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*The Observer*  
**Spring - Issue 2**

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*For a few dozen students Monday, March 19<sup>th</sup> began in the frigid cold at three in the morning*

## **Academic Strike Marks Fourth Anniversary of Invasion in Iraq**

**By Grace Dwyer**



photo by Edward Hall

*While the campus slept these students planted thousands of flags taped printed poems to lampposts and buildings and erected a wire, string, and duct tape fence for posting thoughts on the war.*

**It was the beginning of a daylong anti-war academic strike, planned and organized by a group of roughly thirty students, and designed to mark the end of the fourth consecutive year of the United States' military involvement in Iraq.**

The day began at ten o'clock screening with a screening in Weis of Eugene Jarecki's *Why We Fight*, a documentary exploring the roots and consequences of the US military industrial complex as defined by former president Dwight D. Eisenhower in his 1961 Farewell Address to the Nation. He cautioned the American populace –and the students gathered in Weis cinema that morning– “We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.”

At noon students Anya Raskin and Tess Hall formally introduced the day's events

from a podium set up in the Campus Center. “We have the extreme privilege of living in a country at war without seeing the effects of this every day. We need to stay angry, stay involved...this day is about engaging our thoughts,” Raskin said. For the next two hours over a hundred students and faculty gathered around the podium, many perched on window sills, standing, or eating lunch sitting on the floor, as speakers addressed topics ranging from strategies of protest to US imperialism in the Middle East. Professors Jonathon Becker, Carolyn DeWald, and Mark Lytle, as well as local legislator Joel Tyner and students Holly Young and Zach Haydt all gave brief speeches.

Especially well received was Haydt's speech, a first-hand account of disillusionment with the war. He had served in the Marines for five years and was stationed twice in Iraq and once in Afghanistan. Recounting the escalating levels of violence he personally witnessed, Haydt described the war as a “political Hail Mary play that totally failed,” citing the “criminally reckless” lack of a plan after the initial attacks. “I should have seen through the lies to the money racketeering underneath,” Haydt concluded. He stepped down to loud and prolonged audience

applause.

Emphasis throughout was placed on the universal nature of the anti-war sentiment. As Becker said, "You don't have to be a professional activist to understand how tragic this war has been for our country." Between speeches Raskin and Hall read relevant statistics and asked for greater awareness, communication, and thought from community members—about more than just the war in Iraq. "The war is not an issue of the Bush administration or the Republican Party – it's a problem with the entirety of the imperialist system," articulated Jake Feltham, a senior.

Additional events included a bike ride into Red Hook, a wide variety of well-attended student and faculty-run workshops, the screening of several films, and a talk on "The Media and the War" by FAIR's (Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting) Jeff Cohen. All events except for the Cohen talk were organized by a group of students who had met for the first time only a month earlier, brought together through the efforts of seniors Feltham and Bhav Tibrewal.

"Every semester there's been some constituency of students that have been interested in doing stuff...The last couple of semesters there's been kind of sad attendance," explained Tibrewal. "What got a lot of people involved [this time] was that it was March 19<sup>th</sup>, which is the fourth anniversary of the war." On February 18<sup>th</sup> Tibrewal and Feltham drafted an email calling for "an initiative for a unified Bard response" and sent it to a list of club heads and other likely candidates. About twenty people showed up at the first meeting a day later. Students decided to call for an academic strike based on the model of the March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003, "Books, Not Bombs" day of strike and alternative education.

Though aware that critics might label a campus-only academic strike as ineffective, Tibrewal explained the group's justification for choosing to create a day that would be an exception from the norm and an opportunity for thought and creativity, saying, "Setting aside the academics for one day is essential...I mean, everyone should have the right [to choose what they do.] But I personally think an academic

strike was effective because it allows you to put your head into this for a day. That day was really intense for me because I was strictly invested in the issues of the day and I think that's important."

Well-attended in comparison with initiatives in the past three years, attendance on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007 could not compare with participation in the academic strike of 2003. "In four years we have completely lost the momentum of the anti-war movement," said Tess Hall in an introduction to one of the day's speakers.

Many students, though impressed and saddened by displays such as the 3158 flags on the pathway from Kline representing Iraqi and American deaths, expressed a feeling of impotence. "Quite honestly, I was just caught up in doing academic stuff," voiced one first-year student. "Just because the strike happened doesn't mean I can get out of doing my work... I think [if I hadn't had work] I would have gone out of pure curiosity. I don't know if I would have expected much out of it."

The day ended with a silent vigil on Annandale Road. Students stood in the falling snow holding lit candles in paper cups until the bell tolled four times, signifying the four years of US military involvement in Iraq. But for many, it was clear that the sentiments of the day had been only the beginning. "I think it's important for students to recognize on a daily and constant basis that we have now entered our fifth year of war against Iraq," said Tibrewal. "The entire thing doesn't make any sense and that should be recognized and thought about every single day. I'd encourage every student and every person in this country to stay as educated, as informed, and aware every single day of their lives from this day forward about what the United States is doing to people in the Middle East."

**An Iraq study group consisting of March 19<sup>th</sup>'s organizers and others will continue to meet Monday nights in the Campus Center, working to further the ideas and momentum generated by the academic strike. If you're against the war, action can start now.**

In his recent book *The Enemy at Home: The Cultural Left and Its Responsibility for 9/11*, Dinesh D'Souza wrote, "The cultural left and its allies in Congress, the media, Hollywood, the non-profit sector and the universities are the primary cause of the volcano of anger toward America that is erupting from the Islamic world." Surely, he must have noticed that on that Tuesday morning, planes didn't bomb Ludlow and the MGM lot, preferring instead the route of destroying major symbols of American military and economic global hegemony. See, what's going on here is that Dinesh D'Souza is lying. He knows as well as I that Islamic aggression towards the US is the product of a long and ongoing historical process, outlined below.

## AN INCONVENIENT HISTORY

by Jesse Myerson

**14 February 1945.** On board the USS Quincy III in the Suez Canal, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt receives Ibn Saud, King of Saudi. During this meeting, the Saudis promise the Americans access to Saudi oil (the highest concentration in the world) in exchange for American protection of the House of Saud, the reigning Saudi family.

**17 July 1973.** In Afghanistan, which has been ruled by a more-or-less stable, corrupt, do-nothing parliamentary monarchy, dominated by the interests of the poppy farmers and Muslim clerics, Mohammed Daoud Khan seizes power in a bloodless coup. Daoud's presidency will best be remembered for two acts that threw the country into major turmoil: the abolition of the heroin trade and the implementation of women's rights. Obviously, these infuriate the previous reigning institutions, who subsequently put Daoud under heavy attack. Out of this fray, a Marxist group becomes the victor, backed heavily by the USSR.

Being involved in the Cold War, the involvement of the Soviet Union prompts the CIA to train a group of Islamic radicals in terrorism, in collaboration with Pakistani intelligence. This group is the Mujahideen, one of whose major members was a Saudi financier, who had severed ties with his family and was thus living abroad: Osama bin Laden. When the Mujahideen take power, the government becomes known as the Taliban.

**Summer, 1990.** The US is preparing to go to war with Iraq and needs military bases in the Middle East. President George H.W. Bush naturally goes to America's old ally, the House of

Saud. The Saudis are reluctant to yield President Bush his request, but eventually acquiesce on the strict condition that the US military leave immediately after the war ends.

*{NOTE: Saudi Arabia is home to the Kaba, housed in the city of Mecca, toward which Muslims worldwide turn to pray five times daily. Medina, too, the site of the Prophet Muhammad's hajj, or "pilgrimage" is in Saudi Arabia, making the country the spiritual focus of the Muslim world and the destination of thousands of religious pilgrimages every year. Essentially, this is holy, holy land, where the infidel must tread very lightly.}*

**1 March 1991.** The war ends, and the US does not leave. Of course, this enrages many devoted Islamic leaders, weary of American military involvement all over the Arab world. Some of these actions occur by proxy through Israel, whose military America lavishly funds and whose interests America protects in the global community. The American establishment of permanent military bases in the most sacred of all Muslim countries provokes an outraged response: a group of dissidents form a loosely connected Sunni coalition of militant factions, known as "The Base," or, in Arabic, al-Qa'ida. A major money-source for this collection is Osama bin-Laden.

The United States, for more than 60 years, has used the Middle East as a bloody testing grounds for its political theories and as a station for its global hegemonic goals: militaristic, territorial and economic.

It has slaughtered countless civilians, financed coups and assassinated political and religious leaders. It is currently embroiled in

two abysmal wars in the region and planning at least one more.

America's main financial and military ally occupies one people's land and engages on-and-off in conflicts in another's. Yet, Dinesh D'Souza claims—and makes a lot of money by claiming—that Islamic aggression towards the US has nothing to do with these facts and, instead, everything to do with America's domestic acceptance of culturally liberal ideas and people (as to why they haven't attacked Canada and Sweden and Russia and Japan and Chile and so many other countries as "morally slack" as ours is, D'Souza is silent).

This ludicrous claim could be laughable if D'Souza weren't blaming me (and probably you, dear Bardian) for the deaths of several thousand people not far from here, people who may well have been our relatives or friends. It could also be laughable, if he weren't a fellow at the Hoover Institute, a right-wing think-tank whose other fellows include such Bush Administration friends as Condoleezza Rice. It could be laughable if the man blaming

us for the attacks of September 11 weren't very much on the in with an administration that likes to posit a view very similar to Mr. D'Souza's own, specifically that the debate about leaving Iraq emboldens our enemies and strengthens Islamic fundamentalist arguments for attacking America.

It's just a lie, like everything else the administration says. Cheney and Rice and Pearle and Wolfowitz and Feith and Rumsfeld and the rest of those nihilistic murderers know all the history I do. They understand that "the terrorists" are mainly just a more-or-less righteous backlash against most of a century of American aggression and occupation of holy land. But they don't care—it is more important that America establish a hegemony than that there be truth and peace. And they philosophically believe that the current war in Iraq is a step in that direction. And they're counting on you not to notice.

Notice.

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## JUDGING THE WAR IN IRAQ

By Jack A. Smith

**I**s the U.S. war in Iraq aggressive or defensive, legal or illegal, just or unjust? This is the usual criterion for making sound judgments about the rights and wrongs of an armed conflict between two states, but such matters are hardly discussed in the American mass media, or heard in the halls of Congress.

Mainly, the politicians and the media speak of Washington's "mistakes" in Iraq, or "faulty intelligence," "lies," "bad judgment," "ignorance," "incompetence," "sending too few troops," "failure to plan for the post-conflict period," "lacking an exit strategy," and so on. It is almost as though the problems confronting the U.S. in Iraq today were caused by defects of character, intellect or technical finesse, and not ideology and a penchant for exercising global hegemony.

Probing whether a war is aggressive or defensive, legal or illegal, and just or unjust

sheds an entirely different light on whether a particular war should be supported or opposed.

Let's start with the concept "war of aggression." An act of aggression in international law and in the Theory of Just War is the initiation of armed force in violation of another country's basic rights of political sovereignty and territorial integrity when the target country in no way threatened the aggressor. In the process, such an act of military aggression also violates the basic rights of the people and the communities within the victim country.

A war of aggression is a serious "crime against peace," according to the Nuremberg Charter. In fact, the post-World War II International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, Germany, ruled in 1946 that "To initiate a war of aggression... is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains

continued on next page

within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

Actually, the leaders of a state that engages in a war of aggression are liable for criminal prosecution in the International Criminal Court. Given Washington's overwhelming military power and dominating influence over vast areas of the world, no other country will dare bring charges, which would be ignored in any event.

An armed invasion of a much smaller country with a weak military defense force that in no way threatened the attacking country is clearly a war of aggression. The Bush Administration initially claimed that it began the war to eliminate Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction which were a direct threat to the U.S. and to retaliate for Iraq's collusion with Al Qaeda in the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, which was false on both accounts. The invasion actually took place for two main purposes, neither of which could possibly justify or mitigate its aggressive nature:

First, Iraq in March 2003 was a country that not only refused to take orders from Washington but also happened to possess the world's second largest reserves of petroleum. Does anyone think Washington would end up spending over a trillion dollars to invade a country that only had more sand under its sand, not petroleum? Second, the expected quick and easy victory in Iraq was supposed to pave the way for extending U.S. hegemony throughout the oil-rich Middle East, including regime-change in Syria and Iran, the two remaining countries in the region independent of Washington. In all its particulars, from intentions to deeds, the U.S. engaged in a war of aggression, not defense.

Is the war legal or illegal? Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Sept. 15, 2004. "It was not in conformity with the UN Charter," he declared. "From our [United Nations] point of view and from the Charter point of view it was illegal." Under the Charter and in international law generally, preventive war ("anticipatory self-defense") is illegal and constitutes aggression. President George W. Bush tried to circumnavigate this obstacle by declaring a "pre-emptive," not "preventive," war. A pre-emptive war is legal if the attacking state can prove it invaded to prevent an "imminent

threat" from the victim country. This, of course, was never proven – so preventive or pre-emptive, the United States is engaging in war that is condemned by the UN and international law. In legal terms, it is engaging in a criminal war.

According to the terms of the UN Charter, to which the U.S. as a signatory is constitutionally bound to adhere, it was absolutely necessary for the Bush Administration to obtain approval from the Security Council before launching its "shock and awe" bombardment of Baghdad on March 19, 2003. Without such approval, the attack and subsequent occupation would be illegal. Washington sought such approval, but withdrew its application on March 17 because it was clear that a majority of the Security Council was about to vote against a war.

The U.S. subsequently argued that two earlier UN resolutions had in fact given President Bush the authority to wage a pre-emptive war against Iraq, but this was simply nonsense put forward to deceive public opinion. The UN certainly didn't see it that way.

In this regard, it must be understood that the United States is a serial violator of the UN Charter particularly in terms of waging wars. In the last several decades, America's wars against Vietnam, Cambodia, Panama, Grenada, the Dominican Republic and Yugoslavia all were without UN sanction.

Is the war "unjust," i.e., contradictory to accepted notions of justice? Over the last 1,500 years, secular and religious ethicists have developed what is called the Theory of Just War. The Roman Catholic Church is a major organizational upholder of the just war concept, but the theory enjoys universal application and generally influences international law and the UN Charter. This is not a pacifist theory because it finds some wars just and some unjust. For instance, U.S. participation in World War II against German and Japanese imperialism is considered just, but its role in Iraq is termed unjust. Justness, not nonviolence, is the international criterion.

There are nuanced differences in the interpretation of the Theory of Just War, but there is general agreement on its six principal stipulations – all of which be must honored



for the resort to war to be considered just. Four of the points are relevant to Iraq, the most important being "Just Cause." This means war is permissible to confront "a real and certain danger" – either an attack or imminent attack from another country– and includes self-defense or the defense of others from external aggression. Iraq, of course, presented no danger to the U.S. The Iraqi army at the time of the invasion was a shell of its former self, incapable of offering more than a token defense of the country. The Pentagon has never attacked a country that it believed can fight back since it was defeated in Vietnam by an army composed of poor workers and peasants largely subsisting on handfuls of rice and with no air force to provide cover.

Another of the points is "Last Resort." This means a country may resort to war only after exhausting every other possible alternative. This is reflected in the UN Charter, which calls for serious efforts to resolve differences nonviolently through diplomacy or the courts, before the resort to military means. War was obviously President Bush's first resort.

A third stipulation is "Right Intention" – i.e., fighting only on behalf of an expressed "Just Cause" without a trace of ulterior motivation such as the acquisition of power, land, resources, riches, etc. The privatization of Iraq's nationalized oil reserves and the influence given to U.S. oil companies is but one of an abundant supply of ulterior motivations. Another point is "Proportionality," meaning that the quantity of violence, damage and costs is proportionate to the expressed reason for resorting to war. Given the devastation visited upon Iraq in order to eliminate its nonexistent weapons of mass destruction, the mere mention of proportionality is a painful absurdity.

In this connection that the Theory of Just War permits the people of any country that is unjustly attacked to exercise their inherent right of self-defense.

One of the arguments in President Bush's defense is that he was under the impression – now said to be created by "false intelligence" – that former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass

destruction and might possibly use them against the United States. This argument fails for four reasons.

First, a country cannot be excused for committing a massive act of aggression on the basis of an incorrect "impression." If war is to be justified at all it must be based on concrete facts. Second, there were many voices that were ignored or belittled, such as that of former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter who insisted well before the war that Iraq had disposed of its WMD years earlier. Also, demands for proof of the charges against Iraq were never provided – a tip off at the time that the allegations were insubstantial. Third, it is now known that the Bush Administration manufactured its "evidence" about WMD and Baghdad's alleged connection to Al-Qaeda and 9/11. Fourth, and most importantly, if President Bush seriously believed Iraq harbored WMD, why did he declare a war and prematurely terminate the mission of the UN weapons inspectors who only needed a couple of more months at most to determine the real truth behind the U.S. accusation? Bush did not declare war as a last resort, he did so to preempt any possibility the UN would determine there were no weapons of mass destruction, removing his main pretext for launching a war for hegemony over the resources and governments of the Middle East.

To sum up: For the United States to wage a pre-emptive war of aggression against Iraq without UN approval and in contravention of both the UN Charter and the Nuremberg Charter – and to do so without "Just Cause," "Right Intention," "Last Resort" and "Proportionality" – means Washington is engaged in an illegal, unjust, aggressive war that amounts to nothing less than "the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole."

*--The author is the editor of the Hudson Valley Activist Newsletter (where this article appeared April 13) and former editor of the (U.S.) Guardian newsweekly. He may be reached at jacdon@earthlink.net.*

# Is Aramark's Time Running Out?

By Samuel  
Lang Budin  
& Marika  
Plater

In the coming weeks, the Bard administration will decide whether or not to renew its contract with the Aramark Corporation, a decision that is likely to have a large impact on the lives of Bard's housekeeping staff. "Nobody knows what's going to happen", said Joan Wyant, a housekeeper at Bard for more than 20 years. "One way or another, everybody wants to do a job here."

Having been a member of the Bard community for so long, this is not the first moment of uncertainty and change that Joan has experienced. Joan was here when the

management, hospitality services, and uniforms and career apparel to health care institutions, universities and school districts, stadiums and arenas, prisons, businesses, and a wide variety of additional clients around the world. The corporation's revenue in 2005 was \$11.33 billion, with a net income of \$314.69 million. Aramark's corporate record is not a spotless one: the company has been accused by the Federal Trade Commission of price fixing, and has been suspected of ties with organized crime. Aramark has been criticized for its dealings with many private prisons across the country. It has been said that the corporation uses its monopoly within these prisons to overcharge people who are incarcerated for basic goods. Aramark has also been cited for major health and safety violations in prisons. The company has been known to discriminate against employees of color, mentally and physically challenged employees, and queer employees (Aramark was once ranked as the worst company in the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index.)

The list of problematic aspects of this corporation could go on, but Aramark's problems here at Bard may be enough to warrant the termination of its contract. Aramark pays the housekeepers \$11 per hour, a stark contrast with the \$17 per hour wage that Marist housekeepers,

housekeeping staff was employed directly by the college as a part of the same department as B&G. At that time housekeepers received benefits and wage increases equal to those of other Bard employees. In 1991, however, the college contracted housekeeping out to ServiceMaster. Nine housekeepers left Bard at that point, but the rest stayed, employed by ServiceMaster instead of by Bard. Large changes again took place for the housekeepers when Aramark bought ServiceMaster in 1991.

The Aramark Corporation is a private company that provides food services, facilities

who are employed directly by the school, can be earning within three years. The benefits offered by Aramark are also far below those offered to Bard employees. Housekeepers currently pay \$80 per week for health insurance (1/5 of their take-home pay), which is more than twice what B&G employees pay for family coverage. The fact that housekeeping is managed by a corporation remote from Bard also means that housekeepers must deal with burdensome bureaucratic tangles in order to get their needs as employees addressed. Joan Wyant says that sometimes she'll call Aramark's corporate offices on two consecutive days and not get to talk to the same person because that person will have been fired already. Other housekeepers have been told by the corporate offices, "We don't have you on the books", which means that Aramark has no record that they are working here. Aramark's contract with Bard is miniscule in comparison with others it takes on, and its attention to its Bard employees seems to reflect that fact. Wyant now is trying to find out what happened to back pay owed some employees since last last November, and Aramark's distance (both physically and figuratively) is inefficient and frustrating.

Joan thinks that most everyone on housekeeping staff wants to be employed directly by Bard again, though there are

individual concerns. Many feel that if the housekeepers are managed by Bard, they'll be able to get resolution for problems more quickly because they'll be able to deal with their employers directly. Other reasons for wanting to be employed by Bard rather than Aramark were voiced by housekeepers in a recent meeting with their Union representative, Mike Lonigro. Besides the access to better, more affordable healthcare that housekeepers would receive as Bard staff, being employed directly by Bard would give housekeepers access to tuition remission for their children. The housekeepers also expressed the desire to work directly for Bard to increase their sense of belonging in this community. Many housekeepers have great

relationships with students, really feel like a part of this community, and would like to be part of it officially. Some housekeepers who have been here since before 1991 remember that they felt more committed to the community and more valued when they were working for Bard than for an outside company.

Joan Wyant remembers that there has been student support for the housekeepers against outsourcing management since the beginning of the ServiceMaster era. This tradition continues today. The Student Labor Dialogue supports the housekeepers' desire to be brought back in-house. Meetings are every Tuesday at 5 PM in the Root Cellar. (Come!)

## **Proposal from the Trans Action Initiative**

**Submitted to Student Government**

The Trans Action Initiative, in recognition of the existence of transgender identities and the ways in which these identities intersect with the Bard community, believes that Bard must continue to take an active role in addressing the concerns which result. Because of this, we ask that the Student Association of Bard College move to support the following—

-The inclusion of gender identity in both Bard College's statement of Commitment to Diversity (Bard College Handbook, 6) as well as the college discrimination policy (Bard College Handbook, 156).

-The continued education of the Bard Community, both through the efforts of the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Trans Action Initiative, as well as through the continued academic pursuit of the Gender and Sexuality Studies program. We feel that it is important that Bard engage in the various discourses involving the transgender community and seek to broaden the perspectives of all students, faculty, staff and administration.

-The revision of Residence Life policies regarding the barring of First-Year students from living with someone of a different sex or gender as well as the requirement that members of the Upper College ask their guardians for permission for the same. We also feel that it is imperative that the college provide housing in which transgender

students can feel comfortable and safe. On the basis of providing safe housing, we see creating gender-free dormitories as a viable solution. We encourage Residence Life to work closely with the student body in this endeavor.

-The establishment of gender-neutral bathrooms and single occupant, handicap accessible bathrooms throughout campus. We recognize the various reasons that gendered bathrooms are both appropriate and necessary for some members of the community and we support the college in making thoughtful decisions regarding the placement of both gendered and Gender Neutral bathrooms.

-The creation of a gender-neutral space in the Stevenson Gymnasium for the purpose of changing and showering. The current structure of locker rooms and bathroom facilities are potentially dangerous and threatening to transgender individuals. We support the administrators of Stevenson Gymnasium in developing both short- and long-term solutions to this concern and encourage them to work closely with the student body in doing so.

Therefore, we ask that the student government give consideration to our concerns, and join us in promoting the creation of a safe and comfortable environment for transgender members of the community.

# A Note or Two on the SMOG

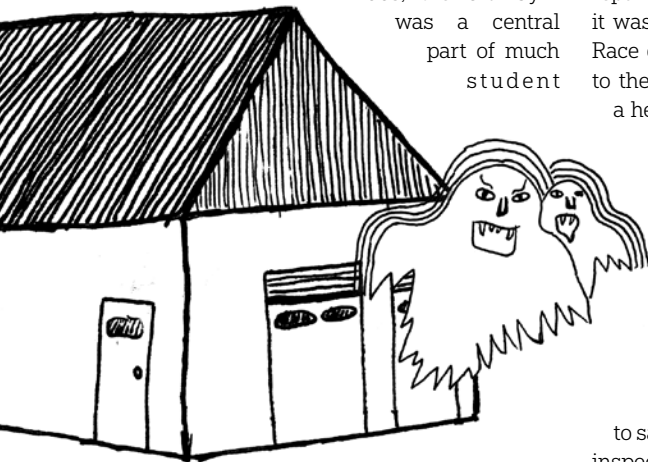
By Josh Klein-Kuhn

*"A lot of people have slammed John Gall and the administration, saying, why aren't they getting it done...but I mean it was a huge project, and I think they've done a great job,"*

articulated first-year Alex Carlin, one of five committee members responsible for the management and upkeep of new SMOG.

The drama of the SMOG is a story that begins long ago, in a moment in the spring of 2003, when a mattress was lit on fire in the middle of the Old Gym. It would surprise me, Alex, if this was something you even knew had happened. It would surprise me even more if you could link that seemingly isolated event from back in the day to your position on the SMOG committee, and to my frustration with the quote above. It's a tale that only a dwindling number of people know, and most of them are about to graduate. This is my desperate bid to pass this story on and not let this history die with our graduation.

When I came to Bard in 2003, the Old Gym was a central part of much student



life here. The upstairs played host to all of the big parties (no party was ever held in the MPR or Kline), and they were parties. Big, dense, sweaty, pulsing parties that were what was happening that weekend. The "everyone you knew was there" sort of parties. The downstairs housed practice rooms, the Red Room (the SMOG's predecessor for rock shows), the Root Cellar, and the Student Action Center, where all of the environmental and social justice groups did their organizing. It was exclusively social space. We didn't have to party in the same space we had supper in earlier in the evening, knowing that we'd be there for breakfast the next day too. It was a heavily used building, and it was ours. Despite having security right there in the front, it really felt like a student space. It felt free and autonomous, the sort of space where those who used it set the rules and made it all work.

One day in the spring of 2003 (just before I arrived), someone walked into the gym to find a mattress on fire in the middle of the floor. No one has ever been held accountable for that. There was a temporary closure of the building, repair work done on the floor, but by that fall it was open again. That fall saw the last Drag Race ever, a party that drew over 2,500 people to the Old Gym (Ask a senior about it). It was a hell of a party in every sense, including the unfortunate fact that by the end of the night nineteen or so people had gone to the emergency room. It was a hell of a party that had been going on for years, but that last one was too much and the administration permanently ended the tradition.

Towards the end of spring 2004, the administration announced that the Old Gym would be closed due to safety concerns of the government building inspector. According to the administration, the government inspector had deemed the building structurally unsafe and at the end of the school

year it would be permanently closed in response to that injunction. The clubs and groups that used the basement scrambled to replace their spaces, including students putting in a lot of time and effort over that summer to help build the new Root Cellar space in the back of Stone Row as the substitute space. The SMOG, which previously had been used by the Surrealist Circus, the Bardge Project and others as a workshop (which it originally was: the Student Mechanic Operated Garage), began to be used occasionally for shows.

What was noted then and I'll note again now is that, despite an alleged governmental order condemning the building, neither Aramark nor Bard Security ever has relocated. That suspicious fact, combined with an inability to produce official paperwork upon the demand of students and the fact that much of the building is back in use with no renovations having ever been done, has led some students to speculate that the College made up this story in order to close off the building for student use.

When they shut us out of the Old Gym, the administration did not have any real plans in place for where we were supposed to go instead. The possibilities that we were offered (Kline, the MPR, the SMOG, etc.) were not nearly able to replicate the kind of space and role in the community that the Old Gym was. So there was unrest about it. Students were vocal in their resentment of the closing and the subsequent dearth of space and of social life accordingly. Critical articles were written, meetings were held, and displeasure was voiced.

At some point, it became clear that the administration was never going to provide an adequate replacement and that we would have to adjust and make do with the trifling options we were offered. With the blessing of the student body, a group of students met with members of the administration and architects to discuss an addition to the SMOG. What they planned out was a building, (not a shed) roughly the size of the MPR, that would have several smaller practice rooms, bathrooms, and a large main space. It was planned to go roughly where the SMOG addition has now been erected. Former Bard student Matt Wing and others knew that they only could fight to get it in the list of projects to be funded by the Capital Campaign,

that it was too expensive, and would never be built.

The following year, the Student Government discovered a reserve of money, leftovers from the annual Convocation Fund that had been collected and saved up over several years, available, and last spring the student body decided that building a social space ourselves because they wouldn't do it for us was the best possible use of our collective money. SO THE STUDENT BODY OFFERED TO PUT UP \$50,000 TOWARDS FUNDING THIS NEW BUILDING."

The administration gladly accepted that money, and using a blueprint drawn up by Brandon Rosenbluth, then head of SMOG, and John Gall of B&G, the project was given the go-ahead. The addition was to be built last summer and be ready for this school year. Due to various bureaucratic bumbling, including a period where the building permit was available in Red Hook and none of the people responsible drove in to town to pick it up, the construction kept being pushed back further and further until the school year started up again. Finally, ten months after promised (and several years after something should have been done) there is a pavilion (shed) attached to the SMOG. Congratulations, you have a building.

I'd like to clarify a few things:

One: This is not a "huge project." If you think that the SMOG addition is a "huge project," then you need a lesson in perspective. The new science building is a huge project. New Robbins was a huge project. The Performing Arts Center was a huge project. This is fundamentally a shed. Half of the guys at B&G have workshops or garages on their properties that are at least as nice as the SMOG, cost less to build, and went up substantially faster.

Two: They did not do a "great job." The giant block of text above that recounts the history of this drama shows a long history of administrative deception, manipulation, and unwillingness to deal with the students in a sincere and respectful way. I'd say that that's not doing a "great job." But more than that, what about the building process itself? Let me tell you about how you/I/all of us who are a part of the student body that funded it got ripped (the fuck) off in this building process. (I'll give you a hint: There was an awful lot of money wasted.)

Since the construction was not done on schedule in the summer, there were additional costs associated with the construction. Since concrete doesn't set very well in sub-freezing weather, they had to rent a tent to enclose the area and run big propane heaters to keep the temperature adequate.

In what Ross Saxon accurately described as an effort to "force false character on the building," John Gall commissioned musical notes to be mounted on the window bars. These bars, which previously had been mounted vertically and did a good job preventing the windows being smashed, were removed to be modified in hopes of somehow improving the vibe of the place. By the time they came back modified, they were now close to \$300 in B&G labor more expensive than when they left. That's not even including the cost of the sheet steel and paint the notes are made of. (And, since they're now oriented horizontally to imitate a musical staff, they make opening the window a pain in the ass! Four inches at a time!)

As a result of redoing the furnace and ductwork to provide better heat and allow for the potential to heat the new space, they had to relocate the chimney. The chimney pipe that was installed is a very nice, very weather-resistant, very expensive pipe that is designed to stand on it's own in the elements. Despite the total adequacy of the chimney pipe by itself (in terms of both performance and aesthetics), John Gall decided to have the contractors build a fake chimney around the pipe and give it a façade of fake brick. To give it a more homey feeling, I guess. I don't know.

The list could go on.

The moral of the story is: MUSIC NOTES ON THE WINDOWS AND FAKE BRICK ON THE CHIMNEY IS OUR MONEY GOING TOWARDS BULLSHIT. Even if these costs are not being paid for with the \$50K from us, the money comes from our tuition, so either way, we are paying for it. Not a "great job," I'd say.

The other thing that concerns me about the quote reprinted at the top of this article, and the fact that the Observer printed it, is that is dangerously undermines the ability of

students to make demands of the administration. The next time a group of students (or the whole group) wants or needs something, they will pull out this article and, conveniently forgetting the other quotes like "It's kind of a waste," and "They destroyed the spontaneous outburst of people's creativity and enjoyment of the space," point to your quote and say, "See? The students love us! We must be doing a great job because Alex Carlin says we are. You can't have anything nice for the rest of the year because we already did this year's nice thing, and the students say we did a 'great job.'" The fight for a space of our own has been going on for several years now, and a lot of good people have devoted themselves to it. Saying shit like this is an insult to those people and their dedication to the health of our community. You are a freshman and I know that you don't know a lot of this story. That's why I wrote this. But in general, you should make sure to properly contextualize things before going ahead and praising them.

Providing space that is exclusively designated for facilitating a healthy social life at Bard is as obligatory as providing heat in the dorms and chairs in the classrooms. As they are always quick to point out, we come to Bard for the education, but that does not mean that the administration can ignore or neglect the rest of our life here. We live here, we play here, we have a social life here, and giving the proper attention and resources to that is absolutely a basic responsibility of the College.

IT IS APPALLING THAT THE STUDENTS OF BARD COLLEGE HAD TO PROVIDE THE FUNDS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL SPACE HERE. It is appalling that the SMOG committee is going to be forced to spend even more money to purchase "removable canvas walls" to enclose the space. Creating social space should not be our responsibility, but since we've gone ahead and taken it (or been suckered into it because there's not enough outraged protest over this shit and too much passive acceptance), there's no reason to thank the administration or praise them for a job well done.

# Democrats' Winter Meeting Present Field for 2008

## Seven Bard Students Attend

By Andrew Simon

WASHINGTON - Basking in the glory of their November victories, the Democrats presented a diverse field of ten candidates with a unified message at the 2007 Democratic National Convention in Washington Hilton from February 1-4, is traditionally a testing ground where they can make their case to an audience of DNC members, guests, press, and students.

In conjunction with the DNC event, the College Democrats of America (CDA) held a leadership and training summit. Seven Bard students attended, giving them the opportunity to hear the ten candidates speak.

The Democratic hopefuls in attendance were Senator Joe Biden, retired General Wesley Clark, Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Chris Dodd, former Senator John Edwards, former Senator Mike Gravel, Congressman Dennis Kucinich, Senator Barack Obama, Governor Bill Richardson and former Governor Tom Vilsack. Each was allotted seven minutes to explain why he or she should get the Democrats' approval to run in the Nov. 2008 general election.

Most centered their speeches around Iraq and foreign policy, and all candidates made it clear that they view President Bush's approach is harmful, expressing their commitments to restore America's role as peacemaker rather than aggressor.

Students were inspired by the talks and some favorites emerged. The Bard Democrats organization, however, does not currently plan on endorsing a candidate. "All of the speeches, especially Barack Obama's, gave me a great sense of hope that we, the American people, can step up and solve the problems that are facing the world and our country today," said Luke Bolton, sophomore and Bard Democrats President. During the last election cycle, Bolton led the group to unprecedented successes registering voters, volunteering for local Democratic candidates and getting students to the polls on election day.

Bard Democrats will support the eventual nominee selected by primaries and

caucuses in early 2008 but until then, some members desire the candidates to take up more progressive positions. "I would like to have seen stronger anti-war stances, but I liked how many nods there were to the problems of health care, education and the environment," said sophomore Anna Pycior.

Pycior and the six other Bard Democrats members received coaching from the DNC and CDA on how to prepare their organization for the presidential election with a strategic plan. "It was great because 250 different kids from different types of colleges got information and training that they can take back to their campuses across the country," said Ethan Porter, senior and CDA Communications Director who spent months preparing for the event. "Events like this show that the Democratic Party, from Howard Dean on down, is committed to young people," he added.

Porter stressed the impact that college students can have on elections. During the fall of 2006, the CDA organized "invasions," caravans of college students to volunteer in swing races across the country. Bard students traveled to Pennsylvania to campaign for Bob Casey who defeated incumbent Senator Rick Santorum.

Bolton thinks the guidance he and other Bard Democrats received a few weeks ago will be valuable for the group as it grows and attempts to establish a presence in the 2008 elections. "The training meetings will help our club get organized as well as connect with all levels of the CDA from Bard up to the national level," said Bolton. We have already begun the implementation of what we learned in the meetings."

No matter what Democrat is selected to continue on to November, first-year and Bard Democrat Mae Colburn is convinced it will be someone with courage and conviction. "I think the candidates know as much as we do that things have to change," said Colburn. "We have every reason to be excited for the next election."





is this more true than at college. We are in an incubator. All of us. And we are at a college that encourages us to explore and define ourselves in ways that defy conventional categorizations. (In practice, this encouragement often falls short of any actual implementation of supportive policies, but that is a separate issue.) The QSA strives to be a group that encourages people of all persuasions to become active members, and it is my hope that by doing so, we can organize events that target various sects of the GLBTQQI community. Without the input of those who feel alienated from QSA, however, we are unable to organize these events.

Indeed, the QSA has a sizable budget. We are awarded this money because we have demonstrated, and continue to demonstrate, a commitment to campus activities that draw big, diverse crowds. Last semester, we spent every penny the Planning Committee gave us and applied to the Emergency Fund for more. Since we are a group with a big budget, we are frequently contacted by performers and speakers who know that the QSA is their best bet for a gig at Bard. The two best examples of this are Devon White, whose presentation "How to Become an Unforgettable Lover" drew a substantial audience, and The Sex Workers' Art Show, which consistently packs the MPR. If other groups on campus could afford to bring in these events, surely they would. However, we are in a position to make these events happen, and we do. These events are not meant to make a statement about the QSA's stance on sexual lifestyles or preferences, the opinions of which vary from person to person within the group. They are meant to be enjoyable, informative, and challenging. Over the years, we have gained a reputation as a group that is great to work with, and as a result we co-host a wide variety of events during the semester with groups like BSO, Feminist Alliance, Amnesty International, Trans Action Initiative, and others.

As far as I can tell, people on this campus don't pay attention to who sponsors events (with the possible exception of parties). No one knows that the first event the QSA hosted last semester was a benefit concert, featuring the triumphant returns of Kate Myers and Christine Dominguez, that raised over \$300 for Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. What they do know

is that when they want to strip down to their skivvies and paint themselves red, they'll fit right in at a QSA/Moderator party. For the record, the QSA and the Moderator are entirely separate entities, and while we support the work they do, the relationship between us is based on the fact that the Moderator does not have enough money to throw parties and publicize the release of each issue. When they needed a hand, the QSA stepped in to help, as has happened countless times before with other groups. The difference is, these particular parties blur the lines between the two groups; with each Moderator party we co-host, it seems people have a harder and harder time distinguishing between the groups.

Outside of the parties which seem to dominate conversation about QSA, we hosted (and co-hosted) a great semester of events last fall, including the aforementioned benefit concert and Devon White, two presentations by transgendered activist Debbie Davis, the band Gay Beast, Smogfest, a screening of "Beyond Beats and Rhymes," a teach-in on the history of same-sex unions, and a World AIDS Day event (most of which was unfortunately thwarted by a power outage). This semester is shaping up well, too. We've hosted the Sex Workers' Art Show, and a screening of "Shortbus," followed by a performance by Jay Brannan, one of its stars. In addition, we are building alliances with groups from Vassar and Marist, with whom we plan to organize larger events in the future. We are also co-hosting events featuring Inga Muscio and Staceyann Chin, and as always, The Day of Silence. A number of these events were suggested by QSA members, who simply came to a meeting and said, "You know what we should do?..."

So maybe that's the point of all of this. I (as the sole head of QSA this semester) am doing the best I can. And without the input of people who want or need something from QSA, I'm on my own. So if you want something to change, come see us Tuesdays at 8:30 in the Fishbowl. One of my goals for the QSA has always been to host interesting and fun events that make people think and get them talking, and I'd say that we as a group have done a pretty good job, but if you disagree, by all means, let me know- otherwise, nothing will change.

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# SETTING SOME THINGS STRAIGHT ABOUT TLS

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There seem to be many opinions about the TLS program around campus these days. Critiques revolve around leadership, community, privilege and opportunities for involvement. Let me address these as clearly as I can:

Critique: Leadership development is not community development. There is too much emphasis in TLS on supporting individuals and not enough effort put into community development.

Response: On rare occasions collectives operate well without a primary leader, but I think if you look closely, even in those instances where leadership is seemingly dispersed, some one has their foot on the gas. TLS projects are all community development projects. Taking responsibility for generating and sustaining right action is part of community building. We try to make it clear that responsibility is not

synonymous with power, and do our best to discourage pompous, self-righteous posturing as a substitute for the building of respectful partnerships. Ultimately the intention of TLS is the development of effective, responsive, informed human beings who gracefully align with other people.

I think if you look at a list of TLS projects, it's clear that community building is the intent of the work. In keeping with the purpose of this college, all personal development happens in a social context. Personal striving is understood to be in the service of inclusive webs and networks. Sharing decisions thoughtfully and fully, including everyone's voice, respecting all the stakeholders, these are the directions we're trying to take. If something else is happening, then we have work to do. We welcome your insights about what changes have to happen.

If there is something in the structure of the program that bothers you, come speak to us in the office about it. If you are troubled by something in a TLS project, please speak with the student organizer directly. Every member of the TLS program knows it is their job to articulate their work and its purposes. We welcome these conversations, especially if they are challenging and timely.

Critique: TLS is insensitive to and even exacerbates issues of privilege.

Response: It has always been the intention for students in the TLS program to examine and evaluate their own beliefs and practices concerning class, race, sexual orientation, etc. In order to operate with integrity, we must consider the myriad forms of oppression that boil around and through us. Certainly there is the danger of TLS students using their privilege and power in ways that have negative effects on others. This has certainly happened, in ways we can identify and in other ways that are less visible.

Racism/sexism/ethnocentricity and abuses of wealth have plagued human beings as long as there has been social order of any kind. Virulent contemporary forms of oppression are going to tear the human world apart if they are not addressed. I do not, however, believe that condemning each other - especially through rumor and innuendo - is the solution.

Last January I heard the philosopher Cornell West speak in New Orleans (80 Bard students were there). I was extraordinarily moved by his message and his generous presence. He exhorted us all to speak truthfully with courage and at the same time reflect self-worth back to others, even those whose ideas we oppose. That is the crux of my hope; we will speak to each other with candor, and we will also do so with civility and grace. In *Race Matters* (Vintage Books, 1994) West elegantly articulates his position: In these downbeat times, we need as much hope and courage as we do vision and analysis; we must accent the best of each other even as we point out the vicious effects of our

racial divide and the pernicious consequences of our maldistribution of wealth and power. We simply cannot enter the twenty-first century at each other's throats, even as we acknowledge the weighty forces of racism, patriarchy, economic inequality, homophobia, and ecological abuse on our necks. We are at a crucial crossroad in the history of this nation—and we either hang together by combating these forces that divide and degrade us or we hang separately. Do we have the intelligence, humor, imagination, courage, tolerance, love, respect, and will to meet the challenge?

Do we in the TLS program have the intelligence, humor, imagination, courage, tolerance, love, respect and will to act strongly in the world with awareness and sensitivity? Sometimes we do, but we could be doing a better job of examining ourselves, our projects, our beliefs, and especially our actions. And, it's essential that we do so. It is also important that we don't become paralyzed with guilt or self doubt. I do not think reckoning and change occur in a haze of individual or collective self-hating. I invoke Cornell West's vehemence and compassion as we seek honesty with ourselves and each other.

Recently a group of TLS students came to me and said in essence, "There isn't enough attention being paid to the problems of privilege. The danger of committing oppressive acts based on unexamined beliefs and practices regarding race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity differences is too great." It was spoken honestly and respectfully. In response, TLS students are meeting in small work groups with the express purpose of considering their own understandings and conduct as they move out into the world. These are not "oppression therapy" groups. These are real discussions informed by readings and powerful experiences. We are talking about honest self-evaluation, a process that takes courage and time. We are giving it the time. Students have to find the courage within themselves.

continued on next page

We are also in the process of compiling a reserve section in the library that speaks theoretically and practically to these issues. If you have a particular book, article, film, journal, novel, or poem that you think should be included in this section, will you please contact me with the title.

Critique: TLS is an exclusive club.

Response: Every student on campus is eligible to apply to TLS - from the moment of arrival to the day of graduation. TLS students are foreign students, HEOP students, athletes, Music majors, Human Rights majors, rich and poor. The common membership trait is a compelling interest to make a difference and the willingness to work hard at it.

We also sponsor many actions organized by students who are not in TLS, for example by providing vans for anti-war marches, partially funding film showings, co-sponsoring LASO speakers, and so on. We don't necessarily make a big deal out of it, but we partially fund students who are not in the program to go on activist training retreats, etc. We attempt to be general participants in student action on campus. Please come see me if you have a similar and legitimate need for resources.

Critique: Some of the most effective students on campus aren't TLS students.

Response: TLS is a resource. It does not claim to fill every activist need. Everyone, however, is eligible to join, and every compelling interest is considered. Please note that we tend not to meddle, and we do our best to support quietly rather than direct projects. I think some very capable students on the campus would be more effective if they availed themselves of this resource. We also don't need to saddle up to every good idea on campus. We certainly don't have a monopoly on good inspiring work. We support and encourage everyone.

Critique: Community service should be voluntary, but TLS students are paid.

Response: Is it nobler to sit at the desk in the library than to design and run an ESL program

for recent immigrants? Organizing TLS projects take a lot of time. Students need to eat. They cannot do the heavy lifting of organizing a TLS project and work in an office at the same time. Certainly some TLS students take on bigger responsibilities than others. That's okay, we do our best to ask each TLS student to extend themselves to their maximum.

Critique: There are not enough opportunities for volunteering. Isn't this the job of the TLS program?

Response: TLS has not in the past maintained an exhaustive list of local agencies and organizations that need help. We assume, and I think correctly, that the biggest differences are made by people who have real ownership of their work. (I have letters from former TLS students who corroborate this.) We have chosen to support student-generated, student-run projects. Sending students out to do hourly volunteer work is an entirely valid, and an entirely different focus and approach.

Vassar, for example, maintains an office with several fulltime employees who work out volunteer scheduling with local agencies and schools. Vassar students do a couple of hours a week in the battered women's shelter or local school, write a paper, and get a unit of credit for it. Hundreds of service hours are performed this way, and it's of great value to the City of Poughkeepsie. This structure, however, doesn't promote organizational skills. It doesn't force students to face cold calling institutions and funders. It doesn't support students to do the plain hard work of taking an idea and making it happen. And it doesn't allow a project to develop over several years. Ultimately it doesn't produce a Bard Prison Initiative, or a New Orleans Relief Project, or a student-run ESL program.

We do recognize that there are a growing number of Bard students who want to volunteer locally for an hour or two each week. We are now in the process of producing a comprehensive booklet for students who want to pursue volunteer opportunities in local

communities. If you know of organizations or sites for volunteering, please share them with us for inclusion in this booklet. We will make it widely available, in dorms, in the Campus Center, in Kline and so on.

Critique: Why are there mostly weird projects that involve "helping poor people" in faraway places?

Response: I assume faraway places means out of the country. This past Intersession a student group traveled to Nicaragua to build three small houses. All the money they raised on campus and through grant writing went toward building supplies. Each student raised his or her own plane fare. That is this year's "weird project in a faraway place". In contrast, here is a partial list of TLS projects that happen here in Dutchess County:

- v 20-25 Bard students go the Astor Home in Rhinebeck each week (a residential school for behaviorally challenged kids who have been removed from abusive households). They teach writing, reading, art, music and so on.
- v A vital ESL class is run in Red Hook involving 10-15 Bard students each week.
- v There are tutoring programs in Rhinebeck and Germantown which involve dozens of Bard students.
- v An excellent writing program at the

Parker Center in Upper Red Hook for young men who have violated probation has been running for seven years.

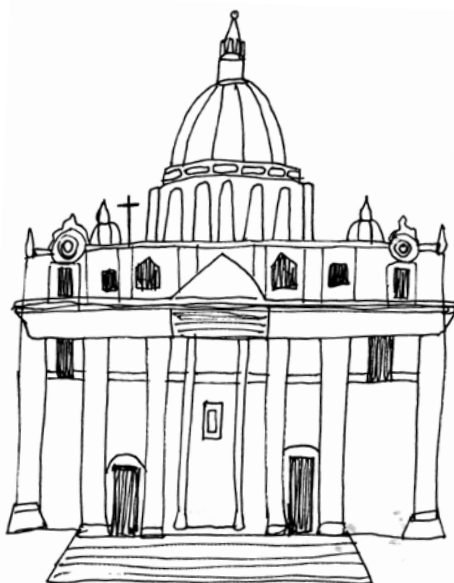
- v Poetry workshops at a prison in Beacon.
- v Free string instrument lessons in Kingston on Saturday mornings for economically challenged youth.
- v A mentoring program in Rhinebeck for young children whose parents don't speak English.
- v An outdoor educational program for Red Hook and Hudson children (20-25 kids twice a month).
- v A young women's group in Hudson.
- v A tutoring/mentoring program in Hudson.

The TLS program isn't perfect, and it never will be. It is always changing, hopefully responding to need and insight. If it is to move in a good direction, your input is vital. Please bring your suggestions, critiques and questions to us, or speak directly to the TLS students themselves. If you want to be involved, or are concerned about the program, please come to the office. We're on the second floor of the Campus Center, and our door is always open.

Sincerely,  
Paul Marienthal  
Director, TLS program

## Prisoner seeks communication with community activists and organizers interested in prison reform and social justice.

Please contact:  
Ronald Davidson  
#76A1166  
Shawagunk Correctional Facility  
PO Box 700  
700 Quick Rd.  
Wallkill NY 12589-0700



..... **BARD TO ROME AND BACK AGAIN** .....  
..... **CONVERSING WITH OUR MAN OF THE CLOTH** .....  
..... **BY RACHEL MEADE** .....  
.....

Every Sunday morning at 11am, unbeknownst to the largely slumbering Bard population, Bard Chapel plays host to a rather unusual Catholic Mass. The priest, Bard alum Paul E. Murray, advocates a form of Catholicism, and Christianity in general, in which faith in God and Christ are central, but other doctrinal issues are up for interpretation. His views on what he terms "Open Christianity," were formulated in part due to his gradual coming to terms with his own homosexuality.

After graduating from Bard College in 1971, Paul Murray studied to become a priest in Rome under Pope Paul VI. Murray attributes this somewhat atypical post-Bard career to his desire for an ordered vision of the world. Raised Episcopalian, a more democratically spirited sect of Christianity, Murray sought a more conservative approach in Catholicism. "I was drawn to the idea of [Catholicism] as an ancient tradition imposing truth because they know," said Murray. "It seemed to offer a kind of clearer vision in a world of turmoil."

Today, Murray's vision of Christianity is quite different. Many of the same things that drew him to Catholicism, such as order, hierarchy, and structure, are aspects he now sees as outdated elements keeping Christianity from all that it can become. "My thinking, thanks be to God, has evolved," said Murray. "I don't believe in Catholicism as a top-down hierarchy or vision of truth."

This may be due in part to the fact that since his ordination, he went through the internal process of coming out to himself and the world. "I both knew and did not know for a number of years," said Murray of his sexual orientation. "It was only after my ordination to the priesthood that [I realized] this was an aspect of my being that I needed to understand."

While many homosexual Catholics might find it tempting to turn away from one or the other aspects of themselves, Murray's faith actually guided him through the process of self-acceptance. "I believe there is a real spiritual aspect to the coming out struggle," he said. In

fact, he wrote a book about his spiritual process of coming out, which will be on sale next year. "Just writing it has been a very healthy and informative process," said Murray.

Surprisingly, when Murray finally decided to come out to the world, including church officials, they kept quiet on the issue. "The world did not fall apart," said Murray. "The real tensions with church officials were related to a course I taught here in 2004." The course in question was entitled "Same-sex Unions and Christianity", and its mere existence at Bard got Murray threatened with excommunication. "It was strange getting that letter in the mail," said Murray. "It felt like something out of the middle ages."

The bishop who sent Murray the letter also labeled him a "heretic", and ordered him to recant his views. Murray noted that the bishop never even took the trouble to find out what those views were; he merely saw the title of the course and drew his own conclusions. This experience only drove home for Murray what he had already believed; that the church hierarchies are vestiges of the past, unsuited to the modern world. "I suspect that the hierarchical church is going to get a rude awakening as we move along in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," he said.

Murray sees this movement away from hierarchy and imposed values already happening within almost every sect of Christianity, as people begin to define for themselves what Christianity means to them. "Change is afoot," he said. "This is a very exciting time for Catholicism." According to Murray, the boundaries of Catholicism will only expand as

people continue to assert the dignity of gay and lesbian Catholics, the ordination of women, and the primacy of social justice.

For Murray, the current anti-gay rhetoric that dominates church dialogue reflects tensions about who gets to formulate Christianity. "It all has to do with understanding Christianity as a part in an open society rather than as a set of values that need to be imposed to save the world," said Murray. He sees schisms opening up in almost every sect of Christianity over the issue of homosexuality. "When something becomes that big an issue, there are factors that go beyond the issue itself and make it a vehicle of debate," he said.

According to Murray, Bard is the ideal setting to explore these changing conceptions of Christianity. "[Bard offers] a terrific opportunity to explore spirituality and faith traditions without the imposition of religious hierarchies," said Murray. "It's a place that fosters an independent spirit." Upon coming to Bard nine years ago, he only expected to stay a year, but he has been here ever since, as Catholic Chaplain and a theology professor. "It's a very special environment that just feels like home to me," said Murray.

To hear more on changing conceptions of Christianity, watch out for "Toward Open Christianity" a symposium organized by Murray to take place at Bard April 13-15. Murray, along with various other religious scholars, will be speaking at the event, which seeks to explore, through panel discussions, workshops, art, and prayer, the meaning of a conception of Christianity that is open to the world.



# Entertaining Everyone

**By Noah Weston**

**T**his year, I have been to more rock and rock-derivative shows than I ever attended at my last six semesters at Bard. To my abundant pleasure, they attract a healthily sized audience, sometimes packing SMOG to the gills. Although it ain't my scene per se, I take comfort in the spasms of joy among the crowd. They are a testament to what the Entertainment Committee has done right: reliably catering to the tastes of some Bard students. That's a mighty big "some," however, and it highlights a persistent problem with the booking of shows at Bard. If you like some brand of music with live guitars, basses, drums, and even vintage synthesizers, the Committee has you covered. But, if you're like me, a hip hop listener, you're assed out.

It is no understatement when I say that the Entertainment Committee booked literally no hip hop shows this semester. Actually, allow me to qualify that further. The Committee booked no specific rap acts, except for the VIP Party Boyz, a trio of gay rap parodists who scarcely appeal to most hip hop fans. In addition, they set aside a middling portion of money for hip hop shows, perhaps enough to pay for two or three low-cost performers. As far as I can tell, there has

been little genuine initiative to seek out any particular solid rappers to bring to our school, despite my prodding as a Planning Committee member and a person in the Bard Community that advocates for hip hop listeners. While I have respect for the tremendous work the Entertainment Committee puts into booking dozens of performers a year, I cannot stomach how little credit they have given rap music and the people who would like to see more of it here.

The two largest shows I have ever seen at Bard since the closing of the Old Gym were the Perceptionists, a Boston hip hop trio comprised of Mr. Lif, Akrobatik, and Fakts One, and M-1 of Dead Prez along with DJ Evil Dee of Black Moon. Anyone who saw the turnout for these shows cannot front on their success. For Afrika Bambaataa's sake, they filled the MPR! Nothing productive or persuasive would come of me trying to compare the virtues of a rap show to a rock show since each is different. As both yield great positive returns, though, especially the former, it behooves the Committee to finally do the right thing and book more rap shows by itself, not just in conjunction with other clubs who have their own activities to fund.

See, by definition, the Entertainment





Perceptionists played in the MPR last year.

Committee bears the responsibility of bringing performers to Bard, and it stands to reason that they should do as much as they can to cater to the diversity of interests here. Given that mad people love rap here, it seems that the next logical step is more rap shows. Pretty simple, right? And yet every semester sees a decline in investment in this popular branch of music while interest in no way seems to wane on the part of the student body, which could be more active, but ultimately is the constituency whose interests the Committee must aggressively gauge and serve. Students can and should make their voice heard, but the Committee needs to do a much more strenuous job of reaching out to a broad swath of people in our community.

As far as I can tell, both in conversation and by observation, the current climate of the Committee is one in which its members are, by and large, not rap listeners, which isn't to their discredit, but requires their looking past their own immediate inclinations. The same would apply were I and five of my friends to constitute the Committee and bent on bringing nothing

but our favorite burgeoning rap acts. As the recipient of the largest budget of any club on campus, the Committee has to face the reality that it must represent everyone who pays convocation fees and accordingly branch out. In succeeding years, we need to see more music that exceeds the realm of rock and its variants. Otherwise, this school will continue to afford musical entertainment only for a constrained fraction of students, while the rest will have to settle for whatever comes up on iTunes. I hope a change is going to come, but then again I question whether our Committee would even book the ghost of Sam Cooke if he emailed them tomorrow.

I'm on my way out of this piece come May, but everyone else still has the ability to change the course of music at Bard. I encourage you to do so by sending your comments, critical or otherwise, to the members of the Entertainment Committee at [entertainment@bard.edu](mailto:entertainment@bard.edu) as soon as you can. If they won't make movement on this problem, then it's up to you. And that's my word.

# John Cage Trust at Bard College

*By Grace Converse*



*illustration by Mae Colburn*

**A**s of this spring, the college will be home to the John Cage Trust (JCT), now the John Cage Trust at Bard College, giving Bard the rights to produce John Cage's works and utilize his works and ideas for educational purposes. The Trust will be under the direction of Dr. Laura Kuhn who is to become the first John Cage Professor of Performance Arts.

In 1940, John Cage joined a circle of New York avant-garde artists including dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham, and painters Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper. From there he began to compose his most renowned works including "4'33", a silent piece where the sounds of whatever environment it is played in become the song. John Cage composed numerous other works, was awarded with a Guggenheim Fellowship; an award from the National Academy of Arts and Letters for his work extending the boundaries of music; membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, American Academy of Arts and Letters among others. He was the author of multiple books, and was the musical advisor for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company until his death in August, 1992.

The Trust was created after the revolutionary composer's death, when all of his works and belongings were passed to his friend and collaborator, Merce Cunningham. The Trust formed legally under the directions of Cunningham, Anne d'Harnoncour (director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art), David Vaughan (archivist at the Cunningham Dance Foundation), and Laura Kuhn (Cage's assistant

since 1986) with the intention to administer rights and licenses to all of Cage's work and to encourage educational experiences based on his work.

As a resident organization at Bard, the holdings on the JCT will be accessed and utilized through courses, workshops, concerts and new programs. Dr. Laura Kuhn will maintain the Trust and also be instrumental in using the Trust's holdings, as she will be teaching at undergraduate and graduate levels.

The Trust will serve as a resource for the entire college, but is particularly beneficial and inspiring to the performing arts, which have in the past five years continuously grown with the building of the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts and the establishment of the Bard College Conservatory of Music. John Cage is an inspiration for many performing artists and demands each performer to question what is performance, what is music, what is dance, what is art?

According to Botstein, "One cannot overstate the importance of John Cage and his work, and its impact on 20th century music, art, and culture. That the John Cage Trust will now reside at Bard College, where scholars, students, faculty, and the general public will have access to his holdings, is an honor to the College. It is an extraordinary asset for all of us at Bard and particularly exciting as it relates to our new Conservatory of Music. We will utilize this invaluable material to develop new and innovative educational and performance programs reflective of Cage's groundbreaking work and extraordinary life."

# Sculpture III Opening

By Joy Baglio

Whether you've been wondering what the Bard sculptors lately been conjuring up or you simply need an explanation in order to understand the complex conceptual sculptures Bard students are prone to making, climb aboard for a ride through the strange installations of Daniela Dooling's Sculpture III class. The students began their ambitious installations by strolling around the Fisher Center's "barn" in order to get a feel for the space. Their projects were meant to merge the conceptual with the formal, which led many students to incorporate an element of performance into their pieces.

The first thing you'll see upon entering the Fisher Studio Arts barn is an ominously looming black tarp. Under the tarp, a strobe light flashes behind a series of hanging crates, sending a pulsing glare into your eyes. A black light above the crates illuminates the eerie technological experience. Sophomore studio arts major and robot enthusiast Ben Kane is responsible for the installation, which is meant to stimulate the experience of information traveling through the web. His piece seeks to find common ground between computers and humans, to conjure human empathy towards computers.

In a similar theme, Kane built a robotic arm in a hidden space that had a camera attached to it for a project last semester. The camera projected an image of the interior of the hidden space, which the viewer could manipulate using a remote control. You can see this piece in the Spring Moderation show, currently exhibited, (See page ).

Next to the tarp, a deceptively simple white door rests ajar. While many people may perceive it as a stagnant object, creator of the installation and junior studio arts major Kerry Wessell, had other plans in mind. Upon opening the door, you're immediately confronted by a very dark, narrow passageway. The space conjures up images of Egyptian catacombs and creepy attics. As you walk, the passage changes directions, all the while becoming narrower and narrower, until it leads the participant back to the beginning, except that at this point it has become a cramped space barely big enough in which to move.

The piece began as an attempt to trick the viewer into a space that ultimately traps him. "When I started, I wanted to imbue it with evidence of labor," said Wessell. "All of that kind of got lost, and now it's a lot more about how the inside doesn't have an outside exactly. It does literally, but it's not apparent in the space." One student commented that Wessell's piece is "separate from the barn," that it feels like a different space and has a "transformative quality."

"Unfortunately, with more than one student in there, it becomes a funhouse," said Wessell. "People act as blockades for other people." He later added pensively, "Sometimes I go in there to get away and just relax for a second." Wessell is interested in art as a blue and white color activity, something that encompasses mental activities and physical labor. "When you're working with installation, the main theme usually tends to be about the



by Kerry  
Wessel

space you're in," said Wessell. "Because installation happens on such a large scale, it acts as a lens through which every other theme is seen."

Following Wessell's maze, you'll see a large mirror-paneled cube surrounded by swirls of red paint. Yellow puddles litter the ground like strange, exotic sea foam. Black alien forms cluster on the ceiling above it, vaguely reminiscent of jellyfish or perhaps the tripods from *War of the Worlds*. A light inside the cube illuminates the inside, mysteriously perceptible through the cracks in the walls. The artist, senior and studio arts major Daniela Gilbert hoped to experiment with the properties of reflection through the monumental cube. She is also interested in "drippy, organic forms," as she calls her black yarn creations that hang above the piece, which to her, are a way of returning to a past habit in art while also exploring something new.

"It's about reclaiming space," said Gilbert. "About creating an alien environment with different materials, while also referencing inner and outer space." Her piece definitely invokes an unfamiliar scene, creating a space that is obviously recognizable as a landscape, yet strangely foreign at the same time. There is something almost alive about the black yarn creatures, and the yellow foam blobs seem unusually organic.

Near Daniela's cube, light blue string cascades from the ceiling, curling in translucent strands, spilling into a welded wire frame. In the corner shine a blue blown-glass lamp and tiny blue Christmas lights at the end of a cord curling on the ground. Elizabeth Peters, who has blown the blue glass vase herself, was inspired to create her piece by the movement of flowing water.

"It always moves in a spiral," said Peters. "This way it can oxidize and clean itself." She didn't plan on having the strings curl, but when she learned that it better represented the motion of water, she accepted it. Her piece deals with the juxtaposition of interior and exterior



by Daniela Gilbert

surfaces, with water representing the transfer of energy throughout the piece. It also speaks about bridging the external and internal, which the string shows by spilling in and out of the welded frame.

The last piece you'll see starts on the floor and continues all the way up the wall to a series of four adjacent windows about fifteen feet up from the ground. Four huge three-foot wide stripes of color, (purple, pink, blue, and red), ascend up to four windows in which sit four girls, painting their nails. On the ground, two drab-looking workers sweep dirt silently from the colored floor, in which someone has written the words "Fuck You." The fumes of nail polish are everywhere, and the girls go diligently about their work, without glancing up or acknowledging the viewers.

Sophomore Sarah Lee, the artist as well as one of the window nail-painters, said that watching her roommate paint her nails for thirty minutes first started her thinking about ways in which people practice mark-making on their bodies. The four brightly painted windows were meant to be a macrocosm of the individual nail-painters. She purposely chose nail paints with ridiculous women's names: "Maryanne Blue," and "Mikayla Purple".



by Sara Lee

“Everyone in this performance has a dynamic understanding of their femininity,” said Lee, quickly adding that her piece is not meant as a feminist statement. “It’s about the verticality of power. Hierarchy. Intervention.” The girls idly painting their nails so high up in the windows while workers below sweep non-existent dirt literally represent the gap between various levels of society.

While every installation was unique in various surprising ways, they all similarly utilized the space of the building’s space to their advantage. According to Lee, “Everyone has their own complex and contradictory understanding of space.” performance art.

# Why Now?

## The Recent Trend of Rwandan Genocide Films

By Joey Lee

Why Now?

The Recent Trend of Rwandan Genocide Films

By Joey Lee

800,000 Tutsi and Hutu civilians were murdered by Hutu extremist groups in Rwanda. That was in 1994. Since 2004, nine films have been released documenting the genocide, whereas before 2004, no films were released about the subject. Why the sudden trend? Is there a set period of time to be "sensitive" about international tragedies? Before 2004, was it considered politically incorrect to make a tragedy into a commercial enterprise for entertainment?

*Beyond the Gates* is a fictional narrative about a catholic school that became a refugee camp for Tutsis. Hugh Dancy, who plays one of the British Catholic schoolteachers, states that the main reasons for the surge have to do with timing, funding, and gaining the support of the Rwandan government. "It takes time for the story to filter into the Western consciousness," said Dancy. "It takes even more time to find people willing to fund the movie. Then we have

to get the Rwandan government to agree to let us in the country for filming."

Anne Aghion, who is currently working on her third documentary about the Rwandan reconstruction, disagrees with Dancy. Aghion states that permission from the government does not pose the problem Dancy suggests. "I went to Rwanda four or five times in 1999 for the filming of my first film, *Gacaca*," said Aghion. "I was under the radar and got authorization easily. I doubt it would be any more difficult for to get permission to film a feature."

Aghion's explanation for the delay is much more rooted in human psychology. "I think many of these films are made by people who were directly connected to it in some way who thought 'I saw it happening and couldn't do anything. How can I make an impact?'" said Aghion. "These filmmakers are driven by disbelief and guilt. That takes awhile to get over."

Director of Education and Granting for the Global Film Initiative Santhosh Daniel attributes the trend to the mentality of Rwanda:



both its citizens and its government. "It's taken more than a decade for the Rwandan government to finally condemn the genocide. It has also taken that many years for those most affected by the images, children, to grow into adulthood and demand an answer...for what happened," said Daniel. "And ultimately, it has taken this many years for anyone, especially filmmakers, to believe there is value in understanding, rather than ignoring, those images."

If the nine films recently released have one aspect in common, it is their negative portrayal of the inaction among Western Powers like the United States and England. We must remember, although the horrors in Rwandan happened 13 years ago, there are many similar political situations happening currently. Could the timing of these films be a not so coincidental message to the governments of the United States and England? Dancy concurs that, "These films bring up the issue of the U.S.'s failure to get involved in situations like Darfur."

Daniel also acknowledges the current importance of such films, but ultimately takes the more cynical view that a central goal of the films is commercial. Daniel points out that the reason these films were made is not solely for a political purpose, but because the Western audience is now more interested in the genocide than it was ten years ago. "These films do have political objectives in so much as they express thinly

veiled criticisms of European and American inaction in addition to universal condemnation of genocide and civil and communal violence," said Daniel. "This is, without question, intentional and meant to raise political awareness as much as it's meant to make money and win awards."

Films like *Sometimes in April* and *Beyond the Gates* raise awareness with audiences in the U.S. and the U.K. but the effect of these films on the population of Rwanda is much harder to track. Rwanda's only traditional movie theater, in the French cultural center, closed three months ago. However, RCN: Justice and Democracy, an NGO, hopes to educate rural populations by traveling through the Rwandan countryside with video projectors, showing documentaries followed by discussion groups.

Aghion believes that this process can be therapeutic to the population, all of whom were involved in some way with the genocide. However, what means the most to these residents is that their story is getting told at all. "During the genocide, the people of Rwanda still had access to the news on the radio, so they knew the rest of the world dropped the ball," said Aghion. "They felt forgotten. Now that these films are being made, even if the Rwandan population hasn't seen the movies themselves, they still have an effect. The fact that their stories are being told, make the people of Rwanda feel not so alone."



*Beyond The Gates*

Directed by Michael Caton-Jones - Written by David Wolstencroft

Starring John Hurt, Hugh Dancy, Claire-Hope Ashitey, Dominique Horwitz

# An Open Letter to the Sex Column

Dear Sex Column and Bard Students:

I would like to discuss a problem that is running pandemic through the bed sheets of Bard. No one knows what the fuck they are doing.

I mean, I like to fuck. A lot. I have had sex with men. I have had sex with women. I have had sex outdoors, through the back door, suspended in the air, backwards, forwards, sideways, standing, 69ed, in parking lots, the ocean, hotel lobbies, floors, beds, showers, kitchens, chairs, hallways, Fisher Arts, and while being watched. I have fucked till I bled and was bruised. I fucked a person because I hated them. And I fucked them hard. I have sucked on fingers, nipples, dicks, clits, balls, necks, and thighs. I gave one boyfriend eight orgasms in a day. I have fucked for seven hours straight. I have laboriously coaxed limp dicks into life and babied, petted, cooed at stubborn clits. I would like to think I am an equal opportunity fuck.

Last semester I had sex with nine people. And out of the nine people, **ONLY ONE PERSON MADE ME COME**. I'm tired of all the people who don't know how to get me off. Or, who worse, don't bother. I'm tired of getting other people off and not getting anything in return. I understand that there are perfectly legitimate reasons for not being able to get me off. Sometimes I can't get me off. But there is no excuse for not being attentive to the person you are fucking. Nor is there an excuse for not trying. Step up your fucking game. Try something new. Pay attention. Talk about it. **BUT IF YOU WANT TO MASTURBATE, STOP USING MY BODY AS YOUR HAND**. Yes, it might have been easier than you thought to get me

into bed but this is only because I like to fuck and I am willing to give you a chance(s). And yes, I think you are extremely attractive, but this doesn't mean you can order me around, let me suck you off, and not even attempt to go down on me. You might have a big dick or think you eat a mean pussy but none of this means shit. Because in the end prior conceptions or expectations dissolve in the dark and all I want is to experience you, without words, without talking. I want to feel the tension of your body against my body and understand what that means. I want you to push against me so I can push against you and we can keep pushing off of each other until we both come. I want our senses to rapidly fire electricity across our synapses until thinking doesn't matter and your hand grabbing my hand is the only thing in the room that exists. And as you fuck me and I fuck you, I want you to understand that right now smelling is touching and listening is tasting and everything I see is sweetly dripping and highly saturated and my brain feels like it's pissing honey. But just because you got me into bed, it doesn't mean you can drop the fucking ball. I'm fucking my heart out. What the fuck are you doing?

Sincerely,  
S.A.

P.S. And if you are going to ask me if I have been tested for STDs (and I have), please ask me before I am straddling you naked and/or have gone down on you. If I actually had an STD I wouldn't fuck you. But the next person you fuck might not be so considerate.

# An Introduction to Game Theory

By Dan Wilbur

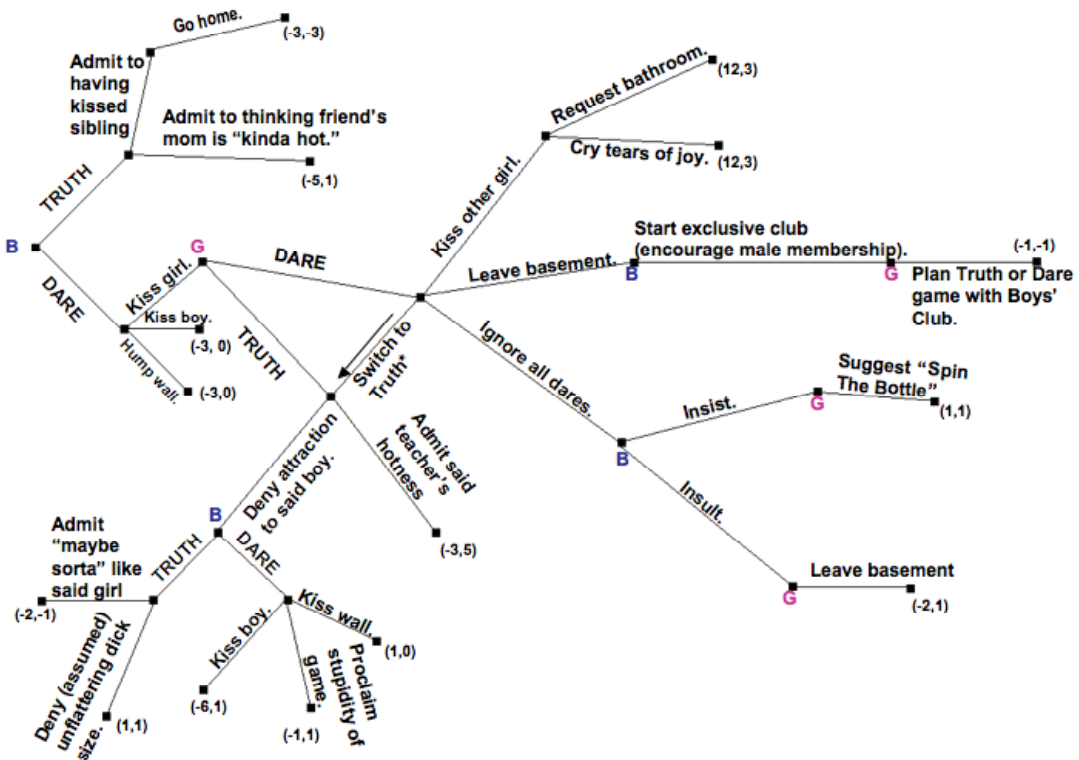
John F. Nash theorized that every game has an equilibrium. That is, every time people use a strategy to get what they want, whether in business or recreation, there are limited strategies that each player chooses, and as a result would receive no better outcome with any other strategy. Nash's theory aided the advancement of such complex studies as Economics, Psychology, and Political Science.

Dixit and Skeath, writers of the popular textbook *Games of Strategy* (a measly \$110 at Bard's Barnes and Noble), offers real life examples to students, including tips for games like *Survivor*, *NYPD Blue*, and a hypothetical scenario where three bitches don't have the common decency to plant anything in a communal garden after promising each other they would. These examples, along with

countless unappealing casino/carny games help students understand the importance and overwhelming impact Game Theory has on society today.

The following is an outline of a Sequential Game, or a game where players take turns, in this case, boys and girls. A Game Tree offers the student a chance to visualize all possible strategies and outcomes a game has. I have chosen the popular game Truth Or Dare to illustrate this redeeming beginner's technique.

Read the Tree below from left to right. Unless otherwise noted, it remains one player's turn until a different letter appears under a dot, or decision node. Then it is the opponent's turn, and it remains his or her turn until otherwise noted. Here, the game is played Boys (B) versus Girls (G). Can you find the dominant strategies for each player?



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# MUSIC REVIEWS

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## Modest Mouse

### We Were Dead Before the Ship Even Sank

By Andrew Worthington

Modest Mouse's last album, *Good New For People Who Love Bad News*, saw the band move towards a sound that reeked of finely polished production and did not reach the . Not surprisingly, it was also the band's first commercially popular release, and saw lead singer Isaac Brock move towards addressing his drug problems (as seen on the song "Good Times Are Killing Me"). The newest disk, *We Were Dead Before The Ship Even Sank*, peaked at #1 on the Billboard Charts and follows in the same direction with a few exceptions (or additions). For one, the band added Johnny Marr of Smiths fame, an odd yet excellent addition. Consequently, electric guitar-driven songs on the album layer on the guitar

very heavily, and often sound busy because of the abundance of percussive and orchestral sounds that accompany. Meanwhile, there are also songs that are reversely simplistic and gentle, and Modest Mouse does a good job of blending these dichotomous elements. My favorite tracks were "Parting of the Sensory", "Little Motel" and "People As Places As People," each of which fits into the mold of the softer and more subtle songs. All things considered, *We Were Dead Before The Ship Even Sank* is probably an improvement from their last album and will spawn several radio-friendly hits, but it is far from the best that we have seen from Modest Mouse.

# Clap Your Hands Say Yeah

## Some Loud Thunder

By Niki Schur-Narula



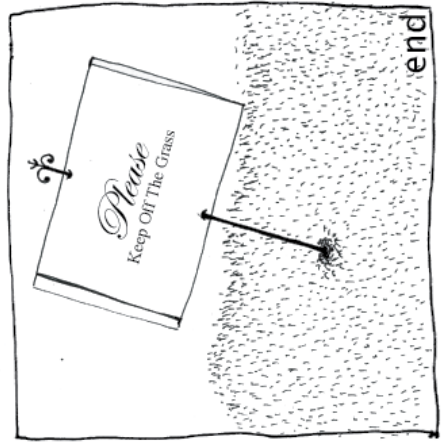
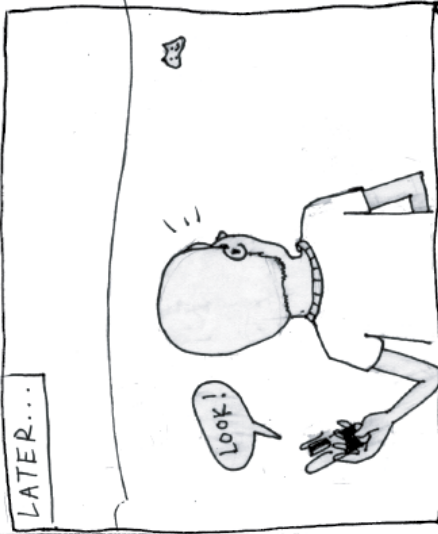
**T**he Brooklyn-based indie rock band Clap Your Hands Say Yeah followed up their groundbreaking self-titled debut album with the highly anticipated *Some Loud Thunder*, leaving listeners with an album that is mediocre at best. Frontman Alec Ounsworth continues to wail into the microphone in his distinctive cracking voice, resulting in lyrics that are often slurred and difficult to understand. Musically, Clap Your Hands Say Yeah seem to have made some progress, incorporating more styles and instruments into the new album. *Some Loud Thunder* demonstrates the band's growing potential. Varied instrumentation exhibits the mounting complexity of the band's music, but what about the good old simplicity of their first record?

This new release is somewhat difficult to endure at times. Some songs are so jarring that they take a couple of listens just to get through. However, this is not to say that all the album's tracks possess the same qualities. Although the new album is not as catchy and as fulfilling a listen as the band's debut, there are a couple of songs that indicate that the band is still on the same track as it began on. We are still left with captivating indie rock that doesn't disappoint, at least some of the time. Though they are somewhat different from the straightforward songs on the last

album, the mystifying "Five Easy Pieces", the ballad-like piano of "Love Song No. 7" and the Dylan-esque sound of "Emily Jean Stock" will keep fans humming the melodies for hours. And fear not, Clap Your Hands Say Yeah have not taken a totally different direction in their music; as songs like "Some Loud Thunder" and "Satan Said Dance" make obvious, the band has not strayed entirely from its catchy, poppy roots.

The majority of the album is, nevertheless, rather tough to sit through at one time; many of its songs are laden with intermittent, discordant breaks and overwhelmed by the barrage of too many sounds at once. Perhaps it is for this reason that the band chose to put in a couple of short, one-minute tracks such as "Upon Encountering The Crippled Elephant", an accordion waltz that helps alleviate the stress induced by its surrounding songs.

Despite occasionally unsuccessful experimentation, *Some Loud Thunder* is a manifestation of Clap Your Hands Say Yeah's potential for greatness. If the next album entwines the musical complexity of *Some Loud Thunder* with the simple folk-pop of the debut, we are looking at a groovy upcoming record. For the time being, though, we will have to make do with this album. It may take a couple of listens to appreciate, but the good tracks are certainly worth it.



Tender Vittles By Mekko Harjo

OBSERVER

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