winning mentality,” said Hill, a cannon-armed phenom from Boulder, Colorado, who was his state’s high-school quarterback of the year in 2013. “We’re mentally tough. We promised each other during the off-season to work really hard and put last fall behind us. We want to help turn this program around.”

### The gridiron and beyond

Pilling and Bagnoli are currently developing a long-term plan to revamp the Lions football team. Some of their changes are already being implemented: they have added to the athletics department a strength-and-conditioning coach and a speed-and-agility trainer, both of whom will work with football players and other varsity athletes.

Pilling says the University is also committed to paying the football team’s assistant coaches more competitive salaries than they

received in the past. He points out that this was among the recommendations made by outside consultant Rick Taylor, the former Boston University football coach and athletic director whom President Bollinger commissioned to conduct a top-to-bottom review of the football program last fall. That report’s central recommendation was that Columbia devote more resources to the program.

“It’s clear that the University, under President Bollinger, is determined to find this team the resources that it needs to be successful,” Pilling says. “One way we hope to do this is by soliciting more donations from alumni. This will be instrumental in boosting the assistant coaches’ salaries, which, in turn, will help us retain the best people.”

Pilling says he hopes to increase fundraising for all Columbia athletic programs — from its thirty-one varsity teams to the physical-education and wellness programs that serve thousands of undergraduates every year. But raising money for the football team is especially critical, he says, since its struggles have at times threatened to overshadow the accomplishments of other Lions teams.

“Seeing our football team succeed will re-focus the public’s attention on the tremendous achievements of so many of our teams,” he says. “The tide is going to rise for everybody.”

## In brief

### Doyle named University Professor

Michael W. Doyle, a prominent scholar of international relations, history, and law, has been given the title University Professor, which is Columbia's top faculty rank and highest academic honor.

Widely known for his theoretical work on the idea of "democratic peace," which holds that democracies are less likely to wage war than countries with other forms of government, Doyle joined Columbia's faculty in 2003 as the Harold Brown Professor of US Foreign and Security Policy, a joint appointment at Columbia Law School, the School of International and Public Affairs, and the Arts and Sciences department of political science. Previously, he held senior positions at the United Nations, working on initiatives to promote human rights and advance democracy movements around the world. Doyle is codirector of the law school's Center on Global Governance and has written several books, including this year's *The Question of Intervention: John Stuart Mill and the Responsibility to Protect*.

### Columbia and Rio form tech partnership

Columbia University has established a center in Rio de Janeiro to spur technological advances in areas such as sustainability, sanitation, data science, smart cities, and precision medicine in Brazil's second-largest city. The center, called the Rio-Columbia University Innovation Hub, will host collaborations between Columbia faculty and students from across the University and Brazilian industry leaders, scholars, students, and researchers.

"This is going to bring new, innovative, technology-based solutions to critical issues facing cities to transform lives both locally and globally using truly interdisciplinary approaches," said Columbia engineering dean Mary C. Boyce at an April 21 ceremony marking the launch of the center.

Researchers from the School of Engineering and the School of International and Public Affairs are expected to make

key contributions to the Innovation Hub; many of their activities will be coordinated through the Columbia Global Center that was launched in Rio in 2013.

At the ceremony, Rio de Janeiro mayor Eduardo Paes spoke enthusiastically about the newest Brazil-Columbia partnership. "Innovation is what Columbia does best, and to promote that in Rio has been a priority for us," said Paes. "To be a global city, Rio needs to be connected to state-of-the-art scientific research done in major institutions around the world, such as Columbia."

### Men's tennis retains Ivy title

The men's tennis team completed its second-straight perfect Ivy League season en route to capturing its twelfth conference championship with a 7-0 win over Penn at Columbia's Dick Savitt Tennis Center on April 19. The Lions finished the season ranked twenty-third in the nation.

Before the first serve, Columbia honored the collegiate careers of its five graduating seniors: Eric Jacobs, Winston Lin, Ashok Narayana, Max Schnur, and Bert Vancura. One of the most decorated graduating classes in the tennis program's history, the five Lions, over their tenure, helped Columbia to a 69-19 overall record, a 24-4 record against Ivy League opponents, three appearances in the NCAA Tournament, and the program's first trip to the National Indoor Intercollegiate Championships in two decades.

### CUMC and Biogen combine forces on genetics research

The global biotechnology company Biogen Idec and Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) recently formed a \$30 million partnership to study the genetic underpinnings of disease and to identify new treatment strategies. As part of the agreement, a genetics sequencing and analysis facility, along with a shared postdoctoral program, will be established at Columbia to support collaborative research. The agree-

ment will integrate basic research conducted at CUMC with Biogen Idec's expertise in developing new medicines.

"Our understanding of human genetics is rapidly expanding, and there is growing recognition that the elucidation of the genetic causes of disease will have a transformative effect on both patient care and drug development in many different diseases," says David Goldstein, the founding director of the University's Institute for Genomic Medicine.

### Nursing school receives \$6.5M gift

Columbia's nursing school has received a \$6.5 million grant from the Helene Fuld Health Trust that will support, among other new initiatives, the creation of a simulation-learning laboratory where students will hone their skills on high-tech mannequins prior to entering the clinical environment. The Helene Fuld Simulation Center will occupy two floors of the nursing school's new six-story building, which is under construction at West 168th Street and Audubon Avenue.

The gift, which is the largest in the school's history, will also establish an institute for promoting best simulation practices in nursing education and a scholarship fund for students entering the school's accelerated master's and doctor of nursing practice programs.

### Kennedy Prize for drama honors *Father*

Playwright Suzan-Lori Parks has won the 2015 Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama Inspired by American History, for her play *Father Comes Home from the Wars, Parts 1, 2 & 3*. The Kennedy Prize, which is administered by the Columbia University Libraries, was established in 2013 by Jean Kennedy Smith in honor of her late brother, the Massachusetts senator. Parks will receive \$100,000 and will work with the libraries to create a website containing educational materials related to her play, which follows the life of a slave who fights in the Civil War.

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## CUMC profs to conduct major research initiative on sexual violence

Columbia, like many American colleges and universities, has recently taken aggressive steps to combat sexual violence and gender-based misconduct. But in drafting additional policies to prevent these problems, administrators have found a shortage of data about their underlying causes.

To address this, President Lee C. Bollinger recently announced the launch of a major two-year research effort called SHIFT — the Sexual Health Initiative to Foster Transformation — aimed at identifying the social factors that contribute to gender-based misconduct in the undergraduate community, and then translating the data into policy recommendations.

“It’s hard to know how to develop interventions if you don’t know what you’re intervening against,” says Claude Ann Mellins, a professor of medical psychology at Columbia University Medical Center. “Where are people socializing? How are they vulnerable? How are they not vulnerable? What is the role of alcohol? What are the cultural factors? What are the institutional factors?”

Mellins and Jennifer S. Hirsch, a professor of sociomedical sciences at the Mailman School of Public Health, are leading the study. They will work with faculty members from six Columbia schools to conduct the research,

which will include an extensive written survey of Columbia undergraduates, as well as ethnographic research such as interviews with 120 students, in-depth follow-ups with a select group of those students, and “participant observation,” in which members of the research team will spend time with students as they go about their daily lives.

The use of ethnography is “critical to understanding the unspoken rules that govern daily interaction,” says Hirsch.

The SHIFT research team will consult regularly with three advisory boards, representing students, faculty, and administrators, who will provide feedback on the design and implementation of the project.

Mellins and Hirsch will also work closely with Suzanne Goldberg, the new executive vice president for university life, who is leading many of the initial steps that the University is taking regarding gender-based misconduct. Those have included enhanced mandatory training for staff and students, the opening of two additional rape-crisis centers, and the expansion of staffing and hours at the Offices of Sexual Violence Response and Gender-Based Misconduct.

Though SHIFT’s research will focus on the Columbia undergraduate community, and the policy recommendations will be



EVE VAGG

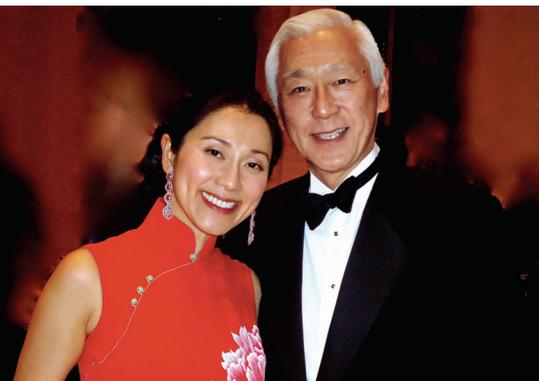
Claude Ann Mellins and Jennifer S. Hirsch

tailored to meet Columbia’s needs, Hirsch and Mellins see the potential for a broader impact. This May, SHIFT and the Columbia Population Research Center brought together seven sexual-violence-prevention researchers from around the country to help map out the gaps in the science and push research forward in those areas.

“Our goal is specifically to help Columbia with its policy and programming, and at the same time to get the research out into scientific journals, where other universities can learn from it and then translate it into their own programs and policies,” says Mellins.

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## Philanthropists give \$5 million for Chinese-history center



Agnes Hsu-Tang and Oscar Tang

A new center for the study of ancient Chinese civilizations is being established with a \$5 million endowment gift from Oscar Tang, a private investor and philanthropist, and his wife, Agnes Hsu-Tang, an archaeologist, a cultural-policy adviser to UNESCO, and host of the award-winning documentary series *Mysteries of China* on History Channel Asia.

The Tang Center for Early China, to be housed within the East Asian languages and cultures department in Kent Hall, will be officially inaugurated in September. Li Feng, a

Columbia professor of East Asian languages and cultures, will serve as its first director.

The center’s mission is to promote awareness of China’s early history through new education, research, and publishing endeavors. Specifically, it will sponsor an early-China lecture series; an annual lecture in archaeology; academic workshops and conferences; and a monograph series for academic titles that break new ground in the field of early-China studies. The center will also offer fellowships for visiting scholars and research grants for doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows.

# NEWSMAKERS

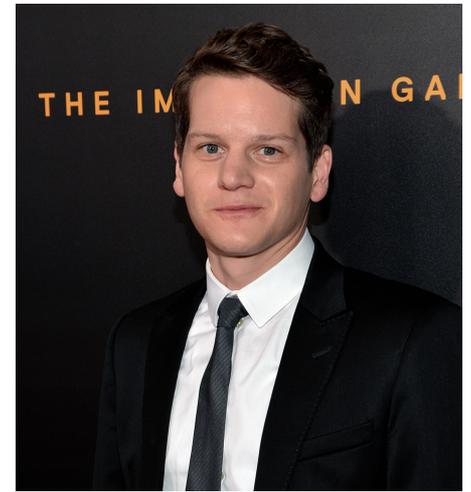
## Think Globally

Rachel Schutt '10GSAS, the chief data scientist of News Corp, was nominated for membership in the Forum of Young Global Leaders. This division of the World Economic Forum is composed of leaders under forty who have demonstrated commitment to making a positive impact in their respective countries . . . Jan Svejnar, a professor of economics at SIPA and the director of the Center on Global Economic Governance, received the 2015 IZA Prize in Labor Economics. He was recognized for his research on the transition from socialist to market economies.

## Dollars for Scholars

Elizabeth Walsh '14GS and Yuntong Ma '12CC are among the forty US recipients of

this year's Gates Cambridge Scholarships. Funded by Bill and Melinda Gates, the prestigious award gives students the opportunity to pursue postgraduate studies at Cambridge University. Walsh hopes to work with the university's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in pursuit of a master's of philosophy in social anthropology, while Ma plans to study sociology . . . SEAS junior **British Patnaik** and Columbia College sophomore **Brian Trippe** received Barry Goldwater Scholarships for the upcoming academic year. The scholarships, which were established by the US Congress in 1986 to support students who intend to pursue careers in the sciences, math, and engineering, are among the most competitive scholarships available for undergraduates.



Graham Moore '03CC

## Flattery for Imitation

Graham Moore '03CC advised viewers to “stay weird, stay different,” during his memorable acceptance speech at the eighty-seventh annual Academy Awards. Moore won an Oscar for best adapted screenplay for *The Imitation Game*. Five of his fellow Columbians also received Oscar nominations. Producer Dede Gardner '90CC was nominated for best picture for *Selma*; associate producer Mary Prendergast '93GS, '98SOA was nominated for best documentary feature for *Finding Vivian Maier*; and *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*, produced by Geoffrey Wexler '93LAW, was nominated for best animated feature. Robert D. Yeoman '77SOA received a best cinematography nod for *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, and screenwriter Dan Futterman '89CC was nominated for *Foxcatcher*.

## Guggenheims and Warburgs

Benjamin Taylor '92GSAS, an adjunct professor of writing in the School of the Arts, was named a trustee of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. The trustees are responsible for selecting the recipients of the annual Guggenheim Fellowships, which celebrate those who have excelled in scholarship and the arts.

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Taylor received a fellowship in 2012 . . . **David Freedberg**, Columbia's Pierre Matisse Professor of the History of Art and director of the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America, is the new director of the University of London's Warburg Institute. The Warburg Institute "exists principally to further the study of the classical tradition" and its influence on European civilization — particularly in the Renaissance. Freedberg will continue to teach at Columbia and direct the Italian Academy.

### Good Chemistry

The American Chemical Society bestowed its highest honor, the Priestley Medal, on **Jacqueline Barton '74BC, '79GSAS, '10HON**. Barton is the Arthur and Marian Hanisch Memorial Professor of Chemistry



Jacqueline Barton '74BC, '79GSAS, '10HON

and the chair of the Division of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at the California Institute of Technology, where she conducts research on electron transport in DNA.

### Up, Up, and Away

NASA astronaut **Timothy Kopra '13BUS** will return to the International Space Station in November for the first time since 2009. The commander plans to stay for six months



Timothy Kopra '13BUS

to test the effects of zero gravity on humans and explore fluid mechanics and combustion. Kopra will also help repair the space station, which was first launched in 1998.

### Literary Lions

**Gregory Pardlo**, a teaching fellow in the undergraduate writing program and an MFA student himself, won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in April for his second book of poems, *Digest* . . . Three Columbians took home Yale University's Windham-Campbell Prize this spring. Established in 2013, the \$150,000 award recognizes outstanding achievement in literature. **Teju Cole '03GSAS** won a fiction prize, and adjunct School of the Arts professors **John Jeremiah Sullivan** and **Geoff Dyer** won nonfiction prizes . . . **Claudia Rankine '93SOA** received the National Book Critics Circle poetry award for *Citizen*, the first work to be nominated in two categories — poetry and criticism.

### Court Date

Four Columbia Law School alums were awarded US Supreme Court clerkships, starting in October. **Z. Payvand Ahdout '13LAW** will work for fellow alum Justice **Ruth Bader Ginsburg '59LAW**, **Jonathan**

**A. Berry '11LAW** for Justice Samuel Alito, **Tejas Narechania '11LAW** for Justice Stephen G. Breyer, and **Samuel P. Rothschild '13LAW** for retired justice David H. Souter.

### Project Greenlight

When **Anna Stork '11GSAPP** and **Andrea Sreshta '11GSAPP** appeared on the ABC reality competition series *Shark Tank* in February to present their solar-powered light *LuminAid*, they accomplished a rare feat: they received investment offers from all five of the show's "sharks," including Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban and Corcoran Group cofounder Barbara Corcoran. Moved by the devastating effects of the Haiti earthquake in 2010, Stork and Sreshta created prototypes of the portable, waterproof lantern during their time at Columbia . . . The GreenShields Project, a startup founded by SEAS sophomore **Jonny Cohen**, has been named a finalist for the MIT Clean Energy Prize, which comes with a \$275,000 award. GreenShields are aerodynamic devices that affix to the tops of school buses to help improve fuel efficiency; pilot systems are already being tested in select school districts. Cohen was named to the 2012 and 2013 *Forbes* "30 Under 30" lists.



Jonny Cohen

# EXPLORATIONS

## Face-to-face dialogues seen as key to breaking down bigotry

If all gay people came out of the closet, Harvey Milk once said, there would be far less homophobia in the world.

This idea, that prejudice can be defeated by giving its victims names and faces, has been a guiding light of the LGBT-rights movement. But is it true? Is it really likely that someone who is opposed to, say, same-sex marriage will change his or her mind simply for having met a gay person?

Indeed, this appears to be the case, according to a new study by Columbia political scientist Donald P. Green and UCLA doctoral student Michael LaCour. In 2013, the researchers sent two groups of canvassers into Los Angeles neighborhoods that had strongly supported Proposition 8 — the 2008 ballot measure that banned same-sex marriage in California — to knock on doors and try to convince people to reverse their stance. One group of canvassers consisted of gays and lesbians who told residents that they wanted to marry but couldn't. Another group consisted of straight canvassers who made the case for gay marriage by describing the plight of a gay friend or relative. In conversations that lasted an average of about twenty minutes, the canvassers all attempted to have candid, two-way exchanges with the people they met.

"This wasn't the type of quick-hit conversation typical of political canvassing, but a genuine dialogue," says Green, who was recently named an inaugural recipient of an Andrew Carnegie Fellowship for innovative research in the social sciences and humanities.

Follow-up surveys conducted a few days later suggested that the gay and straight canvassers had been equally persuasive, as support for same-sex marriage increased evenly across the board. (Whereas the interview subjects had initially expressed views in line with the population of Nebraska, they subsequently mirrored Massachusetts residents in their outlook.) Over the next year, though, something remarkable happened: the boost in support for gay marriage disappeared among people who had met a straight canvasser, while it persisted among those who had met a gay canvasser. The effect of the gay canvassers' message even seemed to spread within households; people who simply lived with someone who had met a gay canvasser also became more supportive of same-sex marriage.

"It seems that people who spoke to a gay person were so affected by the meeting that they discussed the issue with family and friends," says Green, who has written extensively on voting, political campaigns, public-opinion polling, and prejudice.

## New hope for those with chronic fatigue syndrome

As many as four million Americans are thought to suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome, a disease characterized by symptoms that include persistent lethargy, headaches,

muscle pain, mental fogging, and sleep problems — but the illness, once dismissed as the "yuppie flu," has long frustrated scientists seeking to explain its etiology. To date, there has been no cure or treatment protocol, or even a way to test for the syndrome, but now a breakthrough by a team of scientists led by Columbia epidemiologist Mady Hornig may provide clinicians with a way to diagnose and treat chronic fatigue in its early stages.

In a study comparing blood samples from hundreds of people with chronic fatigue syndrome to those from healthy counterparts, the scientists found differences that support a popular hypothesis about the syndrome's cause: that it occurs when the immune system, in the course of fighting off an acute infection, gets stuck in high gear and eventually wears itself out. The evidence? People in the early stages

of chronic fatigue syndrome have elevated levels of immune-system messenger chemicals called cytokines, which indicate an active immunological response, while those who have been ill for three years or longer have unusually low levels of these cytokines.

"We believe the initial trigger could be any number of viral, bacterial, or fungal infections," says Hornig, an associate professor at the Mailman School of Public Health who conducted the research with Columbia colleagues who include epidemiology professor Ian Lipkin, as well as scientists from Harvard and Stanford. "The end result appears to be the same: the immune system goes out of whack and exhausts itself."

Hornig says that the discovery, which appeared February 27 in *Science Advances*, could form the basis of a new diagnostic test. Physicians currently diagnose chronic



COURTESY OF MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Mady Hornig, an epidemiologist, is searching for the cause of a once-ignored ailment.

The results of the study startled Green and his colleagues, he says, because social scientists have long thought that people's views on hot-button issues like homosexuality, race, or abortion are too entrenched to be permanently altered by exchanges with activists.

"Conventional wisdom was that a canvasser might prompt you to rethink your stance on a controversial issue for a few days at most, but that once you went back into your social milieu, your opinion would snap back into accordance with your preexisting views," he says.

There is reason to believe these findings are applicable to other issues; Green's collaborator at UCLA just finished a study showing that people express more support for abortion rights after meeting a woman who has had an abortion. Green says the implications for outreach campaigns of all sorts could be profound.

"In the gay-rights movement, for instance, there has long been an assumption that face-to-face canvassing is unlikely to have any enduring impact," he says. "The trend in the last few years has been to instead put straight celebrities on TV and have them talk about how much they accept and admire gay people. Our study suggests that this may not be the best approach."

>> For a video interview with Green, visit [news.columbia.edu/canvassing](http://news.columbia.edu/canvassing).



KARIN HILDEBRAND LAU / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Gay-rights activists rally in California. A Columbia study has found that people opposed to same-sex marriage will often reverse their stance after a single conversation with a gay canvasser.

fatigue syndrome, also known as myalgic encephalomyelitis or ME/CFS, by checking off a list of symptoms that are judged subjectively; physicians can struggle, she says, to distinguish it from depression, bipolar disorder, and other neuropsychiatric conditions that have similar symptoms. She also says that physicians have a difficult time determining when an infectious disease like mononucleosis, Q fever, or Lyme disease — all suspected preludes to chronic fatigue syndrome — has evolved into the full-blown syndrome, thus necessitating a new treatment strategy.

"We'd love to be able to tell if a person has ME/CFS rather than, say, a persistent case of Lyme disease, simply by looking at their cytokine levels," says Hornig, who is director of translational research at the Mailman School's Center for Infection and

Immunity. "Today, up to 70 percent of people with chronic fatigue have a delay in their diagnosis of at least a year — and sometimes of ten years or more. It's really important to get the diagnosis as soon as possible, so that you can begin to think about appropriate treatment strategies."

Hornig and her colleagues are now conducting follow-up studies to see if measuring cytokine levels is, in fact, useful in making diagnoses. In one study, they are following people with chronic fatigue syndrome over the course of a year or more in hopes of spotting distinct patterns in the fluctuations of their cytokine levels.

The scientists are also optimistic that their discovery may eventually lead to the development of new treatments for chronic fatigue syndrome; the only treatments currently available are drugs that have been

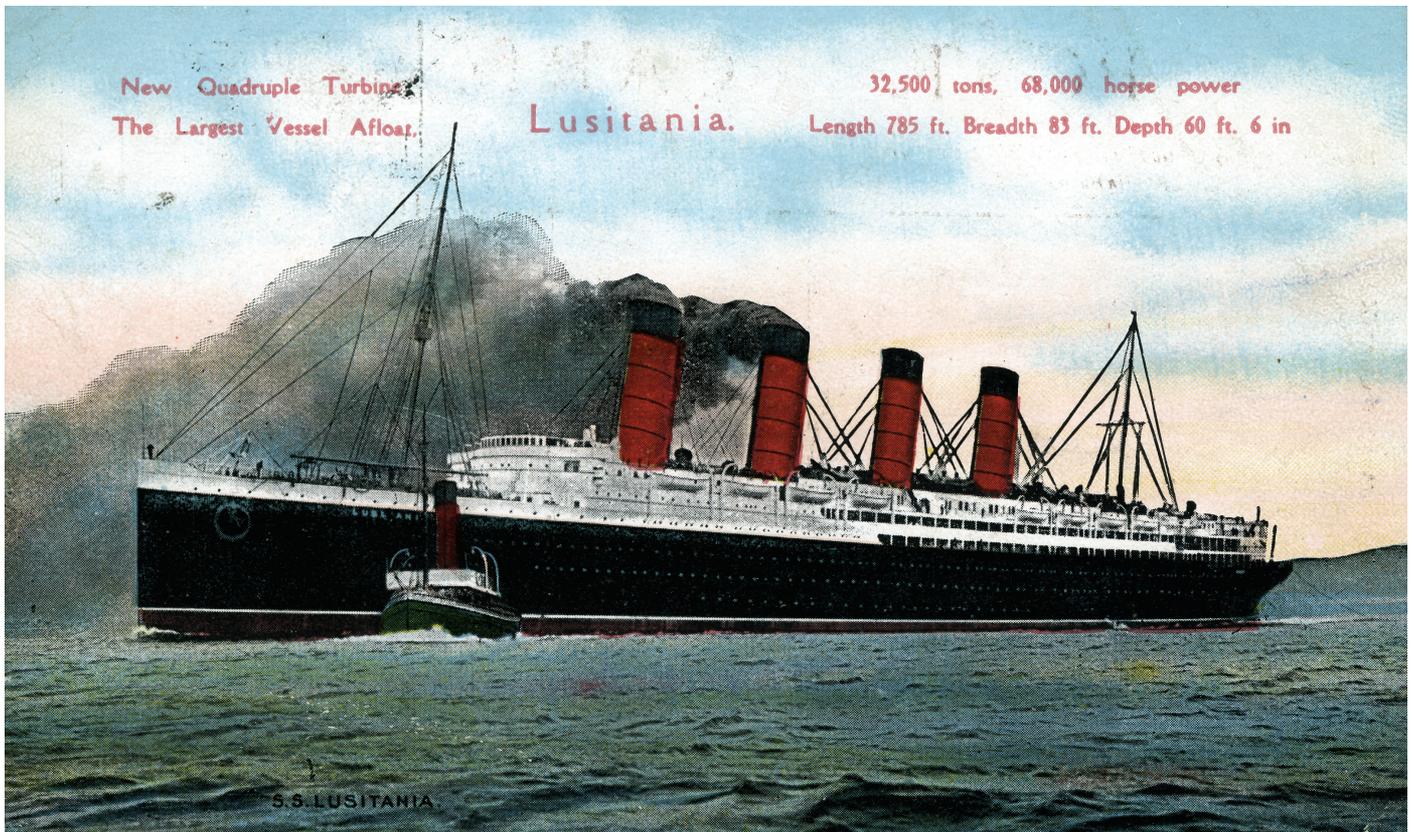
approved for other purposes and which physicians prescribe off-label to target a person's symptoms.

Regardless of the clinical impact this research may have, Hornig says that her latest discovery ought to give peace of mind to anyone who, in suffering from chronic fatigue, has felt intuitively that something was wrong with his or her body but was told otherwise by a physician.

"Patients are often left wondering why they're not getting better, the implication being that maybe they're not trying hard enough and pulling up on the old bootstraps," she says. "But this is not a problem of a person's will to get better. This is a biological disease."

>> To watch a video of Hornig explaining her research, visit [www.magazine.columbia.edu/chronicfatigue](http://www.magazine.columbia.edu/chronicfatigue).

# REVIEWS



The RMS *Lusitania*, as depicted in a 1907 postcard.

## For Those in Peril on the Sea // By Sally Lee

### **Dead Wake**

By Erik Larson (Crown, 448 pages, \$28)

When it comes to epic disasters involving luxury liners, the *Titanic* and its iceberg loom large. Few are as familiar with the *Lusitania*, another ill-fated transatlantic cruiser, which left New York on May 1, 1915, with great pomp and celebration, only to be torpedoed by a German U-boat in hostile waters off the coast of Ireland. The *Lusitania*, once called by its owners “the safest boat on the sea,” sank in just eighteen minutes. Of the 1,959 passengers and crew aboard, 764 survived.

In *Dead Wake*, Erik Larson ’78JRN seeks to detail the last crossing of the *Lusitania* and “the myriad forces, large and achingly small, that converged one lovely day in May 1915 to produce a tragedy of monumental scale.” Using the testimony and diaries of survivors, along with telegrams, letters, and secret intelligence ledgers, Larson constructs his compelling narrative with a

painstaking — some might even say pathological — attention to historical accuracy.

While lesser writers might feel constrained by the responsibility to remain faithful to primary sources, hard evidence, and the rigors of science (yes, we are given a thorough grounding in torpedo technology), Larson revels in the challenge. Indeed, he has already demonstrated his total mastery of the art of re-creating history in all its lurid and lucid detail in earlier books, including *The Devil in the White City* and *In the Garden of Beasts*. Both won him critical acclaim and an international fan base.

*Dead Wake* is a complex work: Larson weaves together several plotlines and characters to share multiple perspectives on the central event. The story shifts effortlessly from the point of view of William Thomas Turner, the capable captain of the *Lusitania*,

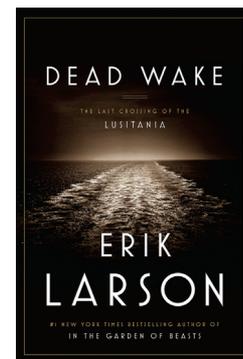
to that of U-boat pilot Walther Schwieger, a man known for his kindness, humor, and love of puppies. We get an unusual glimpse into the private life of President Woodrow Wilson, who, in the spring of 1915, seems more preoccupied with a budding romance than with events in Europe. And we go behind the scenes at the British Admiralty, where, ten months into the war, petty infighting is beginning to undermine naval intelligence.

As Larson sets the stage for the disaster, he underscores its brutality by giving us a peek into the private lives of dozens of the *Lusitania*'s passengers. We are introduced to a feminist architect with a passion for spiritualism, a young couple traveling with their six children, and a rare-book dealer whose luggage includes more than a hundred illustrations by the Victorian author William Makepeace Thackeray. Below decks, we meet several crew members, including eighteen-year-old Leslie Morton and his brother Cliff, two apprentice seamen who are returning home to England to fight in the war. As we come to know and care about each of these living, breathing souls, the ineluctable reality of their impending ordeal and poor odds of survival becomes increasingly oppressive.

The book's tension is heightened by the fact that, despite the German government's warning that all ships entering the war zone are "liable to destruction," the *Lusitania*'s passengers and the American public blithely underestimate the threat. "That the war had begun at all was a dark amazement, for it had seemed to come from nowhere," writes Larson. He points out that American isola-

tionism is so acute that on June 27, 1914, the day before the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the American newspapers seem only vaguely aware of European tensions. In a wry aside, he notes that the *New York Times*' lead story that day was "Columbia University at last winning the intercollegiate rowing regatta, after nineteen years of failure."

*Dead Wake* may be a work of non-fiction, but it has all the freshness, immediacy, and dramatic tension of a contemporary thriller or spy novel. Indeed, Larson conjures this sad chapter of maritime history in a way that both illuminates and leaves us demanding more. After finishing *Dead Wake*, readers will find themselves devouring Larson's copious footnotes, googling photographs of the *Lusitania*, and poring over vintage film clips of the liner as it leaves New York on its final, fateful voyage. In those flickering black-and-white images, passengers arrive at the dock full of excitement and anticipation. They smile for the camera, gather their luggage, and stand on deck waving white handkerchiefs as the ship slowly pulls away from the harbor. That Erik Larson has so successfully rescued these unlucky people from anonymity makes those last goodbyes all the harder.



## Analyze This // By Eric Liebetrau

### ***Shrinks: The Untold Story of Psychiatry***

By Jeffrey A. Lieberman, with Ogi Ogas (Little, Brown, 352 pages, \$28)

In the annals of medicine, few disciplines have endured more controversy than psychiatry. In fact, as *Shrinks* — a methodical, fluidly written history of the field — convincingly demonstrates, psychiatry truly has been "the most distrusted, feared, and denigrated of all medical specialties."

No author is better positioned to tell this fraught, fascinating story than Jeffrey A. Lieberman: former president of the American Psychiatric Association, chairman of psychiatry at the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, director of the New York State Psychiatric Institute, and psychiatrist in chief of New York-Presbyterian Hospital.

Lieberman's stature in his field does not prevent him from opening his book with a fearless declaration "to provide an honest chronicle of psychiatry with all its rogues and charlatans, its queasy treatments and ludicrous theories." He serves as the consummate guide to a profession that, due to lack of tangible evidence, "has always been susceptible to ideas that are outlandish or downright bizarre": the deplorable insane asylums, the fever therapies, the induced comas, the lobotomies.

But Lieberman is not interested in just chronicling the titillating aspects of psychiatry's history. From a variety of angles and historical perspectives, he probes two central questions: what is mental

## REVIEWS

illness, and how do we treat it? No matter how far afield he roams, those two questions always inform his narrative. Readers follow along each step of the way forward — and occasionally backward — in the development of psychiatry, but Lieberman never loses that thread, nor his commitment to candor.

Certainly, Sigmund Freud looms large in any discussion of psychiatry, and Lieberman affords him an appropriately sized portion of the story. Refreshingly, Lieberman both rescues Freud from anathema and pointedly examines his many shortcomings. While Freud “provided the first plausible means by which psychiatrists could understand and treat patients,” he also undoubtedly suffered from megalomania and placed far too much emphasis on the value of psychoanalysis without the benefit of a true understanding of the mechanics of the brain — a development that was to come later. Eventually, as Lieberman astutely concludes, “psychoanalysis cross[ed] over from a medical profession into a human potential movement” and “assumed the trappings of a religion.” From there, it was a natural progression to the proliferation of alternative forms of therapy, including, most ominously, Scientology.

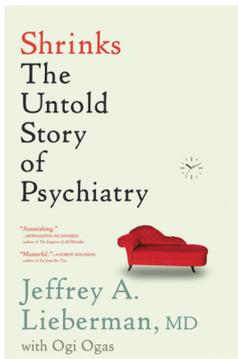
While Freud takes center stage, Lieberman also gives weight to countless other important pioneers in the history of psychiatry, including Franz Anton Mesmer, the first to reject moral or religious failing as the primary cause of mental illness; Philippe Pinel, who fought against the horrific conditions in asylums; Emil Kraepelin, “the founder of the modern system of psychiatric diagnosis”; Walter

Freeman, who performed the first lobotomy; Columbia neuroscientist Eric Kandel, whose painstaking experiments led to some of “the most important foundational principles of modern neuroscience”; Aaron T. Beck, the developer of cognitive-behavioral therapy, or CBT; and Columbia psychiatrist Robert Leopold Spitzer ’66PS, the architect of the *DSM-III*, the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which, according to Lieberman, “might just be the most influential book written in the past century.”

First published in 1952, the *DSM* encapsulates all the controversy over definitions that has surrounded psychiatry from the beginning. It’s a case study that gets to the heart of Lieberman’s two central questions, and he spends a few chapters exposing the inner workings of the process behind the book’s creation and development. Spitzer’s *DSM-III*, writes the author, was largely praised for having “turned psychiatry away from the task of curing social ills and refocused it on the medical treatment of severe mental illnesses” — a vital advance. While the *DSM-IV* flew under the radar, the *DSM-5*, published in 2013, has been prominently criticized for “pathologizing normal behavior.”

Regardless, Lieberman is adamant about the value of the *DSM* and its indispensable information, and his defense and discussion of the manual leads into a long, in-depth analysis of posttraumatic stress disorder, a hot-button issue in modern psychiatry. Thankfully, for the millions who suffer from some form of mental illness, “contemporary psychiatrists hold a pluralistic view of mental illness that embraces neuroscience, psychopharmacology, and genetics.” It’s an optimistic assessment of the state of the field that gives one hope for the future.

*Eric Liebetrau is the managing editor and nonfiction editor of Kirkus Reviews, and writes for several other national publications.*



## The Emigrant // By Jennie Yabroff

### *Girl at War*

By Sara Nović (Random House, 314 pages, \$26)

A young woman stands before a group of UN delegates, delivering a speech about human-rights violations during the Yugoslavian Civil War. The delegates, she knows, are “thirsty for gore,” and as she talks, images of teenage girls “sporting camouflage and scuff-marked assault rifles” flash on the screen behind her. “Who had taken these pictures, I wondered . . . Must have been journalists, a breed of people I still couldn’t understand. Outsiders who claimed the moral high ground, then stood back and snapped photos during encounters with bloodied children.” Ten years earlier, the speaker, Ana Jurić, had been

one of these children, a Croatian girl with a gun caught in a conflict that would destroy her country. What happened to that girl, and how it haunts the woman she grows up to be, is the premise of *Girl at War*, the remarkable debut novel by Sara Nović ’14SOA.

When we first meet her, Ana is a tomboyish ten-year-old, riding bikes in Zagreb with her best friend, Luka, and laughing at the red-faced Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic on TV. Then war breaks out between Serbs and Croats, and soon she is helping her father tape up the windows and begging their apartment complex’s one Serbian

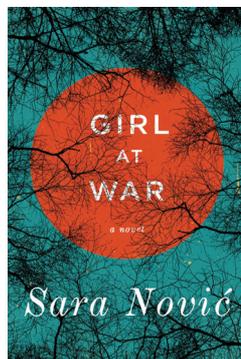


A memorial wall around the NATO building in Zagreb, Croatia, 1996.

resident to blacken his windows during air raids. When Ana's younger sister, Rahela, develops kidney disease, Ana's family takes a risky trip across the border to Bosnia to deliver Rahela to a medical mission that will transport her to the US for treatment. They make it to their destination, but on the return journey are stopped by Serbian soldiers, who demand their papers. "Giving up our IDs would provide the soldier with the greatest weapon against us: the knowledge of our names. Our

last name, specifically, the one that carried the weight of ancestry, ethnicity." The soldier forces the family out of the car, and Ana's life as she knows it ceases to exist.

Next we flash-forward to Ana ten years later, a college student in New York in the aftermath of 9/11. It's jolting, but effectively so — a jolt that mirrors, as we come to find out, her transition to American life. She's learned to evade most questions about her past, and only confides in a professor, who then gives her the novels of W. G. Sebald. Unlike many of the Americans she encounters, who are at once repelled and morbidly fascinated by her experience, Sebald understands the longing for a place that no longer exists, the sense of permanent homelessness that makes it impossible for Ana to feel truly at ease in her adopted country. But reading Sebald causes Ana to fear that memory may be porous and malleable, and that even photographs, like the ones of the girl soldiers, can't tell the full story of a country or a war; only people can do that. Ana agrees to testify at the UN about the atrocities that her family endured. Afterward, she impulsively decides to return to the former Yugoslavia, in search of Luka and answers about her past.



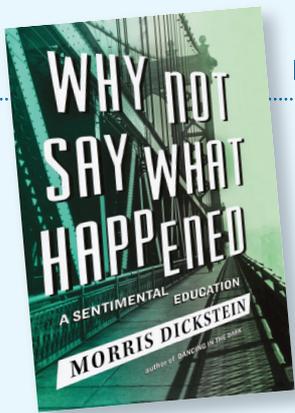
Nović, who is approximately the same age as Ana, lived in Croatia after Milosevic's death, and the scenes of Ana in modern-day Croatia are among the most impressively rendered in the book. The writer deftly describes the experience of being both native and foreigner; the way the country itself is struggling to forge a new, post-Communist identity, borrowing from the West and its own past. A nightclub is filled with "cigarette smoke and the pounding rhythm of some remixed hip-hop song that had been popular last year in America"; the locals have Coke and cell phones but still distrust air conditioning, so swelter in the summer humidity, watching *Walker, Texas Ranger* on TV. Being back is both comforting and disorienting, and Ana realizes that while she may never be fully American, she is no longer entirely Croatian, either: as a result of the war and its aftermath, "Croatia was a country to which, technically, I'd never been."

Talking to her professor about why she admires Sebald's writing, Ana says she likes "that he can describe an emotion so perfectly, without any adjectives." Nović attempts the same in her novel, and largely succeeds. Ana is unsentimental to the point of stoicism, and the descriptions of the worst of what she goes through are brief, understated, and matter-of-fact. Memories, pictures, and words may never fully convey, let alone make up for, what she lost, but in *Girl at War*, Nović does a remarkable job of describing the shape of the hole.

Jennie Yabroff '06SOA is a writer and editor in New York City. Her work has appeared in *Newsweek*, *the New York Times*, and *Salon*.

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## Notes of a Literary Partisan

The book: *Why Not Say What Happened: A Sentimental Education* (Liveright, 301 pages, \$27.95)  
 The author: Morris Dickstein '61CC, literary and cultural critic

**Columbia Magazine:** Why did you, a critic, decide to write a memoir?

**Morris Dickstein:** I had spent decades doing research for a previous book on the 1930s [*Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression*] and wanted to do something more literary. Even when I was writing about historical subjects, personal elements kept intruding. When I shifted into the personal voice, I felt I was tapping into another part of my brain: a different tone entered the writing, and it picked up a real emotional vibration. I wanted to see if I could do that in a longer story.

**CM:** Did you know what you wanted to write about when you started?

**MD:** I come from a large, colorful Jewish family, and I had thought it would be primarily a family memoir. But I found that most of what I had to say about the family, I had already said. As I wrote, it became more about my intellectual formation.

**CM:** The book chronicles an intellectual journey that starts in your early years on the Lower East Side and progresses to Columbia and beyond. But it's also a story of separation from your family.

**MD:** I felt I was telling a story of moving into the wider world. My parents were very loving, but they were riddled with anxieties, many of which they passed on to me, and I paid a price in anxieties and neurotic reactions. At the same time, I never felt an urge to completely reject where I came from.

**CM:** You are identified with the “New York Intellectuals.” Who are they?

**MD:** In 1969, Irving Howe wrote a celebrated essay about a group he called

the New York Intellectuals. There are many New York intellectuals, but Howe was referring to mostly Jewish, mostly male intellectuals who had gone to City College or Columbia and were grouped around magazines like *Partisan Review*, *Commentary*, and *Dissent*. People whose interests were in both politics and culture — what Lionel Trilling '25CC, '38GSAS called “the dark and bloody crossroads where literature and politics meet.” This generalism fascinated me: to not be trapped by a particular field, or caught up in academic and technical writing. I was drawn to writing that was lively and aphoristic, that reached across fields and flowed from the world of intellectuals to the world of a broader intelligent readership.

**CM:** Do you see a connection between this cross-disciplinary generalism and the Core Curriculum at Columbia, which you studied and later taught?

**MD:** I see it in the challenges that the New York Intellectuals faced in trying to strike a balance between contemporary concerns and past tradition, which were similar to the issues that swirled around the establishment of the Core Curriculum — dealing with tradition in a way that had contemporary relevance.

**CM:** In the book you discuss teaching the radical Romantic poet William Blake during the 1960s.

**MD:** Teaching Blake at the time of the counterculture was an amazing confluence. As was teaching Thucydides at the time of the Vietnam War — he's describing a similar overreach on the part of the Athenians that America was experiencing.

**CM:** You have mentioned critics like Trilling and Edmund Wilson as wanting to be thought of not strictly as critics but also as writers. Do you feel that way about yourself?

**MD:** There are two things I want to do when I'm writing. One is to really communicate. The other is to write something that's memorable, beautiful, and powerful. Whereas some critics just try to get their ideas onto the page, I want to do it in a way that respects the language. When I revise, I want to remove any dead phrase, any cliché. I want the rhythm of the sentences to be variable. Criticism is not the highest form of literature — it pays tribute to higher forms — but I strongly feel that it must be considered a form of literature.

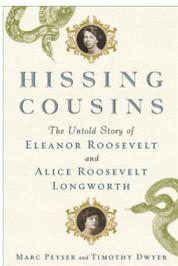
**CM:** What happened to the New York Intellectuals?

**MD:** By the time I was in my late twenties, the group had begun to fracture due to the provocations of 1960s culture. The things they agreed on, like anti-communism, led them in different directions — some toward neoconservatism, some toward a resurgent radicalism. They survived as a somewhat fractious group for twenty or thirty years.

**CM:** As a member of this group, do you feel that you are part of a disappearing world?

**MD:** The world is always changing. I was very sad when one of the magazines I identified with, *Partisan Review*, folded in 2003. But it had a wonderful run. I urged my publisher not to promote me as “the last of the New York Intellectuals,” because there are plenty of young New York intellectuals who continue this tradition. Every generation finds its own interests and ways of combining past traditions with new concerns.

— Paul Hond



### Hissing Cousins

By Marc Peyser  
and Timothy Dwyer  
(Nan A. Talese,  
352 pages, \$28.95)

We all know Eleanor Roosevelt: fierce Democrat, fearless reformer, long-suffering wife of Franklin D. (she nursed him through polio and, like many other political spouses, always turned a blind eye to his wandering one). She never sought fame, but her passionate defense of human rights made her one of the most widely admired women of the twentieth century.

But at the beginning of that century, it wasn't Eleanor but her first cousin Alice who had the world's heart. The daughter of then-president Theodore Roosevelt, Alice was the yin to Eleanor's yang: confident, beautiful, and — gasp — Republican.

Their relationship wasn't always easy, as Marc Peyser '87JRN and Timothy Dwyer show in their delightfully juicy book, *Hissing Cousins*. Born eight months and twenty blocks apart into equally dysfunctional branches of the Roosevelt clan, Eleanor and Alice were largely raised together. As adults, though, their opposing politics caused an irrevocable rift, compounded by Alice's jealousy as Eleanor began to step into the Washington spotlight. (Alice's husband, Nicholas Longworth, was not destined to advance beyond the House of Representatives). As Alice said, "When I think of Frank and Eleanor in the White House I could grind my teeth to powder and blow them out my nose."

The cousins' rivalry was well known in its day — Eleanor and Alice even wrote competing newspaper columns — but this is the first account that gets into the nasty details. It's an enormously entertaining portrait, particularly of the acid-tongued Alice, who finally — in this book — manages to steal back the show.

— Rebecca Shapiro



### Get in Trouble

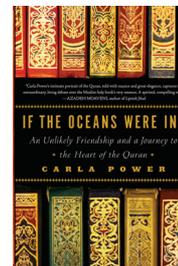
By Kelly Link  
(Atria Books,  
336 Pages, \$25)

Something ominous lurks in Kelly Link's latest collection of short stories, *Get in Trouble*. Sure, the book begins with the ordinary — a small town, a theme park, a crowded bar — but it quickly veers into the bizarre — demon lovers, superheroes, and double shadows — making the familiar unfamiliar and often unsettling. In Link's world, the line between fantasy and reality is always fluid.

"The Summer People" finds Fran, a working-class teenager from a small Appalachian town, forced to care for eerie, fairy-like creatures who mysteriously live in a nearby mountain house: "Overhead were the fantastic shapes of the dirigibles, and the dragons that were hung on string and swam perpetually through the air above your head." In "The Lesson," a couple's visit to the portentous, possibly supernatural "Bad Claw Island" turns into an all too plausible horror story when they learn that their surrogate has gone into labor at just twenty-four weeks (this tale is drawn from Link's own experience). Just as a bad dream can seem real, so too can life seem nightmarish and surreal.

Link '91CC is well known for her young-adult collection *Pretty Monsters*, and she ventures into adolescence again in "Secret Identity" and "The New Boyfriend." Both stories explore relatable feelings of inadequacy, jealousy, and the longing for acceptance — all while their characters cope with evil villains and ghost boyfriend dolls. With elements of magical realism, science fiction, and romance, all of these tales — like adolescence — hover on the border between half-known worlds.

— Lauren Savage



### If the Oceans Were Ink

By Carla Power  
(Henry Holt,  
352 pages, \$18)

Carla Power '95JRN, a half-Jewish and half-Quaker American, knows an awful lot about Islam. A journalist who was raised as many years in the Middle East as in the Midwest, she went on to study Islamic societies in college and graduate school, and to cover them for magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek*. But post-9/11, as the world became increasingly embroiled in what some called a "clash of civilizations," Power wanted to know even more — specifically about the Quran, a text that she soon learned was "invoked more often than read."

Power turns to her friend Mohammad Akram Nadwi, a devout madrasa-trained sheikh and Oxford scholar of religion, who agrees to be her tutor. Over the course of a year, they meet regularly to study and debate and drink endless cups of tea, eventually even making a joint pilgrimage to Nadwi's native village of Jamdahan, India.

Not surprisingly, Power is particularly interested in controversial issues like women's rights and Sharia law, and finds that she and her tutor are often at odds in these areas. Nonetheless, Nadwi's perspective as a Muslim raising six daughters in Western society makes for fascinating reading.

Nadwi and Power do find common ground, both on the subject of human rights and in their shared eagerness to reexamine the use of the Quran as a justification for war. The two friends reveal themselves to be deeply intelligent and refreshingly open-minded — ideal guides to an ancient text that has come to shape modern society.

— RS

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## Real Estate

**CATSKILL MOUNTAINS, NY:** 500 ft. of lighted cascading waterfalls, architect-designed one-of-a-kind home, 5 deck levels, 5.1 wooded acres, 90 minutes to NYC, \$489,000. For more info, visit: [buyawaterfall.com](http://buyawaterfall.com); 845-647-3914.

**HISTORIC HUDSON-RIVER COTTAGES:** Affordable studios, one- and two-bedroom homes available in historic cottage cooperative in Westchester County, off the Hudson River, one hour from NYC. Dating back to 1929, this three-season community offers swimming pool, tennis court, organic community garden, social hall with Internet and social activities. \$25,000–\$98,000+. [www.reynoldshills.org](http://www.reynoldshills.org). Contact [melgarfinkel@yahoo.com](mailto:melgarfinkel@yahoo.com). 917-880-5419.

**NORTHERN MINNESOTA:** 5 A. on the Mississippi R. chain (6 lakes), 314' of firm gently sloping sandy shore, wooded except for 30' open beach. Cedar-sided cabin with block shed in mid-woods clearing. Well, electricity, phone. [kitwab@yahoo.com](mailto:kitwab@yahoo.com). 785-499-6428.

**PA BROWNSTONE FOR SALE:** Original mahogany staircase & doors, 5 fireplaces, \$130,000. 484-668-1440, [mahoganybrownstone@zoho.com](mailto:mahoganybrownstone@zoho.com)

**PARIS, SAINT-GERMAIN-DES-PRÉS:** Lovely studio apartment on rue Jacob. 212-463-8760; [www.lefanion.com/paris.html](http://www.lefanion.com/paris.html).

## Vacation Rentals

**NEW MARLBOROUGH, MA:** Unique weekend, vacation, or all-year residence in Berkshires, easy 2.5-hour drive from NYC or Boston. A historic New England church converted to modern 3-bedroom, 3-bath residence with 2-story living room and a large great room perfect for parties or a studio for artist or musician. For photos and details, see: [millriversteeple.com](http://millriversteeple.com) or call 201-567-1413.

**ROME:** Bright, quiet, spacious apartment. Wi-Fi. Elevator. Walk to major tourist sites, Metro San Giovanni. 2 double bedrooms, 2 baths. \$850/week. [www.casacleme.com](http://www.casacleme.com). 212-867-0489. [Lm603@columbia.edu](mailto:Lm603@columbia.edu).



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**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. Columbia alum owner Lyn (PH '90): 404-371-8287, [info@imagesoftuscany.com](mailto:info@imagesoftuscany.com), or see photos/details at [www.imagesoftuscany.com/apartment.htm](http://www.imagesoftuscany.com/apartment.htm).

**TUSCANY, ITALY:** Spacious, comfort-filled, antiques-furnished family villa with garden in charming 13th-century castle town. Utterly tranquil, yet immersed in Tuscan village life. Contact Victoria de Grazia: [vd19@columbia.edu](mailto:vd19@columbia.edu); [www.hilltownholiday.com](http://www.hilltownholiday.com).

## Miscellaneous

**ALUMNUS IS BUYING U.S. AND FOREIGN COINS:** David 516-662-4722. [manofcoins@yahoo.com](mailto:manofcoins@yahoo.com).

**AT RISK** by Robert Gitlin '79 (writing as R. G. Philips): The demons of the high-school classroom pale beside the demons of a kicking addict's own psyche in this raw, honest novel (Kindle Direct Publishing, e-book, \$4.99).

**WANTED:** Will pay top dollar! Lenox china plates of Columbia University, singles or a stack! Contact Kate at [kateberm@aol.com](mailto:kateberm@aol.com) or 303-830-1121.

**WEDGWOOD CHINA:** Twelve 1932 Wedgwood plates (with campus buildings in blue) from my late alumnus father. Replacements, Ltd., offers at \$65–\$75 apiece. E-mail interest to [richard.major@icloud.com](mailto:richard.major@icloud.com).

## FINALS

# The Prize Is Right

Welcome, contestants! As the 99th annual Pulitzer Prizes in journalism and the arts were announced in Pulitzer Hall, and the distinguished judges recovered from the task of choosing just 21 winners from 3,000 entrants, we thought we'd mark this annual spring rite by testing your Pulitzer IQ. Pencils ready?



- 1) Who was the first non-classical composer to win the Pulitzer for music?
  - A) Wynton Marsalis
  - B) John Zorn
  - C) Duke Ellington
- 2) In 1999, which newspaper won the Pulitzer Prize for public service for its coverage of reckless gun use by undertrained city police officers?
  - A) The *Chicago Tribune*
  - B) The *Washington Post*
  - C) The *San Jose Mercury News*
- 3) Whose image is depicted on the Pulitzer Prize gold medal?
  - A) William Lloyd Garrison
  - B) Benjamin Franklin
  - C) Joseph Pulitzer
- 4) Which nominated play was found insufficiently "uplifting" to merit a prize?
  - A) *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, by Edward Albee
  - B) *Angels in America*, by Tony Kushner
  - C) *A Streetcar Named Desire*, by Tennessee Williams
- 5) Ernest Hemingway won the fiction prize for which novel?
  - A) *The Old Man and the Sea*
  - B) *For Whom the Bell Tolls*
  - C) *The Sun Also Rises*
- 6) Who was the only president to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize?
  - A) John F. Kennedy
  - B) Woodrow Wilson
  - C) Dwight D. Eisenhower
- 7) In 1979, the staff photographers of the *Boston Herald American* won for which story?
  - A) The Boston school-desegregation and busing struggle
  - B) The installation of Pope John Paul I
  - C) The blizzard of 1978
- 8) Diana Marcum of the *Los Angeles Times* won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in feature writing for what topic?
  - A) The California drought
  - B) The fight over teacher tenure
  - C) The proposed ban on plastic bags
- 9) Who was the first African-American to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize?
  - A) Gwendolyn Brooks, in 1950
  - B) Ralph Ellison, in 1953
  - C) Alex Haley, in 1977
- 10) Of the 21 Pulitzer Prizes typically awarded each year, how many are given for journalism?
  - A) 10
  - B) 14
  - C) 16
- 11) In 1961, which paper won its first national-reporting Pulitzer for exposing an unethical timber transaction?
  - A) The *Christian Science Monitor*
  - B) The *Seattle Times*
  - C) The *Wall Street Journal*
- 12) Which of the following has happened 63 times in the history of the Pulitzer Prize?
  - A) New York-based newspapers have won
  - B) No prize was awarded for a particular category
  - C) The ceremony has coincided with Columbia's graduation
- 13) In the 1990s, Columbia journalism professor Sam Freedman, cultural historian Peter Gay '51GSAS, and memoirist Richard Rodriguez '69GSAS were finalists in what Pulitzer category?
  - A) Biography
  - B) History
  - C) General nonfiction
- 14) The Pulitzer board's \$1.5 million effort to promote Pulitzer awareness in advance of the prizes' 2016 centennial is known by what name?
  - A) The Bonfires Initiative
  - B) The Campfires Initiative
  - C) The Firelight Initiative



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—EMIL BAHARY '57BUS,  
'62SEAS, '69SEAS,  
KAMEL BAHARY '54CC,  
and BILL BAHARY '61GSAS

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## 8 Things You Probably Didn't Know About Columbia Alumni

1. Five have been inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.
2. Sixteen have served as mayor of New York City.
3. Twenty-five live in Bermuda, an island that is just 21 square miles. (That's more than one Columbian per mile!)
4. Forty-five have competed in the Olympics.
5. Fifty-eight had films featured in the Sundance Film Festival this year alone.
6. Ninety-nine served in the Peace Corps.
7. 7,483 couples (or 14,366 alumni) found love at Columbia.
8. Today, 106,200 Columbians call New York home.