

Third Rail

The Award-Winning Political Arts Magazine of the College of Staten Island/CUNY

Spring 2010

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An Open Letter To All

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Third Rail Active 1st Show

Dominick Malloy writes about the first recording of Third Rail Active

CSI's *only*
award-winning
student publication

Third Rail

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A SPECIAL
Third Rail
EDITORIAL

An Open Letter To
All



An Open Letter To All

To Whom it should interest:

The purpose of this letter is to explain some things I have said in Third Rail, and in The Banner. I hope this will clear things up a bit.

First, there is some confusion among the people who approached me about my earlier remarks. On the whole, there seems to be an assumption that I have a personal problem with Student Government. I assure you, this is simply not true! What could benefit me from a personal

well, to say I hold this individual in low regard would be an understatement. Putting those opinions aside, it still does not effect my opinion of SG as a whole. As I said, there are several members of SG that are trying very hard to make SG a beneficial organization. So, no; I don't let my personal grudge against one person color my opinion of everyone. That would, once again, be insane.

Let me explain why I disapprove of Student Government by using a recent example. President Obama gave his State of the Union address in



SG Senator Washeika Torres

feud with SG? Frankly, I haven't gone as crazy as that idea suggests. To take every single action of the entire SG to be a personal slight against me would be clearly insane.

Second, I happen to like many of the members of Student Government. Many of our student senators work very hard in an attempt to improve CSI, and I applaud them. There are others who I do not know personally and I hold no ill will towards those whom I don't know. Again, that would be insane.

Third, I do concede that my personal feelings for a certain Vice President on SG may...

January. At one point in his speech, he said to the Supreme Court - in response to the decision that corporations should be allowed to donate as much money to a political campaign as they desire - that they should be ashamed of such a stupid decision. President Obama was not talking to all nine Supreme Court Justices. The decision was split, 5-4. He could only have been talking to the five justices who were in favor of setting such a precedent. I don't know for certain, but I'd like to think that the Justices who opposed the decision agreed with the President. At the very least, I doubt that they would have taken it as a personal attack against them. Why would President Obama chastise those who were "in the right," so to speak?

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When I say things like, "our Student Government is worthless," and "SG sucks," I'm not referring to those members who are trying their best for the students! I am only pointing out those who are there to do the bare minimum necessary to collect their stipend. To those among you I may have wrongly offended, I am sorry. I ask that you please know this: when I speak out in shame of SG I'm not talking about you, and when I praise SG I am praising you.

In my last letter, it was stated that SG allocated over \$50,000 on themselves in one year. This assertion has been questioned. The figure was added by Third Rail's Lay-Out Editor, Neil Schuldiner. The following are the figures that Schuldiner found in the public records*, and I will let them speak for themselves.

Private Bus Service:	\$490.00
Water:	\$100.00
Clothes:	\$450.00
Food:	\$2,350.00
Leadership Retreat:	\$13,808.60
(cost for SG participation only)	
Stipends:	\$32,900.00
President	\$1,350.00/semester
Vice President	\$1,100.00/semester
Senator (commision)	\$900.00/semester
Senator (non-commision)	\$700.00/semester

The following were not included in Schuldiner's original calculation:

Academic and Curricular	
Affairs Commission -- Food:	\$250.00
Elections Commission -- Food:	\$1,000.00
Finance Commission -- Food:	\$250.00
Part Time Commission -- Food:	\$4,000.00
Student Center Commission -- Food:	\$200.00
Student Services Commission -- Food:	\$1,500.00

With just a simple calculator and a moment of your time, you can see that the first set of spending adds up to \$50,098.60. The second set of figures represents an additional \$7,200.00, putting that figure at \$57,298.60 -- well over the \$50K we reported. I'm not saying that the current Student Government has spent that much of our money, but SG, as an organization, historically has done. To those members of our current SG who took offense at that assertion: there are the numbers in black and white. **Your numbers.**

Now, we find the problem with SG stipends, and that is those stipends represent nearly 60% of the money that SG spends on themselves. There are supposed to be budget cuts across the board, but Student Government is still collecting the same amount of cash while telling other organizations that 'money is hard to come by owing to the budget cuts.'

Not so hard to come by that they'd need to cut their bloated stipends? To put this in perspective: a SG Senator has seen a 700% increase in their pay since the 2002-03 year, Commissioners have earned a 360% increase, and the President earned a mere 270% pay raise. What budgets are being cut to pay for this? In contrast, at my



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Campus Center job, I have seen our pay cut by \$1/hour, and a drastic amount of hours have been slashed from the schedule as well. The explanation given is that the position is not meant to be a considered a full-time or part-time job, but rather as a supplemental income. This came as quite a shock to everyone employed by that particular office, many of whom were already working two or three jobs and were barely making ends meet.

I would, however, like to thank SG for their proposal to cut their stipends earlier in this semester. They demonstrated admirable solidarity with the students in a time of economic suffering and universal budget cuts. Regrettably, they could not follow through with the stipend cuts, and that bloated section of their budget remains. What I find most insufferable about this is not that the vote failed, but that Carol Brower (a member of the Administration who works with Student Government, not a student) insisted that the vote had to be retaken. Why? I quote from the minutes of that meeting:

“Carol explained that the first vote on stipends has to be re-voted since the vote did not pass according to the new requirements of the Open Meetings Law. Kevin (Elkins) moved to retroactively pay stipends for the fall of 2009 semester and pay stipends for the spring of 2010 semester at the same rate as the 2008-09 academic year.”

My problem with this is that Student Gov-

ernment had a meeting where they took a vote that passed, then, in an entirely different meeting, the rules were changed and they were forced to take a new vote based on the new rules. This leads me to ask why the very same Administration that is cutting hours for their employees would just blatantly mandate a re-vote after a successful, legal vote to decrease SG pay?

I'll admit to just about everyone that I'm a know-nothing schmuck; but, there is something that doesn't add up here. Why was this the only vote mentioned from the previous minutes that had to be retaken? Why didn't the new rules affect all the other votes in the same ex post facto way? It makes about as much sense as our Congress retaking the vote on the Civil Right Act of 1964 because of a modern-day procedural change or that's how it seems to me. I'm not saying the Administration is telling Student Government what to do; I don't think that's exactly the case. From what has been reported to me, and from my own observations, the Administration is using a very heavy-handed approach in guiding our Student Government to advance their own agenda. I'm not saying they are forcing their agenda on Student Government, but they do lay out a very clear idea of what they would like to see.

The Administration has every right to do this. They have an agenda which includes running an institution of higher education -- and that is laudable. However, they are using SG as a showpiece for advancing that agenda, and that we cannot tolerate. SG needs to have their own identity, independent from that of the Administration. They need to accept that they can make a positive difference, and set goals that directly benefit the students of CSI. That is the job of SG: to pursue

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those goals aggressively.

Sadly, once again we return to the stipends. Should Student Government scale them back to free more money to use for the students? Absolutely. Should they return to the pay scale from 2002? No, of course not. For the amount of time that our Senators invest they honestly deserve more than \$100 per semester. In fact, they would be able to make a lot more than that if they worked a minimum-wage part-time job during SG meeting hours! I propose that they return to the pay scale from the 2004-05 year. I don't think this would be too far-fetched. Per semester, the President would make \$1000 per semester, the Vice President \$700, a Commissioner \$600, and a Senator would earn \$300. I'm more than willing to accept this as fair.

That said, there is a troubling trend in Student Government. The continued rise in stipends has been coupled hand-in-hand with a decrease in the number of SG members that are actually active in campus life. Whenever there is an SG event, it's the same few faces over and over again that are involved. This is one thing I must concede: a certain Vice President I mentioned earlier does

maintain an active SG presence on campus. I understand that members of Student Government are required to be matriculated students, and I'm sure that many of them are very busy, but surely they should be able to make their presence known to us. I guess the difference is caring?

Which puts me in a great position to explain some statements I have made about the Administration. Many of you may be aware that I have been saying that the Administration is either:

- A) incompetent, or,
- B) hates the students

Just for the sake of my fragile sanity I'm going to reject the notion of them being incompetent. I have to assume that such a level of incompetence would be coupled with a very high rate of job turnover. Is it a delusion? Maybe, but I'm sticking to it for now. That leaves us with only choice B.

When I say the Administration hates the students, I don't literally mean every single administrator is hired specifically for their loathing of the student body. Furthermore, I don't mean that every administrator has, or is even aware of, hatred for the students.

I mean that I have observed a systemic indifference towards us. We are the ever-shifting cast of helpless fools dancing disruptively against the backdrop of their daily routine. So when I say they hate us, I mean it in the context of a cashier who hates his customers. To them, we are the uninformed masses trickling in to ask a thousand different variations of the same few questions. Is it really a surprise that they seem so tired? If only something would change! If only the very simple information that we needed was easily accessible to us, perhaps they would be a happier lot...

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But the fact is that very little changes. Why does change takes so very long to accomplish -- thanks to the strangling CUNY bureaucracy -- that CSI has ingrained inaction and indifference as a conditioned response on many of the people that work here. That much should be clear to anyone that has been here for more than a year.

Some have suggested to me that it is the indifference of people who shrug their shoulders and proclaim, 'I don't get paid enough to care!' As much as part of me agrees with this sentiment, I cannot -- perhaps, once again for the sake of what little sanity I have left -- agree with the idea that those who went into an educational field to help others would succumb to that sort of thinking. Is it naïve of me to think this? Oh, yes it is! But, for my mental health I will continue to believe it.

Our lives as students are hard enough. Every single day we are forced to do a delicate balancing act: how many hours we can devote to school work to better ourselves are in direct competition with how many hours we must devote to work in order to to meet our financial demands. CSI has many opportunities to alleviate some of those demands, but fails to do so again and again. They allow a private bookstore to exist on campus, instead of having a school-owned bookstore which could provide significantly cheaper textbooks. The cost of food continues to rise; this semester many



of the food portions have decreased, but the cost is the same as last semester (I don't think four chicken fingers and a bottle of iced tea should be seven dollars. That's insane!). It seems like every single semester, there is another fight over tuition hikes, even as admissions sky-rocket, and all this extra money is buying less and less for the students.

So, there you have it. An incomplete list of my grievances, and an incomplete set of explanations. There are so many more that there would not be enough room to print them

all. If anyone out there reading this wants to take something away from it, let it be this: things cannot continue the way they have been on this campus. It will only last for so long before we all sink. There must be a better way to get things done, and I will keep asking why we aren't doing anything and everything possible to make CSI a more efficient, student-friendly place -- a place that we can all be proud of.

With Best Regards,
Michael Miley

PS: Feel free to attend the Student Government meetings held every other Thursday in 1C-209. They are run under the Open Meeting Law, and completely open to the public.

* All of the figures provided are accurate as of January 2009

School Spirit

By Andrew Oppenheimer

At CSI, you don't party until the morning.
You don't get trashed and pregnant
because Vinny slipped you a mickey and
was polite enough to drag you to your dorm.

At CSI, you don't wake and run to class.
You don't step over your roommate,
who fell asleep on the floor after a night
of binge text memorization.

At CSI, you don't protest when tuition is hiked.
You don't picket, or walk out of classes.
You don't talk to the professors,
and you don't march on Washington.

At CSI, you don't have sexual exploration.
You don't get to meet new people, or
have your obligatory fling. You don't
discover anything about yourself.

At CSI, you party during club hours.
You get excited over free pizza, and
the new issue of Operation: Three Legged Dolphin.
You leave the crust on a table and walk to 3S.

At CSI, you wake up an hour and a half early.
You wait for the buses that show late,
and you take the boat that might connect
to the shuttle, crowded and no longer safe.

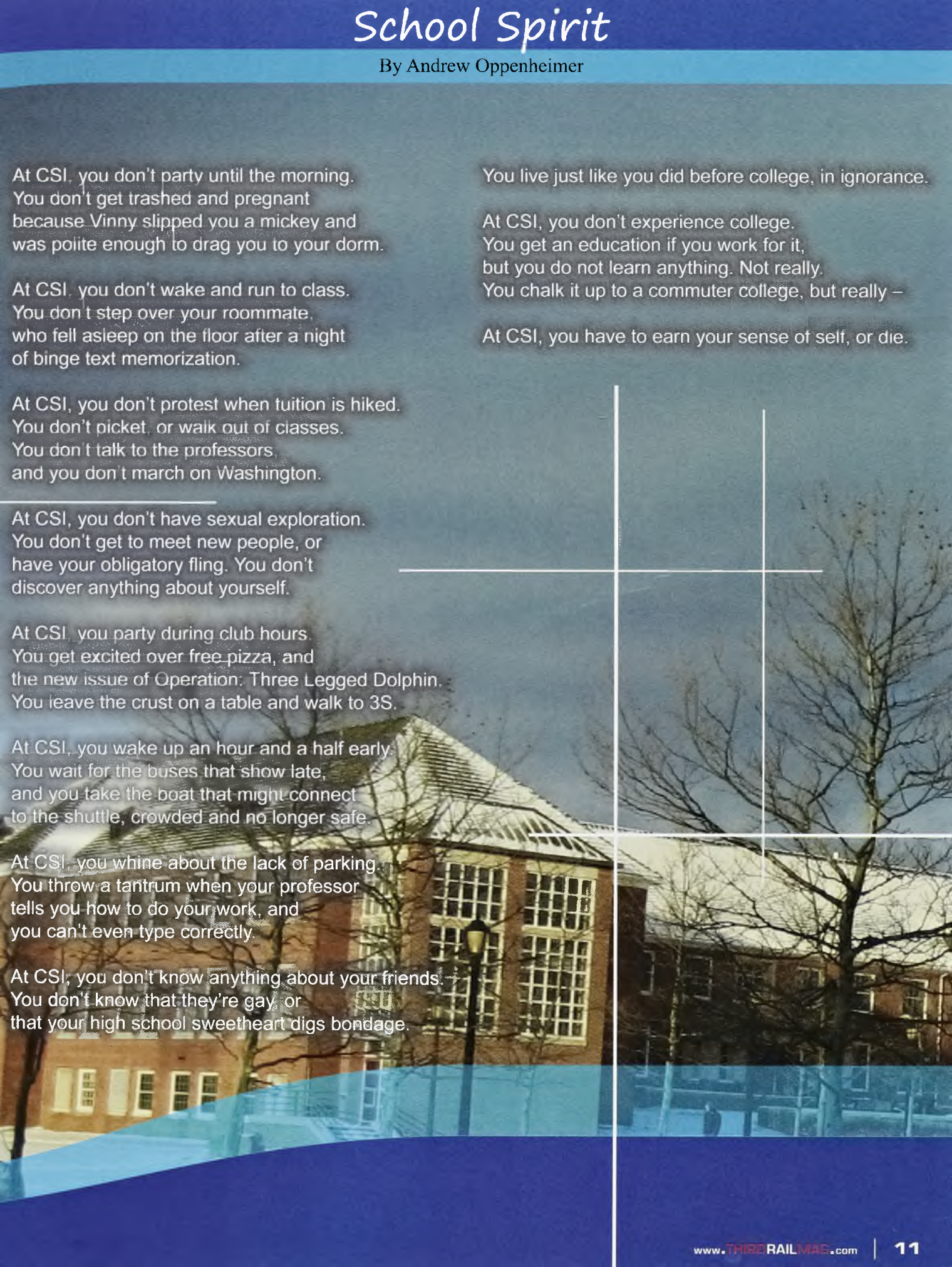
At CSI, you whine about the lack of parking.
You throw a tantrum when your professor
tells you how to do your work, and
you can't even type correctly.

At CSI, you don't know anything about your friends.
You don't know that they're gay, or
that your high school sweetheart digs bondage.

You live just like you did before college, in ignorance.

At CSI, you don't experience college.
You get an education if you work for it,
but you do not learn anything. Not really.
You chalk it up to a commuter college, but really –

At CSI, you have to earn your sense of self, or die.



Written By Dominick Malloy

Third Rail has finally hit the airwaves. The first show of Third Rail Active, the magazine's new radio show, was recorded on March 18, 2010. It is a roundtable debate show which, much like the magazine, is centered on politics. The topic of discussion New York City's mass transit budget cuts and how it will affect the people and students. Also, Staten Island's traffic issues and Campus parking here at CSI.

The debaters present for the first show were Third Rail's own Michael Miley, Ben De'Angelis, student government member Jolanta Smulski, and hosted by Third Rail editor Martin Clifford. The discussion opened with the issue of the \$800 million budget gap, which is the reason for the proposed budget cuts by the MTA. The cuts the MTA wants to make are to the free student Metrocard program and eliminate several buses on Staten Island. Last year, the budget gap was \$400 million, and this year that amount has doubled. Where is this money going? Why do the twelve players under contract for the Yankees make roughly \$120 million combined!? According to this year's census, the population of New York City is over eight million. That means out of eight million people, twelve guys have a yearly income an eighth of the amount of the current budget gap. So, the city can conveniently find money when a ball player needs to be paid or when they want a new stadium built, but when it comes to regular citizens and students, there's nothing for anyone. One speaker brought up the idea that the city might dip into federal stimulus funds to try and solve the problem. But, when we

see our city's money being spent on superficial things, it's obvious that there are other things we can cut to close the gap.

Over a billion people use mass transit each month. All those people travel between the five boroughs, New Jersey, and Long Island. A single commuter spends about \$800 per month on travel fares. Money is being sucked out of us constantly and the MTA's solution is to raise fares and take more. The speakers talked about lower population cities that offer their residents free transportation. If buses and trains are free in places with a low number of people, why not New York? More and more people move into the city each year. With that, more money is spent per person which means mass transit and other businesses make more money. But, like any retail corporation, the MTA expects to raise their income every year. The MTA has become the same as a retail corporation. They keep squeezing us for our hard-earned dollar everyday and for them it's just business. So, each year they have a higher profit goal.

The MTA's plan for meeting their money hoarding quota this year is to make the parents of school-children, who already go through nearly \$800 per month on travel expenses of their own, to pay more to them just to get their kids to school. One speaker made a good point regarding the quality of service of the MTA employees, mainly the bus drivers in Staten Island. We all have to deal with the excessive rudeness of most bus drivers, although there are a few pleasant ones [the chances of a bus driver not instantly

hating your guts as soon as you board are few, and far in-between]. Not to mention the horrible timing of the drivers. I can't count how many times I have left my house early to get to school on time just to get to a bus stop and the next bus scheduled comes about half an hour late. The worst is when there is another bus for the same route right behind it with more space but if you go for that one, the driver will assume you're not trying to catch a bus (because you avoided the first crowded one) and then passes you. Then there are the buses that see you but don't stop anyway, leaving you and other people trying to get to work or school on a cold morning. Never mind the number of buses that are not in service that create more traffic because of their aimless driving. What are we paying more for? Service gets worse and we pay extra.

The bus lines they plan to cut on Staten Island are the S42 and S60, along with two others. Those cut routes usually go through neighborhoods with steep hills. Now it will be difficult for people to walk through these neighborhoods, notably the elderly. The budget cuts will affect student attendance in schools when students can't afford to make it to school because of high fares. The Staten Island railroad may also have turnstiles placed at each station. The speakers discussed the possibility of people jumping over the turnstiles to avoid paying. The speaker from Student Government made a counterpoint saying there would be law enforcement officers stationed at each platform. At least with that, we know what we're paying for when we pay our fares at a station. We invest in safety. I've been

on train platforms, late in the night, often to know that there are some really weird and suspicious characters there.

There has also been talk about extending the railroad. Which I think is definitely necessary for the constant increase in population on Staten Island every year. The railroad extension will create railways into Brooklyn, New Jersey, and to the southern tip of Staten Island. But, the drawback is that construction would most likely go through poor neighborhoods. Neighborhoods would be demolished to create this track leaving poor families living in the area homeless. During the show, the idea of using the plentiful underground space on the island for a subway came up. A subway could prevent demolition of these poor neighborhoods. More travel options must be created to decrease traffic, which is a serious problem on the island. There is a large number of car owners who reside here. Car traffic hinders bus movement making commuters late to their destinations. If the railroad spanned the entire island, it would make mass transportation incredibly productive. It might even prove to be faster than driving, giving people an incentive to save gas and move more conveniently.

Another plan to improve mass transit in Staten Island asks for a bus line specifically for Hylan Boulevard. The service promises fast passenger boarding and will hold green lights a few seconds longer to reduce travel time. Some believe this system will hurt businesses by loss of parking spaces. In my opinion, losing parking space is the least of the problems that plan will create. There are plenty of

residential streets on all sides of Hylan where people can park if they're not too lazy to take a two minute walk around the corner. Reckless drivers, as there are many on Staten Island, will see the extended green lights as an opportunity to drive faster. Anyone who has driven on Hylan Blvd. even once knows the entire street is like a highway. With fewer red lights, drivers are going to take advantage, which will make Hylan more dangerous than it already is. I'm all for the idea of the bus line, but not for the light extension.

The next topic was what could be done to improve campus parking and loop road traffic issues. The problem is the amount of students that attend the College of Staten Island. Last year the number was 4,000 students. It has now gone up to 13,000 this year. Since a good number of students drive, the campus needs more parking spaces. We should get rid of some of the lawn and make new parking lots. Many people argue that the appeal of campus comes from the green environment and people will be put off by more asphalt. The grass is nice, but it is bad enough most students who pay for a parking pass have to park in free parking anyway because the reserved parking is usually full. Not to mention the long walk across campus, which some people don't think is that bad, unless you're already running late. The walk from free parking to a South building can take up to 15-20 minutes, and taking the loop bus doesn't make much difference - it always arrives two minutes before your class starts. The time spent waiting for a bus and walking is the same. The amount of traffic makes purchasing a parking pass meaningless.

Getting a spot in a reserved lot is like a lottery.

The small town roads do not match the urban-like population of Staten Island. The loop road is a really narrow street as well. There has been talk of adding another lane for everyone else to use. A new lane is a great idea in my opinion. The campus also needs more exits. There are some points in the day when leaving campus is more difficult than finding parking. With everyone trying to leave through the main exit all at once, it creates a long line of cars worse than a line at a nightclub on a Saturday night. As we all know, the campus is incredibly dark at night and needs more lighting. The addition of more lights is also an issue that needs to be acted upon to increase safety on campus at night. We, as students and staff alike, can also improve traffic conditions by carpooling. Most students drive to school alone. Offering rides to classmates and friends works out for everyone. There would be more space on the bus and drivers can make a few bucks for gas money.

At the end of the show, the speakers made their closing statements reviewing everything they discussed. The premiere show of Third Rail Active went great and I look forward to covering future shows. The show will be airing Wednesday nights on 88.9 WSIA. Hopefully, the show will keep going and will be supported by our fans and people who care about the politics of our school and country.

Tough Pill To Swallow

Prescription Drug prices in New York are out of control – and the state’s efforts to help consumers are failing miserably

Ben DeAngelis and Rose Ellicott

In Midwood, Brooklyn, people with high blood pressure can fill their Hyzaar prescription at one pharmacy for a whopping \$7,511. But if customers shop around, just two blocks away the same prescription sells for \$97. As the healthcare debate rages in Washington DC and across the nation, New Yorkers are facing huge discrepancies in their prescription prices. A report released this spring by state consumer advocates shows a need for more public information to help consumers. Recent efforts to educate shoppers are falling short and it is time to fix the system.

A Bitter Pill is the second consumer report within the last year to identify substantial problems with the state’s attempts at helping prescription holders. The 2.6 million New Yorkers who are uninsured are hit particularly hard, because they pay full retail price for medications. Young people - ages 19 to 29 - have the highest uninsured rate of any group: 30 percent are uninsured, compared to 17 percent of the entire non-elderly - ages 35 to 60 - population. As a result of having to pay top dollar for their prescriptions within the past year, people without insurance were more than twice as likely than the insured to cut pills, skip doses or not to fill prescriptions in the past year.

It was not long ago that the legislature sought to expand the available information on prescriptions. In 2005, state law began requiring pharmacies to display signs advertising the health department’s prescription price website (<http://rx.nyhealth.gov>). But a survey done last winter by NYPIRG (New York Public Interest Research Group) shows that few pharmacies bother to follow the legislation. Of 256 pharmacies surveyed, only 46 stores across the state complied; in New York City, the compliance was worse.

While the prescription website is run by the Health Department, the jurisdiction of pharmacies falls to New York State’s already burdened Education Department. The enforcement by the Education Department has been ineffective and is putting consumers at risk. On top of that, the website itself has deficiencies.

The Health Department website is intended to list the prices of prescriptions at all pharmacies across the state so consumers can comparison shop. But the information for specific drugs can only be obtained by the system after a customer has filled that prescription using Medicaid at that particular pharmacy. So pharmacies without any Medicaid customers have no records and many pharmacies have numerous holes in their listings. People who want to comparison shop in their area are not getting all the information they need.

Across the city, prescriptions prices vary widely from store to store. The top ten most used medications in the city all range over \$130, depending on location. Users of Plavix can find their medication for less than \$25 in some places, and \$680 in others. While Medicare and Medicaid help some of those who need assistance, the system is inadequate. Seniors who fall into the “donut hole” of spending more than \$2,830 but less than \$4,550 annually on prescriptions are also

left without assistance.

When the original Medicare program was created in 1966, there was no need to create prescription drug benefits because drug costs were an insignificant amount of health care spending. Our government officials need to address these issues now, before problems get worse. First, the Health Department website needs to be expanded beyond Medicaid records. If the gaps are filled in, the website will prove much more effective in helping consumers. In addition, the Education Department has to enforce signage regulations to promote the online database. Its only when consumers are aware of price differences that they can comparison shop to save money, and protect their health.

Range in Prices for the State’s 10 Most Prescribed Brand-Name Drugs in New York City

Drug Name	Highest Cost	Lowest Cost	Range	Citywide Avg	Statewide Avg
Plavix 75MG TAB	\$680.63	\$24.95	\$655.68	\$189.29	\$186.46
Lexapro 10MG TAB	\$207.71	\$71.97	\$135.74	\$111.78	\$110.37
Nexium 40MG CAP	\$663.00	\$141.42	\$521.58	\$204.95	\$203.06
Prevacid 30MG CAP	\$437.39	\$95.00	\$342.39	\$206.23	\$203.73
Lipitor 10MG TAB	\$227.33	\$13.97	\$213.36	\$109.65	\$108.11
Celebrex 200MG CAP	\$269.52	\$103.00	\$166.52	\$143.19	\$142.58
Singulair 10MG TAB	\$338.00	\$97.58	\$240.42	\$147.63	\$146.18
Ambien CR 12.5MG TAB	\$393.68	\$38.90	\$354.78	\$189.00	\$188.19
Advair Diskus 250/50 INH	\$553.90	\$2.39	\$551.51	\$253.02	\$249.76
Nasonex Inhaler	\$231.25	\$79.99	\$151.26	\$123.40	\$122.83

NYPIRG Pharmacy Survey

All pharmacies in New York are required to post two pieces of information; a sign advertising that a “Drug Retail Price List” is available upon request and another informing people about the Health Department’s price website (<http://rx.nyhealth.gov>). Students from across the state spot-checked local pharmacies to assess compliance with signage laws. Rose Ellicott, a CSI psychology major conducted much of the local surveying, “I was shocked that even with legislation, that so few stores don’t post signs of their prices or of the website.”

Information was also obtained through the Freedom of Information Act to analyze prescription prices across the state. The report was not to compare stores, only drug prices. The report also revealed a clear jump in drug prices from just a few years ago.

Drug Name	Average of prices reported in 2007	Average of all prices as of Dec 2009
ADVAIR DISKUS 250/50 INH	\$222.16	\$249.76
AMBIEN CR 12.5MG TAB	\$151.81	\$188.19
CELEBREX 200MG CAP	\$125.74	\$142.58
LEXAPRO 10MG TAB	\$99.90	\$110.37
LIPITOR 10MG TAB	\$98.54	\$108.11
NASONEX INHALER	\$104.16	\$122.83
NEXIUM 40MG CAP	\$177.17	\$203.06
PLAVIX 75MG TAB	\$155.60	\$186.46
PREVACID 30MG CAP	\$180.98	\$203.73
SINGULAIR 10MG TAB	\$126.04	\$146.18

A Bitter Pill is endorsed by the AARP, Center for Medical Consumers, Consumers Union and the New York Public Interest Research Group. The full report can be found at www.nypirg.org/health/A_Bitter_Pill.pdf

Ben DeAngelis is the Project Coordinator for the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) at the College of Staten Island. Rose Ellicott is a freshman psychology major at CSI and Project Leader of NYPIRG's Consumer Protection Project. For more information on NYPIRG, email csi@nypirg.org or stop by the Campus Center 1C-218.

NYPIRG

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Voter Mobilization
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learn valuable skills while
working on meaningful campaigns

contact Ben at the NYPIRG office for more information:
rm: 1C-218, (718) 982-3109



As both a student and employee here at CSI, Andrew Oppenheimer relies heavily on the MTA. Most of you who have relied on the MTA are aware of how tiring it can be waiting for a train or bus that seems like it will never come. Buses and trains also seem to have a knack for coming late when you are in a hurry. Better yet, there is the occasional driver or conductor who sees you running for the bus or train and still he closes the doors and drive off.

“We have no options besides the MTA. We need them to do their jobs so that we can get to ours.”

Andrew's trials and tribulations with the MTA are chronicled in his journal.

Card
acing you

A Rider's Journal

Property of
Andrew Oppenheimer



11.29.09 - 1:30AM

Less than two hours ago I left my house for an evening of celebration as a good friend turned 21. She decided to celebrate in Manhattan, with pool and a bar later on. There was a restaurant involved too, but I had a prior obligation for that time.

I left my house at 10:09, aiming to meet with a friend and catch the 10:30 ferry. I arrived at the bus stop at 10:16, all the while looking through the tree line in my way to watch for passing buses. None passed, despite being a minute late. The next scheduled bus is at 10:49, thus pushing me back to the 11:00 boat.

My friend waiting at the terminal was kind enough to stay until this boat instead.

44 minutes passed. The bus arrived at 11:00 on the dot, as the boat is leaving. I got on anyway, assuming that I might catch the 11:30 ferry instead. I told my friend to go on without me, I didn't want to hold them up for a full hour because I'm running late.

While on the bus, I immediately noticed that the driver was busy talking to a friend of his, a middle aged woman that can't seem to shut up. Judging from the way he drove, he was caught up talking to her and now had to make up for lost time.

I arrived at the terminal at 11:06. Quite a bang-up job from the talkative driver that couldn't understand punctuality and urgency. The next boat was, in fact, at midnight. Rather than waiting, and arriving at the pool hall at 1AM, I called, wished them my best, and walked up the bus ramp for the next ride towards my house.

I was in luck, a bus was parked in it's loading zone. As I walk to the half full unscheduled bus, the driver pulls away. I waited another 20 minutes in the cold. The next one showed right on time, at 11:30. Apparently the only way to catch a bus on time (sometimes) is to catch them at the first stop.

The rest of the trip was quiet. I got off the bus at 11:40, I got in at 11:47.

Total time spent out: 99 minutes.

Total time spent in buses: 16 minutes.

Total time spent in transit on foot: 14 minutes.

Total time spent waiting: 53 minutes.

Total time unaccounted for: 16 minutes.

From this breakdown I can ascertain that the average trip time for a (literally) five minute ride is roughly an hour. More importantly, that the MTA literally stole 16 minutes of my life.

11.12.09

After 10:00PM, many buses will only run hourly, or cease to run at all. This is understandable to an extent, but in many cases leaves riders with no options. One such bus is the S62, which runs along Victory Blvd.

Last night a cluster of my friends and I went to a restaurant/dinner and finished up after midnight. This normally isn't an issue, but no one in this particular group drove. The bus I would've used to get home stopped running fifteen minutes prior, and the only bus in the area still in operation was the aforementioned S62. This bus had only passed three minutes prior, and the next scheduled run was in 57 minutes.

We collectively decided that it would be better to walk the length of Victory Blvd. rather than wait for the bus in the cold. The six of us marched on, passing something like two hours' worth of scenery. As we neared our destination, the bus finally passed. One friend commented about its' worth, and I pointed out that we would have paid \$2.25 after waiting an hour to save five minutes. The sense of triumph thickened for me.

2.5.10 - 12.02PM

The mousy driver seems equally fit to drive the bus as for him to molest children. He is rude, breaks hard, and ignores "customers" at their stops.

He is a poor representation of the drivers on this island, but even the MTA can choose its' workers. On this trip, the S44 is "empty" at a mere 20 riders. Scattered on the benches and chairs are white fliers, harbingers of the MTA's newest plan of attack on the riders.

The page shows a bias, but it does not lie.

The MTA is planning to cut the S42 (a senior populated route), the S60 (a residential route that climbs an impossibly steep hill with no other buses), the S67, and SIX express lines. They are also reducing frequency or rerouting the S54, S76, S40, S52, S66, and S57.

The paper also tells me to call MTA chairman Jay Walder at 212-878-7200. This strikes me immediately as less of a propaganda piece and more of a near silent rallying cry without a megaphone. Perhaps a better mouthpiece is needed.

My stop comes now, and I am off.



2.11.10 - 10:57AM

I am waiting at the corner of Henderson and Westbury Avenues for the S44, as I have been for the past hour. Yesterday it snowed, granting the MTA a temporary "Get out of Jail Free" card. Like any skilled monopoly player, they fully plan on using it, passing go, and collecting several million dollars doing nothing.

I left my house at 10:00 AM, knowing this absurdity would wait for me. Not snow delays - all streets on this route uses are major and the city already plowed them - but an hour wait for a fifteen minute ride to the ferry.

It is now 11:10 AM, and the first bus I've seen going in my direction just passed the stop. It was full beyond safe capacity to make up for the three others that didn't show. I hate the thought of every bus passing in this way. I'm within the last two miles of the S44's route.

In the past hour and a half, I have seen three buses headed in the opposite direction, four plows (one pushing negligible amounts of snow off of a street so small it might as well not exist), two police cars, and several DOT administrators. Henderson Avenue is completely plowed, and some spots are even sun-dried. I've watched the dry spots spread from the cracks in the street.

On Staten Island, the MTA has a much stronger monopoly than in the other boroughs. Many Islanders rely on the MTA to get them to work in Manhattan and Brooklyn. I have seen one stray cab fly by, full to the front seat. We have no options besides the MTA. We need them to do their jobs so we can get to ours.

At 11:50AM another bus finally arrives. This one is less full, and stops. I ask the driver why I waited an hour and fifty minutes.

"There are three buses out before me. We have three 44's out when we should have seven," he replies. "I've had my hands full." His tone is stressed, but polite.

I've heard in the past when an operator calls out they are not replaced. Their shift is left as an empty space. I now have confirmation.

After a fifteen-minute trip through very clear streets, I arrive at the ferry in time to catch the shuttle bus to CSI. I am very, very late.

2.22.10 - 12:48PM

The S44 managed to do it again. I arrived at the stop at 12:26PM, running late. The mall-bound bus is scheduled to pass this stop at 12:27, followed by another at 12:46. I realize (as the ferry bound bus passes) that there will be no 12:27, nothing the MTA operates on this island sticks to its' schedules.

I dive across the street for a better chance, hoping to possibly catch a shuttle at the ferry. The next bus on this side is scheduled for 12:39.

At 12:44 the mall bound bus comes. I run across the street again, despite a burst of heavy traffic. The bus is very full for something running fast. Must be to make up for the previous one.

It has taken almost 20 minutes to write five paragraphs while standing. It's now 1:07PM. My shift started seven minutes ago. I will be almost half an hour late when I get to work.

I hope the MTA plans to reimburse me for lost pay.

3.1.10 - 11:53AM

I've started taking the S40 in the mornings to connect to the ferry shuttle.

While less frequent than the S44, it seems to be far more punctual.

I missed the first 40 of my own fault, and opted to walk to the corner of Lafayette and Richmond Terrace (a stop for both the S40 and the S44). At this corner, I talked with an elderly man in a wheelchair. He missed the S44, unsurprising. He explained his trip to Roosevelt Island to visit his sweetheart. Apparently they'd swapped SIM cards in their cell phones and he wanted to make sure she got all the calls she missed.

Three minutes after the S44 was scheduled to arrive, the S40 showed on time.

I took a seat at the back, making sure the gentleman with wheels could have the space in the front of the new bus. Bright pink notices about the Service Reduction Hearing littered the seats and floor. A teenager threw one from her seat diagonally across from mine, plopping down. Her face was too happy. She must have been high, or oblivious to the world around her. She wasn't going to get the free ride forever.



3.2.10 - 7:52 PM - Service Reduction Hearing

The atmosphere in 1P is chaotic and angry. The air is hot, riddled with the hum of disgruntled riders and rightly directed angst. This is not a hearing anymore. It's a rally.

The usher at the door is a friend of mine, she informs me that it's actually beyond capacity. There isn't even standing room where the wheelchairs would normally go for a dance recital. A man in an MTA Police uniform stands near her, ensuring that no one will sneak in. A woman exits, and I hear the roar of applause as some harsh words are hurled at the MTA officials.

I climb to the second floor with some friends, and do a quick head count. I lose track after 200. I know the theater's capacity is roughly 1100 people. The usher for the balcony is gracious enough to take a photo of her section. It has never been this full of people or life.

While I know that my experiences are unique, they are similar to so many others that are present. I do not need to speak to have my voice heard, my voice is that of hundreds of others.

I smile and leave, knowing that the injustices of a corporation monopolizing our

lives will have to change their ways.



3.15.10

It's recently come to my attention that the service reductions have been lessened. The MTA has agreed to cut fewer lines and runs for various lines... but none of these apply to Staten Island. After all's said and done, we still face the brunt of the abuse. We still need to find ways to get our elderly up steep hills. We still face hundreds of children's inability to get to their schools.

We're still getting fucked by the organization that always claimed to be "Going [Our] Way." I guess our way is the wrong way.

The MTA is planning massive cuts to bus service here on Staten Island.

If enacted Staten Island bus passengers are looking at longer waits, over crowded buses or no bus service at all. Once again the MTA wants Staten Island to bear the brunt of service cuts while passengers on Metro North and the LIRR once again suffer little or no service cuts.

They don't care they are forcing **15,000 Staten Islanders** to use other buses and the Ferry to get to work and school. Yet they have no problem spending \$4,400,000,000 so people on the east side of Manhattan can take a subway not a bus to work!

What ever happened to congestion pricing? Less buses equals more cars equals more pollution.

The MTA is actually \$1 Billion over budget on the Fulton St. Subway hub. Yet, the MTA claims they will save \$3 Million by cutting the lines on Staten Island!

What can we do?

ATTEND THE MTA Service Reduction Hearing Tuesday March 2nd 6pm - 9pm College Of Staten Island Building 1P

Show Up and Let The MTA Know How You Feel. Only By Voicing Our Outrage Their Buses!!



The Veteran Political Agenda

By Michael Abramovich

“War is old men talking and young men dying,” anonymous. In our country there are two aspects of war: elected officials who make decisions, and the service members who carry them out. Commanders give orders and the troops follow them. We often assume that because the troops carry out orders without protest, they support those orders professionally and personally. However, the latter isn't always the case. Veterans and service members are individuals with unique experiences compared to civilians. Hence, veterans come with varied political and social views. To best demonstrate, compare: Dwight Eisenhower, John Kerry, John McCain, and George W. Bush all who have served. One will understand that there is no single unifying Veteran Political Agenda.

To understand the veteran's view point one must understand that vets come from varied backgrounds. All veterans were civilians and come from all walks of life; everyone who joins has a reason for serving. With that in mind one can assume all current and former servicemen have different political views and beliefs.

The one thing that all soldiers have in common is their service to the American flag. Every service member stands ready to go to war for the country if called upon. In this regard, veterans have shared experience and camaraderie. They have all worn the uniform. This shared experience allows them to bond as a group and to get along despite political differences. This is true especially for anyone who served in a combat zone. War on the ground is not political nor is it discriminatory.

Bullets and rockets target liberals, conservatives, and moderates equally. The enemy shoots at service members whether they agree with the conflict or not. To the opposing force, an American soldier is an American soldier. In a combat zone, service members must stick together and that unity remains once they go back home.

In some cases, veterans return to their civilian roots unchanged. These vets leave their service in the past and carry on with life. Other veterans become involved with local or national Veteran groups. These groups include the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and Student Veterans of America.

Veterans who go to college sometimes organize themselves into groups and clubs on their campuses, and the CUNY Veterans Administration links the veteran groups of the CUNY schools. Here at CSI the Armed Forces Club and the Student Veteran Center (located in 1C room 219) brings servicemen together, and works to improve the college experience.

What do most veterans want out of Washington and their state governments? They want to see more funding towards education, assistance with disabilities (for those who have them), better medical care, and preservation of their history and their struggles. No veteran wants their war forgotten, it means those who perished have been lost for nothing.

For those interested in getting involved here at CSI, one can come to an Armed Forces Club meeting, or to stop by the Student Veteran Center in 1C-219.

CSI Welcomes all Veterans of the United States Armed Forces

The purpose of this brochure is to help student veterans easily access educational benefits and other supportive services.

Professional counselors sensitive to veterans issues provide confidential personal and academic assistance and/or referral. PTSD information, screening, and/or referral are also available.

ARMED FORCES CLUB

- Campus forum for student veterans
- Meetings are held during club hours on Wednesdays at 2:30pm in Building 2N, Room 001.



VETERAN SERVICES AT CSI

- Educational and Financial Aid Benefits
- Readjustment Counseling
- Academic Advisement
- Information and Referral to
 - Disability Services
 - Mental Health Services
 - Instructional Support
 - Academic Counseling
 - Vocational Counseling
 - Community Resources



Services are available to student veterans and their family members at the Student Veteran Center, Campus Center (1C), Room 219. Please call Veterans Coordinator, Urszula Echols at 718.982.3108.

VALUABLE WEBSITES

- CSI Student Veteran Center—www.csi.cuny.edu/veterans
- Post 9/11 GI Bill Calculator—www.newgibill.org/calculator
- Veterans Affairs Education Benefits—www.gibill.va.gov
- Veterans Affairs Vet Center—www.vetcenter.va.gov
- CUNY Veterans Affairs—www.cuny.edu/veterans
- New York State Office of Veterans Affairs—www.veterans.state.ny.us
- Staten Island Project Homefront—www.siprojecthomefront.org
- Staten Island Supports Our Soldiers—www.sisos.org
- Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America—www.iava.org

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- **Michael Abramovich**
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- Visit us on the Web:
www.csi.cuny.edu/veterans



Filibuster Elimination

By Michael Gualtieri

The United States Senate is more dysfunctional now than it has ever been in history. It is time for us to eliminate the filibuster from the United States Senate because the Republican Party is abusing it to the point of crippling our legislative process. I generally hate to make partisan statements, but the obstructionism that Republicans are using in the Senate is unprecedented, and it is a childish disgrace. The filibuster is a method by which to prevent legislation from being voted upon. This parliamentary procedure can be used for good, but overall it is counter-productive. The United States has plenty of protection against bad legislation without these systems of obstruction.

The way a filibuster works in the United States is debating senators take advantage of the rule that a debate can only be closed by a vote of sixty or more senators. This means that a speaker can talk endlessly unless a super majority of senators votes to move ahead. In the past senators would read the Bible or a phone book, or just ramble endlessly to prevent votes. Filibuster sessions are a waiting game. If a filibustering senator needed to use the restroom, he would have to get another senator to continue speaking for him. This was a very frustrating waste of time, so they made an agreement that senators could simply announce that they wanted to filibuster a bill and the senate would move on to if there weren't enough votes to break a filibuster.

The constitution states that each House of Congress shall set their own rules for how they pass legislation. Traditionally, the House of Representatives has based its procedure around majority rule - they don't have filibusters - bills are passed by simple majority. The Senate tends to require much more consensus.

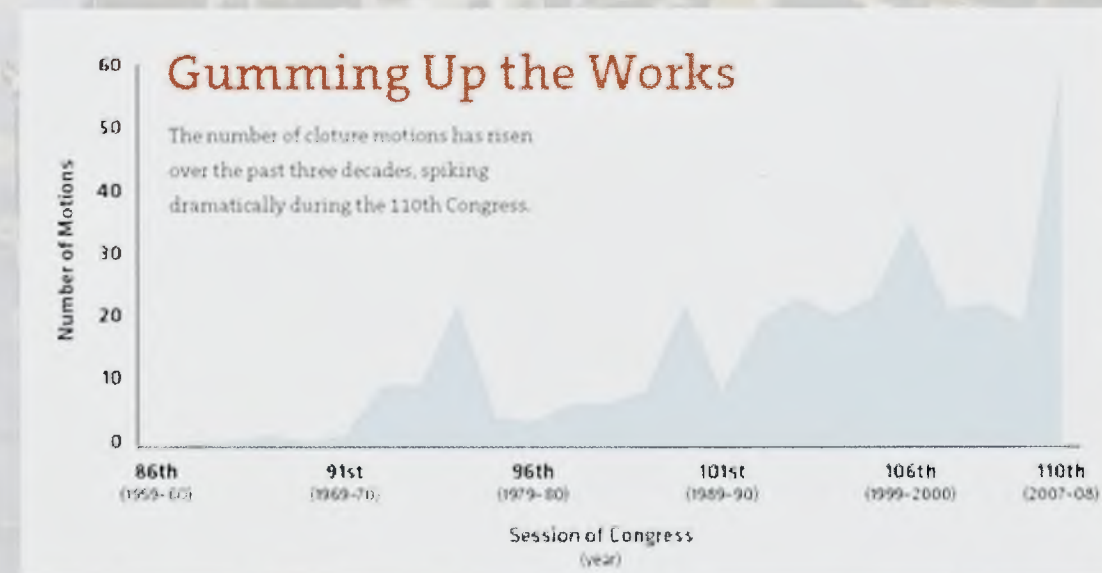
In my experience, requiring too much consensus makes an organization crippled by bureaucracy. For a short time I served in the University Student Senate, which is essentially a CUNY-wide student government. It was the most dysfunctional organization I'd ever seen. Nearly every person in attendance needed to vote in agreement for anything to get passed, and there were always a few holdouts who would never vote. Because it's very hard to please everyone, nothing got done. Other senators and I serving in USS would chat or read news papers while the same vote kept coming up, never with a large enough majority to pass. USS has significant power, but it is so crippled by its procedure that it is essentially useless.

I feel the United States Senate has become the same way. The record setting number of filibusters is preventing the senate from doing anything significant. A majority of U.S. senators support the creation of a Public Option for health care, and yet we are having trouble passing even

mild health care reform because majority is not enough. You need a super majority, and this is a new phenomenon. In 2005, Republicans were talking about eliminating the filibuster because they felt the democrats were abusing it. They were all over TV talking about how obstructionist Democrats were preventing up or down votes in the senate. Now that Obama is the president and Republicans are the minority, they are making attempts to filibuster every vote. They are even trying to filibuster policies that they are on-record supporting.

For example, Republicans recently filibustered a vote to re-enact pay-as-you-go, a fiscally conservative budgeting rule that required for any spending increases in the budget they would have to cut the same amount of spending from somewhere else. Six current Republican senators, including John McCain, had co-sponsored a bill to bring back that policy. But when Democrats tried to pass the same exact rule, those same senators joined a filibuster to prevent its passage.

If they won't vote for things that they support, than how can you compromise with them? I believe that Republicans are trying to prevent anything from getting done so that Democrats will look ineffective, and the Republicans are succeeding. The senate can and must eliminate the filibuster. With our system of checks and balances, a simple majority should be all that is needed to pass through the House of Congress.



In 2005, when Republicans wanted to eliminate the filibuster because Democrats were "abusing" the privilege, the number of filibusters was at its lowest point in 15 years.

The next congress, contributed by Republicans, saw ~300% increase in filibuster use.

Is The MTA a Glass Half Empty?

By: Ben DeAngelis

This summer will bring a string of cuts to MTA services throughout the region. Weekend and evening transit service will suffer, and another fare hike looms in the coming year. On the other hand, improvements to Staten Island's mass transportation system are seemingly in our near future. Railway expansion throughout the island and the introduction of Select Bus Service can ease the island's transit woes and prepare for the future of the borough.

Anyone who has ever commuted in Staten Island understands the transit issues we face. Strap-hangers lament over late buses, poor off-peak service, and high prices. Drivers are forced to sit in traffic because the inadequate transportation services lead to more of their fellow Islanders choosing to get in their cars as well. The MTA now faces an \$800 million budget gap, causing them to cut numerous services in all five boroughs. For Staten Island, the cuts are devastating. While other commuters may have to switch to another subway or bus line, Islanders will be left with few options.



The MTA's Service Changes Proposal calls for the elimination of three buses and several express buses in Staten Island. Commuters will be expected to switch to other local buses and utilize the ferry more often. "If the ferry were a viable option for everyone, you wouldn't see packed express buses of people paying \$11 a day to get to work that way," one strap-hanger told MTA

Board Representatives at the Staten Island Public Hearing on March 2, at CSI's Performing Arts Center. The hearings are starting to be an annual show on the theatre's schedule. This year's hearing featured over 1,300 attendees. "People are really fired up about these cuts," said Nicholas Saviano, a CSI sophomore who went to the event, "and the MTA needs to know we can't take another round of service cuts."

As the population of the borough continues to grow, (77,000 more people are expected to flock here by 2010) transit issues need to be addressed. Currently, the MTA's neglect of the island has stunted our ability to expand in a manageable and sustainable way. While the people of Staten Island contribute a significant amount to the city's transit services through taxes and tolls, they see little in return. Nearly six percent of the nation's tolls are collected on Staten Island's bridges, yet our buses are inadequate, our roads have potholes and those toll-collecting bridges are in constant disrepair. Much of our toll money leaves straight from those booths and heads to our neighbors in Long Island and the Hudson Valley. In fact, 50% of tolls subsidize the costs of Metro-North and Long Island Railroad Services. This substantial sum of money should be dedicated to transit improvements and upkeep in our own borough, not miles away.



It is not all bad news. The separation of the MTA's operational and capital budgets allows for new projects in a time when current services are suffering. There may be light at the end of the tunnel; the proposed Light Rail system. Ever since the North Shore Rail closed in 1953, there has been talking of reopening and expanding the lines. Feasibility studies have been conducted repeatedly and now we may finally have a plan that works. The Staten Island Economic Development Corp. is proposing a new train line to travel from New Jersey's Hudson Bergen Light Rail station on 8th St in Bayonne down to the Richmond Valley SIRR station. The route would travel south over the Bayonne Bridge, along the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Expressway and then beside the Staten Island Expressway to the West Shore Expressway, which it would follow all the way to its terminus.

The first phase of the project would run from Bayonne to a Richmond Avenue station, just a half mile from the College of Staten Island. The West Shore Rail would also be able to connect to

Is The MTA A Glass Half Empty?

New tolls take effect 3 A.M. March 16, 2008

CARS		
Verrazano-Narrows Bridge (One-Way Tolling)		
	Current	Effective March 16
Cash	\$9.00	\$10.00
E-ZPass	\$8.00	\$8.30
Staten Island Resident Token	\$6.40	\$6.70
Staten Island Resident E-ZPass	\$4.80	\$4.98
Staten Island Resident Carpool	\$2.25	\$2.33
Major Crossings		
- Bronx-Whitestone Bridge - Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel - Queens Midtown Tunnel - Throgs Neck Bridge - Triborough Bridge		
	Current	Effective March 16
Cash	\$4.50	\$5.00
E-ZPass	\$4.00	\$4.15
Henry Hudson Bridge		
	Current	Effective March 16
Cash	\$2.25	\$2.75
E-ZPass	\$1.75	\$1.90
Minor Crossings		
- Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Memorial Bridge - Cross Bay Veterans Memorial Bridge		
	Current	Effective March 16
Cash	\$2.25	\$2.50
Token	\$1.50	\$1.67
E-ZPass	\$1.50	\$1.55
Rockaway Resident Tokens	\$1.33	\$1.40
Rockaway Resident E-ZPass	\$1.00	\$1.03
Each Additional Axle - Cash or E-Z Pass (e.g. a trailer pulled by a car)		
Verrazano-Narrows Bridge	\$4.00	\$4.50
Major Crossings	\$2.00	\$2.25
Henry Hudson Bridge	\$1.25	\$1.50
Minor Crossings	\$1.25	\$1.50

a newly revitalized North Shore Rail. This connection of the entire rail system would give the island's roadways some relief. While the current bus system is having a tough time pulling people out of their personal vehicles, an improved commute time would certainly sweeten the deal. With a light rail system, travel from Arlington to St. George would take 12-15 minutes. The trip from Richmond Valley to Bayonne would be just over 24 minutes. But with Environmental Impact Statements and other studies still to be done, the earliest we may be able to catch a ride on the new line is still more than a decade away.

If that is too long for you to wait, the MTA may bring improved bus service within the next five years. Select Bus Service, also known as Bus Rapid Transit, would improve transit along a main thoroughfare, cut travel times, and alleviate traffic. By having strap-hangers swipe their MetroCards at the station, rather than onboard, stop time will be greatly decreased. This program also allows passengers to board through all doors, and will feature more seats than today's buses. The success of this service has been proven in a trial run along Fordham Road in the Bronx. While the exact location of Staten Island's new line is being debated, any neighborhood along its route

will surely see the benefits.

If the MTA can find money to remodel the Fulton Street Subway Terminal and dig new tunnels to add and expand subway service throughout Manhattan, then money should be allocated to improve the services on Staten Island. The cost of one mile of Select Bus Service will be roughly \$1 million, compared to nearly \$1 billion for a mile of subway. With a shift in mindset, Staten Island can take advantage of our available space and public support to expand our transit system. It has long been understood that there are few things that will get the borough's residents out of their cars and onto mass transit. This idea has kept us from a real push towards transportation expansion for many years. With our roadways already over capacity and the population continuing to grow, will we watch our bus lines fade away into a choking smog of traffic pollution, or will we find the support to bring Staten Island the transit relief it needs?



The Boondock Saints II: All Saints Day By Anthony Vivirito



The fans will always remember. They'll remember the unique action scenes, the unforgettable characters, the charismatic directing style. But above it all, they will remember the prayer. Everybody who has ever been exposed to The Boondock Saints will never forget the classic prayer recited by the duo as their trademark finish. There are some movies that stick with us and always will. But sequels tend to ruin that streak. Can a classic movie return after 10 years and still carry the same flair and originality? In my opinion, there's no sequel better to carry this flair than director Troy Duffy's *The Boondock Saints II: All Saints Day*.



peacefully living out their lives in Ireland with their father, Il Duce (Billy Connolly). They intended to continue this life, until they get the word that a priest in their beloved Boston has been murdered, and the methods used in the killing has them as the main suspects. In order to

clear their names and bring those responsible into their gun sights, they unearth the past they left behind to bring their own style of justice back to the streets of Boston.



I personally have to give it to Troy Duffy when it comes to continuity. Not only is the story picked up directly where the first left off without fail, but he manages to

The sordid story starts out eight years following the ending of the first movie. The McManus Brothers, Connor (Sean Patrick Flannery) and Murphy (Norman Reedus) are silently and

bring back the entire original cast. Every single member of this crew reignites the flame that had never left, and gave stellar performances. Of course, this time there are new actors to join the fray. Clifton Collins, Jr. (*Star Trek-2009*) joins

The Boondock Saints II: All Saints Day



a mafia legend by the name of The Roman, played by legendary actor Peter Fonda. Combining the original talent base of the first film with some actors from today and yesterday, Troy Duffy manages to assemble a cast that will be remembered through the ages among culters and movie-goers alike.

For a movie that has spent ten years on store shelves and Hot Topic merchandise racks gaining cult status and popularity, the director writes the sequel without letting time take away elements or sacrificing anything that made the first film what it was. He manages to build a story that travels with the movie, never intending the plot or the action to slow for any reason. Blending this with his flair for comedic situations, the

the Saints as Romeo, their hot blooded Mexican comrade who is looking to free Boston from its criminal element. Regardless of cleaning up their beloved city from evil men, the FBI is still around to give chase, and they have sent it in the form of the lovely Special Agent Eunice Bloom (who plays Rita on Showtime's "DEXTER"). Cult Classics are always known to bring big names to the table, and the villains of the movie do not disappoint. Judd Nelson brings his numerous talents to the table as mob boss Concesio Yakavetta, the son of the mob boss executed by the Saints at the end of the first film. He in turn hires an (relatively short) assassin named Crew Cut (Daniel DeSanto) to carry out the contract on the Saints. But both of them have a hand that guides them in the form of



movie carries the viewer on a thrill ride that does not compromise or disappoint. Troy uses his unique writing style to take us through many different stories and actually have them all converge at the end perfectly. He uses his unique story of convergence to tell exactly how every scenario went down, even when certain characters were not there to witness it. The action scenes do not disappoint. They continue to remain fertile through the film, ending each execution with the classic family prayer that has carried over so well through the series. As a fan of the series and a fan of the action genre, it is good to see the series is still keeping up with the fan base.

The only down-side to this movie was the ill-publicity it movie produced. It was given only limited release last Halloween and didn't have much time in the theaters. But that's the beauty of the en-

ertainment industry's "cult status" films (DVD's and home videos have helped movies to get into the hands of the world and expand the exposure to them). Thus, movies such as these, often containing great stories and groundbreaking filming, are able to have their day in court with the audiences. The Boondock Saints II: All Saints Day helps push movies like these into the



eyes of those who are fresh to the cult classics, and elevate the franchise itself into legendary status. It is available at all major outlets and rental chains, so do yourself a favor: pick up both titles, sit back in a comfy chair, some good snacks and a good friend who hasn't seen these films, and enjoy!

On Occupation

By Eugene Lerner

The recent events at the University of California and this past year's student occupations at NYU and The New School, as well as many other such movements both in the US and abroad, have prompted a great deal of interest in the "Occupation" phenomenon. I was asked to write a small piece on the subject for this fine publication. I write as a participant in the April 10 New School occupation as well as a member of the CUNY community, and a student and labor activist.

Because there has been much obfuscation around the concept of 'radicalism' lately, I must first attempt to clear these muddied waters. Political radicalism is, by definition, simply the tendency to directly address any given social problem. If you believe that directly addressing social injustice is a good idea, then you are a radical. If you believe that injustices ought to be left to fester, or that we should simply deal with their symptoms while keeping the actual source of injustice intact, then you are in the first case a conservative and in the second case a reformist. In this sense, occupation is a radical tactic.

When those who are in charge of a popular institution - administration, chancellor, board of trustees and politicians in the case of CUNY - do not act in the interests of those who actually make the institution run, or those who the institution is meant to serve (students, staff, faculty and members of the community), then it is time for those who make the institution run to wrest control from the hands of those in charge.

At the very least (as in the case of the 1969 occupation of City College), we can shut the institution down until those in charge give in to our just demands. In the best of cases it is possible to take the institution over and run it freely and democratically (as in the case of Argentina's 2001 factory occupations), entirely dispensing with the folks in charge.

Even when the radical aim of entirely displacing unjust social hierarchies has failed, these radical tactics have, more often than not, actually proven to be more successful than their reformist counterparts. So, even if you are a reformist, occupation should have an honored place in your arsenal.

Occupation is a tactic that is as old as it is obvious, and as effective as it is rooted in the history of CUNY. When I attended the CUNY Social Forum last year, I had the pleasure to speak with some of the participants in the 1969 occupation. This occupation succeeded in doing what all the placid and servile petitioning had failed to do- it finally forced the CUNY Board of Trustees to adopt a policy of open admissions. It created CUNY as we know it today: an institution of higher education for working people, and an institution that reflects the ethnic diversity of our great city. Thousands upon thousands of people (who were the first in their families to hold a college degree) have that occupation to thank for their opportunity to attain a higher education.

The parallels between 1969 and today

are clear. The open admissions policy has been defunct since Matthew Goldstein assumed the office of Chancellor in 1999. We have been hit with tuition hike after tuition-hike, year after year. Each of these blows has come one step closer to destroying the very character of our university. Each tuition hike and service cut makes a university education that much less attainable for working class people. Higher education is not simply a path towards better paying jobs, but an important part of an individual's quest for knowledge and personal fulfillment. Education is a basic human right. Not only must CUNY be safeguarded against further tuition hikes, but it must, by all rights, return to being the free university that it once was. This demand is as just as it is necessary, and wholly unattainable by any but the most direct methods.

"CUNY students are voters" is a favorite mantra of reformists who would achieve any and all political, social, and economic ends through political patronage. But the fact that CUNY students are voters only goes so far. Lucrative bribes, such as campaign advertisements paid for by moneyed interests that do not give a tinker's damn about CUNY or CUNY students, are more valuable to the slimy politicians whose table scraps we compete for than our potential votes will ever be. Power concedes nothing without a struggle, and writing polite notes, asking nicely, and perhaps chanting some rhyming slogans at an empty office building from behind an iron railing and a line of

riot police doesn't sound very much like struggle from where I'm standing. We've been there. We've done that. And it has accomplished nothing other than perhaps put a smile on Matthew Goldstein's oh-so-punchable face.

No victory is ever assured. It is possible that the tactic of occupation will fail to make higher education an inalienable human right in our city in the short term. However, a student takeover of our schools, demanding nothing short of an end to tuition and the reinstatement of open admissions, will do more to hold back the hikes and cuts than the futile ritual petitioning that we have engaged in for so many years.

The logic of the situation is inescapable: they take, we take back and we hold fast. If you feel that the next inevitable wave of tuition increases and financial aid cuts will make it impossible to continue your schooling, then the time to act is now. You have nothing to lose, and you everything to gain. Organize to occupy!

Join Third Rail

OK. So maybe we lied when we said we can guarantee you'll get laid by joining *Third Rail*. But while we can't guarantee you that, we CAN guarantee that you'll have lots of fun writing, photographing, designing, poeticizing (that's our made up word for creating poetry), investigating, debating, drawing and, oh yeah—criticizing the CSI Administration (they don't get enough of that). And if you're really lucky, maybe you won't just write about the news—you'll be the news! So join *Third Rail*! Our meetings are in the Campus Center (1C) during Club Hours. To find out when our next meeting is visit our website at www.ThirdRailMag.com, or give us a call at 718-982-3105. And who knows, you just might get laid.

Get Laid!

