Revvimg Up to Serve the City Even Better

Midway through their Columbia sabbatical, three Revson Fellows report on the experience

By Mary-Lea Cox

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erving the needs of the city that never sleeps can be very demanding. Consider the number of New York's young leaders are only too happy to speak of the challenges they have found during their sabbaticals at Columbia for a change. They are the Revson Fellows, who receive financial support and tuition benefits for nine months of study tailored to their particular career interests, along with academic guidance and access to University libraries and resources. Established 27 years ago with funding from the Charles H. Revson Foundation and the Open Society Institute, the program awards fellowships each year to a wide range of mid-career civic leaders.

In addition to their inde-

pendent study, the fellows attend weekly meeting dinners to present their work or exchange ideas with local and national leaders in public, corporate, nonprofit and civic life. Established 27 years ago with funding from the Charles H. Revson Foundation and the Open Society Institute, the program awards fellowships each year to a wide range of mid-career civic leaders. City as part of my coursework, I was particu-

larly the weekly meetings with community development organizations in the city’s grassroots leaders. "Being a Revson Fellow has been very enjoyable the experience of being a Revson Fellow, particularly the weekly meetings where we all come together to address the needs of the city—an inspira-

tion for taking this class was to see my proj-

ects in more of a critical light.

One of my main reasons for taking this class was to see the world outside the University entirely. One long-term benefit of being a Revson Fellow is that we can continue having access to some of our conversations follow.

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ippi-Mamdouh Fekkak (NPR, Jan.'06)

Peter Muennig, associate professor at the Cunard Foundation.

Nicholas Christopher, professor in the writing division of the School of the Arts, on the ethical questions raised by a current popula-

tion that James Fry had distor-
ted key events in his best-

selling memoir, "Little Pieces": "I don't under-

stand why there’s even a con-

vention for writing a factual book and for writing fiction, which means you're taking reality and transforming it for your own purposes. And this writer that we're discussing evidently came to a crossroads: he wasn't sure if he wanted to write fiction or nonfiction. When he chose nonfiction, when he chose a memoir, he became a co-conspirator with the reader saying, 'The facts in here are accurate, but I can remember them.' So if there's a scene where you're writing fiction, as long as you are not a member of your family and you're having dinner 10 years ago and trying to re-

In Print & On Air

AMNew York interview with Brenda McGowan, professor at the School of Social Work, on why social workers failed to stop the Nunez brothers. "Nunez Brothers that result in brutal slayings: 'Money talks. You can cut off the legs of a man and he can miss the signs of abuse for a variety of reasons. Often they need money for training or are sent alone to the toughest neighborhood to offer services. The view parents who react with hostility to the intrusion. Medicine and you've failed thousands of children daily.' A bigger failure is what we are doing for kids who are homeless, are moving from shelter to shelter to foster home; she said. "What are the longitudinal effects for them?" ("When reform isn't enough") by Michael Clancy, 13-Jan 15)

Barbara Taveras directs projects for the Coalition for New Philanthropy, a multyear initiative offering more opportunities and students to connect with local social justice organizations in NYC. The groups I work with, for example, have only recently attempted to manage the transition from the city's banking and credit system. "During the "73 Windows' staff who lost their lives in the tragedy three years ago, he cofounded the Restaurant Opportunities Center New York (ROC-NY). The group has already won six campaigns against abusive restaurant owners. Over the last 15 years, it has raised more than $300,000 in back wages and discrimination payments for workers. It recently published a comprehensive report on the inequalities that pervade New York City's restaurant industry.

During the semester, I'm planning an extraordinary course on the history of New York with historian and author Slade bicycle for several years has been my career. I was surprised to see that students from other parts of the country knew more than I did about this great city, which I love from the bottom of my heart—even though I've lived in New York for more than 18 years. 'I've been feeling a little isolated in class as an older student, but I'm surviving it.'

My other course last term was on American urban policy, that I found relatively easy, as I've been directly involved with New York City politics for the last four years. "I feel very lucky to have found work on this pro-

gram. Writing calls to invite past Revson Fellows to our events, I noticed that most of them are now in pow-

or Social and Economic Policy Research, expanding the fore-

lows' opportunities to engage in ongoing IESR projects that add to the challenges facing urban communities.

To take a close-up look at the Revson Fellowship experience, we invited the fellows to participate in this year's cohort. Highlights from our conversations follow.

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