

NYC: Academic Labor Town?  
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New York is home to at least 100 colleges, universities or professional degree-granting institutions, with hundreds of thousands of residents enrolled in thousands of degree programs taught by close to 60,000 professors, including part-time and graduate students.<sup>1</sup> In what follows, we analyze the particular trajectories of corporatization that have characterized three of New York City's principal academic institutions - Columbia, NYU and CUNY. Our primary focus lies with Columbia and CUNY, as much of the rest of the book details NYU. At root, processes at these three schools reflects, differently, the global restructuring of the higher education industry over the last few decades, all taking place in New York City. While local schools like the newly christened "New School University," Long Island University, Adelphi and others have similarly transmogrified in this new era of austerity, we have chosen to study Columbia, NYU and CUNY for their size and renown, as well as their ideal-typical characteristics. Until the 1960's, each had been emblematic of particular statuses within the academic hierarchy, and had carved out successful niches educating, in turn, national and international elites, the (commuting-distance) middle class, and New York City's aspiring and diverse working class. In the decades that followed, this relatively symbiotic balance was thrown over for increasingly intense antagonism, as each institution sought access to dwindling city, state, and federal funding. The shifting fortunes, jostling for position, cosmetic and structural makeovers of these three universities over the subsequent decades illustrate many of the trends present in the city's academic industry as a whole.

The provenances of each of these three institutions reflect a shared rhetorical commitment to education as a public good, with the public of New York often enjoying pride of place. CUNY's founding mission was to educate "the children of the whole people," while Albert Gallatin sought "in this immense and fast-growing city ... a system of rational and practical education fitting for all and graciously open to all" at NYU. Columbia, the least provincial of the three, nevertheless "recognizes the importance of its location in New York City and seeks to link its research and teaching to the vast resources of a great metropolis," and beyond that, to "convey the products of its efforts to the world."<sup>2</sup> While each of these schools professes to be advancing the public interest in general and more specifically the commonwealth of New York City (whose name they've branded and rebranded), their claims ring hollow when viewed not only through the lens of labor relations, but in relation to broader questions concerning the long-term sustainability of higher education's mission to advance and disseminate knowledge.

### **Columbia and the Rise of the Global City**

In the closing years of the Fordist era, Columbia held a particularly contradictory relationship to New York City. In conditions that hold true to this day, it operated outside many constraints of place, as the students it served and its institutional peers were national and international in scope. As part of the Ivy League, Columbia has always derived its elite status less from its geographic location and more from academic prestige. So, when Columbia began to fall in national rankings, first from third place (after 1957), and then from the top ten after student rebellion in 1968, this was cause for deep concern

within its leadership.<sup>3</sup> This decline was related in part to Columbia's neighborhood, Morningside Heights, and the city itself. As New York's industrial base went into a steep decline, the deep economic and social problems of surrounding economically marginalized neighborhoods such as Harlem began to have a strong impact on Columbia's self-image. After decades in which Columbia had trumpeted its location in "the country's largest city and [a] world center" as a boon, the university's environs suddenly came to seem an alarming burden.<sup>4</sup> In 1967, provost Jacques Barzun described Morningside Heights as "uninviting, abnormal, sinister, and dangerous."<sup>5</sup> By the mid-1970s, the city's policy of "planned shrinkage" of ethnic minority neighborhoods through the slashing of transit, sanitation, police and fire protection in poor areas to levels which the tax base could support seemed to have damned Morningside Heights, and, with it, Columbia, to terminal decline.<sup>6</sup>

Decisions taken by Columbia contributed decisively to this sense of decline and crisis. The student takeover of 1968, for example, was precipitated by Columbia's imperious relations with its predominantly African-American, poor and working-class neighborhood. In particular, Columbia's move to occupy a portion of Morningside Park, a strategic buffer separating the Heights from the Harlem Valley, through the construction of a new gym facility that was to have separate-but-equal facilities for members of each community, raised the hackles of members of the neighborhood's predominantly African American and Latino communities.<sup>7</sup> Columbia further alienated members of both working class and middle class communities in the area through its use of urban renewal powers to acquire deteriorating buildings, evict their tenants, and remodel them for faculty and students. Despite snagging a million dollar grant from the

Ford Foundation to ameliorate urban conditions, Columbia seemed to be behaving as arrogantly as the many urban authorities that used the alibi of “renewal” for apparent ethnic cleansing of the city. The decisions made during the fiscal crisis of the city in the mid-1970s further impoverished Columbia’s immediate locale, and by the early 1980’s the school found itself not only facing deficits but caught within many of the same negative “Fort Apache”-type images and conditions faced by the city as a whole during the period. As Morningside Heights struggled with urban blight, student riot, and racial conflict, Columbia, caught in a vicious Catch-22, found that it could not compete with the salaries and facilities offered by other elite schools as a result of the heavy investment required in neighborhood defense. By 1979, a presidential Commission on Academic Priorities in the Arts and Sciences cited Columbia’s malaise as a product first of the “phenomenal expansion of higher education following World War II,” and, second, of “circumstances relating to Columbia’s location in New York City and its specific location on Morningside Heights.”<sup>8</sup>

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Columbia’s revival in the latter part of that decade went hand-in-hand with the gentrification of the neighborhood, in which it played a prominent role. As middle class neighborhoods in areas like the Bronx and Brooklyn decayed and, in some cases, literally burned to the ground, property values in Manhattan began their steady upward climb. By the mid-1980s, the galloping gentrification of the Upper West Side had reached Morningside Heights, providing a structural form of urban renewal that effectively purged poor communities from the university’s environs. By the 1990s, the reversal in the neighborhood’s fortunes was virtually complete. The draconian policies of “zero tolerance” that did so much to

stimulate gentrification throughout Manhattan during the era of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani sealed this transformation. As Jim Shapiro, an undergrad student at Columbia during the blighted years of the mid-1970s and a faculty member from 1985 to the present, puts it, “Giuliani did more for Columbia’s reputation than anyone else...Columbia has been able to draw on a national and especially an international student population because people aren’t afraid to send their sons and daughters to study in the big city anymore.”<sup>9</sup> The wheel has come full circle. Indeed, in his five-year report covering the period from 1993-98, President George Rupp cites Columbia’s “extraordinary academic quality,” “our New York location,” and the university’s “history of involvement in the international arena” as Columbia’s crucial, defining strengths.<sup>10</sup> Columbia is now firmly anchored in what Saskia Sassen calls the “global city,” a core node of the world economy characterized by, on the one hand, an economically and spatially polarized population employed in high income jobs relating to finance, insurance, real estate (FIRE) and the culture industry (ICE), and, on the other hand, by low-waged workers in the service sector.<sup>11</sup>

While capital and the middle classes began to flood back into the neighborhood, Columbia took steps to capitalize on government schemes to wean universities off public largesse by turning them into money making enterprises. On the day that the Bayh-Dole Act went into effect in 1980, Columbia enacted a patent policy that gave the school rights to faculty inventions, allowing for royalties for the faculty and their laboratories. Since then, Columbia has ranked first among universities receiving licensing revenue.<sup>12</sup>

Patenting is overseen by the Office of Science and Technology Ventures, an entity formed in 1982 that quickly made its mark when a team of Columbia researchers led by Dr. Richard Axel was granted a patent for several essential technologies related to co-

transformation, a process through which cells can be made to produce particular proteins. The so-called Axel patents, granting ownership over biological processes, proved to be the most lucrative in the history of university patents, placing Columbia at the forefront of the increasing privatization of the scientific knowledge commons. In 2004, for example, the *Crimson* reported that Harvard made \$24 million as compared to Columbia's \$178 million from such ventures.<sup>13</sup> Columbia's ambitious plans for expansion into West Harlem underline the increasing centrality of biomedical venture capitalism to the university's fortunes. These initiatives in academic capitalism have generated significant friction: in recent years, residents of West Harlem have challenged the university's rezoning plans and three large pharmaceutical companies have filed a lawsuit against Columbia alleging that the university improperly sought to maintain a monopoly on the "technologies."<sup>14</sup>

Throughout this period of rejuvenation, Columbia's relations with its workforce remained acrimonious, at best. Fourteen unions currently bargain with Columbia, but the university has done its best to fragment inter-union coordination, exhibiting what workers there call a "plantation mentality, like they need to keep their workers in check or they might do something crazy."<sup>15</sup> The university administration fought bitterly against the campaign for unionization among clerical workers in the mid-1980s, using tactics employed by the most anti-union corporations. Feminism played a prominent role in this campaign, as the predominantly female clerical workers highlighted the gendered pay inequalities facilitated by their lack of access to union representation, a theme that was prominent in similar campaigns among clerical workers at Yale and Boston University. Columbia's paternalism toward its workers, so evident in

previous conflicts such as the clerical workers' unionization drive, played out once again as graduate students sought to acquire union representation over the last half decade. Despite the NLRB's prior recognition of graduate students' right to union representation, like its other Ivy League brothers, Columbia consistently drew on the mystique of the feudal university system and its ideological commitment to traditional hierarchical structures to defuse the crisis of consent it faced. Top research scholars were not exactly delighted when they faced grading duties during the graduate student strike. The university administration's response to the threat of graduate student organizing mobilized notions of guild apprenticeships and ancient prestige, articulations of an archaic code that retains its hold over both the public imagination and professional self-image of many academic workers. In addition, the university also threatened graduate students with severe punishments that represented a direct infringement of their academic freedom and a blatant fear tactic.<sup>16</sup> While Columbia faculty did not engage in an active anti-union campaign as professors at Yale had during the 1990s, active faculty supporters could essentially be counted on one hand according to union organizers.

Columbia administrators have shown themselves to be every bit as intent on taking advantage of the trend towards contingent labor as have managers of less well-heeled schools, despite the lack of a pressing economic imperative to do so as a result of Columbia's huge endowment. Columbia's hostile workplace practices, with their echoes from Yale, have served as a model for the NYU administration. Clerical workers at NYU, organized in the American Federation of Teachers, worked in an open shop for years, only winning union security when graduate students organized. Adjuncts, recently organized in UAW, have gone through multiple arbitrations and fought tooth and nail for

their first contract. As private universities, NYU and Columbia can feel somewhat secure from more faculty organizing, as they stand behind the legal cover of the 1980 *Yeshiva* decision, which denied full time private school professors the right to organize. But the City University system, with its public base and near floor-to-ceiling union organization, also served as a model for NYU. It was at CUNY that the possibility of running a large university system with low cost labor was realized on a grand scale.

### **CUNY and Structural Adjustment**

While Columbia's fortunes ebbed and then rebounded, CUNY's plummeted. CUNY entered the neo-liberal era as one of the greatest university systems in the country, with its flagship campus at City College internationally recognized as the "proletariat's Harvard." CUNY was home to one of the new higher education unions, the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), a local of the American Federation of Teachers. Formed in 1969, the PSC brought all CUNY faculty, graduate students, and professional staff together in one bargaining unit.<sup>17</sup> In 1970, as a result of intensive struggle led by African-American and Puerto Rican students at City, CUNY took the historic and radical step of opening its doors to all NYC high school graduates, "arguably the nation's most ambitious attempt to expand college access for minorities." While debates raged over whether this would lower the "standards" of education offered by CUNY, early observations indicated that CUNY could offer universal, free, high quality education—a contradiction in terms, according the market logic then ascending.<sup>18</sup> By combining an open admissions policy

with free tuition, CUNY broke new ground in democratizing access to higher education in the United States. And in 1973, after voting to strike, CUNY faculty and staff won their first contract.

As a consequence, CUNY quickly drew the attention of those behind the nascent right-wing counter-attack against the social movements of the day. The Nixon White House was particularly incensed by the anti-racist and peace activism emanating from U.S. campuses in the early 1970s. Nixon's vice president, Spiro Agnew, attacked open admissions as one of the principal means "by which unqualified students are being swept into college on the wave of the new socialism."<sup>19</sup> In 1970, Roger Freeman, an important advisor to Nixon on educational matters who was working at the time for California Governor Ronald Reagan's reelection campaign, clearly delineated the target of the conservative offensive: "We are in danger of producing an educated proletariat. That's dynamite! We have to be selective on who we allow to go through higher education."<sup>20</sup> While Governor Reagan was able to dismantle the University of California's policy of free tuition after his reelection in 1970, the campaign against CUNY was a far more protracted one.

It was not until the fiscal crisis of New York City itself in 1975 that conservatives, led by Nixon's successor Gerald Ford, were able to strike a decisive blow against CUNY. Faced with deepening fiscal difficulties, the Ford administration simply pulled the plug on federal funding of cities; as the famous headline had it: "Ford to New York: Drop Dead." As the gap between revenues and outlays in the city's budget yawned ever greater, a cabal of bankers led by Citibank's Walter Wriston, who equated all forms of government intervention with socialism, refused to roll over the city's debt and thereby

pushed New York into bankruptcy.<sup>21</sup> In what was to become the model for the devastating structural adjustment programs administered around the world by the International Monetary Fund during the 1980s, the debt relief that followed New York's bankruptcy entailed the construction of new institutions of governance that laid first claim to all city tax revenues in order to pay off bondholders. Encouraged by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, who had long held CUNY's tuition-free status in his crosshairs as New York's Governor, President Ford announced he would withhold federal aid from New York City until it eliminated policies of open admissions and free tuition at CUNY.

The threat represented by open admissions was immediately recognized by private schools, which had seen the public universities expand during the post-war era and their own enrollment shrink as inflation and tuition rose. While CUNY students were struggling for public access in 1969, private institutions such as NYU lobbied hard for public resources, persuading the NY state legislature to channel aid to private institutions through the "Bundy" program of Direct Institutional Aid, which guarantees state funds for financial aid at independent colleges on the basis of "graduation productivity."<sup>22</sup> In 1971, NYU's president joined others on behalf of NY state's private colleges in calling for an end to free and low tuition at the public schools.<sup>23</sup> After the federal rejection of publicly supported higher education, their calculations reflected the popular prediction that if CUNY were to introduce tuition, it would lose its middle-class students, who would not qualify for the New York State Tuition Assistance Program or federal Pell grants. Faced with tuition charges, these relatively wealthy CUNY students would begin to migrate to other fee-charging institutions in the metropolitan area. As

City College President Robert Marshak put it in his alarmed report on academic restructuring in the early 1970s: “The loss of thousands of these lower-middle and middle-class students from the CUNY system would dilute the social mission of the public sector of higher education in New York City, which is to maintain a balanced academic, ethnic, and class mix in its student body.”<sup>24</sup>

Open admissions began as an under-funded mandate, and CUNY entered the 1970’s growing rapidly with inadequate resources. In 1974 the Professional Staff Congress successfully fought off an attempt by the CUNY Chancellor to limit tenure for new faculty, but CUNY’s budget was slashed during the fiscal crisis. Programs were eliminated, hours were shortened, classes cancelled, capital projects halted, and student services curtailed. In the midst of these cuts, the city reduced CUNY’s budget in 1975 by \$32 million, a figure that made transparent its specific goals in starving CUNY: \$32 million was precisely the amount CUNY could expect to yield if it began to charge its students tuition on a par with the SUNY schools. It was clear to contemporary observer Michael Harrington that “the tuition demand has nothing to do with raising money and is certainly unrelated to any educational concerns.” Instead, “It is a symbolic gesture designed to convince the American money market that New York City has given up its sinful, innovative ways” of educating the public for free.<sup>25</sup>

In 1976 CUNY terminated its 129-year policy of free tuition and fired hundreds of young faculty members who had been recently hired to educate the new students resulting from open admissions. In total, 3,294 part- and full-time faculty members were laid off. In the eyes of city elites, CUNY had become “an unneeded luxury, a squandering of tax money, a give-away to the poor.”<sup>26</sup> Middle-class students who could afford to go

elsewhere did, and those who couldn't afford tuition left school altogether. 62,000 fewer students attended CUNY after tuition was introduced, and by 1980 the university had 50% fewer African-American and Latino freshman than it had in 1976.<sup>27</sup> Retrenchment policies have dominated the fiscal management of CUNY for close to three decades. CUNY students have had to endure repeated tuition increases, as state and federal aid dried up during the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the dismantling of the cutting-edge remediation programs set up to integrate non-traditional students into the university setting.<sup>28</sup> The immiseration of students and the elevation of CEO-style university administrators go hand in hand. After receiving a whopping 40% pay increase funded through heightened faculty and staff productivity in late 2003, for example, CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein callously proposed two years later to establish annual tuition increases pegged to inflation for CUNY's working class student body.<sup>29</sup>

Management's efforts to link tuition to inflation gives the lie to its support of a "public" university system. Tuition and fees now cover nearly half of CUNY's operating expenses, and have already increased by nearly two hundred percent over the past fifteen years, while public funding has decreased by thirty percent over the same period.<sup>30</sup> But rather than identify systemic underfunding as the source of CUNY's hardships or call for meaningful increases in public support, its leaders have promoted "cluster hiring" in "flagship programs," some of which could be used to develop for-profit "incubator companies" like at Columbia. The Master Plan of 2004-2008 continues to promote the "flagship" environment of an increasingly stratified system, in which significant resources are devoted to programs such as the Honors Colleges (schools within a select group of senior colleges) and programs run by the central administration. While the more

recent Plan calls for more public support, funding is in part sought through “an unprecedented focus on philanthropy as a permanent feature of revenue in support of programmatic initiatives.”<sup>31</sup>

Although CUNY’s student population began to expand once more as a university degree became increasingly necessary to enter most job markets, a program encouraging full-time faculty to take early retirement further eroded the teaching staff. After a freeze on faculty hiring at CUNY, implemented during the fiscal crisis and lasting for nearly twenty years, a significant generation gap opened among faculty. Although CUNY has added the equivalent of a college and a half since the fiscal crisis, its full-time teaching staff is currently half what it was in 1975.<sup>32</sup> The shortfall in teaching staff was initially made up for through the rehiring of the many faculty members laid off during the fiscal crisis as part-time instructors and, subsequently, through employing some of the many talented post-baccalaureate degree holders who live and work in New York City as adjuncts.<sup>33</sup> Part-time academic workers currently teach between 50 and 60% of all CUNY courses, down from as much as 70% in recent years.<sup>34</sup>

Why this turn to contingent labor? Employment of a contingent labor force obviously saves management money. But it also gives them tremendous power. Part-time teachers do not have the same rights to grievance procedures and due process in general as full-time faculty; they can be hired and fired virtually at will. This insecurity doesn’t just eat away at the academic freedom and general well being of part-timers. In addition, it catalyzes a climate of anxiety and fear that helps tame dissent even among those who are tenured and supposedly “secure.” As the number of contingent faculty

increases, the ability of the faculty as a whole to direct its own affairs diminishes and the basic character of institutional autonomy and collective self-governance erodes.<sup>35</sup>

CUNY management's contract proposal of December 2004 embodies precisely this vicious combination of austerity and control. Perhaps the most central component of management's drive to exert greater control over CUNY faculty was its demand that department chairs be removed from the union. Had this demand been successfully implemented, the faculty's ability to control its own affairs through democratic election of its own departmental executive officers would have been dramatically curtailed. Chairs would essentially have become managers. In addition, CUNY management sought to advance its power over the faculty and staff through the elimination of significant due process protections, the reduction of annual leave, and the undermining of job security.<sup>36</sup>

### **NYU, Inc.**

In the early 1970's NYU found itself on the brink of financial ruin, with costs soaring and enrollment declining. In 1973 it sold its prestigious and architecturally distinguished Bronx campus to the City University, retreating from what was soon to be the smoldering ruins of the city's northernmost borough to the Village as its flagship location. The end of free tuition at CUNY, advocated by NYU's leadership, did not produce the flood of middle-class commuter students needed, although NYU was one of

the biggest beneficiaries of CUNY's eclipse.<sup>37</sup> By the early 1980's, NYU's future was very much in doubt. A short ten years later, however, the New York Times could describe it as "very nearly the Greenwich Village equivalent of Columbia"; today NYU ranks as one of the most popular and expensive undergraduate destinations and is home to many of the nation's leading graduate schools and programs.<sup>38</sup> In the words of *The Economist*, "it is flush with money from fund-raising, 'hot' with would-be undergraduates across the country, and famous for recruiting academic superstars. The Shanghai world ranking puts it at number 32." For the world's premier business magazine, the single most important factor determining these results is "that power is concentrated in the hands of the central administration."

With millions of finance capital raised through its magnate-heavy board of directors, NYU became an active player in the growing real estate sector, helping to literally "rebuild" the city during the booms of the 1980's and 1990's. Like Columbia, NYU was also helped by the gentrification of the city itself, and NYU's own efforts in that direction mirrored steps taken in the city as a whole. While capitalizing on and to a certain extent facilitating the city's real estate boom, NYU marketed itself using its distinctive downtown location in a revived New York City. From the 1981 appointment of President John Brademas, one of the creators of the National Endowments for the Arts and for the Humanities, the school aggressively branded its location in one of the country's foremost cauldrons of creativity. And while most other institutions were cutting back funding for the humanities and social sciences, NYU expanded support for performing, visual, and communication arts in particular.<sup>39</sup> The university's financial supporters recognized the appeal of New York's cultural sector, with real estate moguls

such as Laurence Tisch donating \$7.5 million for the creation of a school of the arts. NYU thus came to embody the synergy between New York's FIRE economy and the urban-based creative class discussed by critics such as Richard Florida.<sup>40</sup>

As Greenwich Village and the East Village became sites of conflict over this process of radical gentrification, NYU often played the role of the public's enemy number one: driving out local residents and businesses, driving up rents, while shadowing one of Manhattan's few "big sky" low-density neighborhoods with towering dorms.<sup>41</sup> The recent struggle over a new dorm on 12<sup>th</sup> street typifies NYU's community relations. After years of being identified as the "Villain of the Village," NYU began a kind of listening campaign with its neighbors. After a community meeting at which new NYU President John Sexton assured concerned residents that "the Village has a fragile ecosystem and we're going to respect it," local activists were hopeful. But a follow-up meeting never happened, and ultimately NYU's promise that it would consider the public's input was "a total snow job," in the words of Andrew Berman, director of the Greenwich Village Society of Historic Preservation. The dorm, currently under construction, is going up as originally planned. "To be blunt, this exceeded my worst expectations about N.Y.U."<sup>42</sup>

The bitter conflict over the 12<sup>th</sup> street dorm recapitulates battles over urban development that stretch back to the era of NYU's initial makeover, when President Hester used a massive grant from the Ford Foundation to build Bobst Library and University Village despite the objections of the surrounding community.<sup>43</sup> This race to expand NYU's urban footprint typifies its aggressive competition for revenues. If NYU

absorbed many CUNY students whose relatively limited means prevented them from settling in dorms following the city's fiscal crisis, the city's reviving fortunes have made housing expansion a high priority, and NYU is not allowing community relations to impede its expansion plans. Other universities that can afford to are following NYU's aggressive real estate expansion. CUNY is building dorms on or near multiple campuses, seeking to better compete for undergraduate applicants, and Columbia's plans for expansion in West Harlem – potentially through the highly controversial invocation of eminent domain to evict community residents - are predicated on the need for additional space for housing as well as research.

## Conclusion

Institutions of higher education in the United States occupy a relatively privileged but also highly contradictory position in the global production of knowledge. Schools such as CUNY, NYU, and Columbia all benefited from historically unprecedented federal largesse during the era of military procurement-funded research and development. While they grew, these paradigmatic embodiments of what Michael Denning calls the Cold War mass university served to reproduce the professional and managerial cadres that ran the country, but also came to offer a vehicle of mass public education and cognate social transformation.<sup>44</sup> As the era of the mass university waned, the understanding of education as a public good was dismantled. Like so many other aspects of social life during the neoliberal era, education and knowledge in general were recast as commodities.

Meanwhile, New York City was transformed by local and national elites from a bastion of social democracy into a lean and mean global city. In the wake of the fiscal crisis, the city's tax system was systematically reengineered in order to eliminate or minimize New York's pioneering forms of social redistribution and to place effective control of the public domain in the hands of urban economic elites. Battles over the fate of CUNY, NYU, and Columbia played an important role in the city's transformation: as repositories of social capital and pivotal institutions of socialization, New York's big three were important symbols of the city and the nation's ideological investments. From their vastly different fates during the neoliberal era we may read not simply a tale of changing pedagogical priorities but the history of a largely successful elite counter-revolution.

The gutting of support for public education and the concomitant shift of funding towards more exclusive private schools has had important implications not just for the city in general, but also for academic workers at each of the big three. With the neoliberal shift has come a fundamental reconfiguration in the terrain of higher education. Polarization takes place on three levels within the increasingly corporate academy: between vertiginously defunded public institutions such as CUNY and elite private institutions such as NYU and Columbia; within the faculties of universities, where disciplines that are not oriented towards immediate profit are starved of funds while venture capital floods into areas such as biomedicine and information technology; between the dwindling core of full time faculty and the expanding cadre of contingent teachers and service personnel. In other words, New York's academic sector reflects and, indeed, has helped catalyze the shift towards a rentier economy in the city, one in which a

small elite controls disproportionate sums of capital and the ladders of upward mobility are systematically knocked away for everyone else.

In this context, unions threaten each of the three institutions in discrete but related ways. Columbia and its Ivy League brethren must deny that graduate students work in order to uphold the historical fiction of graduate school as a period of apprenticeship. But, more importantly, the image of elite intellectuals sharing the fruits of their research with an eager audience of students would be undermined if the extent of both graduate and part time teaching were to be fully understood. CUNY is freed from these particular constraints, but academic unionism remains threatening to its academic management in the most basic senses of money and power. As the latter pursues an increasingly corporate structure, academic unions are forced to battle not simply for faculty self-governance and autonomy, but for the very concept of public education itself. Thus, the PSC's campaign around the theme "Another University is Possible" highlights the issues of endemic race-, gender-, and class-based inequalities of access that underlie struggles over public funding of higher education.<sup>45</sup> In addition, this theme consciously resonates with and draws on the global justice movement's struggle to develop alternatives to the commodification of all forms of public good. As such, the PSC actively seeks to link up with transnational movements within this hemisphere and around the world for the defense of the right to public education.<sup>46</sup>

The obstacles confronted by academic organizers in each of these institutions are, of course, massive. The PSC faces a chilling atmosphere in which the ideology of public austerity has become doctrine despite budget surpluses from year to year. The PSC's most recent contract won a substantial and historic demand—that 100 full time lines be

created from CUNY's pool of experienced part-time adjuncts. "For the first time in its history, CUNY has agreed to convert part-time lines to full time positions, instead of the other way around," remarked Bowen.<sup>47</sup> And recent contracts have begun to reverse the wage declines of recent decades, increased sabbatical pay, brought greater parity for part-timers, increased support for professional development for all job titles, and defended staff from management's attempts to erode job security. But the power being exercised by the union has encouraged CUNY management to evade the contract whenever possible. In recent years the administration has unilaterally implemented policy changes in areas such as computer use, student complaint procedures, and intellectual property, areas that the union has argued fall under bargaining prerogatives. Can the unions representing higher education workers successfully work together to change the direction of the corporatized university? In recent years, activists and officials in NYC's unions have begun to collectively ask this question in meetings and on picket lines.<sup>48</sup> This recognition of the shared interests among workers in our local "industry" creates, in the words of one PSC leader, "possibilities for a more effective, coordinated approach to organizing and building union power in higher education."<sup>49</sup> University administrations have relinquished the public good; it is up to us to forge it anew.

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Exact numbers for these fields are difficult to generate. There are dozens of specialized schools listed that appear on some official lists and not others. Wikipedia has a fairly good list of 95 specific schools, but misses many schools-within-schools (such as NYU or Columbia Law), many of the small technical colleges (like “Brooklyn Institute of Business Technology”), as well as most community colleges outside of the CUNY system. There may be as many as a million people enrolled in some form of post-secondary education; “hundreds of thousands” is a cautious and unfortunately vague estimate. The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides data for “education, training and library occupations” broken down into “post-secondary” positions, within the five boroughs of New York and including (for some reason) six surrounding counties. The figure of 60,000 is therefore including Westchester, Bergen, Passaic, and three others. BLS does not provide numbers for non-teaching university employees.

<sup>2</sup> See college websites and mission statements: [www.cuny.edu](http://www.cuny.edu), [www.nyu.edu](http://www.nyu.edu), [www.columbia.edu](http://www.columbia.edu).

<sup>3</sup> Nathan Glazer, “Facing Three Ways: City and University in New York Since World War II,” in The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to the Present, ed. Thomas Bender (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 267-291.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the President’s Committee on the Future of the University (1957), quoted in Glazer, 270.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Glazer, 272.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of policies of “planned shrinkage,” see Robert Fitch, *The Assassination of New York* (New York: Verso, 1993), viii-ix.

<sup>7</sup> Glazer, 274.

<sup>8</sup> Columbia University, *Commission on Academic Priorities in the Arts and Sciences* (1979), quoted in Glazer, 276-277.

<sup>9</sup> Shapiro.

<sup>10</sup> *Columbia University President's Five-Year Report*, accessed January 30, 2007, <<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/news/report/98/>>

<sup>11</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Gilbert “**The Corporate University and the Public Intellectual**” (Draft), Yale Working Group on Globalization and Culture, 18 January 2005; **and** Bernard Wysocki, Jr., “Columbia's Pursuit Of Patent Riches Angers Companies” *Wall Street Journal*, December 21, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Katie Reedy, “Patents Bring in the Cash to Columbia: University Generated More Revenue from Patents Than Most of Its Peers in 2006,” *Columbia Spectator* (November 28, 2006), accessed January 30, 2007, <<http://www.columbiaspectator.com>>.

<sup>14</sup> Reedy. The ethical implications of academic capitalism have been far more publicly aired at other institutions such as the University of California-Berkeley, where a patenting deal essentially gave the multinational pharmaceutical firm Novartis control over government-funded university research initiatives. For an incisive analysis of this controversy and of the contradictions of academic capitalism in general, see Jennifer Washburn, *University, Inc.: the Corporate Corruption of Higher Education* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Rosenstein.

<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Washburn, "Columbia Unbecoming," *The Nation* (April 25, 2005), accessed January 30, 2007, <<http://www.thenation.com>>

<sup>17</sup> "Fighting for the Profession, A History of AFT Higher Education History," March 2003 pamphlet, [http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/higher\\_ed/History.pdf](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/higher_ed/History.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Quote from David Lavin and David Hyllegard, *Changing the Odds: Open Admissions and the Life Chances of the Disadvantaged*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996; Fred Hechinger, "Open Admissions: Prophets of Doom Seem to Have Been Wrong," NYT, March 28, 1971; See Lavin and Hyllegard for the definitive study of open admission's success, under-funding or no.

<sup>19</sup> Spiro Agnew, "Threat to Educational Standards," speech at Republican fundraising dinner, Des Moines, Iowa, 14 April 1970; quoted in Franklin, 126.

<sup>20</sup> "Professor Sees Peril in Education," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 October 1970; quoted in Franklin, 126.

<sup>21</sup> On the city's fiscal crisis, see Eric Lichten, *The New York City Fiscal Crisis* (South Hadley, Ma.; Bergin and Garvey, 1986), Martin Shefter, *Political Crisis, Fiscal Crisis: The Collapse and Revival of New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), and William Tabb, *The Long Default: New York City and the Urban Fiscal Crisis* (New York: Monthly Review, 1982).

<sup>22</sup> See the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities website for more information on Bundy Aid:

[http://www.cicu.org/learnMore/aidprograms.php?Report\\_ID=1](http://www.cicu.org/learnMore/aidprograms.php?Report_ID=1)

<sup>23</sup> Fred Hechinger, "Another Cry for Help; Colleges," *New York Times*, December 19, 1971.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Marshak, *Academic Renewal in the 1970s*, quoted in Glazer, 285.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Harrington, “Keep Open Admissions Open,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1975

<sup>26</sup> Freeman, 271.

<sup>27</sup> Freeman, 271, 272.

<sup>28</sup> For a discussion of CUNY’s remediation programs, see William Crain, “The Battle for Social Justice at CUNY” *Encounter* 14.4 (2001).

<sup>29</sup> On Chancellor Goldstein’s nearly half million-dollar compensation package, see Ellen Balleien, “80<sup>th</sup> Street, presidents get generous raises,” *Clarion* (Dec 2003), 3. On tuition hikes, see Hank Williams and Peter Hogness, “CUNY Board considers plan for annual tuition hikes,” *Clarion* (Nov 2005), 4. Available online at <[www.psc-cuny.org/ClarionNovember05.pdf](http://www.psc-cuny.org/ClarionNovember05.pdf)>.

<sup>30</sup> Barbara Bowen, PSC testimony before the [Higher Education Committees of New York State Assembly and Senate, October 7, 2005](http://www.psc-cuny.org/fundingtestimonyoct05.htm) (<http://www.psc-cuny.org/fundingtestimonyoct05.htm>); Steve London, PSC testimony before the Joint Senate Finance Committee and Assembly Ways and Means Committee, Public Hearings on the 2006-2007 Executive Budget, January 30, 2006 (<http://www.psc-cuny.org/BudgetTestimonyJan06.htm>).

<sup>31</sup> See CUNY Master Plans, 2000-2004; 2004-2008; and “Investing in Futures: Financing the CUNY Master Plan,” report by CUNY, November 4, 2005 ([http://www1.cuny.edu/portal\\_ur/content/2006/compact\\_2007.pdf](http://www1.cuny.edu/portal_ur/content/2006/compact_2007.pdf)).

<sup>32</sup> According to PSC President Barbara Bowen, there were 11,600 faculty members at CUNY in 1975; today there are just under 6,000. Barbara Bowen, personal interview, 20 May 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Bowen, interview.

<sup>34</sup> Bowen, interview.

<sup>35</sup> To its credit, and after many years of pressure from the PSC and other faculty bodies, CUNY is committing to many full-time hires in the coming years, and has recently hired hundreds of new full-time professors in the community colleges. While many of these hires are earmarked for programs that stand to increase CUNY's profits or prestige (see "cluster hiring" discussion), the increase in full-time positions is a positive step.

<sup>36</sup> Barbara Bowen, "The Union Strikes Back," *Clarion* (Jan 2005), 11. Available online at <[www.psc-cuny.org/ClarionJanuary05.pdf](http://www.psc-cuny.org/ClarionJanuary05.pdf)>.

<sup>37</sup> Glazer, 284.

<sup>38</sup> William Honan, "Buying Excellence: How N.Y.U. Rebuilt Itself," *NYT*, March 20, 1995; US News and World Report 2007 Best Colleges; NYU Website.

<sup>39</sup> Frusciano and Pettit, 251.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class; And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> See Duncombe chapter for more discussion of NYU's real estate ventures and resistance. [better footnote? Neil Smith, press coverage of NYU town/gown skirmishes.. mp]

<sup>42</sup> Lincoln Anderson, "Conceding Nothing, NYU Starts Building Megadorm," *The Villager*, August 2, 2006; see also Karen Arenson, "The Villain of the Village?" *NYT*, April 19, 2001

<sup>43</sup> For an account of these earlier conflicts, see John Frusciano and Marilyn H. Pettit, *New York University and the City* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 248.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Denning, "Lineaments and Contradictions of the Neoliberal University System," Working Paper for "Breaking Down the Ivory Tower: The University in the Creation of Another World," World Social Forum, January 2005, Accessed January 30, 2007, <[http://www.yale.edu/amstud/denning\\_lineaments\\_neoliberal\\_university.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/amstud/denning_lineaments_neoliberal_university.pdf)>

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of this campaign, see Ashley Dawson, "Another University is Possible," *Workplace* (forthcoming).

<sup>46</sup> See the PSC International Committee's booklet, "Globalization, Privatization, War: In Defense of Public Education in the Americas," Accessed January 30, 2007, <<http://www.psc-cuny.org/international.htm>>

<sup>47</sup> Peter Hogness, "Contract Ratified by Wide Margin," *Clarion*, Summer 2006

<sup>48</sup> Representatives from the NYC academic locals started this discussion a couple of years ago after meeting together under the auspices of the AFL-CIO's Voice at Work campaign. Changes in leadership at the national and local levels interrupted the progress, but interest remains high.

<sup>49</sup> John Hyland, PSC treasurer 2000-2006, personal correspondence.