Columbians Taking Initiative

Architecture School Renew Effort to Keep New Orleans on Policymakers’ Radar

Major symposium held in conjunction with Princeton on ways to “reground” the devastated city

By Fred A. Bernstein

A ndrei Codrescu, the Romanian-born poet and novelist transplanted to New Orleans, labeled that city’s political culture a “snake gumbo” — turned out to be every bit as vivid as the drawings shown at Princeton the following day. Two of the environmental experts in attendance — Craig Colten, a professor of geography at Louisiana State University, and James Tripp, general counsel of Environmental Defense, a New York-based group — were less poetic than Codrescu but equally graphic.

Colten provided an account of the city’s tenious relationship to the Mississippi River delta, while Tripp decied the loss, over the 20th century, of the wetlands that had buffered New Orleans. “New Orleans is 20 miles closer to the Gulf of Mexico than it was 100 years ago,” said that, Hurricane Katrina, “when the people left, they took New Orleans with them.”

Codrescu, a regular contributot to National Public Radio, was a participant in a March symposium at Columbia on the future sustainability of New Orleans. The symposium was sponsored by the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, an affiliate of the Graduate School of Architecture, Policy and Planning (GSAPP). The event was held in conjunction with a meeting the next day at Princeton University, where students and professors from architecture schools around the country presented ideas for reconsturcting the city.

Yet speaker after speaker described the futility of trying to rebuild before the Corps of Engineers decides the fate of the city’s critical levees. Others brought up the deep social problems they believe the city needs to address to save the city from additional hurricane damage.

Reed Kroloff, dean of the architecture school at Tulane University, and Wim Raymond Manning, a New Orleans architect, said they’d made progress in devising strategies for involving urban planners and other experts — as well as community residents — in recreating the city’s neighborhoods.

The panel GOING FOR CHANGE: dialogue on the future included (from left): Casey Nelson Blake, professor of history, Columbia; Andrei Codrescu, poet, novelist and radio columnist; Frederick Starr, author and professor, Johns Hopkins University; and Michael Sorkin, director, Graduate Urban Design Program, City University of New York.

David Stone (pictured right) will be joining Columbia on March 20 to become the new executive vice president for communications. Most recently, he was an adviser to Princeton University’s Policy Research Institute for the region at the Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs, and as a con- runt on strategic and community out- reach communications for the University of Pennsylvania. He previously served in state and federal government as commu- nications director for Pennsylvania Governor Robert P. Casey and for U.S. Senator Harris Wofford.

Over the past decade, Stone has been a writer, producer and consultant for a variety of media, education, government and mission-driven organizations, includ- ing PBS and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the New York City Board of Education, Pew Charitable Trusts, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Peace Corps. He was also a writer of historical documenta- ries for CBS News Productions, as well as a consulting producer for the Sundance award-winning HBO documen- tary Blue Vinyl.

His articles on media and politics have appeared in the New York Times, the Philadelphia Inquirer and major political journals.

Columbia University Information Technology (CUIT) chief Candace Fleming has announced a restructuring into four main groups entailing various personnel changes. Client Services, to be led by John Lenzi, who previously served as University Registrar, Enterprise Systems, to be managed by Lynne Gerke, who previously directed the Peoplesoft in 10 years what the Corps was thinking of doing in 50” to save the city from additional hurricane damage.

The conference’s most controversial speaker was Michael Sorkin, director of the Graduate Urban Design program at the City University of New York, who said he saw nothing wrong with subsidizing housing costs if that’s what it takes to get residents back.

“Tt’ll solve the problem either by stimulating the poor or by help- ing the poor,” he declared.

The Graduate School of Journalism has awarded its Dean’s Medal for Public Service to MADELEINE MAY KUNIN, JRN ’57, in recognition of her accomplish- ments as the first woman governor of Vermont and as a leading official in the Clinton administration, where she served as deputy secre- tary of education and as ambassa- dor to her native Switzerland.

Kunin is only the second person to receive the medal, which was created last year to honor journal- ism school graduates who have had distinguished careers, including in fields outside of journalism. Last year’s recipient was Daniel J. Edelman, JRN ’41, founder of Daniel Edelman, Inc.

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