

the eye

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SEIZING
THE
INITIATIVE

**could the community
principles statement affect
your disciplinary hearing?**

THE POSTCRYPT KEEPERS

• KILLER SUSHI

• GETTING AWKWARD WITH
DANIEL JOHNSTON

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SEIZING THE INITIATIVE

07 Last Halloween, a group of administrators and student leaders unveiled their plan to foster a better sense of community on Columbia’s campus. Has the Community Principles Statement really changed what it means to be a Columbian?

By John Davisson

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

On pages 46–48 of the March 2008 issue of *Nylon* magazine, a curious trend emerges pretty clearly—and it isn’t stripes for spring. (Check that out on page 126. The spread is actually pretty awesome.) Rather, it’s that, guess what, everyone loves *Nylon*!

These pages of the magazine are the “par avion” section, which is the title *Nylon* has substituted for “Letters to the Editor.” If the ones they’ve chosen this month are a representative sample, the world is in awe of *Nylon*, and its editors should just tuck in and wait for their Nobel Prizes in journalistic excellence.

“The editorial pictures make me squeal with glee ... I can’t wait to save issues of *NYLON* and give them to my grandchildren when I am older,” Loveada S. of Kent, Wash. opines. Maribel R. expresses her pleasure at the fact that *Nylon* “does not always talk about fashion, and it has many other interesting things that there are in the world.” Moxie C. conveys her thanks for “your rockin’ zine!”

There are a few nonsequiturs, too: an unnamed correspondent writes to let *Nylon* know that “my grey marker is running out,” while Kelsey S. explains that she didn’t read their cover story on Mary-Kate Olsen right away, “but that’s just ‘cause I’m a procrastinator.”

A Letters to the Editor section is a tricky balance to strike. *The Economist*’s “Inbox” section is often harshly critical—more so than I think the magazine deserves—and also illustrative of the fact that *The Economist*’s core readership is a thesaurus-owning bunch. (The “SIR – ” with which each letter begins really drives it home.)

People, on the other hand, follows more or less the same format each week: three letters from readers who liked the subjects profiled in any given

issue, in addition to two from gently disgruntled subscribers who disagreed with coverage choices.

You’ll notice *The Eye* doesn’t run Letters to the Editor. There are several contributing factors to this editorial decision: lesser causes include space constraints and split opinions on what sort of tone to strike with the letters we’d potentially choose to include. Do we go the *Nylon* route, publishing letters that set a positive precedent for the issue to come but smack of the omission of more critical ones? Or do we follow *The Economist*’s example, affording our most vocal detractors the chance to call themselves published authors?

Another small consideration is what we’d call it—“par avion” is cute for *Nylon* and “Inbox” makes sense for *The Economist*, but we’d have to come up with some optical pun (remember that “In Focus” and “Eye to Eye” are taken). I’m partial to “Navel-gazing,” myself, but maybe that’s a touch too glib.

The other, more pressing, concern about printing letters to *The Eye* is that there are no letters to print. Or not many, at least. The last four issues of this magazine have engendered letter-worthy reactions from only three people (not counting my mother, whose unequivocal support is always a welcome addition to my inbox. Thanks, Mom!).

Please, readers: don’t hold back. If you have something to say about *The Eye*, we want to know: e-mail us at eye@columbiaspectator.com.

If, on the other hand, you just want to let someone know your marker is running out, you can reach *Nylon* at 110 Greene St., Suite 607, New York, NY 10012.

—Alexandria Symonds

The Tomboy Turned Dressmaker

lara schilling interviews sari gueron

INTERVIEW AND PHOTO BY LARA SCHILLING

THE BUZZ AROUND YOUNG designer Sari Gueron has been growing steadily over the past few years among independent-minded celebrities and creative city girls alike. At the recent showing of her fall 2008 collection in Chelsea, actresses Maggie Gyllenhaal and Julianne Moore were among the guests. Gueron's interest in the infinite possibilities of the dress—easily the most emblematic feminine piece—combined with a keen eye for detail and a simplistic, relaxed attitude toward dressing have made her the go-to designer for unique pieces that don't scream for attention. In an age where many designers feel the pressure to create “look at me” garments in an effort to stay one step ahead, Gueron is content to focus on what she thinks real women want: comfortable clothing that flatters the figure and highlights the wearer's individual beauty. Now, three years after her breakout spring collection, Gueron is branching out into new territory with a contemporary line that will combine her original design philosophy with more practical, day-wear fabrics.

Tell me a little bit about your background. Did you always want to be a designer?

I didn't. I was actually a huge tomboy growing up. I didn't wear dresses or skirts until I was 15 or 16. I was really into sports and was always following my older brothers around. I did have distinct views on fashion though, like specifically not wearing skirts or dresses and always wearing Adidas or something. There was a period where I wouldn't wear buttons, or anything in my hair. My mom gave me bangs so it wouldn't be in my face all the time. And even in high school, I wore all black, like a uniform of black—always specific, but it wasn't girly at all. It's all really ironic because now I'm most significantly a dress designer.

Where did you study fashion design?

After high school I went to RISD [Rhode Island School of Design], and I didn't go specifically for fashion, but during freshman year I took a pattern-making class and realized that I loved making clothes ... just everything about it—the technical aspects, and draping, and touching the fabric. Dresses were the most appealing to me because they somehow express best the tomboy simplicity that's such a big part of my personality. I'm not prissy, and I don't like putting complicated outfits together. It's easy to just throw one piece on, and there are so many possibilities for making dresses. The softness and comfort level of wearing a lightweight, easy dress is so appealing to me.

Once I took that class I never looked back. I interned with Galliano in Paris twice, for both the winter and summer sessions. I worked with Oscar de la Renta after I graduated and learned a lot there too. And then after that I was really antsy to start my own thing. I won a GenArt award, and that really helped me get off the ground in the beginning.



Sari Gueron's dresses are inspired by the designer's own sense of simplicity.

What inspires you in the design process, and how do you get your ideas for each collection?

Now it's moving more towards the fabric—the fabrics and prints have been really inspiring me. But it's also always a continuation of the season before. Like let's say you do skinny pants for two seasons, but by the third you just get bored with it. ... That's kind of why the fall fashion world seems to be doing similar styles at the same time every year, even though it's not as obvious anymore. But for instance, we did pencil skirts for a few seasons and started getting bored with it. This season our designs have a lot more volume and were really inspired by these vintage floral prints that we found. They were really the starting point. A lot of designers will try to tell you they were inspired by some child wearing a hat that they saw on a trip to Tibet, but it's not really like that. For me it's less about a distinct inspiration and more about a feeling or mood that I want to convey. You work with the colors together and then usually a technique will emerge that runs through the whole collection.

So would you say the fashion cycle is kind of like a pendulum?

Yeah, it is. What I do is always sort of similar though—these easy dresses that have a lot of detail but don't overwhelm the wearer or give them a particular look. It's about being subtle and not looking like you're trying too hard. The goal is for the woman to look pretty and natural—she's in a beautiful dress but didn't spend a ton of time getting ready. I feel like my customer is a

little bit smarter that way. She knows it's not a show—she doesn't wear a ton of makeup, and she wants to be able to breathe in her clothes.

You're starting a contemporary line. Can you tell me more about that?

The idea for it sort of came from my own clothing choices. I like to dress really casually during the day but super luxuriously in the evening. And I really don't think you can make super luxurious looks for cheap, nor should you make casual clothes for a lot of money. So it just made a lot of sense for me to have these two lines separate. The same philosophy runs through both though—the contemporary line is still in keeping with soft, comfortable dresses and the same attention to detail. The designs are just cut from more casual fabrics and have fewer embellishments. I was originally doing a lot of casual clothes in the main collection, but they were making them with these really expensive fabrics and selling for eight or nine hundred dollars. I wanted to appeal to a wider audience, essentially, and design a larger variety of looks.

And do you know where the new line will be sold yet?

It should be sold at Barney's COOP, but it's not official yet. Everything is still kind of in the works.

What are your goals as a designer?

At the moment, to really work on growing both lines and have continued success. I want to build a business that will last.

///

Dirt on the Dirty

checking out new york's neglected stepsister

BY COURTENEY ERVIN

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTOPH'S PICTURE GALLERY

AN OVERHEARD DIALOGUE from every nook of the Columbia social scene:

"Where are you from?"

"New Jersey."

"Oh ... I'm ... sorry."

It's known as "the Jerz," "the Dirty," and even "the armpit of America": the state of New Jersey.

"I wish we could just find a way to take a knife and carve it out of the U.S.," jokes native New Yorker David Cooper, CC '09.

While New Jersey is one the most fiercely criticized states in the union, it is one of Columbia's most represented states in terms of student population. It's also the most densely populated state and one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse. The New Jersey turnpike is one of the state's claims to fame, but New Jersey's transportation system can also contribute to its negative perception.

"Every time I drive through New Jersey, I want to vomit because of the deadly aroma," Philip Tjimos, SEAS '09, says, referring to the Bayway Refinery operating in Linden, N.J., just off the Verrazano Bridge.

Students from New Jersey don't have much better assessments of the state.

"There isn't much to do, and no matter where you go it always looks the same," says Janusz Kesek, SEAS '08 of Linden, N.J. "People who aren't from New Jersey are biased, and people who are from New Jersey are proud. ... People shouldn't judge where you're from."

Another Linden resident, Brittany Reid, CC '11, defines "the Jersey attitude: we're just mean and trashy. But I feel like you can only say we're trashy if you're from New Jersey."

Where does all this paradoxical pride come from?

New Jersey is the birthplace of numerous notables, including Michael Ian Black, Jack Nicholson, Amiri Baraka, Derek Jeter, Bruce Springsteen, Thomas

Edison, Bruce Willis, Ice-T, and Jon Bon Jovi (just to name a few). It boasts a Six Flags Great Adventure theme park, the Liberty Science Center, a number of historical sites, several beaches, cranberry bogs, cities, suburbs, and farmland, with nothing farther than two hours from anything else.

Then why all the New Jersey hate?

Jersey's proximity to New York City seems to be a big part of the problem.

"In New Jersey you have 12 things to do, and you're done in 12 days. Then, you come to the city and you're like, 'Wow, New Jersey is like a village,'" Kesek says.

Like most states, New Jersey doesn't have a city large or varied enough to compete with New York, and the cities that it does have—Newark, Camden, and Trenton—are known more for crime than anything else. As Cooper says, "New Jersey has to deal with living in the shadow of New York, which it can't really do anything about."

The Jersey-New York tension looms large at Columbia, where even students from other states are conscious of anti-N.J. sentiment. Quincy Sweeney, CC '09, says, "It's pretty much New Jersey is like Barnard. We love to make fun of it ... constantly." Sweeney hails from Nevada and maintains that there is no scapegoat state on the West Coast, though people have no problem making fun of the East Coast.

Stephanie Wu, CC '10, has also heard the complaints about New Jersey, despite the fact that she's from Iowa. "There's something about New York dumping trash into N.J., but it also might be Staten Island. They're pretty much the same in my mind," she says.

People from outside of the tri-state area make Jersey jokes of their own, despite the fact that it's a place they may have never visited. "It's funny because I think that in order to pretend you know something, you make fun of New Jersey," Sweeney says. "It's

like, 'What do I know about the East Coast? Oh, insert New Jersey joke here.'"

Still, television shows and movies continue to use New Jersey as a setting for an assortment of plots. *House, M.D.*, *The Sopranos*, *Being John Malkovich*, *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle*, *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*, *Garden State*, and all of Kevin Smith's

"But I feel you can only say we're trashy if you're from New Jersey."

films are still only a short list of movies that take place in New Jersey.

"It has the city quality, but it also has the suburban feel, which is probably a good combination for movies," Reid says.

Heather Oh, CC '09, says the suburbs of New Jersey are easy for movie audiences to identify with, especially "if you're going to make a movie about people complaining about something unimportant."

Media portrayals may do more to hinder than to help though.

"I think that the representations of Jersey in pop culture reinforce the stereotypes," Kesek says, comparing the self-conscious condemnation of movies and television shows in New Jersey to the complete sanction of Colorado in the heavily satirical animated series *South Park*.

However other people see the Garden State, residents will continue to defend it, even while acknowledging its lesser characteristics. "I didn't really appreciate it until college, until I left," Oh says, missing the copious malls and the 24-hour diners most while she's away at school. Her favorite New Jersey memory is an experience frequently stereotyped: her prom and the massive weekend-long after party at Seaside ("Sleazeside") Heights.

Reid recounted his prom experience as one involving an attack by a "man-sized wild turkey" right alongside the comfort of convenience stores such as 7-11 and Wawa.

Wu had a great time when she visited a friend in New Jersey over winter break. They flew a kite on the beach and just drove around. "I miss driving wildly and irresponsibly, like teenagers do. You can't do that in New York," she says. After a couple days in the suburbs, Wu has her own opinion of New Jersey: "It's like Happy Days or something. New Jersey is like a time machine."

While the armpit of America probably won't smell better to outsiders anytime soon, residents will continue to maintain the attitude of a catchphrase rejected from the statewide slogan contest held two years ago: "New Jersey: You gotta problem with that?"



New Jersey is sometimes seen as just a New York City suburb.

Postsecret

exploring columbia's unmapped music venue

BY ASHLEY JAMES

PHOTO BY MOLLY CROSSIN

ON SATURDAY NIGHTS, while some students can be found roaming frat row or bar hopping in Brooklyn, others are going to church. St. Paul's Chapel, to be exact.

Every Friday and Saturday from 9 p.m. to midnight, a humble yet charming room in the basement of Columbia's St. Paul's Chapel is bustling. Postcrypt Coffeehouse, an acoustic performance venue that features mostly local musicians, opens its doors on weekends to students and locals looking for good music and good company.

"Postcrypt gets a great mix of musicians, we have all these local guys who've been playing the 'crypt for decades sharing our stage with kids coming up from Brooklyn with their harmonicas," says Nellie Bowles, CC '10, booking manager of Postcrypt Coffeehouse.

Postcrypt is run by a student club of the same name. Founded in 1964, members of the club run all aspects of the coffeehouse, from booking the musicians to selling the beverages on the night of the performances.

The vibe of Postcrypt is decidedly low-key, with a room capacity of just 30. Julie Raskin, CC '08, a volunteer with Postcrypt for three years, says it is precisely Postcrypt's mellow mood that makes the place so unique.

"It feels very homey," she says. Raskin, who transferred to Columbia as a sophomore from Haverford College, was attracted to Postcrypt for the comfort it provided in her transition to a new school.

"Columbia felt really overwhelming, and [at Postcrypt] it always feels like coming home."

Contributing to Postcrypt's coziness are its

In true folksy fashion, Postcrypt also offers cheap homemade brownies and hot apple cider bought from the farmer's market.

walls of unpolished stone and the 10 charmingly aged wooden tables and chairs that are scattered about the rectangular room.

"It doesn't feel like I am at Columbia. It makes me feel like I'm in a cellar in Paris or something," Victorine Lamothe, BC '11, said of the place in between sets last Saturday.

Lighting is kept to a minimum at Postcrypt. Dim Christmas lights line the wall that features the wooden "box" that is Postcrypt's unimposing stage.



Despite its name, all Postcrypt attendees are alive and well.

"The stage is small, so it's a good place to play because it is so intimate, and the acoustics are great," says Ellen Kessel, CC '09, Postcrypt co-president.

The shows are completely free of charge, and Postcrypt sells refreshments for relatively low prices. Its major sales are beer (one of which is organic) priced at \$4 and coffee that sells for just a buck. But, in true folksy fashion, Postcrypt also offers cheap

uniquely laid-back approach.

"Everything I heard about it was that it was warm and welcoming. And after being here, I see that it has a nice vibe," says Jason Wilder Evans, whose first performance at Postcrypt was this past Saturday night.

"I e-mailed and e-mailed, and after a while finally got a response," Evans says.

The lag in response time is not a product of Postcrypt's disorganization. Instead, Postcrypt get hundreds of booking requests per month. Bowles goes through the varied group and decides who plays, but said she is particularly interested in featuring more student performers.

"Coming up this semester, we've got three of my absolute favorite Columbia performers, Ginia Sweeney, Reni Laine, and the Kitchen Cabinet, each sure to make for good times. I'm also looking for more student performers to play our final months," Bowles says.

With over 40 years of performances, Postcrypt has played host to a fair share of talents. Ani Difranco, Jeff Buckley, Lisa Loeb, and Dar Williams have all graced Postcrypt's stage, and every year the renowned jazz musician Suzanne Vega plays a secret show.

"The place is always really packed when she comes," Kessel says. "People hear about it from word of mouth."

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Songs of Pain

daniel johnston's sweet originality

BY ANDREW MARTIN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LORI BAILY

Halfway through an awkward phone interview with Daniel Johnston, I bring up *King Kong* in an attempt to make some connection with the singer-songwriter. In previous interviews I'd read, Daniel went out of his way to mention monster movies, and the original *King Kong* happens to be my favorite movie. For a few minutes, we find some common ground talking about the Peter Jackson remake from a couple years ago. "Man, up on that mountain, when that girl started doing cartwheels, you just knew they were having a good time," Johnston says. "It was like they were havin' an orgy up there or somethin'."

This is the Daniel Johnston humor that one comes to know and love on his early and best home-recorded records—a charming mix of sweetness and bizarre originality delivered in a high-pitched yelp. The moment we share is short lived. Our conversation soon settles back into the earlier strained back-and-forth, and eventually tapers to a close.

Besides the usual stiffness of a phone interview, standing between us is the reality of Daniel's serious bipolar disorder, which, combined with his medication, affects his attention span and renders his thought process muddled. Going into the interview, I knew it would be difficult or impossible to get Johnston to open up. In fact, our conversation on the whole is an absolute success when compared to some of his more unhinged or troubled interviews and public performances over the years.

The show is a happy reminder of what makes Johnston's music special—its ability to convey complex emotion nakedly and viscerally.

Johnston has attracted a varyingly dedicated cult following over the course of almost 30 years of recorded music. In the early 1980s, he recorded a series of rudimentary albums directly onto cassette tapes accompanied by a cheap keyboard, most notably the seminal *Songs of Pain* and *Hi How Are You?* While Johnston's frenetic and unpretentious music often draws the most attention, his drawings are also popular with fans and musicians alike. Kurt Cobain, for example, wore a Johnston original t-shirt (the album cover of *Hi How Are You?*) for years. Johnston became a hometown legend by handing his tapes out to anyone who would take them, eventually ending up on MTV in a special about Austin, Texas.

Unfortunately, his mental state deteriorated at the tail end of his most fertile creative period, and he was in and out of mental institutions during a time when artists including Kurt Cobain, Yo La Tengo, and the Butthole Surfers championed his work. At one point he became obsessed with the idea of the devil, and in a particularly harrowing episode of mental illness, caused his father to crash a small plane by trying to



Daniel Johnston's pop songs have influenced a generation of young musicians.

wrest the controls away from him. Johnston has persevered through his health setbacks and the fickle nature of the music industry to gain recognition as a genuine, if extremely erratic, artist.

Like many artists from what is now increasingly considered a "golden age" of independent music in the mid to late 1980s, Johnston has benefitted from his work's canonization in young, hip circles. An album of Johnston covers and a documentary film in the past few years have helped to raise his profile for a new generation of listeners.

"We're *really* making the better money this time," he says in response to a question about his current tour. "I was starving for years, but you know, I haven't worked since 1986 when I worked at McDonald's. So it's great to be able to live off my music."

Johnston credits his newfound financial viability to the fact that his father, Bill, and his brother, Dick, have taken over his management and finances. Besides their apparent skill in sorting out his money, the family model is also a thousand times more charming than any PR representation could hope to be—I spend a baffling but ultimately endearing morning trading phone calls with Bill while he wonders out loud where Daniel "had gotten off to."

The team also seems to have figured out how to successfully manage a Daniel Johnston concert experience, a notoriously hit-or-miss affair that has frustrated many fans and critics over the course of his career. At his show last Thursday night at the Highline Ballroom, things were far from perfect, but they were also far from disastrous. Daniel tells me he doesn't rehearse much, but many of his straightforward and best-known songs don't demand a great deal of technical precision. He reads from a music stand and often makes a racket striking his pick against the side

of his guitar—he has tremors resulting from his medication—but the lyrics and melodies of his best songs speak for themselves.

His bittersweet anthem "Living Life" connects with immediacy, and his cover of "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away" by his beloved Beatles is a fantastic reminder that Johnston's simple and sometimes arbitrary rhymes have a precedent in the greatest pop-song writing of all time. Johnston took a short break after his eight-song acoustic set and returns with the opening band, Spanish Prisoners. It was sometimes glaringly obvious that any preparation between Johnston and the rest of the band had been minimal—at one point the Johnston sang in a different key than the band, who patiently continued. Still, they added the necessary momentum to the ecstatic "Speeding Motorcycle," and they found the haunted core of "Walking the Cow" by haltingly building the complexity of the arrangement as the song progresses. Johnston returned to the stage for a single encore, a quiet take on his classic "True Love Will Find You in the End."

The show is a happy reminder of what makes Johnston's music special—its ability to convey complex emotion nakedly and viscerally. His strengths as an artist do not lie in public self-assessment—when I ask him a question during the interview about his artistic process, he launches into a description of his household routine (make a drawing, watch a movie, eat some food, make some music). A question about whether he thinks his music has progressed over the years prompts a hesitant, "Yes." His inability to completely explain what makes his music significant shouldn't devalue his music, though. At its best, his songs are as poignant and idiosyncratic as nearly any pop songs of the past three decades, and they do not need to be improved upon by explanation. ///

Seizing the initiative

**what the community
principles statement
means for columbia**

**BY JOHN DAVISSON
PHOTOS BY MOLLY CROSSIN**

“Columbia University is a community of students, faculty, alumni, staff and visitors,” the Community Principles Statement begins dryly. It’s a pretty uncontroversial preamble as they go, but the 159 words that follow—along with the two-year effort spent on one of the school’s more enigmatic and quietly controversial projects—seem to engender a bit less agreement.

Across almost two dozen interviews conducted with current and former student leaders, the statement was labeled “a set of principles we can all gather around,” “an agenda by administrators,” a catalyst “for respectful dialogue,” “sterilized ideas of feeling implemented by skilled bureaucrats,” a “project in its early stages,” a “faltering effort,” and “kind of incomprehensible.”

Indeed, nearly four months after its Halloween-day unveiling, the statement and its parent project, the Community Principles Initiative, occupy an ambiguous role on a campus where hardened cynics appear to outnumber consensus-builders. Some see the initiative as a promising path to strengthening Columbia’s often fragmented community, others as a misguided but well-meaning attempt at the same, while still others as a boondoggle that dramatically misjudges the dynamics of the University’s undergraduate population.

In basic terms, the CPS is a collection of loosely-worded community standards aimed at ensuring civil interaction and discourse on Columbia’s campus. It is the centerpiece of an ongoing, multi-year collaboration (the Community Principles Initiative) that includes student leaders from Columbia’s four undergraduate schools and members of the CC/SEAS Department of Student Affairs. The principles in the document—which consists of five paragraphs and an introduction—are nonbinding.

The roots of the initiative date back to late 2005, when it began to form under the banner of developing a more forceful community response to hate crimes and bias incidents than had previously existed. Student support for the idea coalesced after the vandalism of a Ruggles suite in December 2005, when two Columbia students—Matthew Brown, CC ’07, and Stephen Searles, SEAS ’08—wrote homophobic, racist, and anti-Semitic messages on the walls.

“I think that was the initial motivating goal behind this—we wanted to transform the student body in a way that this wouldn’t happen again,” says Michelle Oh, CC ’06 and president of the Columbia College Student Council at the time. “This was one practical measure that could happen.”

As Stop Hate on Columbia’s Campus entered the height of its protests that spring, a group of student leaders began to work with members of Student Affairs to formulate a more lasting response. The two sides would eventually spend a year and a half on meetings and summits developing the Community Principles Initiative and its most conspicuous feature, the Community Principles Statement. After countless revisions by a committee and feedback from a wide range of student leaders, a signed version of that statement was released to the public and displayed on Low Plaza for a day in October 2007.

“The Community Principles Initiative (CPI) has undergone a great deal of thought and development since its inception in 2005,” Kevin Shollenberger, associate dean of Student Affairs and a member of the initiative, says in a statement. “After several student-organized community summits and numerous meetings with student organizations and leaders, a draft of the statement was unveiled this past Fall. Over 30 student organizations signed the statement showing their support for the Initiative.”

While a completed statement now hangs in Lerner, the initiative is still very much dynamic. The CPI’s general committee meets every other Friday, and its various subcommittees continue to work on expanding the scope and reach of the project in targeted areas.

But while the history of the CPS may help to reveal the motivations of its framers, it leaves plenty of questions unanswered about what role the statement should actually play in the lives of the students it is said to represent. Neither a set of statutes, nor a binding creed, nor a pledge subject to a popular referendum, its day-to-day significance and its connection to the community remain issues open to debate.

“I think the statement is sort of a baseline—these are the standards to which we would like to hold ourselves,” Jessie Leiken, CC ’08 and vice chair of the Student Governing Board, says. Leiken sits on the CPI’s statement committee.

“Maybe they [average students] would think of one

IT SEEMS POSSIBLE THAT THE STATEMENT MIGHT COME INTO PLAY DURING A HEARING.

or two parts of the statement and how they relate to it,” Glenn Thompson, CC ’08 and CCSC’s vice president for communications, says.

But another member of the CPI, speaking on terms of anonymity, voices doubts about its practical import. “To be honest, I can barely remember what the statement says. I guess that speaks volumes. Who’s going to treat it [CPI] seriously if not the people on it?”

Then there are ambiguities in how, if at all, the statement should be implemented. Unlike the University’s various housing, alcohol, and misconduct policies, it’s billed as a nonbinding set of principles. That means that a student can’t be subject to Dean’s Discipline merely for failing to maintain “the integrity of the community as a whole,” for example (something stipulated by the CPS).

This is both intentional and unavoidable: the possibility of giving the CPI the full force of University policy was never seriously discussed during its creation. As Thompson explains, “The statement wasn’t meant to be a code of conduct.”

Alidad Damooei, CC ’09 and CCSC’s vice president for policy, describes the statement as more of a suggested set of principles for staving off conflict.

“If people followed the sentiments of the statements, I think we’d have less controversy on campus,” he says. While Damooei was not part of the group that drafted the statement, he sits on the committee planning the next CPI summit, set for fall of this year.

But its nonbinding status doesn’t necessarily preclude the possibility that the statement could come into play once a student has been called into a disciplinary hearing on suspicion of statutory violations. According to the Dean’s Discipline procedures for CC and SEAS, the process has two purposes: first, “to determine the accused student’s responsibility for the alleged violation(s),” and second, “for the student to engage in a meaningful conversation regarding their role as a member of the Columbia community.”

Considering this, it seems possible—likely, even, given Student Affairs’ heavy involvement in the creation of the CPI—that the statement might come into play, either explicitly or implicitly, during a hearing.

Sakib Khan, CC ’07 and former chair of SGB, says that in his discussions with members of Student Affairs relating to the CPS, administrators indicated that the statement might be used as “a guiding course for discipline.”

Student Affairs’ vague characterizations of the disciplinary process seem to leave open this possibility. In a 2006 interview on the disciplinary process, Morgan Levy, the assistant dean of judicial affairs for CC and SEAS, notes: “The ultimate goal of the Dean’s Discipline process is to help students understand how their actions have impacted their own life, and the lives of those in the communities around them. ... When students appear at a hearing demonstrating that they understand what they did wrong ... their perspective is taken into consideration when considering sanctions.”

By this standard, could a student then face harsher consequences for refusing to recognize the validity of those community principles? And if that’s the case, does the label of “nonbinding” still stick? The answers aren’t entirely clear.

“I think people are confused as to the difference between Dean’s Discipline and CPI,” says one CPI member, who asked to remain anonymous due to the

individual’s ongoing association with the CPI. “They see it as being tied, which is really problematic.”

Khan adds, “There were also some concerns that it [the CPS] wasn’t going to be a large intellectual endeavor, but that it could become a rationale for the University to pursue police actions.”

And then there’s the matter of public interest. Few students seem to be aware of the CPI’s existence apart, perhaps, from the massive copy of the statement hanging from one of Lerner Hall’s ramps. Many of its organizers even concede that the CPI and CPS haven’t permeated the undergraduate body much beyond those directly involved in the project.

“It does seem like a lot of students don’t know what the CPI is or what it does,” says Paula Cheng, CC ’08 and president of the Activities Board at Columbia. Cheng is a member of the branding committee, which is charged with shaping the public image of the initiative. “Community principles are collaborative and don’t exist unless everyone agrees that they exist,” she adds.

Among the student leaders interviewed for this article, there is no clear consensus on how to bring more students into the fold—only an agreement that for the CPI and CPS to work in earnest, they first have to do as much. (What are community principles, after all, without the community?)

“The idea [of the CPI] was to establish a set of principles we can all gather around. I don’t know if that’s exactly what it is,” Thompson says. “What’s required to achieve that is a lot more student buy-in.”

One way to do that, Thompson says, is by introducing the statement and initiative to incoming first-years during orientation week. Whereas older Columbia students may be too jaded or busy to give the CPI serious consideration, he explains, those new to campus should be easier to reach. Still, given the readiness with which Columbia’s newcomers already shirk and scoff at “mandatory” orientation events, that approach could have pitfalls.

Some efforts to advertise the CPI have already been made, while others are still in the works. Last October’s presentation of the statement on Low Plaza, as well as the summit in early November, were among the first, and will be followed by next fall’s summit. In April, the CPI will be co-sponsoring a series of events titled “Art of Community,” aimed in part at increasing the visibility of the initiative. And three of the project’s subgroups—the outreach committee, the



One of the banners you ignore in Lerner may have more impact on you than you realize.



branding committee, and the statement committee—are intended to broadcast the purpose of the CPI.

Other elements of the initiative that aren't strictly connected to the statement offer opportunities to broaden its membership and public reach. For example, Leiken says, the statement committee has begun to focus on developing a Web site built around the initiative that can act as a community hub for the project.

Elizabeth Strauss, SEAS '08 and president of the Engineering Student Council, says she recently became involved in the CPI's efforts to address the handling of "tainted" spaces—those in which hate crimes or bias incidents have taken place.

"I think this year a lot of the focus was on unveiling the document," Strauss says. "And now that they're out and more a part of the community, we're getting to focus on a lot of the other parts of it."

Other student leaders called for the incorporation of students into the CPI who don't already lead another organization—people "who get involved in CPI for CPI's sake," as Damooei puts it—to broaden the reach of the initiative and combat the perception that it's limited to student leaders.

Whether or not these attempts are successful, some on the project say CPI's troubles run much deeper than publicity. According to four separate student leaders—all of whom requested anonymity due to their continuing involvement in the project—many current CPI members feel the initiative lacks a clear sense of purpose, that the principles are too vague or difficult to understand, and that the agenda has become increasingly administration-driven since its original organizers graduated.

"I really hate this. This has been so difficult because ... we really don't know what CPI is," one member says, adding, "No one can tell you what they [the principles] actually are."

According to the same student, members of the CPI disagree on the direction of the project, with some questioning whether the initiative's particular brand of community-building is suitable for Columbia in the first place. "Everyone just kind of assumes that you want community, but how students and administration envision that is very different," the student says.

According to a second member, the year-by-year turnover of the initiative's undergraduate membership—a common hurdle for student organizations and leaders working on long-term projects with the administration—has allowed the agenda to become increasingly dominated by members of Student Affairs.

(As of May 2007, all of the student leaders originally involved in the project had graduated.) Others challenge this claim.

"There are ... both administrators and students, who buy in and think this is really important, and then I think there are students and administrators who are there kind of because of the cachet or because of the way it looks," Leiken says. "But I'm not ready to say that it's administratively led. I just think that there could be more enthusiasm from all sides."

The administration's approach to the CPI, says the first student, has been modeled largely on a similar endeavor at American University, where the students are

to both, SDA encouraged one of the magazine's leaders to rein in Bwog's anonymous-commenting feature—known to produce sometimes pointed and vulgar exchanges—characterizing it as a violation of the Community Principles Statement. (At one point, the CPS reads, "Members of our community act with honesty by accepting accountability for their words and actions.")

"In subsequent meetings with SDA there's been no mention of the CPS and no CPI member has ever contacted us or leaned on us to change Bwog's comment policy," Anna Phillips, CC '09 and current editor in chief of the *Blue and White*, says in an e-mail.

"Bwog is not affiliated with Columbia—it's entirely independent—and while comment policy is something that's frequently debated among staff members we generally feel that restricting comments might limit debate and freedom of expression, which is the purpose of the blog," she adds.

"CPI is not meant to be lived by regular students but by model activists who fit SDA's ideal," says one former student leader. "Democracy is sloppy, messy, hurtful, petty, and that's how people think and how ideas play out. And they want everything to come in the form of polite memos—not essays or thoughts or claims or data—but sterilized ideas of feeling implemented by skilled bureaucrats."

In light of these alleged cases, several student leaders have expressed concern that what was intended as a non-binding statement has seeped into formal policy, and that the original point of the initiative—to act as a mechanism for addressing the sorts of hate crimes and bias incidents that have plagued Columbia's campus in recent years—has fallen by the wayside. As evidence, one member pointed out that the CPI's Educational Response to Bias Incidents Committee has been dormant recently.

"I think that a lot of people have sort of lost sight of it being about bias incidents," another student leader says. "I don't want to condemn it—it feels misguided

MANY CURRENT CPI MEMBERS FEEL THE INITIATIVE LACKS A CLEAR SENSE OF PURPOSE.

said to be so polite that they stop cell phone conversations and turn down their headphone volume when passing one another in the hall.

"The problem is that this is such a different school and such a different group of people," the student says.

That vision seems to be playing out first and foremost in residential programs, several CPI members noted. RAs have been asked to develop miniature sets of community principles for their floors. Often, Strauss says, these rules can be as simple as not leaving dishes in the sink.

But another CPI member—more skeptical—linked ResLife's strong emphasis on the CPI to the "War on Fun," the expression widely used by students to describe the apparent administrative tightening of alcohol restrictions in Columbia's dorms, event spaces, and fraternities.

"I think that there are some people on the committee who think that's the point of CPI," one CPI member says, "but a) I don't think that's the goal, and b) I don't think that's an attainable goal, even if it were."

Two CPI participants also described an incident in which Student Affairs apparently invoked the CPS against a member of the *Blue and White*. According

about what its goals are and unsure about how to realize its potential."

Others challenge the notion that administrators have exerted undue influence on the process or misused the statement.

"It's sort of an interesting way that the students and administrators work together," Damooei says. "Everyone on the committee is equal. They plan on playing a role in terms of backing student initiatives. ... They [the administrators] definitely don't control the direction of CPI at all."

While Student Affairs declined to comment on specific allegations or applications relating to the CPS, SDA's Shollenberger says in a statement, "The major goal of CPI is to encourage dialogue on how we can all, students and administrators alike, contribute to a greater sense of community. To realize this goal the committee explored ways to incorporate the concepts of CPI into both student and administrative programs."

Shollenberger adds, "Our work in this area, however, is far from complete, and the committee continues to identify opportunities to partner with student organizations to increase awareness of the Community Principles Initiative." ///

Gutter Stars: Age of the Celebrity

welcome home, roscoe jenkins! and now that you're here, i'll be leaving

BY ALEX GREER

PHOTO COURTESY OF GROOVESHARK.COM

I know what Britney Spears' vagina looks like, and having never conversed, met, or even been in the same room with her, I shouldn't be so well acquainted with this image.

But I am—as are most people with Internet access and a depraved sense of decency. We also know that Judd Nelson's Land Cruiser was towed on Feb. 6, and that Matt Dillon ate prosciutto at Fred Segal Mauro Café on Feb. 9 while Michelle Williams cried 16,000 miles away in Australia at Heath Ledger's "life tribute" (that little tricolon came from just two pages of *Us Weekly's* 680th issue).

We've truly found ourselves in the Age of the Celebrity, and thanks to the overbearing democracy provided by the Internet and modern technology, we're no longer entertained by the godlike status of these personalities. No, we've found ourselves deep in the heart of a growing fascination with the deconstruction of those public images. We don't want to gaze at stars in the sky anymore, we want to see them in the gutter—we want them to be "just like us."

If the readers of these tabloid magazines are anything like average moviegoers, then Hollywood has surely lived up to its promise of giving the public what they want with *Welcome Home, Roscoe Jenkins*. In the film, Martin Lawrence plays RJ Stevens, a daytime-talk show crossbreed of Dr. Phil and Montel who has as many off-camera issues as Maury does when he steps off set. As we learn at the film's outset (told through an Access Hollywood segment), RJ has just announced his engagement to the sultry *Survivor* winner Bianca Kittles, played by a stereotypically sexy Joy Bryant. However, RJ's past lies in the Deep South (as far away as you can get from Hollywood), where his parents are getting ready to celebrate their genuinely heartfelt, multiple-offspring-producing 50 years of marriage (as far away as you can get from RJ and Bianca's image-driven romance). Predictably, worlds collide when the high-class, vegan, white-suit-wearing, Pomeranian-owning RJ is forced to go back home to his low-class, soul-food-eating, overall-wearing, 25-year-old-Labrador-owning family that prefers to call him by his "government name," Roscoe Jenkins.

With the heavy emphasis on the Hollywood-player's-embarrassing-Southern-roots-come-out theme, the film almost resembles a fictionalization of Britney Spears' career trajectory, only with a (probably) happier ending. Much like the picture-perfect Britney of "Baby One More Time," we first see RJ on top of the world, with his life seemingly in order (he even spouts out such twisted Hollywood clichés as "Aside from the hunger pains, being a vegan is the shit!"). But much as the Spears image began to die when she started going into gas station bathrooms without shoes on, RJ's spotless persona quickly becomes soiled once he touches down in the South. Like those *Us Weekly* pictures, we see Roscoe at his worst back home: "Stars: They're Just Like Us! They eat barbecue! They play softball! They get sprayed by skunks! They have hustler cousins and abusive sisters and neglectful dads and other dysfunctional family members that have contributed to serious self-worth problems and relationship issues!"

And in the spirit of not dropping the Britney ball, the real conflict of the story finds its home in the op-



WHERE IS BRITNEY'S PREROGATIVE NOW?

positions between fame and family, lust and love, and success and sacrifice.

I won't spoil anything, but it will suffice to say that RJ learns that veganism and other manifestations of the pop/Hollywood system are no match for good ol' soul food and family. In this vein, the film could even be read as a deconstruction of the Hollywood system, eventually championing real, down-home connections over the more shallow relationships of celebritydom. At least that's how I'd like to imagine it was pitched to James Earl Jones and Michael Clarke Duncan when they decided to sign on.

The film really finds its merit in its faults (albeit unintentionally). Essentially a two-hour recreation of *Us Weekly*, the work offers several interesting observations about the contemporary obsession with celebrities' blemishes. First, while those little pictures of random stars' embarrassing moments are entertaining in a fleeting sense, the ultimate manifestation of this trend (which would be to focus solely on everything embarrassing about a celebrity and disregard any of their positive contributions—just what *Welcome Home, Roscoe Jenkins* does) is boring and almost depressing. If we extend this tendency of truly voyeuristic star hu-

miliation to its logical fulfillment, we'll no longer have celebrities, we'll just have people—and while people are a-okay, they're not celebrities.

Look at Britney Spears. Now that I'm intimately familiar with her custody issues, family problems, and vagina, it's hard for me to imagine her ever achieving any sort of mythical status in my eyes again. I know too much about her—I've gone so far into her embarrassing off-camera life that if she ever does "come back," I'll have little interest in watching her on-camera attempts at making me believe that she's anything but trailer trash. I've seen her vagina—when that happened, she lost all of her allure. I know a lot of other trashy girls, and they inhabit my life in person, so why should I spend my time looking at pictures of a trashy vagina when I could see one for real? The answer is that I shouldn't. But I, or we, also shouldn't aspire to trashy vagina—we should aspire to godlike vagina, and Aphrodite sure as hell never went to the club sans panties.

This is where my second observation comes in, or rather, my agreement with an observation that Nick Cave made in April 2007 while talking with *Esquire*: "The more information you have, the more human our heroes become and consequently the less mysterious and godlike. They need to be godlike. It's something to lift us out of the commonplace and the mundane."

I feel like that quote speaks for itself, but in case it doesn't, here's my plea to you: don't see *Welcome Home, Roscoe Jenkins*. It will only let the industry think that we want to see more stars in the street, and trust me, we don't. Stars belong on top—they give us something to look up to besides an empty sky. ▯

Open Lore Policy

china's continual oppression of dissenting writers

BY LUCY TANG

PHOTO BY MOLLY CROSSIN

The theme song for the Beijing Olympics 2008 is a triumphant pop anthem titled, "We Are Ready," an over-the-top gesture to show the world that China is, well, ready for a greater presence in the global forum. With lyrics like, "Waiting year after year/ We can see into the future/ Together with hard work and sweat/ We've created the five different colors," it seems like China is ready to implement reforms. However, the optimistic lyrics do not mirror reality, especially as the Chinese government continues to imprison writers and journalists who are brave enough to write freely.

In the United States, people are inured to constant criticism of the government—opinion columns are a staple in major newspapers and political pundits have no qualms about pointing out President Bush's fallacies. Most Americans are unaware that the First Amendment that we take for granted is still a far-off reality for Chinese citizens—but PEN, a literary and human rights organization, hopes to invoke major changes in China's handling of dissenting writers.

Founded in 1921, PEN is an organization started with the combined goals of promoting literature and maintaining freedom of expression. Over 80 years later, PEN is still fighting to acquire these rights for writers and journalists worldwide. PEN America, in conjunction with the Independent Chinese PEN Center (ICPC), is currently spearheading "We Are Ready for Freedom of Expression," a campaign requesting the Chinese government free the 40-odd writers and journalists jailed for their writing. The campaign boasts a large following, including a multitude of Chinese authors and journalists in China and abroad, and world-renowned writers and PEN members Margaret Atwood and Salman Rushdie. In an interview, the campaign director Larry Siems and associate director Sarah Hoffman relayed the tumultuous history of PEN's work in China and their hopes for "We are Ready for Freedom of Expression."

The PEN campaign has a Web site detailing the specifics of "We Are Ready for Freedom of Expression," including in-depth biographies of each of the jailed writers and journalists and a mission statement: "World-renowned writers from China and North America marked International Human Rights Day by launching 'We Are Ready for Freedom of Expression,' a campaign that challenges the Chinese government to release all the writers and journalists it is holding in prisons before the Aug. 8, 2008 opening of the Olympic Games." As of right now, external support can be provided by signing the various petitions online and, per usual, through donations. As August draws closer, PEN plans to increase press and activity, and Siems hints at a big press conference in the coming months with the public delivery of the online petition to the Chinese government.

One specific human rights violation case has garnered much press. In 2005, Shi Tao, a 37-year-old poet and journalist, was imprisoned for his political articles online at overseas Chinese political sites like MinZhu LuTan (Democracy Forum), because access to such Web sites is forbidden. The twist in the case lies in Yahoo's abetting the Chinese government by handing over Shi Tao's e-mail records. Expectedly and deservedly, Yahoo soon received a "public grilling" for its involvement and was condemned by the U.S. Congress for its actions. During the trial, Congress even made the Yahoo CEO, Jerry Yang, publicly apologize to Shi Tao's wife.

Beyond individual cases, the ICPC itself faces scrutiny from the government. Half of its membership is composed of exiles, and combined with its encouragement of dissidence and free speech, it is no surprise that the Chinese government has cracked down on this organization. The ICPC holds an informal annual dinner to dole out Freedom to Write awards for those who are banned. However, last December's event was canceled due to government interruption. Four to five days prior to the event, members received phone calls from the government to cancel the event. When the ICPC refused to heed these warnings, the government acted. One of the award recipients, Li Jianhong, was illegally placed under house arrest to guarantee her absence at the dinner. The government also placed officers outside of the homes of many other known ICPC members to prevent their attendance. It even went so far as to force the hotel to cancel the reception.

The Chinese government is historically infamous for its opposition to free speech, especially when the speech is directed against the government itself. Still, China has vastly progressed since the implementation of the communist regime—there exists a greater sense of free space and for the most part the many inhabitants of major cities like Beijing or Shanghai live without restrictions. Even with respect to literary liberties, Siems and Hoffman say, "There have been substantial improvements." Instead of 15-to-20 year sentences, jail time now tops off around three-to-10 years, and people are actually released from jail. Despite looser restraints, the government still opposes muck-raking journalism—information about government corruption, articles on the Communist party, discussions revolving around the issue of democracy—calling such instances espionage.

With the onset of the Olympics and expected global scrutiny of China, PEN wants to heighten the pressure. It mailed a letter to the Chinese government in early December, requesting that it adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, quash internet censorship, and stand by its promise that "there will be no restric-



Larry Siems and Sarah Hoffman are "Ready for Freedom of Expression."

tions on media reporting and movement of journalists up to and including the Olympic Games." For China, PEN's ultimate goal is legal reforms that will make Internet restrictions, subversion laws, and secret state laws controversies of the past. PEN is drafting a petition directly appealing to the Chinese government to enact these reforms.

Thus far, all is mum on the Eastern front. As for the U.S.'s role, PEN has another petition for Congress that asks for a direct U.S. appeal for the release of the imprisoned writers and for the government to uphold the Global Online Freedom Act of 2007, a bill that bars U.S. companies from participating in Internet censorship.

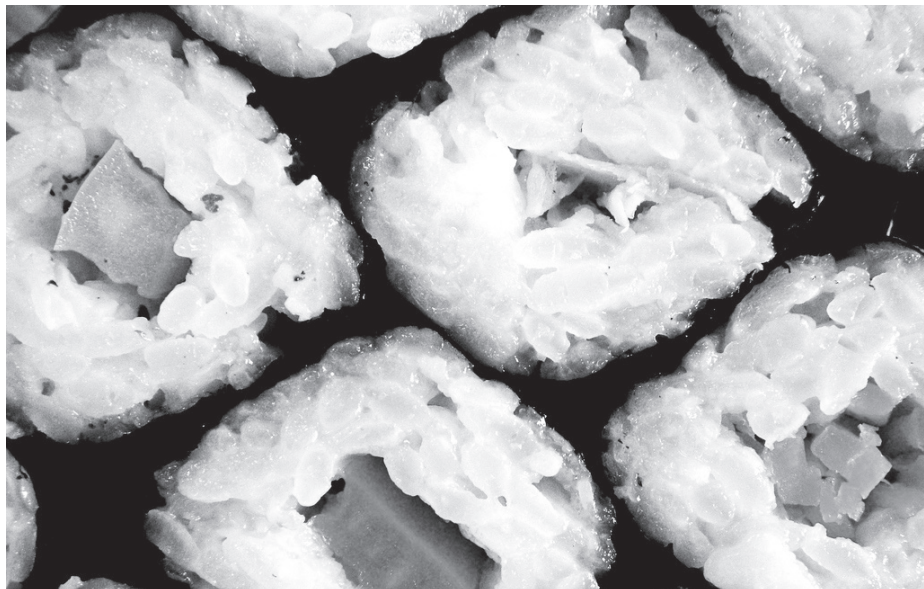
Even if China does not concede, the U.S. can still provide support to these writers. The recent Yahoo fiasco forces the U.S. to reevaluate Internet-provider relationships with repressive governments. Censorship on the Internet violates international freedom-of-expression law. Beyond legalities, human morality argues that companies should not be involved in perpetuating human rights abuses. The passing of the Global Online Freedom Act of 2007 bill is a positive sign, ensuring that no U.S. companies will reveal any users' names or information to foreign governments.

Despite China's uncooperative history, Siems has a positive outlook, maintaining that "China is not quite closed. ... It's a society in transition." That the news of arrests is leaked so quickly is a testament to the interconnection between these writers—Siems deems it an "incredible grapevine." Furthermore, out of the 38 writers currently imprisoned, around half have sentences that expire between now and the Olympics. No doubt China realizes that it must uphold an image of openness and freedom as the Olympics near and PEN recognizes the advantages of the temporal pressure on the government. Siems slyly hints that more authors will soon speak out, but refused to divulge any specific names. PEN also plans to publicly deliver the petition to the Chinese government. As a result of this petition, Siems says, "There's a reasonable chance for a meeting." But what if some remain jailed by August 2008? Siems adamantly says, "We don't stop."

Even with respect to literary liberties, Siems and Hoffman admit, 'There have been substantial improvements.'

Deadly Sushi

the dark underbelly of your favorite fish



BY C. LAUREN ARNOLD

PHOTO COURTESY OF THEGOURMETRO.COM

AS NEW YORKERS (or at least residents of Manhattan), we have certain unalienable rights: the right to never need a designated driver, the right to refer to the place we live as ‘the City,’ and, of course, the right to eat sushi 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Over the past month, the latter of these rights has been openly attacked, and its assailants have used one key word as their weapon of choice: mercury.

The shimmering, silvery substance you might remember examining inside a glass thermometer in your kindergarten class is toxic upon ingestion or contact with the skin. And a form of it, methylmercury, may be inside your spicy tuna roll.

Last month, the *New York Times* caused quite a stir reporting that tuna from many Manhattan sushi hot spots like Nobu and Blue Ribbon contained significantly high levels of methylmercury. These two restaurants’ tuna was found to have, respectively, 1.0 and 1.4 micrograms of methylmercury per gram of tuna. Considering that the average nigiri fish slice is around 10 grams, this means that 10 to 14 micrograms of methylmercury were found in each piece of tuna nigiri in these two restaurants. The typical spicy tuna roll contains about 115 grams of tuna, which means you’re looking at the ingestion of a whopping 57.5 to 80 micrograms of methylmercury per roll.

Put those numbers up against the Environmental Protection Agency’s recommended limit of 38.5 micrograms per week for the average healthy 120-pound adult, and your right to consume as much sushi as possible is significantly challenged. Even a comparison to the weekly limit recommended for

a heftier 240-pound adult—77 micrograms—is disconcerting.

Just after the article in the *Times* was published, Oceana, an oceanic conservation organization, published a survey that showed similar mercury levels in the overall national tuna sushi market. The average content level found in these results was 86 micrograms per gram, quite close to the New York average.

Before you get your chopsticks in a twist, keep in mind that the tuna used in the upper-echelon restaurants that scored so poorly in the *Times*’ study is often harvested from the largest bluefin tuna available. Though considered to be more tender and of higher quality than species like albacore and yellowfin, the larger bluefin contains more methylmercury. This is because bluefin tuna live up to thirty years, giving them more time to absorb the toxin, which is found in many ocean waters because of fossil fuel waste pollution.

Smaller and less-expensive yellowfin tuna generally contains much lower levels of methylmercury. Luckily for Columbia students, the sushi available for purchase in Café 212, Ferris Booth, Westside Market, Café Swish, M2M, Milano, and Morton Williams is all made from yellowfin, not bluefin, tuna.

Regardless of whether they are aware of the bluefin-yellowfin distinction, Columbia students generally aren’t too worried about the mercury/tuna discussion. Representatives from Ferris Booth, Westside Market, M2M, Café Swish, Milano, Java City, and Morton Williams report very few students or community members asking anything about the tuna used in their sushi.

The citywide sushi manager for Morton Williams, Wayne Chang, notes that on the purchasing level “many of the customers who normally get tuna are choosing salmon.” But closer to home, Ferris Booth sushi chef Jinho Park stated that “people just keep picking up everything” and that there is “never any tuna left over.”

John Chin of Milano says that for two to three weeks after the original *Times*’ article came out customers shied away from tuna, but they have since returned to their usual routine. Representatives from other stores in the area have observed a similarly steady market for tuna.

The nonchalant attitude perceived by vendors is reflected in students’ opinions. Jon Berliner, CC ’09, has not changed his tuna-eating habits at all, though the topic comes up “almost every time” a friend sees him purchasing sushi. He claims his “hedonism” prevents him from doing so.

Debra Aharon, CC ’10, says she “doesn’t care about that stuff,” adding that she firmly believes “it won’t

ease Registry (ATSDR), those who need to be most careful are pregnant mothers, children, and women who may be thinking about getting pregnant. It is generally accepted that high levels of mercury cause damage in neurological development in young children who have not yet reached adolescence, the point at which neurological development naturally slows down.

Recent studies show some evidence that significant levels of methylmercury can also have a negative effect on adult patients in areas such as cardiovascular disease. But until more studies can directly link the mercury found in fish to harmful health risks for all adults, students without plans to have children soon need not be too concerned. In the words of Alana Kribo-Kaufman, BC ’09, many Columbia students find that all the tuna/mercury hubbub is simply “semi-hype with maybe a bit of truth—not worth much attention at all.”

Perhaps it is not incredulity, but rather flirtation with the Grim Reaper that keeps us on our path to a wasabi-

The typical spicy tuna roll contains about 115 grams of tuna, which means you’re looking at the ingestion of a whopping 57.5 to 80 micrograms of methylmercury per roll.

hurt you in the slightest unless you eat it almost every day.”

The only voice that expresses much concern at all was Gold Truong, SEAS ’08, who says that it is “important for people who are more sensitive to it [mercury]” to be aware and limit their sushi intake.

But what defines such “sensitive” people is still up for debate. According to the information published by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Dis-

tinged end. After all, from insane taxi driving to our parents’ *Law and Order*-related worries, we have the right to live every day on the edge (however fictitious it may be) here in ‘the City.’

Besides, as Barnard/JTS first-year Nora Feinstein says, with typical Columbia cynicism, “We’re all going to die at some point. Now, then, mercury, guns. ... It’s all death.” At least we tuna-lovers will go out with a hedonistic bang.

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Seen on the Stage

theater gives fashion a dramatic twist



Theatrical elements from Viktor & Rolf, Gaultier, and Poiret.

BY ALEXANDRA OWENS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF STYLE.COM, NYTIMES.COM, GLAM.COM

Smoke rises gradually around eight waltzing men and a 20-piece orchestra. Rufus Wainwright croons “Over the Rainbow” as dramatic, lovely women in even more dramatic and lovely ensembles glide through the scene. Is this a new off-Broadway production? Or perhaps some sort of spin-off of *Dancing With the Stars*? No—it’s the runway show at Paris Fashion Week for Viktor & Rolf’s spring 2008 prêt-à-porter collection.

Such productions on the catwalk are becoming more and more common. Designers from Rag & Bone to Marc Jacobs have started to use live performers at their shows. It seems the current feeling is that the more theatrical, the better. For example, at Christian Dior’s spring 2008 couture show “The Space Age,” a highly exaggerated runway perfectly balanced the symbolist motif in his designs.

Considering the strong ties between fashion and theater, this connection is hardly new or surprising. After all, it was Condé Nast himself who seemed to recognize this relationship nearly a century ago when he decided to keep a magazine feature called “Seen on the Stage” when he took over *Vogue* in 1914. In a time before fashion shows were prevalent, these monthly photos of actresses in stylish costumes would preview new colors, lines, and trends.

Nast strongly believed in theater’s powerful influence on mainstream fashion. Thanks to him, embellishments such as slashing and puffing—both traditional Shakespearean and

operatic costume designs—began to appear subtly in everyday clothes, in the same way that John Galliano’s exaggerated styles eventually show up in the mall (albeit in a much tamer form than on his muses).

Many designers, seeing that theater could be a useful tool of exploration and advertisement, began to experiment in both fashion and theater. Mainbocher used the stage to test designs. Paul Poiret was inspired by the Ballets Russes. Jean-Paul Gaultier joined with Regine Chopinot for *Le Défilé* and demonstrated a marriage between performance and apparel.

an element that was very recognizably present in the costume of the 19th-century role and morph it into her couture of the 20th century.” The effect lent “a timelessness to her fashion.” Her experience with stage costume helped her develop a unique palette for her line.

In an almost symbiotic way, the fashion world has also given much to theatre by adding to costume—a huge part of the meaning and the spectacle of any show. Kara Feely, the costume-shop manager for the Barnard theater department, says: “Costumes can reveal specific information about individual characters or performers, while also

The impact of a costume can be so strong it can make or break a performance.

Phyllis Magidson, curator of costumes and textiles at the Museum of the City of New York, notes that many costume designers have lifted “the vocabulary of the 19th-century ballet costumes that have defined character.” These elements include romantic details featured in productions like *Giselle*, such as the full skirt, corseted waist, and feminine bodice.

One notable couturier to incorporate these elements into her wardrobe was Valentina Schlee, who, according to Magidson, “would lift a simple motif or

revealing a larger stylistic idea. They can work on a micro and macro level simultaneously, revealing individual qualities while presenting overall artistic concepts at the same time.”

In some cases, the impact of a costume can be so strong it can make or break a performance. Magidson uses the example of Glenda the Good Witch’s entrance in *The Wizard of Oz*.

“You wouldn’t remember it the way that you do if it hadn’t have been for that incredible pink toile gown,” she says.

While the relationship between theater and fashion is certainly intertwined, some lines between the two arts need to be drawn. “Theater designers are often aware of trends in theater design but don’t attempt to replicate them, because they want to present their own unique ideas and interpretations ...,” Feely says. “That being said, it’s important to know what your peers are doing, so you can build from that, add something new to the conversation and not just re-hash old ideas.”

Magidson sees a similar issue when the theatrical infringes on the stylish. She states that there is probably “more of an impact of fashion on the stage, because theatricality can be difficult to translate” to everyday clothing, making the looks tricky to incorporate into mainstream fashion.

Considering that fashion itself is ever-changing, perhaps it’s only fitting that the connection between it and theater—no matter how strong—cannot be easily defined. Today, theatrical productions’ fabulous clothes still inspire viewers to put a dramatic twist in their wardrobes, and costumes continue to add excitement to performances and win Tony Awards. As designers become more and more bold and their clients become more and more creative, theatricality is taken into our own hands.

“There’s less of a separation [between fashion and theatre],” Magidson says. “I think that especially contemporary fashion shows no constraints whatsoever. There are no rules. ... NY is a theatre of fashion on the street.”

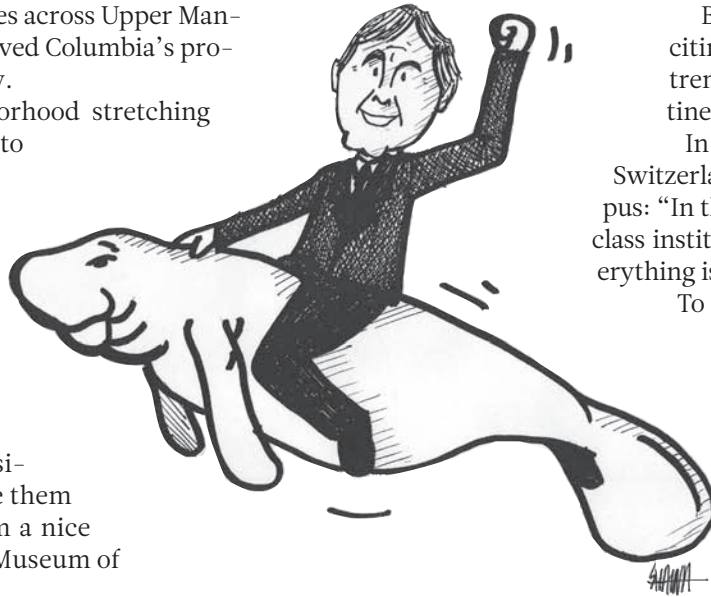
Sea Change

BY RAPHAEL POPE-SUSSMAN
ART BY SHAINA RUBIN

In a development sure to send shock waves across Upper Manhattan, the City Council unanimously approved Columbia's proposed expansion into Manateeville on Friday.

Manateeville—a 77-acre aquatic neighborhood stretching from 122nd Street to 135th Street—is home to several schools of fish, a few pods of dolphins, and a multitude of manatees.

Environmental groups have expressed concern about the displacement of a federally-endangered species from its natural urban habitat, despite assurances from Columbia that it will take care of the manatees. "There are only a few hundred manatees" in the neighborhood, says President Lee Bollinger. "We're going to resettle them off the coast of Florida. Or we'll find them a nice climate-controlled room in the American Museum of Natural History."



Bollinger has called the Manateeville project "essential," citing the dearth of space at the Morningside campus, and the tremendous cost of disposing of the manatees that are routinely beached on St. Nicholas Avenue.

In a phone interview from the president's chalet in St. Moritz, Switzerland, Bollinger described his plans for the submarine campus: "In the future, man will live under the sea. To remain a world-class institution, Columbia has to explore this frontier. Besides, everything is better, down where it's wetter. Take it from me."

To allay the environmental concerns, Columbia plans to construct a marine biology laboratory in Manateeville, to, in the words of Provost Alan Brinkley, "study manatees, who are adorable little creatures, and never hurt a fly."

Despite the controversial nature of the project, many Columbia students seem to be unaware of the University's plans for expansion. "Manateeville?" said Tom Faure, CC '09 and editor in chief of the *Spectator*. "Isn't that a song by Jimmy Buffett?"

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WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR THE LEAP YEAR?



<<

Tony Gong
Watching all 22 chapters of R. Kelly's "Trapped in the Closet."



<<

Marybeth McGaugh
Updating my Facebook status to say, "Marybeth is Leap year!"



<<

Clementine Gilbert
Pirates of Penzance!



<<

Phil Crone
Going to a crowded, sweaty college bar.

"insouciant virtuosity ... a force to reckon with in contemporary American music"—*Financial Times*

Thurs, **Feb 28** at 7:30 PM
Zankel Hall

ALARM WILL SOUND

Alan Pierson, Artistic Director and Conductor

A/RHYTHMIA

The always-adventurous ensemble performs a program spanning medieval to modern, ranging from contemporary arrangements of Ciconia's *Le ray au soleil* to Nancarrow's player-piano studies to the New York premiere of John Adams's *Son of Chamber Symphony*.

Sponsored by KPMG LLP

Carnegie Hall commissions in the 2007–2008 season are made possible, in part, by a grant from the New York State Music Fund, established by the New York State Attorney General at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Tickets start at \$28.

(Only \$10* with student ID at the Carnegie Hall Box Office.)

Sat, **Mar 1** at 7 PM
Zankel Hall

ENSEMBLE ACJW

Featuring Fellows of The Academy—a program of Carnegie Hall, The Juilliard School, and The Weill Music Institute in partnership with the New York City Department of Education

Christopher Hogwood, Conductor

Praised as "an enormous success" by the *New York Times*, the public concerts of the Fellows of The Academy are not to be missed. For this concert, early-music expert Hogwood displays his musical breadth, conducting the ensemble in works from the 18th and 20th centuries, including one of Haydn's earliest symphonies and Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* Suite.

HAYDN Symphony No. 22, "The Philosopher"

MARTINŮ *La revue de cuisine*

HAYDN (arr. Wranitzky) Divertimento, Op. 71

STRAVINSKY *Pulcinella* Suite

The Academy is made possible by a leadership gift from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Major funding has also been provided by Mercedes and Sid Bass, The Kovner Foundation, Martha and Bob Lipp, The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Judith and Burton Resnick, Susan and Elihu Rose, and Mr. and Mrs. Lester S. Morse Jr., with additional support from the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation, The Dana Foundation, Suki Sandler, Mr. and Mrs. Nicola Bulgari, and The William Petschek Family.

Ensemble ACJW performances are supported, in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

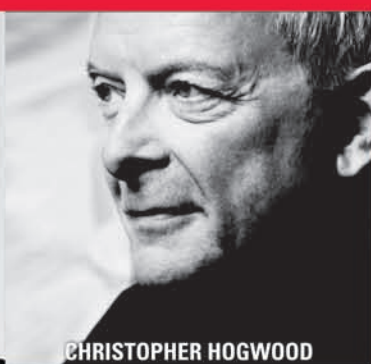
Tickets: \$15

(Only \$10* with student ID at the Carnegie Hall Box Office.)

CARNEGIE HALL presents



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CHRISTOPHER HOGWOOD



BOBBY McFERRIN



SFJAZZ COLLECTIVE

"[McFerrin is a] 'natural wonder' of the musical world."
—*Telegraph*

Tues, **Mar 4** at 7:30 PM
Zankel Hall

BOBBY McFERRIN VOICESTRA

A virtuoso display of vocal improvisation by 12 gifted singers with broad stylistic experience, ranging from jazz to R&B to Indian classical opera.

Sponsored by KPMG LLP

The Bobby McFerrin Perspectives concerts are supported, in part, by The Rockefeller Foundation's New York City Cultural Innovation Fund.

Perspectives concerts are made possible, in part, by a generous grant from The Alice Tully Foundation.

Tickets: \$48, \$60

Wed, **Mar 5** at 8:30 PM
Zankel Hall

SFJAZZ COLLECTIVE

Joe Lovano, Tenor Saxophone

Dave Douglas, Trumpet

Stefon Harris, Vibraphone and Marimba

Miguel Zenón, Alto Saxophone and Flute

Robin Eubanks, Trombone

Renee Rosnes, Piano

Matt Penman, Bass

Eric Harland, Drums

The SFJAZZ Collective returns with a stellar new lineup and repertoire focusing on the music of the legendary Wayne Shorter.

Presented by Carnegie Hall in partnership with Festival Productions.

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