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 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

The Record

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NEWS AND IDEAS FOR THE COLUMBIA COMMUNITY

FEBRUARY 18, 2009

Pitchfest Spurs Prospective Entrepreneurs

By Leah Bourne

An iPhone application that directs you to local sales. A website that caters to sports addicts. An eco-friendly, motorized tricycle. These are just three ideas presented at the University's first PitchFest, a fast-paced event held in Davis Auditorium on Feb. 4 where members of the Columbia community pitched their ideas for new products and business ventures.

Sponsored by the the Center for Technology, Innovation and Community Engagement (CTICE) at the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science, PitchFest was somewhat like a speed-dating session for would-be entrepreneurs. "Pitchers" included undergraduate and graduate students from many of Columbia's divisions and one Teachers College administrator. Each entrant had two minutes to toss out ideas to the audience, and the high number of entries—41—suggested that Columbians really have caught the entrepreneurial bug.

"The aim of PitchFest is to create a forum for people to express their ideas and to meet people to get feedback on their ideas," says Jaime Peretzman, one of the event's organizers, a graduate student at the engineering school, and a member of the Society for Entrepreneurship and Technological Innovation, a student group. Peretzman, a pitcher himself, presented his idea for a virtual multi-game "table" that would include table tennis, pool and ice hockey.



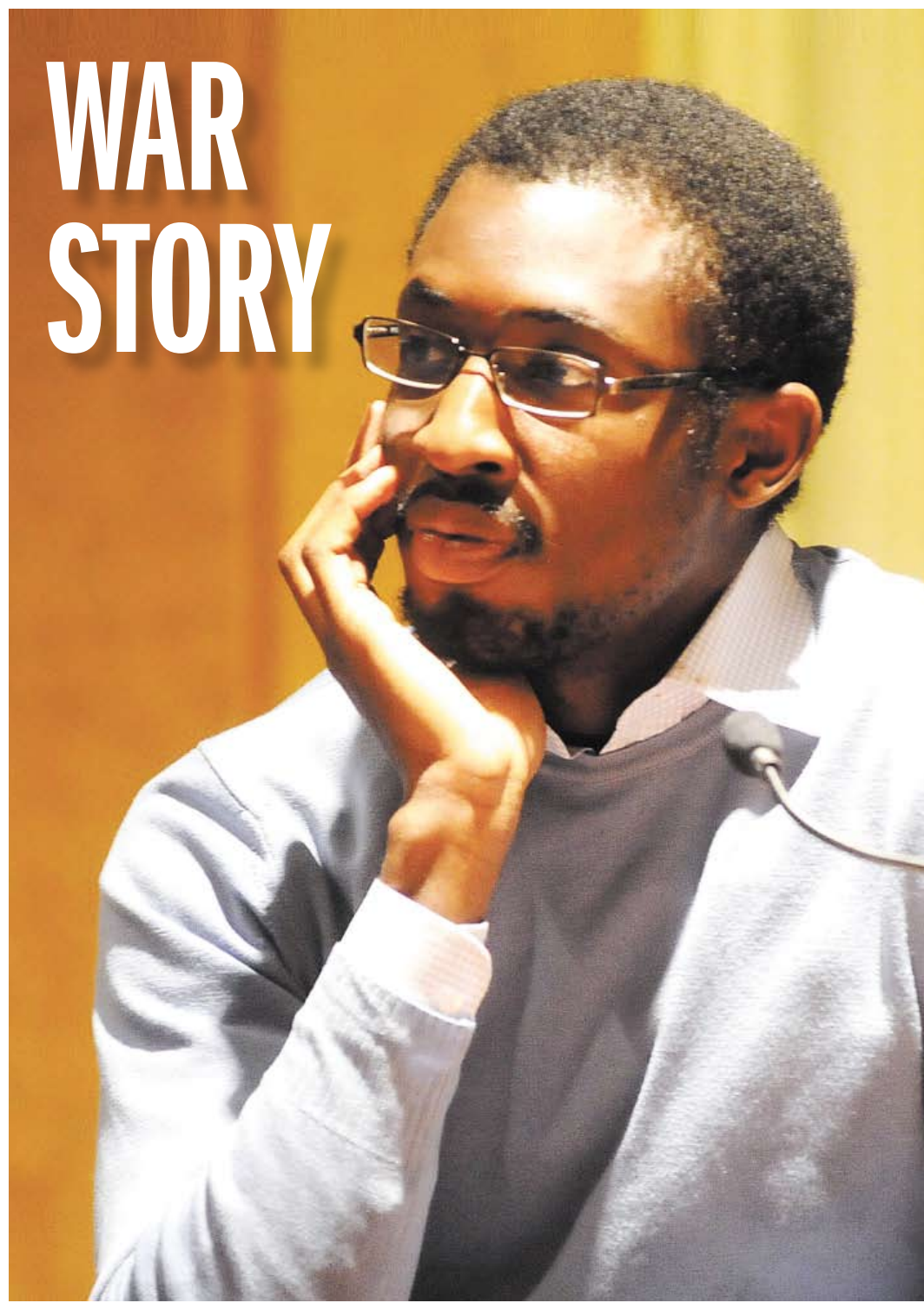
Pitching it loud and clear at Pitchfest

There were no judges for the presentations—and no prizes—but there was plenty of feedback in the form of applause; pitchers who came with props earned the loudest acclaim.

Noel Lim proposed YubaTrike International, a motorized tricycle business targeting Asia. He brought a bright red prototype of the three-wheeler along with him. "This is a do-good business," said Lim. "Philippine tricycle drivers are in a low-income class earning just \$6 a day. Conversion to electric bicycles will increase [their] disposable income by removing expenses for gasoline and oil," he said.

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WAR STORY



EILEEN BARROS

Uzodinma Iweala, a Columbia University medical student, speaks at the "Literature and Terror" series to address the real-life issue of child soldiers through his fiction novel, *Beasts of No Nation*.

By John Ubl

Uzodinma Iweala's award-winning debut novel, *Beasts of No Nation*, has been praised for its graphic portrayal of child soldiers in West Africa. Yet Iweala, a Columbia University medical student who was 23 when his novel was published in 2005, is quick to point out the fictional nature of his work.

"It's an imaginative experience that I've never experienced," he told Professor Mamadou Diouf, director of Columbia University's Institute of African Studies. The two were discussing Iweala's book at a Feb. 3 session that was part of the Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life's year-long "Literature and Terror" series, which engages professors and authors in a conversation about terror and related issues.

The book began as Iweala's senior thesis when he was a Harvard undergraduate and would go on to

be named a book of the year by *Time*, *Slate* and *New York* magazine; Iweala landed on *Granta* magazine's 2007 list of the 20 best young American novelists.

The book tells the story of Agu, a young boy in an unidentified West African nation who is conscripted into a corps of guerilla fighters after seeing his father murdered and his village ransacked. Written from Agu's point of view in a broken dialect that Iweala based on Pidgin English, it juxtaposes Agu's life as a soldier with recollections of the family life he lost to war.

Iweala has pointed out that he has never been through anything like the situations faced by his characters. Yet in an age of memoirs and art works that are often "a comment on something," Iweala said he has found that more and more readers are "bent on having representations of truth in writing, whether it's fiction or nonfiction."

He recalled that at a reading of his book in Germany, an audience member was upset to learn that *Beasts of No Nation* was not the product of personal

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STUDY LINKS FETAL HEALTH TO REDUCTION IN TOXIC RELEASES

By John H. Tucker

A new study by a Columbia economist definitively links a decline in fetal harm in the 1990s to stricter environmental controls. It proves, according to its authors, that living near a toxic manufacturing plant poses a significant risk to fetal health.

The study, by Professor Janet Currie and graduate student Johannes Schmieder, will be published in the May edition of the American Economic Association's *Papers and Proceedings*. Currie's research specializes in the relationship between economic policy and children's health.

"Unhealthy emissions can be viewed as a pricing problem," says Currie, who chairs Columbia's economics department and is the Sami Mnamneh Professor of Economics. "Factories dump toxic releases into the atmosphere but don't pay the cost of pollution. There would be less harm to the children who ingest the toxins if the factories had to bear the cost."

Currie's study argues that day-to-day releases of 10 harmful toxicants—such as cadmium, toluene and epichlorohydrin—can cause low birth weight, premature birth and infant death. The researchers discovered that reductions in the release of these three chemicals accounted for a 3.9 percent reduction in infant mortality in the United States from 1988 to 1999.

"It's not true that everyone starts on a level playing field."

The data on toxic releases are collected as a result of a 1986 federal law requiring many U.S. plants to file annual emissions reports with the Environmental Protection Agency—a law created in response to the 1984 disaster in Bhopal, India, where more than 10,000 people were killed after a Union Carbide pesticide plant released 42 tons of toxic gas.

Currie has since capitalized on those emissions reports to produce research that is "revolutionary," says Michael Greenstone, an environmental economist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "This paper has taken a giant step forward in improving our understanding of the relationship between toxic emissions and infant health," he says.

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OFF CAMPUS



COURTESY OF LAMONT DOHERTY

CLIMATE CHANGE OUTSIDE THE BELTWAY...WAY OUTSIDE

Scientists aboard the U.S. research vessel Laurence M Gould, 10,000 miles from Washington D. C., off the coast of Antarctica, held their own presidential inaugural celebration on Jan. 20. Stopped in desolate, icy seas for three days to do climate-change research, they dubbed their temporary study area Ocean Station Obama. "The project scientists decided to dedicate the station to President Obama and his administration to recognize their vital interest in the problem of climate change," Douglas Martinson, an oceanographer at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and chief scientist of the cruise, wrote in an email message. "The setting of our study, in an area of rapidly changing climate and ecology, is an appropriate spot and moment in our history to dedicate this sampling station to the events taking place in Washington," he wrote. "Oceanographers name such stations to facilitate future identification, and it is common to name them after people, events, animals or anything else to distinguish them. Station Obama is located in Marguerite Bay immediately south of Adelaide Island, in the eastern Bellingshausen Sea (approximately 67 degrees 46 minutes south latitude, 68 degrees 51 West longitude).

MILESTONES

FRANCESCO DE ANGELIS, assistant professor of Roman art and archaeology, was granted a Humboldt Research Fellowship by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, which connects researchers and scholars from various fields with academic hosts at German research institutions. De Angelis will research style and identity in Roman imperial art at the Archaeological Institute of the University of Heidelberg.

The Student Council of the Columbia School of General Studies presented its 2008 Excellence in Teaching Award to Professor **ANNETTE INSDORF**, director of undergraduate studies in the Film Division of the School of the Arts. Insdorf received the award, which is given annually, because "she is a remarkable lecturer and sets inspiringly tough standards for student work," according to the students who nominated her.



V. FAYE MCNEILL, assistant professor of chemical engineering, has been awarded a National Science Foundation CAREER award to research a deeper understanding of the influence of ice and snow on atmospheric composition and climate. The CAREER Program is NSF's most prestigious award in support of junior faculty who exemplify the role of teacher-scholars through outstanding research, excellent education and the integration of education and research. McNeill's proposal, "The Atmospheric Chemistry of Ice and Snow," will be funded for five years. Her plan is to address a major challenge in atmospheric chemistry: understanding and quantifying the interactions of ice and snow with trace gases.

GRANTS & GIFTS

WHO GAVE IT: U.S. Office of Research Integrity

HOW MUCH: \$50,000

WHO GOT IT: Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

WHAT FOR: To create a multidisciplinary program that fosters academic integrity.

HOW WILL IT BE USED: GSAS faculty will redesign 10 courses to put greater emphasis on research ethics. The grant will also fund 24 graduate-level Scholarship Integrity Fellows, who will be trained to educate their peers about issues such as academic integrity, plagiarism, laboratory ethics and research financing.

WHO GAVE IT: Jorge Paolo Lemann

HOW MUCH: \$3 million

WHO GOT IT: School of International and Public Affairs

WHAT FOR: Jorge Paolo Lemann Fund

HOW WILL IT BE USED: For fellowships or grants to any students enrolled in a dual-degree program with SIPA and Fundacao Getulio Vargas or other Brazilian institutions.

WHO GAVE IT: Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation

HOW MUCH: \$1.5 million

WHO GOT IT: Earth Institute

WHAT FOR: Millennium Villages Project

HOW WILL IT BE USED: Two-thirds of this gift, or \$1 million, will support drylands sustainability and biodiversity work at Mali Millennium Villages over a period of four years. The remaining third will help Mali in planning, over an 18-month period, to expand the project's strategy to the country's poorest areas.

WHO GAVE IT: The Klingenstein Martell Foundation

HOW MUCH: \$1 million

WHO GOT IT: College of Physicians and Surgeons

WHAT FOR: Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology

HOW WILL IT BE USED: To support renovation of the Center for Prenatal Pediatrics.

WHO GAVE IT: Anonymous

HOW MUCH: \$300,000

WHO GOT IT: School of Nursing

WHAT FOR: Mary Dickey Lindsay Scholarship Endowment Fund

HOW WILL IT BE USED: To provide financial aid to students in the school's Doctor of Nursing Practice program.

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Happening at Columbia

For the latest on upcoming
Columbia events, performances,
seminars and lectures, please go to
<http://calendar.columbia.edu>

Congressional Columbians

Dear Alma,
With a Columbian now in the White House, what about the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue? Have there been Columbians in Congress?

—Congressionally Curious

Dear Curious,

Indeed it turns out there has always been a Columbia graduate (or attendee) serving in each session of Congress since the first in 1789.

Actually, the streak started even before the first session. John Jay (King's College, 1764) and Alexander Hamilton (who didn't graduate) were members of the Continental Congress when the Constitution that created the two houses of Congress was written.

From there, the unbroken string of men and women of Columbia blue starts with Egbert Benson (King's College, 1765) a member representing New York in the first and second sessions of Congress. Each session since has had at least one, and sometimes dozens, of Columbians.

Some were only briefly in Congress on their way to other political positions. DeWitt Clinton (CC1786) spent a mere 18 months as New York's senator before moving on to become New York City mayor, and later governor of New York state. And there are long-serving but little-known Columbians, such as Karl Mundt (CC'27), a South Dakota Republican who served in the House and later the Senate for the 76th through 92nd sessions, stepping down in 1971.

Hamilton Fish Sr. (CC1827) was a representative in the 28th Congress and a senator in the 32nd; his son Hamilton Fish Jr. (CC1869, LAW1873). Fish Jr. served a single term in the 61st Congress, from 1909 to 1911. Two other Hamilton Fish's, scions of the original, also served in Congress but don't count because they are Harvard graduates.

The first woman with a Columbia



ASK ALMA'S OWL

connection appears to be Helen Gahagan Douglas, who attended Barnard from 1920 to 1922 and who served three terms in the House representing California in the late 1940s. Her bid to become California's first woman senator in 1950 failed when she was defeated by Richard Nixon.

The 83rd Congress, which took office in 1953, had a bumper crop of Columbians: seven senators and 17 House members, nine of whom represented New York.

The current session, the 111th, has lost Barack Obama (CC'83). Thank goodness, then, for Sen. Frank Lautenberg (BUS'49) and for Reps. Rosa L. DeLauro (GSAS'66), Sander Levin (GSAS'66), Jerrold Nadler (CC'69), Bradley Miller (LAW'79) and Eric Cantor (GSAPP'89). However you may feel about their politics, they are all helping to keep the University's long-running streak alive.

—Bridget O'Brian

Send your questions for Alma's Owl to curecord@columbia.edu.

Columbia Hosts Conference on the First African American Filmmaker

By John E. Uhl

Nearly 100 years ago, Oscar Micheaux wrote, directed and produced dozens of films spanning both the silent and early sound eras. Being an influential pioneer of early cinema is an impressive enough accomplishment, but Micheaux has yet another distinction: He was the first African-American to produce a feature-length film.

On Feb. 6 and 7, Columbia University School of the Arts hosted a two-day conference on his work, titled "Faded Glory: Oscar Micheaux and the Pre-War Early Black Cinema." Drawing on a new generation of Micheaux scholarship that has emerged since the discovery of two of his "lost" silent movies, the conference, co-sponsored by the Film Society of Lincoln Center and University Seminars on Cinema and Interdisciplinary Interpretation at Columbia University, was convened to celebrate his work and examine the difficulties he faced in making his films.

"The contributions of Oscar Micheaux make him a primary figure not just in black independent film, but all of American cinema," said Jamal Joseph, chair of the Columbia Film Division. "His talent, resourcefulness, vision and sheer guts have inspired generations of

filmmakers to make their films by any means necessary."

Born in Illinois in 1884, the son of freed slaves, Micheaux left home at an early age for Chicago before moving to South Dakota to become a homesteader, an experience that provided the basis for a self-published and-distributed novel, *The Homesteader*. In 1918, Micheaux founded his own book and film publishing company, and turned *The Homesteader* into a movie, selling stock to white businessmen and farmers in Iowa to finance the project. It was the first of Micheaux's 12 silent-era films, many of which are thought to be lost.

When prints of two of Micheaux's lost silent films, *Within Our Gates* and *Symbol of the Unconquered*, were re-discovered in 1991, the critical thinking on his work and legacy underwent a transformation. Together with a third film, *Body and Soul*, they form a silent-era trilogy that has stimulated new scholarship and shed light on what it meant to be a black American at the start of the 20th century.

Lectures and panel discussions with scholars from across North America, as well as screenings of the films—some of which had never been seen before—addressed such topics as early black cinema actors and actresses and the restoration and exhibition of re-discovered archival films.

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Poster for Oscar Micheaux's film, *Swing!*, released in 1938.

ON EXHIBIT: THE COLOR DANCE

The Color Dance (Action Rainbow Prints) by artist Gail Shaw-Clemons is on display at the Gallery Space at the University's Russ Berrie Medical Science Pavilion through March 4.

Shaw-Clemons, who was born in Washington, D.C., and received her master's degree in printmaking from the University of Maryland, says her expressions come "from a freedom that her ancestors never knew here in America." She says, "The survival and resilience of life

is by far my greatest inspiration."

Shaw-Clemons' art has been extensively exhibited with many works included in public and private collections in the United States, Brazil, Norway, Beijing and Ireland. The artist was included in the book *Creating Their Own Image: The History of African-American Women Artists* by Lisa E. Farrington (Oxford University Press, 2004).

—Vivian M. Lingard



Physics Group Honors the Scientist Behind Columbia's Atomic Heyday

By John H. Tucker

The American Physical Society, a leading voice for the nation's physics community, named Columbia's Pupin Hall a historic site, recognizing the University's long history of contributions to the advancement of physics, and honored I.I. Rabi, the late Nobel laureate whose groundbreaking technique for measuring the magnetic characteristics of atomic nuclei led to present-day MRI technology.

Rabi got his Ph.D. from Columbia in 1927 and chaired the physics department during its heyday following World War II.

During the Jan. 29 ceremony, David Hirsh, University vice president for research, accepted a plaque from Gene Sprouse, editor-in-chief of the society's journals. In the crowd of 50 attendees were Rabi's two daughters, Nancy Lichtenstein and Margaret Beels; Columbia physicist and Nobel laureate T.D. Lee; and author Richard Rhodes, who wrote the book *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*.

Rabi played a major role in the development of the bomb. He also gained acclaim through his work on magnetic resonance—the manipulation of an alternating electric field (better known in Rabi's day as a radio wave), which causes a quantum mechanical system to jump from one form of energy to another.

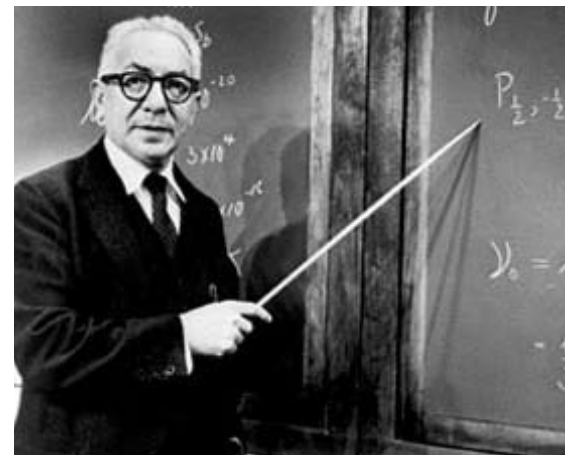
Those who spoke saluted the University for its contributions to physics in the mid-20th century, when Columbia physicists led the world in the development of quantum mechanics, laser technology and nuclear fission.

"Columbia, I think, had the best physics department in the country from 1945 to 1952," said John Rigden, a spokesman for the American Physical Society, during an interview.

The society, now headquartered in College Park, Md., was founded at Columbia in 1899. Its Historical Sites Initiative began several years ago to raise public awareness by honoring institutions central to the development of physics. It was only a matter of time before the society turned its sights toward Morningside Heights.

The physics department counts 27 Nobel laureates among its faculty and alumni. Many were recruited by Rabi and did their prize-winning work under his guidance in the late 1940s. In 1965, Pupin Hall was designated a National Historical Landmark by the National Park Service.

Today, Columbia remains a leader in quantum mechanics research. Last month, the University opened a state-of-the-art, temperature-sensitive laboratory, and



I.I. Rabi at the chalkboard in Pupin.

through its Diversity Initiative, hired Assistant Professor Tanya Zelevinsky, whose work on high-precision spectroscopy "will serve as the scientific grandchild of Rabi's work," said Andrew Millis, professor and chair of the department.

After earning his Ph.D. at Columbia, Rabi spent two years in Germany working with such legendary scientists as Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg and Otto Stern. At Heisenberg's urging, Columbia hired Rabi in 1929; he completed his research on magnetic resonance in 1938. After leaving the University briefly during the war, he returned to become chair of the physics department. He received the Nobel in 1944 and spent the next years contributing to the inventions of the laser and the atomic clock. He later co-founded Brookhaven National Laboratory and the European Center for Nuclear Research, served as President Harry S. Truman's science adviser and was U.S. representative to NATO's science committee for two decades.

"Rabi built the Columbia physics department in the '30s; then he came back after the war and gave it a second rebirth," said oral historian Chauncey Olinger Jr. (GSAS'71), who years ago teamed with New York designer Edwin Schlossberg to build the I.I. Rabi Memorial Room, situated in Rabi's old office space on the eighth floor in Pupin Hall.

Twenty years ago, the University launched the I.I. Rabi Science Scholars Program, which each year allows about 10 undergraduates to attend Columbia and do research alongside the science professor of their choice, with summer housing and stipends provided.

Speaking at last week's ceremony, Margaret Beels, Rabi's daughter, said, "It's wonderful that Columbia has a historical memory. It's good for the students to have things like this to remind them they should study backward as well as forward."



PROFESSORS MAKE A POINT ABOUT MODERN ART IN IRAQ

By Alexander Gelfand

As a professor of ancient art history and archeology, Zainab Bahrani studies the art of long-dead civilizations such as Mesopotamia, Sumeria and Babylonia. So why would someone whose work is rooted in the distant past mount an exhibition of modern and contemporary Iraqi art?

Bahrani asked the question herself during a Jan. 28 discussion panel about the Wallach Art Gallery's new exhibit, "Modernism and Iraq." "We wanted to show the world what we already knew: that there is a rich tradition of modern art in Iraq," said Bahrani, who co-curated the exhibit with Nada Shabout, a professor of art history at the University of North Texas.

The show, which is on display through March 28, features paintings, sculpture, videos and book arts by 44 Iraqi artists—some dead, others living in Baghdad or in exile abroad.

At the discussion panel, Bahrani, the Edith Porada Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Art History and Archaeology, said that since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the country has been portrayed by Western scholars, curators and critics as a country with no modern, secular tradition of art. She and Shabout want to rebut that view. "There is this history, this tradition of modern, post-colonial art, and I wanted my colleagues in New York to see it," said Bahrani.

As the two scholars made clear in their talk, there are several reasons Iraq's modern tradition remains little known abroad. Access to the artworks themselves is one problem: The Iraqi Museum of Modern Art was looted after the fall of Baghdad, and most modern and contemporary works are now in private collections. Meanwhile,

those works that do make it into Western exhibitions often lack historical and contextual background. In part, this is because local scholars have published little on the subject, said panelist Wassan al-Khudairi, the collections curator at the Arab Museum for Modern Art in Qatar, which supplied a number of the works featured in the exhibit.

The problem is exacerbated, said Bahrani and Shabout, by the Western assumption that modern art from the Middle East is invariably inspired by Western sources. "Modernism is usually considered to be a borrowed, Western phenomenon," Bahrani said in an interview after the conference. She, as did Shabout, described this as a form of Orientalism, using a term coined by the late Edward Said, formerly University Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia, to describe colonial-era stereotypes of a primitive and inferior East. (Bahrani and Shabout use the term "neo-Orientalist," meanwhile, to describe recent Western exhibitions that rely on contemporary stereotypes of the Middle East, such as the veil and the desert.)

While the Iraqi Modernists of the 1940s and '50s studied and worked in art capitals such as Paris and Rome, Shabout said, they were also inspired by Islamic and ancient Mesopotamian art, both of which share certain features with Modernism.

For example, a Western viewer might see the reduction of human figures into abstract geometric shapes in Jawad Salim's *Bhagdadiat* (at right) as derivative of Matisse or Picasso. But the same technique was characteristic of Sumerian art, as are the almond-like shapes that recur throughout Salim's work. And many of the postmodern artists featured in "Modernism and Iraq" were totally isolated from Western influence during the economic and trade embargo imposed on Iraq from 1990 to 2002. As a



Jawad Salim's *Bhagdadiat* (*Two Women*), painted in 1957, is characteristic of art of the ancient civilization of Sumeria. Collection of the Qatar Foundation, Arab Museum of Modern Art

result, they, too, mined local traditions, creating new, mixed-media versions of traditional Islamic illuminated manuscripts, or *daftiri*.

Bahrani believes that events like the panel, and the exhibition itself, can help spread the word that modern art in Iraq, and in the broader Middle East, is not just a recent Western

import. But she also believes that the works themselves are the most effective evangelists. "The exhibition itself is the strongest part of the argument, because it can be seen not just by academics and graduate students, but by the general public," she says. "And the works speak for themselves."



Columbia University medical student and award-winning author Uzodinma Iweala, discusses his novel on child soldiers with Professor Mamadou Diop, director of the University's Institute of African Studies

Fact Through Fiction

continued from page 1

experience. "That sucks," Iweala recalled the audience member saying. "We were here to listen to a real child soldier." But, Iweala wondered aloud to audience members at the Columbia event, "If you're not allowed to imagine beyond your own life situation, what's the point [of creating art]?"

Indeed, said Mark Taylor, organizer of the Literature and Terror series and chair of Columbia's Department of Religion, "Fiction writers create the possibility of imaginatively entering another world to look at our own lives differently."

Iweala, who was born and raised in Washington, D.C., spent a good portion of his childhood in Nigeria, where he has many relatives. His decision to set the book in West Africa was the product of "a desire to understand and provide context for something you know and don't know intimately."

Iweala said he created his protagonist, Agu, out of a need to comprehend what he calls the "insanity of war." The character of Agu emerged after Iweala read many autobiographies and interviews of former child soldiers, as well as psychology texts and by asking his relatives and other Nigerians about their memories of their country's civil war in the 1960s. From all these sources, Iweala said, he was able to envision how a boy coerced into battle would feel.

There are approximately 250,000 combatants under the age of 18 fighting in conflicts all over the world, according to Amnesty International, so although Iweala's book is set in West Africa, he considers it emblematic of a more universal problem. "I don't necessarily think of the book as about violence," he said, but rather a way of asking questions, like "Who uses violence?" and "Who has the right to use violence?"

Taylor, who is also co-director of the Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life, said he organized the "Literature and Terror" series as a way of defining "what is distinctive about the experience of terror," as opposed to terrorism, horror or despair. "Terror, in my judgment, haunts our lives and yet we do not understand it very well."

ELEEN BARROSO

Columbia's New Alumni Center Features Welcoming Amenities

By Record Staff

The offices that focus on Columbia's 275,000 alumni have a new location, a new name and a new welcome center for far-flung graduates who visit campus.

The Columbia Alumni Center has opened in a newly renovated and very green building on West 113th Street, a block from the Morningside campus. The building houses the newly renamed Office of Alumni and Development (formerly known as University Development and Alumni Relations) and Columbia College Alumni Affairs and Development, including *Columbia* magazine and *Columbia College Today*.

Until this building opened, there was no space on campus dedicated for alumni, said Susan Feagin, executive vice president for university development and alumni relations. But in an alumni survey six years ago, conducted with one-on-one interviews and phone interviews, "it was clear that one of the most important things alums wanted was to have a place on campus where they could go, even if it was only to sit for awhile between appointments."

The welcome center, which will open this spring, is far more than just a place to sit. It is designed to give graduates some place to stop by, get help navigating the campus or their alumni benefits, peruse a yearbook or a book on Columbia history in the library, and if necessary do some work. Alumni organizations of all Columbia schools can book one of the conference rooms for a board meeting or small event.

The 100-year-old, nine-story building had been McVickar Hall, where the School of Social Work had its offices until moving to Amsterdam Avenue. After a year-long

renovation, the building was converted to office space following many design principles and operating procedures that will enable it to be certified as a green building under the rating system for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

Inside, the office space follows an open plan with no private offices—not even for an executive vice president like Feagin. Such a layout is designed to foster teamwork and cooperation, and is in use by many businesses and even New York's City Hall, where Mayor Michael Bloomberg, shortly after taking office in 2001, plunked his desk in the middle of a room and now sits surrounded by top aides and staff members.

The alumni center will, however, have 27 meeting rooms. Each floor has a Columbia-related theme, and each conference room is named for a specific Columbia alumnus or professor. So there is an A.J. Liebling Room in the communications department, named for the New Yorker writer, a 1919 graduate of the journalism school. The John Kluge Room is in the student life area, named for the 1937 graduate of Columbia College who went on to found Metromedia Inc., and who two years ago pledged \$400 million to Columbia for student financial aid; and in the discovery area there is the Margaret Mead Room, named for the Barnard and GSAS graduate and world-renowned anthropologist.

Even the art on the wall is Columbia-related, coming as it does from the archives and the School of the Arts' LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies, the on-campus center that promotes and teaches print-making and produces editioned prints of established artists.

"We can all feel proud," Feagin says. "The Columbia Alumni Center speaks volumes about the University's commitment to its alumni."



Susan Feagin (GS'74) is executive vice president of the Office of Alumni and Development, and is pictured in the new Columbia Alumni Center.

LITIGATOR IS NEW TRUSTEE

By Record Staff

Jonathan Schiller (CC'69, LAW'73) was elected a trustee of the University.

A co-founder and managing partner of the law firm Boies, Schiller & Flexner LLP, Schiller is an attorney who specializes in complex litigation and arbitration. He has been recognized by several publications as one of the premier international arbitration attorneys, and was elected a fellow of the American Bar Association. He oversees the firm's pro bono program.

Schiller received the John Jay Award in 2006, an annual award that honors a member of the Columbia College family for distinguished professional achievement. He is also a member of the Dean's Council of Columbia Law School. He played on the 1967-68 Ivy League Basketball Team, he was inducted into the Columbia Athletic Hall of Fame in February 2006.

In addition to being a double Columbia graduate himself, Schiller's three sons also graduated from the College. He fills the board seat left vacant by the resignation last summer of Patricia Cloherty.



Columbia Alumni in Top Ranks of Obama Team

By Record Staff

Five Columbia alumni—from Columbia College, Columbia Law School and the School of Social Work—are joining the administration of President Barack Obama (CC'83) in a wide variety of positions, ranging from attorney general to White House counsel to the vice president's economic adviser.

University Trustee Eric Holder (CC'73, LAW'76) was sworn in as attorney general on Feb. 3. The first African American to hold that position, Holder, a trustee of the University since 2007, has spent many years in public service. His prior jobs include stints as a deputy attorney general under President Bill Clinton as well as acting attorney general and associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, to which he was nominated by President Ronald Reagan. Holder has also been a federal prosecutor.

As attorney general, he succeeds another Columbian, Michael Mukasey (CC'63).

Trevor W. Morrison is both a professor and a 1998 alumnus of the law school. Morrison, who teaches constitutional law, has been appointed associate White House counsel to the president.

The counsel's office advises the president on a wide range of legal issues related to policy, legislation, financial disclosures and conflicts of interest. Morrison, a leading expert on separation of powers, federalism and executive branch legal interpretation, is taking a one-year public service leave from the law school. He joined the law school in July 2008.

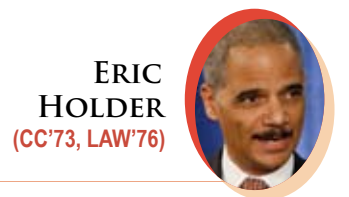
Another law school alumnus, Jeh C.

Johnson ('82), will be general counsel of the Department of Defense. This post is the chief legal officer for the largest department of government in the world. Johnson was an associate general counsel of the Department of the Air Force during the Clinton administration and, until his appointment, was a partner at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP.

Lanny A. Breuer (LAW'85) has been nominated as assistant attorney general in charge of the Criminal Unit of the Department of Justice. Until recently, Breuer was a criminal defense lawyer with Covington & Burling, where Holder was a partner. He was a special White House counsel during the Clinton administration, from 1997 to 1999, representing the president during the impeachment proceedings. He specializes in white collar criminal and complex civil litigation, as well as congressional investigations.

Economist Jared Bernstein (SSW'94) is now chief economist for Vice President Joseph Biden. Bernstein spent the past 16 years at the Economic Policy Institute, a Washington, D.C., think tank that concentrates on economic policy as it affects the interests of low- and middle-income workers. He received his Ph.D. from the School of Social Work.

Columbia almost had six of its graduates in the administration when Judd Gregg (CC'69) was nominated to the post of commerce secretary. But less than two weeks after the nomination, Gregg withdrew his name from consideration.



ERIC HOLDER
(CC'73, LAW'76)



TREVOR W. MORRISON
(LAW'98)



JEH C. JOHNSON
(LAW'82)



LANNY A. BREUER
(LAW'85)




JARED BERNSTEIN
(SSW'94)



SENIOR LAMONT RESEARCHERS APPROVED FOR PROFESSORSHIPS

By Tom Mathewson

 On Feb. 6 the University Senate approved a new title—Lamont Research Professor—for senior officers of research at Columbia's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. It also amended its bylaws, limiting standing committee chairmanships to two per person.

The research professorships proposal had been developed by Lamont director G. Michael Purdy to combat the competitive disadvantage he has faced in retaining his Doherty Research Staff, a group of more than 60 distinguished senior research officers who comprise the bulk of LDEO's cadre of independent scientists, alongside two dozen faculty members from the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences. With the rapid proliferation of academic programs focused on problems related to climate change, LDEO has lost 27 of 30 recruitment or retention battles since 2001 to institutions offering these research officers tenured faculty positions.

In addition to the word professor in their titles, research officers in the new category will have nine-month appointments (with salary paid over the full year), with a substantial fraction of their salaries paid from the Lamont endowment, and with renewable five-year appointments for senior members of the group. Research professors will follow essentially the same rigorous promotion procedure that the Doherty staff undergoes now.

The proposal stirred unease among faculty—inside the Senate and out—that research officers throughout the university would seek similar titles. Purdy stressed that the new title was just for Lamont, a point underscored in the proposed statutory definitions of assistant, associate and full research professors. Still, senior senators Paul

Duby (Ten., SEAS) and Letty Moss-Salentijn (Ten., CDM) pressed for an amendment inserting the word Lamont in front of each title. The amended resolution was adopted with no nays and one abstention.

The bylaws amendment, based on a Structure and Operations recommendation that a limit of two committee chairmanships per person would promote diversity of viewpoints among Senate leaders, had encountered little opposition. However, it faced a different challenge—the three-fifths majority needed to change the bylaws, which had eluded the Senate all fall. The legislation cleared this hurdle on Feb. 6, with 61 of 91 senators in the room (six more than three-fifths), and the measure was adopted without debate.

In now-monthly remarks on Columbia's budget, President Lee C. Bollinger addressed questions about the impact of the downturn on the Manhattanville project and the Arts and Sciences. "We are not in a crisis as an institution, and no individual part of the institution is facing a crisis," he said. "Arts and Sciences is always particularly stressed, and we have to address that. But on the whole, as an institution, I feel really that if we just significantly tighten ourselves for a period of time, we'll be fine."

The Senate approved dual degrees linking SIPA's MIA and MPA with a similar program at the Hertie School of Governance, Berlin, and observed a moment of silence for Eric Harms, a first-year engineering student who committed suicide on Jan. 31.

The Senate meets next on Feb. 27. Anyone with a CUID is welcome. Most meeting documents are at www.columbia.edu/cu/senate.

Tom Mathewson is manager of the University Senate. His column is editorially independent of The Record. For more information about the Senate, go to www.columbia.edu/cu/senate.

Fetal Harm

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Currie's work is an outgrowth of her research interest in children's welfare, where she has used economic approaches and data to study such topics as pollution, school absenteeism and the effects of school breakfast programs on child nutrition. Her 2006 book, *The Invisible Safety Net: Protecting Poor Children and Families*, looks at social welfare programs and determines that—contrary to much political rhetoric—many social welfare programs are effective.

A few years ago, Currie noticed that the emissions data collected by the EPA hadn't been fully explored since 1986. While there had been plenty of research on the effects of chemical emissions following the Bhopal disaster, none of it focused on the health of infants born near manufacturing plants, she recalled. Fetal health, she reasoned, would be an ideal way to measure the effects of toxic emissions because of the known timeframe of pregnancy, a restriction that would allow for tighter control of variables such as place of residence.

Currie relied on vital statistics data, including birth certificates, as well as the mandatory emissions reports from plants in the top 75 percent of U.S. counties by population from 1988 to 1999. She considered only the births from January to March of each year and matched that data with emissions reports from the previous year. (Babies born in the first three months of the year are more than 50 percent likely to have been exposed to the previous year's emissions while in the womb, she explains.)

Currie's previous work has helped shape policy for federal



Currie joined the faculty in 2006.

children's programs, like State Children's Health Insurance Program and Head Start. She hopes her newest research will encourage environmental change in the coming years as well.

"The ultimate goal of this work on toxic exposure is to understand

the vulnerabilities of children and how we can protect them," she says. "Children with low birth weight are less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to have attention deficit disorder. It's not true that everyone starts on a level playing field."

COLUMBIA PEOPLE

Melissa McLaney



WHO SHE IS: Career Services Coordinator, Graduate School of Journalism

JOINED COLUMBIA: August 2007

WHAT SHE DOES: McLaney is the primary contact for journalism employers looking to hire graduates. "It is more and more part of my job to be, as my boss puts it, the 'face' of career services," she said. She manages the career services website, maintaining and managing its database of jobs and internships as well as other informational pages. Despite a slump in journalism jobs, the school still receives some 40 new listings from employers each week. Lately, more of these listings are for digital media jobs, but hiring editors looking to fill other positions contact the school "because they specifically want to fill their openings with Columbia graduates," says McLaney.

CAREER EXPO IN A TOUGH MARKET: McLaney is currently helping to plan the school's annual career expo. Not surprisingly, given the outlook for the economy and newspapers in particular, employer registration has slowed. Planning for it has become easier, however, since this is the second year she has managed logistics for the expo. "In a nutshell, we're more organized and efficient than in years past, but it's going to be a challenge to meet last year's attendance numbers of 114 media companies and 175 recruiters."

BEST PART OF THE JOB: McLaney stresses that she couldn't do her job without her career services co-workers. "I'm thankful to have such a hard-working, genuine, and intelligent team of people to work with," she said. She also revels in watching students succeed. "It's incredibly rewarding when students tell

us they've been chosen for a position, especially when we've been able to offer guidance."

ROAD TO COLUMBIA: Originally from Charlotte, N.C., McLaney moved to New York two years ago with her fiancée after he received a job offer from *The New York Times*. McLaney earned her B.A. in English and master's in teaching at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She taught high school English and journalism in Hillsborough, N.C. and was also a North Carolina Teaching Fellow. Joining the journalism school was a perfect fit because she could still work in an academic setting and continue to have a hand in journalism. She still teaches, too, at the annual fall and spring high school journalism workshops organized by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association.

FAVORITE COLUMBIA MOMENT: One was when Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spoke at Columbia. "The buzz around campus was infectious, the protests were exhilarating, and we invited a few hundred working journalists into our building to watch his speech live." Another was seeing the culmination of months of long hours and hard work at last year's career expo. "The attendance numbers were unprecedented ... Seeing the expo come to life was incredibly rewarding."

IN HER SPARE TIME: McLaney, 26, spends a lot of her down time planning for a July wedding. When she's not in wedding planning mode, she enjoys reading, editing books, running, baking and traveling. She is currently training for a 10K race.

—By Melanie A. Farmer

FACULTY Q&A

SAMUEL K. ROBERTS

POSITION:

Associate Professor of History

JOINED FACULTY:

2002

HISTORY:

Visiting Instructor and Research Associate, New York University Department of Social and Cultural Analysis

Research Associate, Smith College Department of History

Fellow, Dorothy and Lewis Cullman Center for Writers and Scholars, New York Public Library

Interview by Melanie A. Farmer

It was, ironically enough, a bad high school history teacher who got Samuel Roberts hooked on history. As a teenager growing up in the 1980s in Richmond, Va., where he attended a magnet public school, Roberts and his classmates found the instructor so terrible that they researched history facts on their own and showed off their newfound knowledge in class.

At the same time, the budding historian began thinking seriously about history.

“There was a moment there for black youth where it was sort of like Black Nationalism-Black Power 1.5, not quite 2.0,” said Roberts. “Many of us had read the books that we found on our parents’ bookshelves. And then there was popular culture. We were listening to Public Enemy, KRS-1 and Poor Righteous Teachers... when hip hop music was more blatantly a revolutionary endeavor. African American history had always been a part of that.”

Of course, not many teenagers were reading what Roberts raided from his parents’ bookshelves. “I made off with books by Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, Walter Rodney, Eugene Genovese, John Hope Franklin, C. L. R. James and a bunch of others,” he said.

Now, as an associate professor of history here, Roberts is teaching the very subject that fascinated him as a teenager. After studying history and African American studies at the University of Virginia, he completed his doctorate at Princeton University. His dissertation has turned into a book, *Infectious Fear: Politics, Disease and the Health Effects of Segregation*, due out in May from University of North Carolina Press.

In it, Roberts traces the politics of tuberculosis and examines the issues relating to public health and social politics. While the disease is the book’s principal focus, it is also a means for him to scrutinize the still problematic relationship between race, class and health care in America. Tuberculosis was among the top killers of urban African Americans between the 1880s and the first half of the 20th century.

Roberts is fascinated with the connections between race and science, and his research focuses on the historical perspectives in African American health history, urban history and the history of social movements. (He is also an assistant professor at Mailman School of Public Health, currently on leave.) He has recently established the Harlem Health History Project, a teaching and research project designed for historical study of such urban health issues as obesity, environmental justice, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and community mental health. And he is working with Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning to make the findings available to a wide audience via an interactive website. Roberts’ next book project, for which he was recently awarded a \$10,000 seed grant from Columbia’s Institute of Social and Economic Research and Policy, will be on the politics of race and addiction policy, research and on treatment in New York City between 1950 and the early 1980s, focusing on African American communities in Brooklyn and Harlem.

Q. Tell us more about the book and why you decided to focus on tuberculosis.

A. Tuberculosis was a very mysterious disease. During the period covered in the book, we just barely knew what caused it and we had no cure until the 1940s. And tuberculosis was attended by a lot of social stigma against lower classes, against non-whites, Eastern Europeans, Southern Europeans, African Americans, the Chinese, the whole gamut. Of course, these were groups who had high levels of poverty and hence lived in the kind of poor housing which promotes the spread of tuberculosis. The book examines the politics of tuberculosis very much on the ground level, looking at public health politics, social politics and the politics of housing. Tuberculosis is a disease of space, really. One of the things people knew very early on was that individuals who lived in cramped quarters, in conditions of poverty, were more susceptible to the disease. However, the official public



EILEEN BARROS

health responses to this—when it came to African Americans and to an extent, Eastern Europeans and Southern Europeans and the Irish—was to put a racial slant to it, to say that many of these groups developed tuberculosis because they were racially predisposed to the disease.

Q. What was the rationale behind that?

A. African Americans were thought to be more at risk because they were considered “tropical,” unsuited for urban living, so as you might imagine, this is an argument that implicitly and sometimes explicitly was an argument for keeping blacks literally “on the farm.” You would have narratives that would say African Americans developed tuberculosis because they left the healthful effects of slavery, and later, share cropping, and decided to take their own fortunes in their hands and move to the city. Keep in mind, this was in the early 20th century, during a time when there was intense consternation among whites and many middle-class blacks about the tens of thousands of black people moving into cities.

Q. What was treatment like then?

A. Nobody received treatment the way we would have it today because there was no chemical cure before the 1940s. However, one observation I make is that the institutional treatment available to blacks was not at all comparable to those available to whites. But also institutional treatment wasn’t always that great a proposition anyway. In fact, even amongst whites this was something that was bifurcated based on class. If you were well-to-do, then you could afford a lengthy stay in a sanatorium in a very nice part of the country. If you were poor and white, chances are your access to institutional care was pretty limited.

Q. In terms of the disease’s spread, did it have more to do with class than race?

A. That’s another argument of the book. Efforts to disaggregate class and race or vice versa are really laden more with artifice than they are with any sort of constructive promise. In real life, people don’t live a class position entirely, any more than they live a race or sexual position entirely. It’s always a mixed bag. For example, with tuberculosis—a disease that everyone knew was largely about poverty—as soon as many physicians, researchers and statisticians started to look at race and tuberculosis in black populations, the whole class analysis gets dropped out and it’s about black people; as in, Why do black people suffer this disease more than whites? Many black physicians would have said, ‘Well it’s because more of us are poor. Why are more of us poor? Well, largely because we’re locked out of these jobs.’ So it’s both; it’s the intersection of race and class.

Q. Did you come across any surprises while researching the book?

A. I was surprised by how pervasive this disease was in everyday life 80 years ago and before. By my estimate, amongst African Americans, anybody alive in or before 1940 either knew somebody or was related to somebody who died of the disease or had the disease. The contribution I’m making is that it’s not just a story about a disease—one of many stories in African American history or in the history of public health and medicine—but really there is an integrated approach there that literally gives us a lens through which to think of racial science and literally the space of public health politics.

Q. Your scholarship is a blend of history, race and public health. What excites you most about studying this area?

A. Particularly today we’re just at a point where some of the old ideas are about to fall by the wayside. We are entering a period of real inventiveness, and the good side of that is that this is something we’ll see on many levels, in our politics, economy, also in just how our communities maintain themselves. The downside is, this is because of the necessity produced of an economic downturn and eight years of global and domestic belligerence which has just reached a point of instability. One thing I’m very heartened by in our politics over the past few years is that over the past eight years we’ve seen sustained political agitation from public health practitioners and advocates, not an easy proposition given the political climate.

Q. As a scholar of African American history, what does it mean to you that we have our first black president?

A. How can I not be excited about this? However, what I always try to remind people is that we also have a president who has a very open but directed way of thinking about a new brand of politics, at a period where that’s exactly what we need. But the jury is always out. He is, after all, still a politician. Politicians are there for us to criticize them and to keep pressing them in the direction in which we want them to go. I’m heartened by the contrast between President Obama and the gentleman who maintained that office prior to him. Obama seems to be open to new ideas, and indeed to the idea that there will be other new ideas. It’s up to us to continue the demands—for equity, for health security, for peace, for opportunity and economic security—which made his presidency possible in the first place. After all, Franklin Roosevelt’s historical legacy hasn’t suffered from the observation that many of his New Deal policies were responses to the emergence of political rivals, popular demands or criticism. We recognize his brilliance as having stemmed from an astute reading of the situation. I’m very interested to see how this new president reads the current situation.



CBS News anchor **Katie Couric** (far left) takes a break from hosting the annual Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards with fellow journalists **Ira Glass**, host of *This American Life*, and **Hoda Kotb**, co-anchor of *Today* and host of *Dateline NBC*. The awards, held Jan. 22 in Low Rotunda, honor the best in television and radio journalism, and this year's 13 winners came from news organizations and local stations across the country. They included CNN Correspondent **Christiane Amanpour** (far right), pictured here with former Vice President **Al Gore**, now chairman of Current TV, a cable network that won a duPont for a report about the neo-Nazi movement in Russia and its use of the Internet. Amanpour was honored for her work on the CNN documentary series *God's Warriors*. WFAA-TV Dallas was the top honoree, winning a Gold Baton; it was the first local station to receive that honor in that award's 20-year history.



COURTESY OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

Armed with pink and red construction paper, glitter and glue, Columbia varsity student-athletes addressed Valentine's Day cards to the pediatric patients of St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital. The Columbia Student-Athlete Advisory Committee came up with the idea for the Feb. 9 card-making party after learning that many of the hospital's pediatric patients were unable to participate in the traditional Valentine's Day exchange of cards and candy. More than 250 homemade and store-bought greetings were delivered to the hospital.



MIKE MCMAUGHIN

Columbia lacrosse captain **Rachel Ryan** (CC'09) cheers on her skills group at the Columbia-Barnard Athletic Consortium Silver Anniversary Sports Clinic on Feb. 7 at Dodge Fitness Center. The clinic, hosted by Columbia head coaches and student-athletes, featured 100 kids from community groups and public schools that were assigned to six different sports clinics: soccer, volleyball, field hockey, lacrosse, archery and rowing.

Pitchfest

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Jennifer Wright (BUS'09) proposed a "green" version of a pizza box. Made from 100% recycled material, the box breaks down into serving plates and the rest converts into a storage container.

Karen Wu, a postdoctoral fellow at Columbia University Medical Center, presented the idea for a voice-and-text recognition translation application, which would be compatible with mobile devices. The thought came to her while traveling in Morocco, where most people speak both Arabic and French—two languages she didn't speak.

Being unable to communicate with Moroccans left her feeling lost. "I want to create an application for mobile devices that will overcome this problem," Wu said. She also wants to create an application that can learn new words, particularly slang terms. "One of the biggest problems with translation is that there are a lot of cultural differences that are not easily translatable, and I want the device to have a learning capability," said Wu.

Ricky Joshi, a business school alumnus, and Neil Sarkar, a SEAS graduate, came to PitchFest on the hunt for investors and graphic designers for their Website for sports fans, Fandome.com. Launched in October 2008, the site is already drawing 60,000 unique visitors a month. Joshi touted the enterprise, saying there are a "number of ways users can interact with the site, a number of content areas, 40,000 videos across the site. And we have blogs and news as well."

PitchFest participants saw the event as a dress rehearsal for the Columbia Venture Competition, also sponsored by CTICE, in the spring, which is open to students and alumni alike. The competition, to be held April 24, offers more than just attention to lure participants: Winners will receive a total of \$25,000 in cash prizes along with in-kind legal, financial and strategic services. Applications are due April 3.



WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

Hint: Make a wish and wish it well, but this is not a wishing well. Take a moment to assess and make a guess: What vessel is this and where is it located? Send answers to curecord@columbia.edu. First to e-mail the right answer wins a Record mug.

ANSWER TO LAST CHALLENGE: *The Delacort Fountain in the alcove between Hamilton Hall and Hartley Hall; Winner: Sara Schilling (CC'11).*

Micheaux

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"No one had ever attempted a major retrospective of Micheaux's work that included his existing sound films as well as his silent films," said Jane Gaines, a Columbia film professor who co-organized the conference with fellow Columbia film professor Richard Peña. "The Film Society of Lincoln Center gave us the chance to do both a film retrospective and a conference." Films by Micheaux and his contemporaries were screened at the Walter Reade Auditorium at the Film Society of Lincoln Center on the evening of Feb. 6 and all day Feb. 7.

Gaines said that Micheaux represents "independent filmmaking at its tenacious best, overcoming obstacles to find a public and refusing to be discouraged by bad press and tough times."

Micheaux achieved popular success but did not shy from stirring controversy, earning the scorn of press critics and censors by depicting subjects that disconcerted black and white audiences alike. In *Symbol of the Unconquered*, for instance, a black man passing for white rides with the Ku Klux Klan against a black oil prospector, and in *Body and Soul*, a black preacher—played by Paul Robeson in his first screen role—rapes a loyal churchgoer's daughter.

"We're still trying to figure out what he meant for his age since he was both vilified by the black press and adored by black filmgoers," Gaines said.

When Micheaux came to New York, he lived close to Columbia, at 48 Claremont Ave. noted Joseph, the film program's chair, adding that he was proud that Columbia was the first to host a conference in New York City on Micheaux's work. "It is an amazing way to honor his life and celebrate Black History Month."

To learn more about black history month, go to www.columbia.edu/blackhistory.