JOHN SMOCK

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By Mary-Lea Cox

SYMPOSIUM

Changing U.S. Media Landscape

Broadcasting—just another business? Not according to Michael J. Copps, a commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission. Applying a purely business model to the industry means less serious political coverage, fewer jobs, and less of a voice for constituents that should be covered, he said, adding that “every American is a stakeholder in how our broadcast media develop.”

Copps delivered these remarks at the Graduate School of Journalism’s Feb. 8 symposium on media reform, which attracted about 200 journalism faculty and students and industry professionals, including keynote speaker and former anchorman Walter Cronkite, who has often been called the most trusted person in America.

The symposium was Copps’ idea. As one of the few FCC officials pushing for a regulatory tightening of the limits on ownership of media organizations—an agenda contrary to Bush administration policies—he wanted to hear from others in the media business, who are often left out of the conversation, on what reforms might be possible.

Introducing the conference, University President Lee C. Bollinger, a leading First Amendment scholar, said that one of the greatest challenges facing our society today is the student body, say the student organizers of this year’s Black Heritage Month. That’s up dramatically from what was less than 1 percent for most of last century.

But while these statistics are encouraging, more could be done to promote ties across the various cultures in the African diaspora, the organizers say—hence their idea to devote this year’s program to “Out of One, Many.”

“We recognize that there are many different cultures represented by black students,” Courtney Wilkins, chair of the Black Heritage Month Planning Committee, said. “We have seen many different experiences, but we all have roots in Africa.”

By Record Staff

Ushered in with a traditional mix of jazz, poetry, food, music and dance, this year’s Black Heritage Month celebrated the richness of the African diaspora, and Columbia reconnecting with its soul.

Delivering the keynote speech at the Jan. 31 kick-off event, U.S. District Court Judge Joseph A. Greenaway Jr. (CC’78), recalled what it was like to be at Columbia in the mid-1970s as a native of the Caribbean island of Montserrat. Back then, he said there were only a handful of blacks at Columbia, and even fewer who weren’t from the United States. “I had no organization, no one to commiserate with or reminisce about the food back home,” he said.

This year’s theme: uniting the African diaspora

Greenaway’s isolation is one of many dynamics that have changed in recent years for Columbia students of African descent. This year, black students make up about 8 percent of the

RESEARCH

Asserting Your Leadership Style

By Adam Piore

Researchers have spent years studying the characteristics of great leaders—those rare men and women who can inspire others to persevere in war, win a big one for the Gipper, or lead a company to the top of the heap.

But what makes a truly bad leader is a question that researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlooked—that is, whether researchers have largely overlook...
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COLUMBIA

DDC IN D.C.

Getting first-generation low-income students into college may be returned to Columbia's Double Discovery Center, but they now have a reason to stand taller. Double Discovery was one of 15 organizations to receive a 2006 Coming Up Taller Award, a project of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Accepting the award—which includes a $10,000 grant—from first lady Laura Bush at the Jan. 22 White House ceremony were (left to right, above) NEH Chairman Bruce Cole; DDC alumna and current staff member Marvin Cabrera; current DDC participant Esteban Garcia; and the first lady, who serves as PCAH's honorary chair.

August Wilson Revisited

When asked to name his greatest influences, the playwright August Wilson liked to cite the "four Bs": poet and playwright Amiri Baraka, painter Romare Bearden, singer Bessie Smith, and the blues. That last "B" loomed the largest at a Jan. 28 Columbia panel, "The Musicality of August Wilson," co-sponsored with the Signature Theatre Company, an off-Broadway troupe that is staging an August Wilson series as part of its 15th anniversary celebrations.

Wilson's plays are saturated with the blues," said moderator Robert O'Meally, the Zora Neale Hurston professor of English and comparative literature and the director of the Center for Jazz Studies. "They infuse every aspect of this work."

Other panelists concurred with O'Meally's view while noting that to do justice to Wilson's legacy, one should also pay tribute to the support he provided for African-American artists as well as his commitment to telling the story of the African-American experience.

For instance, Barnard theatre professor Shawn-Marie Garrett said that at a time when discrimination pervaded the theater world, Wilson employed a "whole generation of African-American actors, many of whom went on to become directors." But an even more impressive legacy, according to Garrett, was the sociological portrait of black America in the 20th century provided by Wilson's Pittsburgh cycle.

Here producer Robert Santiago-Johnson, who has played in and directed Wilson's plays, chimed in, saying that Wilson "argues lay in presenting a culture and arresting that culture and freezing it and saying, 'Don't you all forget this.'"

Preparing for Freedom

Henry Highland Garnet was among the first students to attend the African Free School of New York City, which opened its doors in 1876 with the mission of educating black children while also holding them up as models of black potential. One can only imagine the thoughts that passed through Garnet's mind when he was asked to create the drawing at left for an examination. The image of a man returning from a hunt is a central motif in rural European art, associated with pastoral leisure and pleasure. However, Garnet, who had escaped from slavery with his family, would have been all too familiar with the figure of a white man using dogs to track runaway slaves. (He went on to become a radical abolitionist.)

Garnet's drawing is one of many works now being showcased on the new Web site "Examination Days" (https://www.nyhistory.org/afs/), which, despite its name, is not a place to go for advice on surviving midterms and finals. Developed by Digital Knowledge Ventures (DKV), the University's multimedia design and development group, the site provides a window into the thinking behind the first school for blacks in America. The school's founders clearly thought it had a noble mission, but it was also a case of noble oblige, given that at the time of the school's establishment New York was hardly committed to abolition—which did not take place until 1827. On the contrary, the city's economy primarily depended on Southern slavery because of its role as cotton broker to the world. Reflecting the city's ambivalence toward blacks, the African Free School communicated mixed messages to its students, attempting to instill in them a mix of pride and subservience. The DKV-developed site was the idea of Jean Ashton, the former director of Columbia's Rare Book and Manuscript Library, who now directs the library at the New York Historical Society, home to the African Free School collection.

The society has been exploring this little-known part of NYC history in a three-part exhibition, the last of which, "Columbia Divided," is on display through Sept. 3.

CITY TURNS TO B-SCHOOL GRAD FOR FOOD POLICY COORDINATION

Park Slope was not always the quaint neighborhood that we see before us today. Benjamin Thomas, a recent graduate of Columbia Business School, should know. The 34-year-old native of this now-fashionable area of Brooklyn remembers that, despite the fact that the area was thriving and had many middle-class residents, poverty was also very visible: "I would often see homeless people sleeping in parks and on subways."

While he loved growing up in this part of New York, he also remembers thinking, "We live in a complicated world that can't be fixed with one decision. A multi-faceted approach will be needed."

Thomas is now in a position to act on these youthful convictions. Last month, he became New York City's food policy coordinator—a position first proposed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg in November 2006 as part of his new anti-poverty plan.

The role involves coordinating a new task force aimed at increasing access to nutritious food, in particular among low-income New Yorkers. Thomas's approach with impressive credentials. A 2003 graduate of the business school's Social Enterprise Program, he has spent his career advocating for the disadvantaged.

While at the business school, Thomas focused on the challenge of how to "build an anti-poverty program that is not overly reliant on government and philanthropic support." Upon graduation, he landed his first dream job that of heading FirstSource Staffing, a company that helps low-income people—often who have barriers to entering the workforce—get on the path to self-sufficiency.

Compiled by Mary-Lea Cox

TALK OF THE CAMPUS

Drawing Exercise:


Preparing for Freedom

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AT THE INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES, THIS ANTHROPOLOGIST IS BUILDING AN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION ON HARLEM’S LEGACY.

This week many New Yorkers celebrate Dominican Independence Day, marking the anniversary of the withdrawal of the Haitians from the eastern two-thirds of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola and the creation of an independent Dominican Republic on Feb. 27, 1844. But even at this moment of celebration, many will reflect on the problems this racially complex country continues to face—problems with which Steven Gregory, associate professor of anthropology and the director of Columbia’s Institute for Research in African-American Studies (IRAAS), is intimately familiar.

Gregory has spent three years on this Caribbean island, and three months ago he published The Devil Behind the Mirror, exploring the impact of globalization—trends such as tourism, technology transfer and transnational migration—on the lives and livelihoods of Dominican people.

Gregory was recruited from New York University in 2000 to lead Columbia’s new interdisciplinary M.A. program in African-American studies. He was drawn to this upper Manhattan location because of his long-standing interest in African-American politics and urban social movements. Not so coincidentally, Gregory’s latest research project is local in focus. He is investigating the impact of what he calls “neo-liberal economic development” on the lives of upper Manhattan residents. IRAAS recently partnered with the Harlem Tenants Council to familiarize students with the gentrification issues facing Harlem residents.

Q. Tell me more about IRAAS.
A. Professor Manning Marable founded IRAAS in 1993 as an academic resource center for building a new intellectual tradition upon Harlem’s rich legacy. As an institute, we administer the undergraduate and master’s degree programs in African-American studies. We also sponsor research, academic forums, and conferences on topics having to do with contemporary black politics, social relations, culture and history.

Q. How did you come to do research on the Dominican Republic?
A. As a graduate student, my area of specialization was the Caribbean. I always wanted to do something on the island of Hispaniola. For a while, I thought it would be Haiti; however, the project I tried to do in Haiti didn’t work out because of the political chaos. I’ve also always been interested in the Dominican Republic, and since New York has such a large population of Dominicans, it seemed likely I would study the country someday. Given my interest in the impact of globalization on the lives of people living in developing countries, the Dominican Republic turned out to be a perfect fit.

Q. What is your involvement with Dominicans now?
A. I continue to engage with Dominican artists and community activists in Washington Heights on ways to celebrate Dominican culture and establish a kind of neighborhood identity.

Q. What brought you to Columbia?
A. Columbia has an extraordinary community of scholars. Both as faculty members and as members of IRAAS, we are engaged in Harlem in different ways, and for me that is very important. I like the emphasis on community connection; I also like living on the Upper West Side.

Q. How has IRAAS expanded since its inception in 1993?
A. We have a larger faculty. We also have developed a graduate program offering an M.A. degree, and we now have a draft proposal for a Ph.D. program, which we hope to establish within the next three years. As we’ve grown, we’ve been able to provide a range of support services for students, such as workshops on how to prepare applications to Ph.D. programs. We’ve also been successful in getting about 85 percent of our M.A. students into doctoral programs or law school. We’ve expanded our activities as our faculty has grown.

Q. IRAAS offers many joint programs with other groups at the University. Is that a priority?
A. Very much so. We recently co-sponsored an exhibition with Teachers College, for example, featuring the work of a Dominican painter. We now have a close relationship with Kim Hall, who was recently recruited to Barnard to head up their Africana studies. We hope to make this a structural connection, beginning by holding joint faculty meetings this semester.

Q. Do black immigrants with language barriers face challenges different from those of African Americans?
A. The classic sociological response is that immigrants face a double discrimination because of their color and language. In fact, I think they confront many of the same challenges. In some ways, black immigration indirectly benefits from not being African American. Many would argue, and I would share that view, that in the structure of what you would call white supremacist ideology, African Americans fall at the bottom.

Q. Is there a buzz on Barack Obama. Is he the face of new African American leadership?
A. We live in a culture that worships celebrities, and he’s definitely fulfilling that celebrity role. But saying that he marks a generational change might be overkill. In the end, how he presents issues of concern to African Americans is what matters. When the debates and primaries come, people will be looking to see where he stands in relation to John Edwards, for example.

Q. Do black voters necessarily follow the same party line?
A. The mainstream has a narrow view of black voters as being the same constituency, but that’s probably never been the case.

Q. This year’s theme for Columbia’s celebration of Black Heritage Month was “Out of Our Many. What is that, ever so clearly racial?
A. On the contrary, it’s something my IRAAS colleagues and I are constantly trying to put into practice. I am encouraged by the recent appointments of a fellow anthropologist, Claudio Lomnitz, as director of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race; of Kim Hall, whom I mentioned earlier (she will be delivering this year’s Zora Neale Hurston Lecture); and of Mamadou Dia as director of SIPSS Institute of African Studies. Columbia is primed for doing some important work on linkages and themes within the African diaspora.
O
n the eve of the start of this year's Black Heritage Month, Judge Joseph Greenaway Jr., CC'78, observed that February is a time to ask: “Where have we been, what are we doing, and where are we going?” The last two questions present an interesting conundrum. On the one hand, record numbers of black Americans now occupy positions of leadership in politics and business, doors that were traditionally shut to them. On the other, we now see a “chipping away” at affirmative action, which President Bollinger put it in his remarks to kick off the month’s events. Under such conditions, how does one read the tea leaves? The second kunnez the following faculty for their thoughts and predictions

**CONNAD A. JOHNSON**

CONNAD A. JOHNSON is a clinical professor of law, Columbia Law School. Johnson served for many years as the attorney-in-charge of the Harlem neighborhood office of the Legal Aid Society of New York City and as its director of clinical education. When he first arrived at the law school, he founded Fair Housing Clinic, which specialized in civil rights litigation.

**GORDON E. LEWIS**

GORDON E. LEWIS is Edwin H. Case professor of American music, MacArthur Fellow, composer and improviser. He has written on experimental improvisation, computer music and jazz. His work as composer, improvisor, performer and interpreter is documented, as well as his views on the relationship of the artist to society.

**DORIAN T. WARREN**

DORIAN T. WARREN is assistant professor in the Department of Political Science and at the School of International and Public Affairs. Warren specializes in the study of inequality and American politics, focusing on the political organization of marginalized groups.

Which issues are at the center of African American politics today and why?

**JOHNSON:** We have progressed from slavery and Reconstruction and a century of legally supported segregation and discrimination. The civil rights movements of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, largely eliminated de jure or legally sponsored discrimination. However, at present, de facto inequality continues to pervade most aspects of American life. The top issue we continue to face is economic injustice. The most important issue we continue to face is economic injustice. The most important issue we continue to face is economic injustice.

**LEWIS:** It is critically important for African Americans to focus on the war in Iraq and any new wars being planned. Black youth, male and female, are at major risk here: this all we can do to all that we can be! We should also be focused on achieving universal healthcare. As issues of environmental racism (recently demonstrated by the New Orleans catastrophe), black children— as well as adults—are particularly poorly served by the present non-system.

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**LEWIS:** We should also be focused on achieving universal healthcare. As issues of environmental racism (recently demonstrated by the New Orleans catastrophe), black children—as well as adults—are particularly poorly served by the present non-system.

Europe’s Dearth of Dynamism?

Edmund Phelps, McKinley professor of political economy and the 2006 Nobel Laureate in economics, has recently authored the [European] Continent’s highest unemployment and lower participation if not also its lower productivity, to the Continent’s social model— in particular, the plethora of social insurance entitlements and the taxes to pay for them. The standard argument is fallacious, though. In my thesis, the Continental economies’ most profound problem is a death of economic dynamism—lowly rate of commercially successful innovation. There is evidence of such a death. Germany, Italy and France appear to possess less dynamism than do the U.S. and the others. Far fewer firms break into the top ranks in the former, and fewer employees are reported to have jobs with extensive freedom in decision-making—which is essential as companies engaged in novel, and thus creative, activity. (Wall Street Journal, 2/12/07)

Rebuilding in the Wake of Genocide

Josh Ruxin, assistant clinical professor of public health, Mailman School of Public Health, and country director for the UN’s Millennium Villages Project in Rwanda. For Rwanda to embrace its bright future, the African nation may have to escape the shadow of genocide. The big key to such a future is personal health (well-being of the population). The best way to achieve this is to educate the masses. This can be done through school education.

People seem to have taken Carter G. Woodson, the founder of Black Heritage Month, at his word. In taking responsibility for their own histories, they quickly figured out that they can select leaders themselves. That’s not a changing of the guard but rather an expansion of it, as well as an increase in the number of people who will make the match. The new would-be national leaders will need to quicken their steps to catch up.

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**EVENT HIGHLIGHTS FEB. 26–MAR. 9**

**MONDAY February 26**

**LDEO Seminar**

LDEO Library, Room 220B, 6:00–9:00 p.m. Open to the public.

**TUESDAY February 27**

**Lecture**

Maison Française (Buell Hall, Room 212). 6:30–8:30 p.m. Frank Ocean.

**Environmental Health Seminar**

Environmental Health Seminar House at CUMC. 11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Open to the public.

**WEDNESDAY February 28**

**Environmental Health Seminar**

Environmental Health Seminar House at CUMC. 11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Open to the public.

**THURSDAY March 1**

**Student Conference 185**

UNESCO Chair on “The Future of Human Rights.” 12:00–1:30 p.m. Open to the public.

**FRIDAY March 2**

**Robert Novak Memorial Lecture**

Robert Novak Memorial Lecture at SUNY. 11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Open to the public.

**SATURDAY March 3**

**Women’s Tennis vs. Rutgers**

Women’s Tennis vs. Rutgers. 12:00 p.m. Open to the public.

**SUNDAY March 4**

**Purple Harris**

Purple Harris. 5:00 p.m. Open to the public.

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**AROUND TOWN**

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**Editor’s Pick**

**DAN GRAHAM’S NEW JERSEY**

Conceptual artist Dan Graham can’t leave New Jersey. After growing up in the Garden State, he went back for one of his early art projects to photograph suburban tract developments, which he conceives as “architectural serials.” As he explained in his legendary essay, “Homes for America” (1966), “Housing developments as an architectural phenomenon seem peculiarly gratuitous. Designed to fill in ‘dead’ land areas, the houses needn’t adapt to or attempt to withstand Nature.” Since then, Graham has returned repeatedly to document New Jersey’s cities and suburbs, and in the summer and fall of last year, he conducted a “roving seminar” for students from the Graduate School of Arts and Architecture (GSAPP). After leading the students to parts of the Garden State that they didn’t know existed, he would engage them in impromptu conversations on whatever topics caught his fancy, from arcadia to aesthetic to play (music). GSAPP is sponsoring an exhibition of the documents and photos collected from these excursions, on display in Bow Dyer Hall through March 23.

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**Around Town**

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It’s time for Mardi Gras and other festivals. Which traditions do you celebrate?

I’m celebrating the new year of the Gold Pgs at home with family, but I’d suggest going to Chinatown in Flushing. There are lots of shops to buy things for the new year, and you can get something traditional and tasty at any of the many local restaurants.

—Watch Ho, Associate Director, Weatherhead East Asian Institute

Happy Losar! Tibetan New Year has arrived! I tutor a Tibetan monk in English, and he invited me to his place to celebrate the year of the Fire Pigs. For similar celebrations, check out Tibet House on 22 W. 15th St. Ghanden Thurman, son of Prof. Bob Thurman, is the director.

—Rish Janishetty, Library Assistant, C.V. Starr East Asian Library

RUSSIANs have their own version of carnaval, called Maslenitsa or Butter Week. It ended on Feb. 18. Most people celebrate by eating blini (Russian crepe-style pancakes). Good places to do that in New York City are Russian Samovar and Uncle Vanya’s. Traditional toppings include caviar, lox, herring, sour cream, chopped egg and scallions. Thar said, I’ve also hosted blini parties in NYC where we’ve had some fusion-going on topings like peanut butter and jelly, whipped cream, Nutella, Marshmallow Fluff, you name it. And blini are of course served with vodka, lots of vodka. It’s too late for these celebrations now but the two restaurants I mentioned will be serving special Russian Easter foods on April 9—the same date as Eastern Easter.

—Natalia Ermolaeva, Administrative Assistant, Harriman Institute
NEVER LOSE HOPE, SAYS PALS SCHOLAR

By Alex Lyda

A sk Yusuf Abukar, GS’09, how he went from being bombarded as a refugee from Somalia to strolling the environs of Morningide as a Columbia student, and he has just two words: “Infinite hope.”

In 1999, Abukar was on the cratered streets of a ruined Mogadishu when his former teacher approached him about applying to a university in the United States, as a way “to escape the violence and cultivate his intellectual ability.” Abukar shot back: “What is the best university in the world?” “Columbia University in New York City,” said the teacher.

For five years, Abukar held on to this vision of life beyond the ruins of his native city. “Pursuing higher education under such circumstances seemed an extravagant luxury,” Abukar says. “But I was confident about one thing, given the opportunity, I would excel and become an outstanding student.”

Last year, Abukar enrolled in the School of General Studies (GS)—Columbia’s home for nontraditional students—where he has a financial aid package provided through the Program for Academic Leadership and Service (PALS).

So far, he can apply to become a PALS scholar. Instead, GS administrators identified a pool of candidates for consideration by a selection committee. Typically, the committee favors first-generation college students and members of historically underrepresented groups with significant financial need and a demonstrated ability to succeed in a competitive academic environment, as well as a record of community service.

“PALS scholars are all passionate about learning and about giving back through community service and leadership,” said GS Dean Peter Awn.

In addition to international students like Abukar, the program targets residents of upper Manhattan neighborhoods. “We started PALS in 1999 by focusing on nearby schools,” explained Scott Halvorson, associate dean of GS and the program director. “Early on, we realized that many of our potential candidates had never walked across the campus. They had never felt it was the place for them. Simply visiting made such a difference. They felt that they could come back here.”

Nearly 70 local high school students had a chance to do just that when PALS hosted its sixth annual “No Limits” symposium on Feb. 16 for students from Beren and Rose Academy; Frederick Douglass High School; the Manhattan Theatre Lab High School; and other city schools. The young people spent the day interacting with PALS scholars through workshops and talks. Followed by an optional tour of the campus.

One of the most popular speakers was up-and-coming poet Jonathan Walton, GS’08. The 23-year-old poet approached him about applying to a university in the United States, as a way “to escape the violence and cultivate his intellectual ability.” Abukar was there, too, and contributed his experiences about how he’d overcome personal and financial hardships in order to come to Columbia. “My inquisitiveness, my patience, my simplicity, my deprivation and, above all, my intellectual ability,” he affirmed—a message that could inspire any young person, whether from Mogadishu or New York City.

STAFF Q&A

SONIA REESE

Interviewed by Dan Rivera

POSITION: Executive Director, Community Impact

LENGTH OF SERVICE: 16 years


Sonia Reese has spent most of her career motivating students to become good neighbors, locally and globally. For the past 16 years, Reese has been the executive director of Community Impact, Columbia’s oldest and largest community service organization.

Before joining Community Impact, she worked at Operations Crossroads Africa, coordinating a cross-cultural exchange program that sent American college students to live and work in Africa each summer. Where she once sent student volunteers thousands of miles away, she now mobilizes Columbia and Barnard students to work in partnership with more than 100 community groups that help provide clothing, food, shelter, education, job training and mentoring to over 8,000 residents in Harlem, Washington Heights and Inwood. About two-thirds of their projects are embedded in the neighborhoods they serve.

Having grown up in the General Grant Houses, a public housing project on West 125th St., Reese knows the needs of low-income households firsthand. “My inquisitiveness, my patience, my simplicity, my deprivation and, above all, my intellectual ability,” he affirmed—a message that could inspire any young person, whether from Mogadishu or New York City.

“Since day one, sandbox, I’ve considered myself a educator,” Abukar says. “I have responsibilities here, I have responsibilities where I come from, and I would like to go back where I come from and share what I learned at Columbia.”

Abukar’s late mother was a teacher in Somalia, and his grandmother was an intellectual who wrote a book about the country’s history. “She died in 1987,” Abukar says. “A couple of years ago, I went to her grave and I could see that the memories and everything I had learned from her are still there. I decided that I would do something for her and for myself.”

“I’m so grateful to Columbia for providing me with an opportunity to learn and work in a challenging environment,” Abukar says. “I have changed very much because of Columbia. I have learned about giving back through learning and about giving back through giving back.”

Day in the Life of...

SANDY HELLING

WHO SHE IS: Associate Director, Community Impact

YEARS AT COMMUNITY IMPACT: 20

WHAT SHE DOES: On any given day, Helling wears many hats—from advising and training students, to preparing accountability reports for donors and government agencies, such as the New York State Department of Education and the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development.

COMMUNITY IMPACT HAS EVOLVED: “Students today are more excited than ever and offer creative proposals of their own. We also have cross-programming. For example, the Student Health Outreach (SHOUT) program, which promotes low-cost health insurance, makes presentations to our adult students in GEO and ESL classes.”

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: “We have a very small staff. There comes a limit to how many programs we can provide the oversight needed to ensure that our students get a quality volunteer experience.”

“Community Impact is Columbia’s oldest volunteer group. How did it get started?”

Community Impact began in 1981 as a grassroots effort by Columbia students. Eventually it gained the support of administrators and chaplaincies on campus, and in 1987 Community Impact was formalized, exceeding $50,000 in donations to the tax-exempt public charity. Similar to The Spectator and QWA (the ambulance corps), we have outstanding numbers of directors. Our annual operating budget is $1.1 million, a third of which comes from Columbia.

What programs does Community Impact offer?

Our main mission is food and shelter, but other programs are just as valuable. One of our largest is the Jobs and Education Empowerment Project (JEPP). Three years ago, through a partnership with the West Harlem Group Assistance, we opened a computer technology center at their apartment building on 155th St. to help residents get basic skills to compete in a computer-dependent workforce. Two of our other big programs are homelessness assistance and youth literacy. In 2005–2006, we served 6,000 clients in our Homeless Assistance and Advocacy Program and 200 clients in our program called America Reads.

What benefits do Columbia students get from volunteering?

One of the great things about Community Impact is that it exposes Columbia students to many of the economic issues surrounding low-income and homeless families. They don’t get academic credit but they can put their experiences on their applications for graduate school. One recent volunteer became inspired to become a professional teacher and now teaches at LaGuardia Community College in Queens.

Is your annual auction in April a big event?

Thank you for bringing up my favorite topic. The auction provides a quarter of our annual budget. Anybody in the community is welcome to donate. We’re looking for top-of-the-line items—previous years those included parts in Farrelly brothers’ movies, and this year maybe a helicopter ski ride—as well as smaller items that can be auctioned off as part of a package.

What do you do outside of Columbia?

I’m a wife and have a 13-year-old son. I enjoy going to museums and having tea.
One of the top hits on the BBC news site this month was a photoblog kept by children in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, showing their daily lives in the village of Kallmandi (news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6332511.stm). For Abby Stone, C’10, this was a galvanizing moment. In the summer of 2005, Stone, then a high-schooler in St. Louis, traveled to India with the Rural Development Foundation and had the idea to start up the photoblog project with the students she met at the school, all of whom are from poor families. As the BBC notes, the project has succeeded brilliantly—not only in connecting the children with the wider world but also in giving the world a window on rural India.

The experience was written in just seven days, he said. Herzog came at the invitation of film history professor Annette Insdorf, who has been friends with the cinema wünderkind for years.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

HINT: It's in set, and has a commanding presence. Send answers to currecord@columbia.edu. First to e-mail us the right answer receives a RECORD mug.

HPM: It is set in stone, and has a commanding presence. Send answers to currecord@columbia.edu. First to e-mail us the right answer receives a RECORD mug.

**Media Reform**

need to resolve the tension between freedom of speech and the market economy, particularly in the area of broadcast media. In the past 20 years, regulators have allowed a free market system to regulate broadcast content, and some citizens can now afford to buy more content than others.

Crinklite, the legendary CBS anchorman, now a nonagenarian, said he found it lamentable that so many of today’s journalists “are saddled with inflated profit expectations from Wall Street. They face round after round of job cuts—and cost cuts—that require them to do ever more with ever less.” As a result, he said, they display “a dwindling commitment to public service.”

Don’t blame journalists for this sad reality, Crinklite stressed. Rather, the situation has evolved as a result of the sheer number of events organized around that theme. Colombians did not await the first of the month to begin their February-long celebration. An opening reception on Jan. 31 kicked off the festivities, with a keynote speech by Judge Joseph Greenaway, C’76, and the presentation of the Heritage Award by the Black Alumni Council to Norman Skinner, CC’40. Other highlights included a speech by poet Sonia Sanchez (left) and a phenomenal dance aptly titled “Many Faces Behind the Mask” (above).

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**Wicked Wünderkind Werner Herzog**

Germain film director Werner Herzog may be the hero of art-house intellectuals, but he is also the king of wicked antics. Take the time he cooked and ate his shoe on camera, or the time he jumped into a cactus patch as a result of losing a bet to...