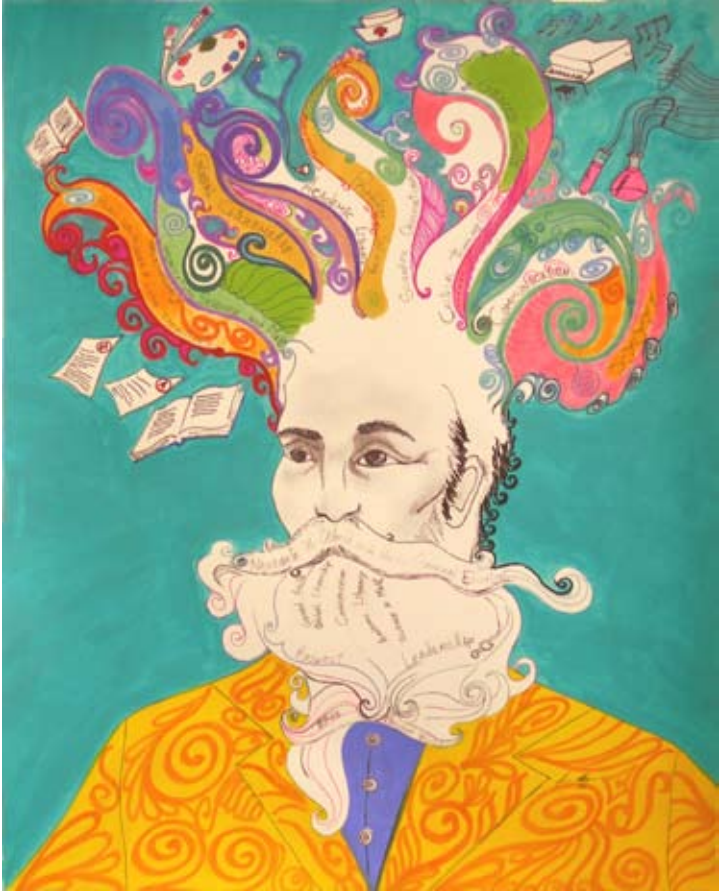


¡ESCRIBA! ¡WRITE!

A BI-LINGUAL JOURNAL OF STUDENT ART AND WRITING



VOLUME 6, JUNE 2008

EUGENIO MARÍA DE HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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A CAT'S MEOW PRODUCTION

COVER: Andriana Hiraldo Martinez, First Place, Gen Ed Contest
BACK COVER: Adam Speckenbach, Second Place, Gen Ed Contest

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INTRODUCTION 

You are about to experience the sixth annual issue of *¡Escriba! ¡Write!* and I am confident that you will be delighted by the diversity of talent, creativity, thoughtfulness and beauty of the written and visual work we include. We hope that these pieces will inspire you to submit your own work to this journal next year! In fact, each year's issue contains more diverse work than the previous year. This year, we build on the diversity and strengths of previous issues.

We are excited this year to include the art and writing winners of the new GenEd Monologues Contest which took place this May. All of the pieces submitted—not just those whose entries won—are deserving of thanks and congratulations, and the Hostos family is proud of all students who rose to this occasion to describe what General Education means on a personal level. Thanks and kudos to professors Lucinda Zoe, Carl Grindley, Ian Scott and the other members of the contest committee for the success of this first GenEd contest. We would also like to thank professors Justicia, Nuñez-Rodríguez and others who urged their students to submit work to the contest; and many thanks also to the GenEd contest committee for making it so successful. Once again, we are honored to present the essays which won top honors in the Women's History Month Essay Contest. Each year, English faculty and students work together to learn about women who have made a positive difference in the world, and then write essays to persuade the NYC Council to honor the woman of their choice. We want to thank professors Andrea Fabrizio, Maria Bennett, Jerilyn Fisher and the entire Women's History Month committee for their great work and for making sure that the winning essays are proudly included in this journal.

A new theme is represented, thanks to Prof. Flor Henderson, whose students have written letters to her that we call "Bringing Green Into Our Lives." Hostos Community College is on its way to becoming part of the solution, not part of the problem, in terms of our responses to climate change, global warming, and the health issues arising because of the pollution and toxins created by our species, homo sapiens. You will find a sampling of these thoughtful and honest letters in this journal. We also present a number of essays that are masterly examples of academic writing based on research, as well as personal experience. These essays reflect the focus or themes in two of our elective English courses: "The Bible

and Literature,” taught by Prof. Carl James Grindley, brought us two interesting essays and “Literature and Illness,” taught by Prof. Frances Singh, brought us the provocatively titled essay, “Stoned.” Many thanks to professors Grindley and Singh for urging their students submit their essays to *¡Escriba!*. In addition to essays, we are delighted by the poetry this year. We have always encouraged students to submit work in Spanish or any other language they are comfortable with, and this year we have more poems in Spanish than in any of our previous issues. Thanks to professors Miguel Correa and Frances Singh for their help in connecting their student poets with *¡Escriba!*. Hostos is a truly global community and we want our journal to reflect the multi-lingual nature of our college. This year, enjoy the poetry, both English and Spanish. And please be inspired to submit your own poetry to us for publication.

This issue of *¡Escriba!* also showcases the impressive artwork and digital photography produced by our students. We are sure you will agree that this intriguing collection of paintings and photos conveys our students’ unique and highly individualistic views of the world. A masterly touch is evident, from the festive landscape of “Dream City: A Celebration” to a striking self portrait of one of the artists as a fruit seller. Beautiful compositions are also characteristic of student work from Hostos’ new digital photography program. This stirring collection of images reminds us of how our students can achieve transcendence in a manner similar to the transformation of ordinary objects into works of art. Thanks to professors Ian Scott and Maria Dumlao for their help in bringing their student artists and photographers to *¡Escriba!*

THE GEN ED MONOLOGUES

This past year, we have been focusing our attention and reflections on General Education. As expressed by The Professor Magda Vasillov Center for Teaching and Learning, “General Education is the foundation of the Hostos experience. No longer just a sequence of required courses, GenEd is a set of learning competencies that transcends traditional boundaries and stretches across the curriculum. With the goal of nurturing, developing and educating the global citizen behind each professional, GenEd is a reflection of the college’s values.” This spring we held a contest asking: “What does it mean to be Human...to be Educated? What does GenEd mean to YOU?” We are proud to publish the winners in the art and writing categories.

Professor Ian Scott introduces you to the art winners and I will say a few words about the winning writers. There were many admirable submissions in this category and we wish we had the space to publish them all. However, as you will undoubtedly see, the fine work of Ms. Gloria German Alvarez, Ms. Renee Blaise and Ms. Zong Ling Li represent the beauty of our very diverse student body and of Hostos students’ experiences. Ms. German Alvarez won first place with her essay focusing on her upbringing in the Dominican Republic, her reflections on the stereotype of poor people, and her understanding that through education, we can fulfill our dreams and goals, and never forget to reach out to pull others up with us. Ms Zong Ling Li, our third place winner, provides a delightful and enlightening imaginative dialogue between three characters: Plato, the Greek philosopher, Harvey, and Esteban. Between them, they ponder the “nature of truth, reality and illusion.” It will be up to you to decide which of these describes your approach to life. Ms. Blaise, our second place winner, contributes a poem and it may be best to end with the clarity these lines from her poem, “Stand Out!”

Going back is impossible
 but going forward is the choice you’re faced with.
 Become the sponge,
 take in all the information that it can store.
 Be the bookworm that will be the next politician.
 Success comes from the little goals achieved.

 **WE ARE CHANGING THE PERCEPTION**

When researching about study-abroad programs this week, someone asked me directly: “Well, are you poor?” After quickly giving it some thought, my answer was affirmative. What was once a pleasing attitude instantly shifted to a pitiful gaze: “So it seems this possibility is not for you.” After walking away from that office, I figured that anybody else could’ve just given up. So many doors are closed in the faces of poor people that it makes everything seem more of a challenge. However, even though we do have many things going against us, one of the biggest ones being the concept society holds of the poor rather than a lack of money itself, many of us have been able to overcome those obstacles. I myself am the perfect example that being poor does not mean living an unworthy life and not achieving any of your goals. And just like I did, many people can and have done so, proving false the stereotype of the poor.

Growing up in a family with seven children, life wasn’t easy for writer Bell Hooks. In spite of hardship, Hooks went to school, but she admits that some of the most important lessons she would learn were taught in her home: she learned how to be intelligent, responsible and hardworking. However, when she went to college, she was surprised to find ideas that differed from what she had learned. In her essay “Representing the Poor,” Hooks says, “They almost always portrayed the poor as mindless, lazy, dishonest and unworthy” (171). Hooks herself was an example that these ideas were wrong, and she says everything she knew about values she learned “...from the poor, the disenfranchised, the underclass” (172). Hooks’ example proves that poor people are not the way they are portrayed by society and, as she does, the poor have important values and are able to overcome adversity, just as she has.

The concept society has of the poor is perhaps the largest obstacle the poor face today. It is because of this concept that people tend not to trust poor people, therefore shutting down so many possible opportunities of growth. In spite of all this, there is a person who trusted these people—an action that earned him a Nobel Peace Prize. Mohammad Yunus started lending small amounts of money to poor people, and against everyone’s belief, they did pay back. In the essay “Grameen Bank,” Yunus says, “It is not just happening in one village, or a couple hundred villages; it is happening in thousands of villages in Bangladesh” (195). So it wasn’t just a few people who paid back the loans from Grameen Bank; they all

paid back. This continues to disprove the stereotype of the poor, who are trustworthy, hardworking people.

Perhaps the example I hold closest to my heart is one I got involved with very closely. Back in Dominican Republic, I have to admit I was not poor. One of the many commodities I have back home is the possibility of having a maid, and ever since I was a baby Martha Silven has been with me. Martha was born in a very poor family in a village of Samaná, one of the provinces of Dominican Republic. When she was just 15, she moved to the city and started working as a maid. Martha is one of the most hardworking people I've met, sometimes managing to work up to three jobs at the same time. In spite of her very poor background she didn't consider what could've been the easiest possibilities: instead, she worked extremely hard. This is a person with character, hardworking, responsible, and poor. And yes, you can have all of that in one person, I have witnessed it first hand.

Today we are seeing more and more examples that prove the perceptions society has of the poor has stayed in the past. We have proven to be people who are responsible, trustworthy, hardworking, and intelligent. Even though changing a stereotype is something that takes time and work, I am certain that many of us are setting that standard up, and proving that you can be poor and lead a very meaningful life indeed.

 **STAND OUT**

I'm from where the sun shines bright
and reflects off the tall buildings.
This is my General Education.
The streets I walk through every day,
learning his and hers culture every day.
The empty car lot that is the t'weens' park,
until they're wise enough to know that playing
With tires isn't as cool as riding on all four.
This place that should be beautiful
is now on a path to being waste.

So I will step on my platform and shout
"There is not much time left! Look around you!"
The days are shortening, the clouds are gray,
The sun stops shining
and the kids won't even make it to be old and gray.
Look at the days that have passed.
Yesterday was a cold New Year's day
And today is the cook out on the beach.

"Wake up!" I shout. "You're not paying attention!
It's not normal, so please stop thinking
You had nothing to do with it."
You said, "We are the most intelligent creatures."
I say, "If you're so intelligent,
why pick the path of destruction?
Listen. I have the antidote
to this illness that's been created.
Don't give up.
Stick it through.

Why?
Because there is a professor waiting just to teach you.
Tomorrow is not in your hands
but in what you take in every second and minute in life.
Going back is impossible
but going forward is the choice you're faced with.
Become the sponge,
take in all the information that you can store.
Be the bookworm who will be the next politician.

Success comes from little goals achieved.
My success is from the history of the street
to the understanding of the classrooms.
Stand Out!

 **THE THREE PEOPLE YOU MEET IN HEAVEN:
PLATO, HARVEY AND ESTEBAN**

Bathed in the bright, yet calm, light was where the three met each other. Each of them was confused about where they were. But as soon as they set their eye on the dreamy clouds with the soothing atmosphere, they were sure that it could only be one place, Heaven.

As Harvey the Pooka, Esteban the Drowned Man, and Plato the Greek Philosopher entered the door of Heaven, they met a sweet angel with wings that were as white as a swan's feather.

Angel: Welcome, Harvey! Welcome, Esteban! And welcome, Plato! Welcome to Heaven!

Harvey: Excuse me, ma'am, but where exactly am I?

Esteban: And who are you, if I may ask?

Angel: You are on your journey to heaven, and I am your adviser angel. In your journey to heaven, you will meet three important people. I'm the first one. With us, you will learn three important lessons of life. They are the nature of truth, reality and illusion.

Plato: Ah, the nature of truth, reality and illusion. How could anyone ever guess that I, Plato, am learning these lessons! Advisor angel, to which great Greek philosopher are you referring?

Harvey: I say time is precious! Let's get started with our lessons!

Esteban: I agree.

Angel: So, everyone, what are your opinions on the subject of truth, reality and illusion?

Plato: From my personal philosophy, illusion is created by what reality provides. The limited reality supplied to us humans has made people begin to create illusions. Truth, on the other hand, is absolute. Therefore, truth will only be reached when a person cuts off the ignorant imaginations of illusion and only focuses on the reality that's being provided.

Harvey: I'm sorry sir, but I have to disagree with your opinion. Although illusion is created by our imagination, it is based on the foundation of truth. When people dream, it often is related to their personal experiences and knowledge.

Esteban: But sir, illusion can be such a mess! In the village, the women were so excited by my unusual appearance that they made up a whole different life story about me.

Plato: Ah, exactly my point! How ignorant! Their story was created by their lack of education and knowledge. Because they didn't know anything about you, your odd appearance gave them the opportunity to place their dreams within your life story.

Harvey: What harm did it do? Absolutely none! Why, you should be proud of yourself, Esteban, to be the one who gave those women the chance to dream and stretch their imaginations! With my existence, my friend Elwood found joy in his life!

Esteban: Why does it matter? You were just an imaginary friend, all made up in Elwood's mind. You were never real and true. All your appearances in their lives were their imagination.

Harvey: What is truth? It is only based on where your knowledge extends. How can you ever be sure that the world you're living in right now is real, and not just another dream?

Plato: Ah! This conversation brings back a dialogue I once wrote called *The Allegory of the Cave*. People who were imprisoned in chains inside the cave had only one connection to the outside world: the shadows that were reflected on the wall of the cave.

Harvey: Please go on with your story.

Plato gave him a cold stare.

Harvey: Excuse me, I meant your philosophy.

Plato: Since the only thing all these people saw everyday were the shadows from outside the cave, they began to make up stories according to the shadows. But all the stories that were made up were false illusions. Therefore, the truth is only the truth when it's fully based on reality.

Esteban: Just like the women in the village. They anger me so much that sometimes I wished I could tell them off.

Harvey: What's so wrong about illusion? If the people in the cave didn't have the illusions of the reflections on the wall, their life would have been full of boredom and lacked any meaning.

Plato: Well, if you disagree with us, why don't you go and ask the Angel?

Harvey: Angel, please settle the question here.

Angel: No, no, no, Harvey! The point of the journey to heaven is to interact with others and discuss the nature and meaning of truth, reality and illusion. There is no definite answer to any question, and this is not an exception. Farewell, for now your journey has ended.

As the Angel disappeared into thin air, there was suddenly a big explosion, and the world turned to a space of emptiness. And after that, all I could hear was a familiar and ear-piercing sound. Then I realized that it was my alarm. This all had been just a dream.

“Stop exaggerating. Go to the bathroom. You know we’re going to be in the hospital all night,” he said.

My husband is a detractor, so when I am in excruciating pain I try to avoid him. For about the last month of the pregnancy I’ve been going through this with him. He’s always trying to convince me that what is isn’t. Being six months pregnant and experiencing—how can I explain—such pain would make anyone nervous. I think I didn’t rush to the hospital at first because of fear. No woman wants to hear there’s something wrong with her precious. The pain would come and go, but never really go away for more than a couple of days or so. It would hit me like a punch from a boxer, maybe a heavyweight, in my right side.

Tonight was one of those hot, humid summer nights when I couldn’t bear the pain any longer. The sleepless nights were really taking a toll on me. Previously, I had gotten some relief by tucking my head between my knees and becoming a human ball. In fact, I was beginning to think I was more a ball than a human being. My husband wasn’t home when the pain hit this time. I called him, and was relieved that he was on his way home. Even though he had just told me to see if I had to use the bathroom, he sounded as if he were rushing home. Why did he always seem to think I was crying “wolf?”

When my husband got home 15 minutes later, he was his usual self. “Are you sure you don’t have to use the bathroom?” he asked. I told him, “it’s not my stomach, it’s my side.” All I could think was how am I going to get through this? My baby was my priority and it wasn’t even born yet. Could you imagine carrying a baby for six months and not being able to deliver a healthy baby? I’d heard stories from my friends about women going through difficulties while pregnant and having stillborns. Those stories, coupled with my obsessive reading about disorders, was driving me crazy. I was always into parent magazines and first time mother series of books. They filled my head with disaster scenarios like SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). But at this moment, the pain in my side was occupying my brain.

We got in the car and drove about 6 miles to the hospital, Long Island Jewish. It is a nice peaceful neighborhood on Long Island, in the beautiful town of Manhasset; a well-off community. The maternity ward has a high reputation. My friend Cathy who

works in the hospital has told me all about the prestigious awards it gets for efficiency. And it's clean. The ride was quiet. We barely spoke to each other. My pain kept me from engaging in any trivial chatter, that and the fact that he was driving about 70 mph, but I was hoping he would drive just a little faster because it seemed like we would never get there.

I felt every bump on the road. It was like I had a heightened sense. My husband, who's really big on car safety, demanded I wear a seatbelt. The belt was very uncomfortable and with every bump the belt became tighter. I could barely sit upright. I kept trying to crouch and bend over but between the seat belt and my big belly it was almost impossible to turn myself into a ball.

Before we left, I had had my husband call Dr. Gilad so that he could meet us at the hospital. He was waiting for us when we arrived. Dr. Gilad is a young, balding man with average looks. He's been practicing for years now. He's friendly and gives you a comfortable feeling because he's so competent. He doesn't let anything go unnoticed. Also, he lets you know his every move, which made me feel less violated. And he has a steady hand and voice.

As I attempt to explain what is going on, the sharp pain hits me. The doctor and nurses get me into a room and start testing the baby's health. With the smug look on his face, I assume my husband is still in lalaland through all this, not realizing the severity of the situation. Meanwhile, the wavelike motions of my child were visible on the monitor. This was taken as a good sign by Dr. Gilad. "A kicking baby is a live baby," he says.

As I'm wheeled into the high risk maternity ward, I start to remember all the things that could go wrong and all the tests they might have to do, tests that I don't approve of. There's that test called amniocentesis. In this test, they stick a long needle through your belly button and puncture the embryonic sac to relieve some fluid from the baby to determine the disorders it might have. "Relax, relax, everything is going to be all right. Your baby is fine." This is my doctor speaking while placing a heart monitor on my belly. It looks like a small box attached to an elastic strap which is then tied around my stomach. But before they attached this contraption, they applied some lubricating jelly. It was so cold and wet feeling that I almost peed.

I've been seeing this doctor for about two years and my husband thinks he's okay. My husband says in a jovial tone, "He's too

ugly for you to cheat on me with.” My husband has also attended every appointment of the pregnancy with me to the gynecologist. I truly trust this man who has become my support in this trying moment.

After waiting hours for the results of testing, blood and physical, I get the diagnosis from Dr. Gilad. “You have something called kidney stones, nothing to do with the baby.” Dr. Gilad continues, “This is either a hereditary condition or what you’ve been eating has contributed to the development of the stones.” I told him that my father has had them several times, the latest being two years ago. So I knew that kidney stones ran in my family, but who could have guessed that I was going to be the one experiencing them while six months pregnant?

Dr. Gilad went on. “It’s not very common in pregnancy, but it seems linked to mild dehydration. Maybe it was just your diet that brought them on. Maybe you’ve been eating diet or salty foods. They could have contributed.” From research I did later, I didn’t find any correlation to my being pregnant and having stones, other than it takes three times more fluids to satisfy a pregnant woman’s needs. Most women don’t increase their fluid intake. Just my luck. I guess I fell into that category of woman who doesn’t increase her fluid intake.

Kidney stones are a common disorder of the urinary system. They are hard masses developed from the build-up of crystals that are separated from the urine. These masses usually pass through the urinary tract. The pain of this experience is equated to the passing of a dime through a pin hole. When my husband heard I had kidney stones, he was stunned and apologetic. “I’m sorry for not believing in you,” he said.

Dr. Gilad told me I was going to pass them through constant urination. He opted to leave me in the high risk maternity ward and monitor my urine. I was on a low dose of morphine since that was the only drug that could ease my pain without endangering the baby. The morphine would get me numb, but it only worked for a short time. I’d be pain free for about four hours and then have pain for two hours. The two hours of pain was crippling. It felt as if the four hours of no pain was passing by in two minutes and the two hours of pain was eternal. I never thought that something so common could be so unbearable.

My hospital room was large and had a standard TV on the wall. I was in the bed by the window. There was another patient across the room. She was in the hospital because she was going to deliver quadruplets early. She had a constant flow of doctors. Every time the doctors came in, I would get nervous. Sometimes she would moan and the nurse would call for a doctor. The commotion would startle me. That became a problem because the baby monitor on my belly would get dislodged, the alarm would go off, and the nurses would run in. Being a nosy person, my patient neighbor kept my mind so busy that I didn't reflect all that much on my own situation. We had a nurse on call 24 hours. The nurse was always asking me if I had to use the bathroom or if I was hungry. All in all, the nurses were compassionate. But if I had a choice, I would have preferred to be in a room by myself.

The nurses would let me urinate only into a bucket. The bucket had this large sifter which looked like a fine net. I would do this about four times a day. The process was strenuous. I would waddle over to the bathroom holding onto the pole carrying my IV. The nurse would lift my gown and hold me on the toilet. On my fifth day there I ended up with a high fever of 101 degrees. This was very dangerous because the change in body temperature could endanger the baby and it indicated I had an infection. The infection, of course, was in my kidney. I broke out into a cold sweat, and the nurses ran into the room to take the vitals of the baby. The nurses figured I was about to pass a stone, so they helped me up and I sat over the toilet with the sifter. When the excruciating pain was over I had passed a stone the size of a grain of sand. It was visible in the sifter. Thank God, I thought, it's all over. But to my dismay, the fever stayed. I wanted to go home so much. I was very tired and the hospital bed wasn't comfortable. It wasn't soft like my bed at home. I missed my mattress.

The next morning, Dr. Gilad came to the hospital to give me one last check-up and to discharge me from the hospital. He told me that the largest stone had passed and the rest of them would be painless. He showed me a sonogram that showed some white freckles in the kidney. Those were the stones that caused me so much grief. I figured that since Dr. Gilad had discharged me I would be on my way, but the hospital was taking longer than expected. Apparently, my fever had not gone away completely. And

I would not be able to go until the fever had gone. I really wanted the IV off of me.

My fever finally broke and I still had no one to remove the IV. The nurses insisted I wait until they could send someone to remove it properly. But it was bothering me and it really doesn't take too much intelligence to take it out, so I did it myself. I think I violated some hospital policy, but it was out, I was aggravated, and I was determined to go home. When the nurses saw what I had done, they handed me my discharge papers. The head nurse yelled, "You know, people usually wait to have needles and tubes to be removed by doctors or nurses."

I think the stay would've been much worse had it not been for my husband. He was visiting me every day and staying for hours at a time. He would bring me soup and fruits. I was always asking for apples and bananas although the morphine took most of my appetite away. Sometimes I felt like hitting him. "How could you doubt me?" I yelled. He replied softly, "I'm sorry." On the ride from the hospital, he was so concerned. He kept asking, "Are you all right? Can I get you something?" I noticed that the ride wasn't as long as I thought it was. I guess when you're in pain, your perceptions of time and space are affected.

When we got home, my husband and I talked over the situation and decided we needed a system in place for emergencies. I suggested that for starters he should believe in me. He chuckled and started devising a system whereby I would just have to call and hang up to let him know to come home. I lay on the bed and nodded. I was thinking of the sleep to come on my own comfortable mattress. I felt relief when I rubbed my belly and the baby started kicking. "A kicking baby is a live baby." Dr. Gilad's words came back to me. I drifted off into sleep.

Today I have a beautiful baby girl. She is 20 months old and doesn't know the fear I endured while pregnant with her. Every day is a smile and a giggle for her but the whole experience lingers. The fact is that 50% of people who have had kidney stones are likely to have them again within ten years. And I know they can be brought on by pregnancy. Next year I plan to be pregnant again and hope that I won't have kidney stones!



THE DIFFERENT FACES OF JESUS: THE GOSPELS OF THOMAS AND JOHN

The first century CE was a time of great political and social upheaval for the Eastern Mediterranean world. The abrupt end of the Jewish temple-state, resulting from the fall of the Maccabees, and the Greek *polis*, from the death of Alexander, left society grasping for social order and understanding of the rapidly changing world around them. A young man from Galilee offered suggestions on how to live one's life in the midst of these complex social circumstances.

Burton Mack explains the popularity of Jesus' teachings as having rested on two themes: the challenge to take up a counter-culture lifestyle, and the social concept called "the Kingdom of God," an ideal society in contrast to that offered by the Romans (Mack 40). Jesus' idea of a kingdom that was welcoming to all, with no attention paid to status or class, was found to be very appealing to people at this time. Within ten years of his death, a number of Jesus movements would arise to carry on his teachings by producing the Sayings Gospel Q, The Gospel of Thomas, and the pre-Markan pronouncement and miracle stories.

Not yet fully understood by Biblical scholars, there seems to have been an abrupt transformation of one particular Jesus movement, beginning in Northern Syria, into a cult of a god called Jesus Christ (Mack 75). While little regard had been previously given to the life of the historical Jesus, this new Christ cult would pay particular attention to his death and destiny of bringing about a new community. Mack explains that this focus on Jesus' death would pull attention away from his teachings and produce an elaborate preoccupation with ideas of martyrdom, resurrection, and the transformation of Jesus into a divine, spiritual presence (Mack 75). Looking through the canonized Christian texts, one is able to see the evolution of the Christ myth beginning in 1 Corinthians, by the newly converted Paul, to the celestial depictions found in the Gospel of John, and culminating in the apocalyptic Book of Revelations. Just how stark a contrast of ideas between the Jesus movements and that of the Christ cult shall be further explored through the examinations of the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of John.

The discovery of the Gnostic Gospels in an Egyptian cave in 1945 shed great light on the early years of Christianity and

the Jesus movements. Of the fifty-two texts found, the Gospel of Thomas garnered the greatest attention for its close resemblance to the hypothesized Gospel of Q. Containing solely the sayings of Jesus, the Gospel of Thomas pulls the reader in with an incipit promise to reveal esoteric knowledge: “These are the secret sayings that the living Jesus spoke and Didymos Judas Thomas recorded.” This idea is continued in the text through the repetition of the statement “Whoever has two ears to hear should hear”, and Jesus’ entrusting Thomas with three sayings (GTh 13), signifying him as one of the true disciples. The veneration of Thomas as one of the true disciples, along with Mary and James, can also be seen in the discourse held between Jesus and the others. The unnamed disciples ask Jesus questions of how to practice religion: “Do you want us to fast?, How should we pray?, Should we give to charity?, What diet should we observe?” (GTh 6). The answers that they receive imply they have wrongly assumed that through the mere practice of physical worship they can be allowed entry into the kingdom: “If you fast, you will bring sin upon yourselves, and if you pray, you will be condemned, and if you give to charity, you will harm your spirits” (GTh 14). Throughout the text, the continued questioning by the disciples is used to show the incorrect ideas carried by the other groups of that time, while Mary, James, and above all, Thomas, understand the true meaning behind Jesus’ words.

The character of Jesus that is introduced in the text is portrayed as one of a sage. While he holds the key to the kingdom of God, this key is easily obtainable to anyone arriving at the true interpretation of his teaching, thereby becoming just as enlightened as he. “Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me; I myself shall become that person, and the hidden things will be revealed to that person” (GTh 108). This Jesus, while possibly being divinely inspired, is not of a divine creation. He warns against such interpretations, “When you see one who was not born of woman, fall on your faces and worship. That one is your Father” (GTh 15). This type of warning may also be interpreted in verse 52: His disciples said to him, “Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and they all spoke of you.” He said to them, “You have disregarded the living one who is in your presence, and have spoken of the dead.” This statement made by Jesus may suggest

that he, like the twenty-four before him, is a prophet, and not the promised messiah of the Old Testament.

Since the writing of the Gospel of Thomas, the portrayal of Jesus would slowly move away from his teachings and focus on the man. The three synoptic gospels would demonstrate a servant of God, in Mark, the promised messiah, in Mathew and the perfect man, in Luke. The Gospel of John, the last of the Gospels, would sharply detour from the ideas found in the Gospels of Thomas and the synoptic Gospels by depicting Jesus as being the word of God. No longer do we see a common man lead by divine inspiration, but a cosmic being that was present at the creation of the universe.

The Gospel of John introduces its Jesus figure as having descended from heaven as the light of man, (John 1: 4) as a means of salvation for a human race that has rejected God. The gospel can be divided into separate parts, Jesus' miracles, death, and resurrection. No attention is paid to Jesus' birth or teachings, with the exception of parables attesting to his own divinity. The intention of the Gospel of John, and of the early Christian Christ cult is, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31). Just as the Gospel of Thomas had called into question the other disciples' understanding of Jesus, the same can be seen in the Gospel of John towards the followers of Thomas. As Jesus appears to the disciples after the resurrection, it is Thomas who is a non believer of this occurrence and the resulting title of Doubting Thomas would persist through the ages.

The character of Jesus is no longer spreading the word of God, but has adopted his own means of salvation that offers one path for attainment. This can be seen in his statements, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the father, but by me" (John 14:6), "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am" (John 13:13). With the cycle of Jewish festivals occurring as a backdrop, the continuous healing miracles—be it blindness or death—the reading of the Gospel of John appears to be an account more to the likening of a theophany than that of a historical or even synoptic figure.

The Gospels of Thomas and John offer two separate views on the character of Jesus, one that offers mentorship and guidance to the kingdom of God, and another that demands an unwaver-

ing covenant with him in order to attain salvation. As a personal preference, it is with the Gospel of Thomas that I would have to align myself. Thomas' depiction of Jesus allows for its followers to maintain their own independence within the journey of enlightenment. John's depiction of Jesus is one that mandates full submission by its adherents, which can be very frightening if placed in the wrong hands.

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ALLUSIONS TO THE BIBLE IN PETER WEIR'S *THE TRUMAN SHOW*

Peter Weir's film *The Truman Show* is rich in allusions and allegories to the Bible. It knits together seamlessly from chapters and verses, creating a multi-tiered experience for the viewers. Some who see this film will miss all of its biblical allusions; they will only see the film for its first layer—an Orwellian tale about the future of humanity. Others will see the subsequent layers, the “where and how” that the film borrows from the Bible but which rewords piece by piece. While the latter has been overshadowed, the biblical references are there. These biblical allusions are placed with concrete reasoning—some are as simple as the associations of characters' names, while others are so embedded and complex that it takes layers, a biblical version of the six-degrees of separation. Through direct references to the Book of Genesis, coupled with the use of other stories spread throughout the books of both the Old and New Testament, Weir's 1998 film *The Truman Show* examines the relationship between God and Man, considers our perception of reality and morality, and provides its own take on Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*.

Peter Weir was born August 21, 1944 in Sydney, Australia, where he started his film career. His Australian and U.S. productions have been varied, but they all share a unifying thematic undercurrent: people who find themselves not fitting into their surroundings. Examples of this would be his first U.S. film, 1985's *Witness*, about a Philadelphia police officer recovering from his injuries on an Amish farm, and 1989's *Dead Poets Society*, in which a new English teacher breaks away from the norm in teaching his new students. Weir's 1986 film *The Mosquito Coast* exemplifies another of his trademarks: his fascination with the solitary man.¹ Weir's biggest film to date has been *The Truman Show*. In an interview with *Film Quarterly* in 1998 he goes on to discuss one of the themes of the film, its concept of reality and how the media defines and molds what is reality. One must note that at this time, the “reality-show” boom was shifting into gear. Interestingly, the idea of what constitutes this agreed-upon reality is often spread via the medium of television.²

As a director, Weir's films have received critical acclaim everywhere from his native Australia to the U.S. He has been widely credited for directing actors such as Harrison Ford, Robin Wil-

liams and Jim Carrey in roles that took them outside of their niche.³

The Truman Show starts off on day 10,909, approximately year 30 of the show's run that is centered on Truman Burbank's life without his knowledge, Truman, played by Jim Carrey, lives in the town of Seahaven where everyone except Truman is a paid actor. The film set evokes the 1950s. During an interview, Christof, the show's creator figure played by Ed Harris states that the 1950s were the perfect time in American history. Truman began life as an unwanted baby who was going to be part of a documentary chronicling the first year in the life of a baby; but due to the popularity of the show, it was extended into a continuously running reality program. While it is unknown exactly how long Truman has been suspicious, the first sign of his suspicion comes after an impromptu meeting with his supposedly dead father, a father who supposedly died in a boating accident when Truman was a child. Truman blamed himself for the accident which causes him to fear the sea. Truman sees his father pulled away by two mysterious figures that carry him off as Truman tries in vain to give chase. He brings his concerns to his wife and best friend Marlon, who downplays his concerns. His wife Meryl ignores them completely by making out of place commentary about house products, a commercial for a brand sold in the real world. There are other events that make Truman question what is going on. There is the light fixture that falls at the start of the film, the small glimpse he gets of the backstage crew of his television show and the malfunction of the car radio that allowed him to pick up the frequency from his own broadcast.

The film is mixed with scenes of "real world" viewers watching the show. The most prominent of these are the people at the Truman Bar where hosts and patrons are transfixed by the show. The strange behavior of his family, especially his mother, when Truman informs her that he has seen his father, only succeed in making his suspicions grow. There are various scenes with him trying to book a trip out of Seahaven, all attempts to book flights, coach-trips and finally attempts to escape the island by car. In each instance, he is thwarted by seemingly incalculable coincidences. He has flashbacks of other attempts to leave the island that have been thwarted. As a young child he was kept on a short leash; later on, it was a huge and menacing dog blocking his path and the constant

radio and print media defaming the rest of the world. He becomes suspicious of his wife when he sees wedding pictures where she has her fingers crossed and the ring on the wrong hand. An argument starts and escalates to where they are both struggling and she looks into the camera and demands something be done. This infuriates an already unstable Truman and the argument continues. Christof calls in Marlon and when he comes into their house, she breaks down sobbing, saying: “How can anyone expect me to carry on under these conditions? It’s not professional!” and leaves the show. Truman is distraught over this and his best friend is coached by Christof word for word what to say to him as his father is reintroduced into the show by Christof, thinking that this would placate a distrustful Truman.

Truman plays a complacent role, and the crew running the show relaxes. This allows him to disappear during the night, slipping off a boat in a last effort to leave the island. Unable to find him, Christof orders a massive search of the town. When finding him remains a problem, he orders transmission cut for the first time. This interruption causes a real world media frenzy. It’s reported to Christof that rival television stations used footage of the search, especially that of Marlon, who was filmed talking directly into the camera. Christof searches everywhere until he realizes that no one is looking at the cameras pointed out to sea, because everyone thinks that Truman would not venture there for fear of the water. Truman is found floating on a sailboat out to sea, and the television feed is once again turned on. Christof orders a storm to deter Truman but with no luck: the storm is fierce and he increases the wind and rain several times, only stopping before Truman is about to drown. Truman finally reaches the periphery of his world and punctures it. Amazed at what he sees, he gets out of the boat and walks on water until he finds a door marked “Exit.” When he reaches it, Christof introduces himself and tells Truman the truth about his life. Christof makes an attempt to get him to stay, but fails. The film ends with Truman bowing to his audience before he steps through the door.

The single biggest allusion to the Bible in *The Truman Show* comes from the giant dome that houses Truman’s world. Hebrew cosmology at the time stated that the world existed under a firmament, a sort of invisible roof.⁴ This theory comes from the Hebrew bible as it written in Genesis 1:6-10:

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.⁵

The dome that houses Truman's world is an example of the firmament, the world created inside that dome is held up by the firmament of the architecture that went into building it. The firmament holding up the dome, however false are the screened sky and false computer-controlled water; the light fixture that fell in the beginning of the film was named after a star in Canis Major constellation. According to the early Hebrews, the Sun was right above the Earth, it is in this Sun/Moon where Christof watches over the show. He is the embodiment of the Priestly writer's God, a deity that pleases himself first and man second.

There are two distinct readings: Truman as Adam, and Truman as Jesus. In the first reading, Seahaven is Eden, and Truman (True Man) is Adam. Eve would be Lauren, who is the first person who attempts to tell an adult Truman the truth about his life. Her expulsion has been the catalyst for his attempts to leave Seahaven. The serpent in Eden is embodied in the people from the "real world" who sneaked into Truman's world to tell him the truth. They attempted to offer Truman the fruit of knowledge. It is not to be missed that one of these events occurred on, of all possible dates, Christmas. Even Truman's age (he was seven) when the event occurred correlates with the Book of Genesis' seven-day creation of the world. They failed in challenging Christof's status quo, who in his inability to foresee this is one of the many cases where he deviates from the Priestly writer's characterization of God by the J writer who portrays a God that is not all knowing (Gen. 3:9). The expulsion out of Eden/Seahaven did not come from an irate God,

but because Adam/Truman plucks the fruit of knowledge himself. While Adam and Eve were pained by their expulsion, when Truman exits, he does so willingly, in contradiction to Genesis, where Truman's God/Christof begs Adam/Truman to stay.

Truman's troubled relationship with the sea is another obvious Biblical parallel. His fear of the sea was forced upon him by Christof, who claimed that there is no harm done in deceiving Truman. The drowning of Truman's father traumatized Truman to the point where he could not even drive over water. His fear affected him so deeply that he was unable in the beginning to get on a small ferry boat to perform business. The storm at sea is the manifestation of God's wrath and power in Noah's story, where, unhappy with the wickedness of man, God creates a great flood that destroys everything. The purpose of the storm is the same as the one created by Christof when Truman was a child: the storm was used to write-off Truman's father and change Truman's life, was also used to control Truman, thus ensuring that he would never attempt to leave via sea. Christof was so sure of Truman's fear of the sea that it was the last place he searched when Truman went missing. When Christof found Truman, he created the storm to deter him; the storm is an allusion to the one that God created in the Book of Jonah: "But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken" (1:4).

In the Book of Jonah, Jonah flees to the sea in an attempt to avoid performing God's will. Unlike in Jonah, the storm in *The Truman Show* is used once again on an adult Truman by an increasingly impotent Christof, who is forced to call off the storm when Truman is about to drown.

Keeping with allusions to water, when Truman strikes the wall of the dome, he leaves the boat and walks along its edge until he finds the exit door; this is the allusion to Jesus' walking on water. This elevates Truman from just being Man to also being a Christ figure. In two of the three synoptic gospels Jesus walks on water:

And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.⁶

Truman's Christ-like nature continues as he approaches the exit door.

When Christof speaks of Truman in interviews, he often does so in the manner of a God that loved the world so much that gave them his only son,⁷ and it is in this voice that Christof addresses Truman and tries in vain to make him stay in the world he created for the man; to which Truman replies by bowing and acknowledging his Christ-like nature by briefly symbolizing the cross when he stretches out his arms. The crucifixion imagery here is the death of Jesus/Truman, and he does ascend to a position of control of his own life.

Truman's reality was perceived and controlled, every motion and word voted upon; yet this was his only reality, thus making it true—for him. The viewers who watched the show were aware of its false reality, and they willingly suspended their own reality. The show's moral problem, although not explored past the "Free Truman" posters that adorn Lauren's home, demonstrates that reality was not the only thing suspended. While it is never explained why those dissidents broke into the show, it is arguable that it was an effort to stop the show. The argument could be made that the show itself is a religion and the world-wide masses who watch are the faithful, who never question how and why they are shown every detail of a fellow human being's life—a life fabricated and molded for the pursuit of ratings, and for their entertainment. Those few who broke in, trying to tell the truth, are disdained by their peers. As much as they are possibly Satan, offering Truman knowledge, they may also be divine messengers in their own right, carrying their own gospel of truth.

The film also builds upon Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*.⁸ What becomes of Truman in the real world is left unanswered in the film, but the world outside the dome is very different from the one he has known. His is a world of an idealized golden-age, a utopian island where every day is sunny, every person is happy, every detail of his life planned for him. In the real world, if he could ever fully integrate himself after 30 years of fame, this would not be the case. This is the argument that Christof uses, trying to get Truman to stay. He goes on to say as much, informing Truman that the world outside is the same and that on the inside—but different because he had nothing to fear because he will be overseeing everything.

To me, the film's overall purpose is to show how a popular medium defines and shapes reality. An example of this would be the rise and continued popularity of reality shows. In 1998, when the reality show boom was starting, the possibility of something akin to *The Truman Show* was unforeseeable. Now, almost 10 years later, it has been done to various degrees, the closest being *The Joe Schmo Show* where everyone except the central character was an actor pretending to be a contestant on a reality game show.⁹ The film succeeds because its premise is based on fact; reality is shaped by the medium that is popular at the time. Media have changed over history, from the artists of the Renaissance, to the scholars in the Age of Enlightenment, to the actors today; each is a mirror of their society.

The biblical allusions really did not have an effect on the success of the film. Most viewers saw a dystopia: the synthetic reality and Orwellian tones of one's life being constantly monitored, and controlled. Weir used two types of allusions in the film, direct and indirect. The strongest direct allusions were when Truman walked on water and when his stance suggests the crucifixion. Audiences also understood the use of names: Christof/Christ of and Truman/True Man. The indirect allusions are the firmament, the storm from the Book of Jonah, Truman/Jesus and the gospel of the people who tried to break into the show. These were mainly missed by the film's audience. Both sets of allusions were vital to the film. The Book of Genesis and its stories are perhaps the most widely known stories of the Bible. By picking direct allusions from the Bible, Weir ensured that a large portion of the allusions used would be identified and understood by the audience, leaving the rest to be deciphered by theologians and students.¹⁰

The film is in many respects an atheistic indictment of the moral bankruptcy of the Judeo-Christian religion. The "viewers" in *The Truman Show* embody the moral corrosion of the every day man (as a massive allegory for religion) that allows such a program to exist. Those who opposed the show, much like those who have voiced their disagreement with some of the most controversial ideologies of Judeo-Christianity, are systematically banished from society. The notion that Christof's actions are deemed reasonable by the majority of the "viewers," with no regard to the effects they

have had on Truman, is perhaps the best evidence of the moral bankruptcies of religion.

END NOTES

1. See examples of this in the following films: *Witness*, *The Mosquito Coast*, *Dead Poet's Society* and *The Truman Show*.
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3. "Peter Weir." IMDB <<http://imdb.com/name/nm0001837/bio>>
4. Banks, Robyn. "Biblical Conception of the Universe." <<http://sol.sci.uop.edu/~jfalward/ThreeTieredUniverse.htm>> Dec. 8, 2007
5. King James Version Genesis 5 - 9
6. Mark 6:48. Luke is the only gospel that makes no mention of Jesus walking on water. The other two that include this miracle are Matthew 14:25 and John 6:19.
7. John 3:16
8. "Plato." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato/>> Dec. 8, 2007
9. "The Joe Schmo Show." Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Joe_Schmo_Show> Dec. 8, 2007.
10. Bach, Alice. "Cracking the Production Code: Watching Biblical Scholars Read Films." *Biblical Studies* 7 (1999): 11-34. Hostos Comm. College Lib., Bronx, NY. Nov. 30, 2007.

 **INTRODUCTION TO ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY**

The works you see in this issue of *¡Escriba!/¡Write!* have all been created in our art classes and are all by complete beginners. A theme that has emerged thanks to the efforts of the Natural Sciences Department is an awareness of environmental concerns. This is reflected in the works of Allan Castaneda and the frightening portrait of a parched Earth by Ineliz Mujilia. Three works of extraordinary beauty are also featured. The celebratory “Dream City” by Jhinson Montaleza was so popular it was sold for \$500 and featured on the Hostos Summer Schedule cover. Sarah Morales produced a work of extraordinary contemplation and beauty in her painting “Meditation Table with Jesus.” The depth and play of light on glass mark this piece out as one of transcendental reality. Finally, Yamalette Carrera shows her fantastic commitment. Spending up to 5 hours a day to produce this detailed self portrait as a fruit-seller paid off when she sold it for \$700 from the students’ show. It is an essay in quality and perseverance and learning these tools will benefit her in whatever career she pursues. Whatever career our students will eventually enter, the time spent in the art room can be the ideal forum to create inner commitment and concentration that is essential to succeed in life.

Professor Ian Charles Scott

The vibrant colors offered by digital photography, combined with an artist’s eye for detail, are what makes this collection of photographs in *¡Escriba!/Write!* so memorable. Created by students in Hostos’ new digital photography program, these images are as diverse as our students’ backgrounds and comment on issues of identity, race and culture. In Fatasia Harris’ “Pink,” a little girl, seen from the back, strides along the concrete sidewalk in a billowy pink gown; in Armando Ortiz’s “Train,” a subway platform at night can be livened up by purplish hues; and for Rafael Rodriguez’s “Beach,” a woman’s sensuous outlines are striking, set against the undulating waves of the ocean. Whether the backdrop is that of nature or an urban landscape, these powerful, painterly images transport us into worlds strangely familiar and yet unknown. Enjoy this treat for the senses!

Professor Jennifer Tang



Yamalette Carrera, "Self as Fruit Seller"



Anthony Guzman, "Three Women"



Ineliz Mujila, "The End of the World"



Allen Casteneda, "Earth Uprooted"



Jhinson Montaleza, "Dream City: Celebration"



Sarah Morales, "Meditation Table with Jesus"



Fatasia Harris, "Shanni"



Armando Ortiz, "Train"



Felix Mendoza, "Heart"



Raphael Rodriguez, "Beach"



Dominique Coston, "Red"



Fatsia Harris, "Costume"



Fatasa Harris, "Pink"



Anna Avagyan, "Door"



Robert Velez, Special Recognition, GenEd Contest



Bien Pocorni, Third Place, GenEd Contest

COMPRENDES, MENDEZ 

Amor no es solo estar con uno en las buenas o en las malas
 Amor es hacer sentir a una persona importante sin dejar que se le
 suban los humos
 Amor es entender el punto de vista del otro
 Amor es compartir tus problemas y llegar a mejores soluciones
 Amor es cambiar tu punto de vista si no le agrada a tu pareja
 Amor es decir que se ve bien cuando en realidad no
 Amor es dejar que se coman el último pedacito de strawberry
 cheesecake
 Amor es callar cuando te enojas para no ofenderlo
 Amor es sentir que tienes el universo en tus manos y el cosmos en
 tus pies
 Amor es un detalle diario que hace mas fuerte tu lazo
 Amor es complacer a tu prójimo
 Amor es decir tienes razón cuando en realidad no la tiene
 Amor es cuando te sudan tus manos te vuelves media tartamuda
 y te ries sin control
 Amor es pensar que no hay nadie mejor para ti que él
 Amor es querer estar pegado a él como chicle pero darle su
 espacio
 Amor es hacerle su plato favorito
 Amor es comer spicy chicken wings aunque sabes que te cae mal
 spicy
 Amor es decir: interesante cuando en realidad quieres decir:
 ¡Qué aburrido gatito!
 Amor es darle un masajito aun que estes cansada
 Amor es perder en ajedrez para hacerle sentir inteligente
 Amor es mirar el partido de baseball aunque este dando tu pro-
 grama favorito
 Amor es escuchar música clasica cuando en realidad quieres oír a
 los Cumbia Kings
 Amor es ir a la venta del día despues de Thanksgiving a las 4 de la
 mañana sin quejas
 Amor es dejarle sentar junto a la ventana aunque sea tu asiento
 favorito
 Amor es querer estar solo con él
 Amor es pensar que no puedes vivir sin él



**REPLY TO NERUDA'S 20TH POEM IN
VEINTE POEMAS DE AMOR Y UNA CANCIÓN DESESPERADA**

With this sad poem I remember today
when you loved me and I did not, sometimes.
But I was yours, that quena* sang over rimes...
Under the stars the cold warmed my nude clay.

Today I miss the shake of the earth in your skin
the ardor of your kisses that inflamed my breasts
the pain of the stones under a cloak of feasts
and the taste of your meat seasoned with sin.

Even if thousands of times I was with another
I miss you Neruda, I miss you today.
Forgive me because it was in a dark night of May
the obscure thousands of times that I was with another.

This is the last forgiveness that I beg you
let me warm you with my kisses, I beg you.
Under the cold stars I want to be elevated,
over your cloak of feast I want to be agitated.

I miss you because I miss you Neruda!

*Quena: Andean flute.

Once upon a spring
a purple tree turned red
after a compliment.

On a branch a bird
is singing for the soft wind.
Empty nest.

Look up at the sky!
A blue bird comes from the white!
The sun is in her eyes!

The air from his wings,
brings the scent of the gods
Seven colors.

A piece of rainbow
was draped over the red tree.
Two shiny birds in love.

 **SPRING BREAK**

He walks in the sun,
no matter the rain.
A flower blooms in a brick.

His head dances and shakes.
His cell rocks.
Take the train 2, 4 or 5.

He is not tall or short.
He is not white or black.
Small college in the Bronx.

He sits in the back,
surrounded by girls.
The best buy is a laptop.

He learns how to learn,
to read and to write.
Spanglish is a language.

After the hard work,
he deserves some rest,
and a trip to Tijuana.

He'll crash the season,
to save the pieces for his friends.
Spring break!

I.

In the beginning
when I created God,
was chaos in the waters.

Suddenly, a light.
The dark was broken,
in many pieces of stars.

And God said you are mine,
come sit in my lap.
I was molded from the mud.

I wanted to run
but I chose to stay
to name all of the animals.

In the beginning
I did not know you,
until the rainbow

Carved the tree of good and bad
God ate and I ate.
Acknowledgment.

And I left my land,
when the mud was dried.
I learned that tears are salted.

II.

Late in a desert,
too tired to feel lonely:
A cry to the universe.

Help me stay alive,
I have faith in you.
The stars are brighter at night.

Acknowledgement
can change my dryness
into a fertile oasis.

Suddenly in the dark
a voice like a storm:
I will see my self in you!

The sun that was asleep,
kissed the moon for me.
I learned how to smile again.

The moon that shines
was melted in my soul,
like a spring of clean water.

The stars from the sky
fall down in my sand
I have millions of flowers.

Look up to me!
Nothing in the sky!
The universe in my heart.

TESTAMENT OF A TALL BLACK WOMAN 

Rejected, yes, rejected.
 Rejected by everyone, yes, everyone.
 Rejected, used, yes, used.
 Used and abused, abused and accused, yes, accused.
 Never shown love, never shown care.
 But still this tall black woman's heart
 Beats on and still her whole life goes on.

No one shares a smile, no, not even a smile.
 No one shares a hug, no, not even a hug.
 No one shows a caring stare, no, not even a stare.
 For this tall black woman, no one sees the longing
 That she seeks, no one sees the love that she offers, her longing
 to share.
 But still this strong tall black woman seeks love.

Still she seeks love, yes, she seeks love.
 She still seeks a smile, yes, she seeks a smile.
 She still desires a hug, yes, just a hug.
 This strong black woman has hope, hope that someone will
 One day give her just a smile, yes, a smile, maybe a hug, yes, a
 hug.
 Someone will give her the love this tall black woman hopes for.

A hug, yes, just a hug, a smile, yes, just a smile.
 A little love, yes, just enough love so she can look back
 Two years, ten years, yes, ten years or even twenty.
 When her last breath is leaving her body she will smile
 With content, yes, content, because she knows she was loved,
 yes, loved
 Given a hug, a smile that shows care
 A smile that she spent all her life looking for
 Yes, looking and seeking, because she knows within her heart,
 That she will receive a smile, a hug,
 The love she had hoped for, hope that kept
 This tall strong black woman living in this strange world.

 **CHAINED**

I lie here in my bed all alone.
It's dark in the room.
I feel I am the only person in the world.
All of a sudden I hear the rain.
How do I know?
I hear tap, tap, tap on the window pane.
Dap, dap, dap on the roof top.

I feel so dirty. I am soiled.
I strip off my night gown,
Run out the door into the dark, wet night,
Hoping the water will purify the sins of my body
As it cleans the filth in the street.
My sins, like abandoned trash, plunge into
The gutter.

Standing there with my tears
Mixing in with the rain
I know, as the dark thunderous gloom
Of the sky voices its anger,
It promises to be
A long and lonely night.

THE ROOM 

The soft down quilt ruffled on the bed,
The shades pulled down to the bottom,
Casting shadows over the walls.
The light dim,
The warmth of the man-made brick oven.

Hands of the trees banging, banging on the coverlet
While the wind voices its anger and
The sky pours its cover over the earth.
The room's warmth makes me
Sleep through the night.



ABANDONO

Como un mendigo
Voy caminando
Sin ninguna dirección
Para arrancarme de mí pecho
A la infiel que me dejó.

Son las penas, que me atrapan
Y me encierran en dolor
Consumiendo lentamente
A mi humilde corazón.

Pero en mi nació la culpa
Por amar sin precaución
Y entregarme por entero
A esa infiel que se marchó.

Pero un día, se que a mi vida,
Un puro amor me llegará,
Y acabara con esta angustia
Mas el tiempo lo enterrara.

Y tu mujer ingrata,
Desengaño, solo encontraras
Regresaras arrepentida
Pero no me encontraras
Adiós.

Tú eres esa chispa de luz que me quema,
y despejan las nieblas que nublan mi mente
para enseñarme y guiarme correctamente
y olvidar el fracaso por el que un día sufrí.

De repente tú llegaste como una estrella fugaz
perdida entre miles en tu firmamento,
que al son de uno, dos, tres, y zas;
tranquila y serena indagaste mi mundo
descubriendo talentos en mis sentimientos.

Fueron tantas noches imaginarias de sueños
y en mis fantasías te creaba yo;
hasta que de pronto el destino perfecto
te puso en camino para, traerte hacia a mí.

Hoy te espero y ansío tu encuentro
como un niño que espera, su apreciado chupón;
siento ya tenerte! encubierta en mis brazos;
que derraman calor y energía del sol
que se funden de amor y de dulce pasión.

Llegaras y veras en mí ese contento
deslumbrar en mi rostro como rosas de viento;
que al menor movimiento comienza su labor.

Esperando y creando para ti este verso
envuelto de paz y armonía perfecta;
de la sombra a la luz, y la luz celestial.

 **LA TARDE**

Que hermosa esta la tarde
Porque estas hoy junto a mi
Todo el mundo sonriente
Por la paz que hay aquí.

En silencio la tarde avanza
Con el sol y su resplandor
La naturaleza que da vida
Y las aves trinar, trinar.

Como aviso del ocaso
Que se acerca paso a paso
Mientras te entregas
Con un fuerte abrazo.

Sin pensar ayer llegaste
Me miraste y conquistaste
Y en mis ojos tú fijaste
La clemencia que añoraste.

Hoy formas parte de mi vida
Y en mi pecho te siento ya
Quiero amarte sin medida
Para toda una eternidad.

Hoy temprano desperté
Y fui de prisa hacia el jardín
A contemplar el florecer,
De cada rosa
Para escoger la más hermosa
Y traerlo para ti.
Te Amo

 **YOU SANG TO ME**

You sang to me
When the nights were quiet,
When the taste of dew still lingered in my mouth.
Because I thought flowers were as sweet as they smelled.
And we sat on the grass listening to the chirp of crickets
The moonlight barely shone in that hour
Only a faint pale lover that was done with us.
And our eyes
Yours red like hibiscus from all that crying
And mine white like daisies.
From feeling your tears drop softly on my cheek,
I wondered where the song came from.
It bellowed from somewhere deep and lonely
Somewhere that was afraid of being scarred.
The wind was still with anticipation
As if it knew I were to leave and it would have to
comfort you.
I'm sorry for all the goodbyes I never said
They're there somewhere drifting, so solemnly unspoken
Rich with complacency
Waiting for the song
That would move me to stay
With the grass, and the moonlight, and the flowers dew
That shines like stars in midnight's caress
Wanting only to be touched.

Candy-coated lies
 Stick sweetly to my caramel color.
 Fiery emotion, marinating crumbs
 Caressed by the finest finesse.
 Essentially this should be unspoken:
 Clumsily lay your hand on the parts of me unbroken.

Lazily I sing to thee,
 Vocal chords strained.
 As I sang to thee,
 Like a flower that's stained,
 This pain should bleed,
 And painfully bring some rain to thee,

Whoever holds close ties
 Sticks lies closer to their whole,
 Hole-punctured lies lined up in their holes
 Empty, and go nowhere fast.

We escape the time, knowing it won't last.
 Some precious memories abroad,
 As I search the Heavens and seas
 For all that we lost.
 What was taken from me
 Can't be the cost
 Of the love that leaves
 As bitter as frost
 When caramel was the color of all sweetness
 That could be tasted while we wait and
 Marinate in this sensuous stew.

We can tickle and tangle
 And slip our way through
 We are all full of moonlight
 Tainted like glass,
 Glazed with dew.
 From what became a poison,
 A glorious ode full of heartaches.
 When we allow the sugar to indulge our souls,
 As we enclose ourselves from those

Who wish to help,
Fight the tide as we live our lives
Drowning in the sticky sweetness of delusional bliss.
Let us open our eyes.

In the summer
When the sky is pasty blue,
Grass shimmers with incandescent light of false moons.
Winds speak through lullabies,
Stroking soft waves near the ocean's edge.
Our toes scrunch up in the cool sand
We breathe the expired breath of summer soon fading
And tomorrow's sun kisses us before setting into oblivion.

 **WINGED THING**

Falling embers attempt to dissuade the charcoal night.
With cupped hands I shiver at the empty air.
The flame of time burning soothes the cauterized wounds
Ashen and white as a snowflake when it emerges from heaven,
Peacefully I must go.
Yet distrustful I become when a pigeon's moan is all that I hear
And that fateful night has whispered its song in my ear.
It sings songs of a place revered
Where all the want flees and disappears.
I perhaps have dreamt this day into night
For what can capture so beautifully the fading of light?
Only the memories of a gray winged thing fluttering all around
I was one with the moment and noticed the sound.

BRINGING GREEN INTO OUR LIVES:

THREE LETTERS TO PROFESSOR FLOR HENDERSON

Dear Professor Henderson,

I now understand the connection between plants and our lives, especially to our health, and human nutrition. I would like to tell you about how I am living green by recycling, and eating more organic products.

When I took your class I thought I was knowledgeable about being green and knew what to do in order to care for and protect our home, the Planet Earth. However, I have to say that I did not know the importance of plants that could benefit Planet Earth and us. I have been green by recycling most things in my house. My family and friends already know what I mean when I say this goes in the Ms. Green, Mr. Blue or Mr. Gray bins. Also, I use less energy and water by turning off our electronic devices such as the computer, TV, etc. when I am not using them. I also change the bulbs in the house to Star Energy bulbs in order to save more energy. Still, my biggest challenge has been to buy more organic products and food.

As you know, organic products bring a lot of benefit to our planet. By buying organic foods we are working together with organic farmers to protect the planet. Not only is it healthy for us, but also for the planet. Nevertheless, organic products and foods are more expensive and I am not able to buy all organic products. Yet, I have started purchasing food that my family and I consume: fruits, vegetables, milk, cereals, and others. I hope that we can reinforce production and consumption of organic products.

Moreover, my next step to continue being green will be to buy a small foldable environmentally friendly shopping bag that I can carry around with me so that whenever I go shopping after school or work, I don't have to ask for paper or plastic bags. Also, I am a coffee drinker as are most people in America. I will stop using disposable coffee cups because most of them are made with only 10% post-consumer, recycled fibers. As you can see, I am conscious of the problems, but also about the solutions that simple changes can bring, to make a big difference. So, I will continue being green and taking action to make the Earth a greener planet.

Dear Professor Henderson,

I write to you today in regard to how your class has made me concerned about our global environment. Prior to attending your class I had no knowledge whatsoever about the effects we humans have on the environment. However, after being presented with a variety of information primarily concerning plants and the role they play in our lives, my attitude has changed. A sense of responsibility has now grown in me concerning this issue. Throughout this semester I've been pondering on ways in which I can become an active participant in the global fight to save our environment. Just recently I've taken gradual steps that will ultimately change my lifestyle.

As we all know, the process of producing electricity entails the burning of coal, oil and gas which in turn cause pollution. In order to reduce this production we must find ways to use our energy more efficiently. I will try to contribute by turning off lights and electrical devices which are not in use in my household. I will also make an effort to change the light bulbs in my home to the more energy efficient fluorescent bulbs. Keeping tabs on the recycling process in my home will also be a responsibility which I will attend to on a daily basis.

Outside of the confines of my home, an immediate problem continues to linger in my mind. The release of carbon dioxide is contributing to the rise of pollution and greenhouse effects in our communities. In order to tackle this problem, planting trees either in my yard or around my community would have a great effect on the environment. By planting trees we would all be able to help to cut carbon dioxide in exchange for oxygen in our atmosphere.

My involvement in the community will not just be limited to planting trees. It is imperative that I volunteer at local environmental organizations that will help to apply pressure in the local and national levels of government. It is important that I get involved in lobbying for environmental initiatives that our elected representatives have been neglecting all along. To help put forth a policy such as a "carbon tax," a tax (surcharge) on gasoline or users of fossil fuels would be one solution. Only through a high level of civil engagement can changes truly take place. For now, rhetoric must end where action begins. I thank you for your time and I wish you a great day.

Dear Professor Henderson

During my research project I found out a great deal of information about global warming and its effects. Global warming, also known as the greenhouse effect, has many negative effects on the environment, the animal kingdom, plants and humans. These effects can vary from minor to severe depending on the exposure. On the other hand, I also learned many things which everyone (including me of course) can do to help contain and maybe reduce these effects. These include recycling, saving energy and conserving water, and reducing emissions of gases that are bad for the environment.

After I learned about how bad the effects of global warming are, I have strengthened my recycling habits. At home we usually separated the big plastic or glass containers such as soda bottles, or the one gallon juice containers, and threw the smaller containers with the rest of the trash. However, now I have talked to everyone at home about my findings and convinced them we must do our part to protect our environment, so now we recycle everything.

I also had a discussion with my family about saving water and energy. I never would've thought that there was so many ways in which we can all do this. For instance, to save water, and these are things I used to do, while brushing our teeth or in the shower we really don't need the water running the whole time, so turn it on when we need it and off when we don't. It may not look like much, but visualize millions of people doing this. Now, for energy conservation, the same concept as above: on when you need it, off when you don't. During daylight, instead of turning the lights on, try opening your curtains. You will get the same amount of light, and will also be helping the environment.

While recycling and conserving energy are a great way to help protect our environment, the most important of all is to reduce the emission of gases that are harmful to the environment. I used to drive everywhere I went, but after I learned what I was contributing to, I decided to minimize my driving to only when absolutely necessary. However it isn't only driving that causes emission of gases; the use of aerosols also releases harmful gases such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's). For this reason, my house is now aerosol free.

When I started to make all these changes at home and in my life, I felt weird for the first couple of days. But now that I'm do-

ing it everyday, I feel a lot better. I think I feel this way because I know I'm doing something good, not only for me and my kids, but for everyone around me and everyone else on the planet. Global warming is not benefiting anyone; we should all do something about it.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH ESSAY CONTEST: 
THE FOUR WINNING ESSAYS

Dear City Council,

As a member of the women's congregation, I understand that you are planning to recognize women whose lives represent courage and their struggle for justice. I acknowledge that there are a number of women under consideration for this award. One is Harriet Jacobs, and the others are the Mirabal sisters. I strongly prefer Harriet Jacobs, because she led so many American women to essential change in their lives.

Harriet Jacobs' legacy should be well known, because she gave the ultimate victory to women during and after slavery. Born into slavery, Jacobs was sexually harassed by her master for nearly nine years. After that, she risked her life to escape. It wasn't enough for her, however, so she continued to fight for other slaves to become free. I believe she is a role model for most women today, because she set an example and her struggle for freedom and fairness should be honored in today's society.

Another reason we should recognize Harriet Jacobs is because she participated in the women's rights movement. I think it is important to women nowadays to take a look at our society during the time of the 1960's and earlier, when the nation was dominated by men. Women did not have the right to vote at the turn of the century, nor did they educate themselves. Most importantly, discrimination against the female gender in the workplace has also been a part of our history. Today, women have achieved almost all their rights. I strongly believe it is important to us now because we can educate our future generation about those who have struggled for our rights, and Harriet Jacobs is an example of a woman whose struggle was successful.

Finally, she was the first woman writer during slavery. This is a massive accomplishment. Can you imagine being the first writer during the period of slavery, when women and slaves were prohibited from learning? Women barely had a voice, but Harriet Jacobs helped bring to light sensitive problems that needed to be addressed. She wrote a book, *Incidents in the Life*

of a Slave Girl, based on her life. Her book covered issues that most women were afraid to discuss. For example, she talked about domestic violence, and the abuse given to slave women. We sometimes don't realize that others paved the way for us to be where we are today. Women now can report any domestic violence that occurs because they have the courage and they are already educated by Ms. Jacobs' legacy. At the end of the day, we can walk with our heads held high.

Once again, Harriet Jacobs deserves to be recognized for giving women the courage to raise their voices on public issues and by struggling for the rights and freedoms we enjoy today. Thanks for your consideration.

Dear NYC History Council:

The tale of the Mirabal sisters is an ongoing legacy of bravery and compassion in order to save the lives of countless Dominicans. They went against the flow of conformity and stood out as national heroines. In addition to the information provided by our class's web site, I thought it was necessary to let you know that the Mirabal sisters deserve the award.

As women, it was hard to fight against what they believed was wrong, especially since the government was against them. The Mirabal sisters didn't care about that. They were very rebellious and used their own judgments of right versus wrong. They were patriotic liberals who understood politics and aspired to study law. Even knowing Trujillo was a dictator who didn't care that they were women, and that they were in danger, they became involved in the underground movement to overthrow the Trujillo government.

The Mirabal sisters give hope today to a lot of women. I believe that when you fight against what you believe is wrong, and you suffer, and you know you are in danger, that this is an inspiration for a lot of women today because so many people consider women to be soft, and assume they can't do anything. On the Web site, I found that the Mirabal sisters give hope to students today against oppression by men. Also, there are organizations for women and human rights. I learned from this that no matter what you believe, whether people think you are wrong or right, you should fight for it, even if it's hard. Don't be scared, and do it.

The Mirabal sisters are remembered as role models. When you talk about the Mirabal sisters, all you think of are beliefs, and fighting against what you believe is wrong, no matter how powerful the opposition is.

Dear NYC History Council:

In honor of the celebration of Women's History month, I believe that the Mirabal sisters are the ones who represent courage in the struggle against injustice. They are an inspiration to our girls and women, and to our boys and men.

The Mirabal sisters, known as "Las Mariposas" in their country, were the only ones who went against Trujillo. Trujillo was a dictator who had the Dominican Republic in economic chaos. The Mirabal Sisters wanted to save their country even though they didn't need to because they were from an upper class family. They didn't have to care about others, but they did care, and fought Trujillo's dictatorship. Trujillo realized that the sisters were having a great impact on the country so he sent some men to kill them.

The Mirabal sisters are a very strong inspiration for boys and men, but a lot more for us girls and women. They inspire not only me, but every girl and woman to be strong and never give up. They give us the strength to work hard to become successful even if things get hard. For example, there are times in my life when I would like to give up college and work in a simple job all my life for the simple fact that things don't come out right most of the time. I get sad and frustrated, but when I think of women like the Mirabal sisters and a lot more women who have become part of history because of bravery, it makes me get strong and move on so that all my dreams can come true.

In addition, the story of the Mirabal sisters does not only show us how to be brave and work for what we want, but it also shows us that it is good to help others. The Mariposas, as mentioned, came from a well cultured environment. They had money. They really didn't need to fight Trujillo for the freedom of those who had no power. They could have just lived their lives with their families, husbands, and children. But they felt the need to help their country no matter what. This action of kindness should inspire everyone. I believe that we can all learn from them to be there when someone needs us.

Life is hard. Even if we want to make it as simple as we can, there's always something or someone who tries to make life hard for us. But all we need to do is to never give up and work hard to achieve our goals. That way, in the future we are going to feel proud of ourselves and others will admire us, and see us as an inspiration for them.

Dear City Council,

Today I write you this letter on behalf of Harriet Jacobs, a woman who should be recognized for her courage and her struggles against injustice. As a former slave who risked her life to fight slavery, she ultimately became a free black woman. She endured living her life on the run from bounty hunters, the fear of being raped and tortured as well as starvation, and worst of all, the thought of never being free.

Ms. Harriet Jacobs was born in 1813 to Mr. Daniel Jacobs and Delilah (last name unknown) in Clinton, North Carolina. The only good thing about the beginning of her life was that her first master's mistress taught her how to read, write, and sew. As Ms. Jacobs grew up, her mistress passed away and she was then sold off to Dr. James Morcom, who kept pursuing her. She had to eventually take up with a white lawyer, and bore two girls for him. But that didn't stop her slave owner from trying to get at her. Eventually, she gave her children to their father and went on the lam.

She lived with many people, both black and white, until June of 1835, when she went to live with her grandmother and her uncle. She lived in an attic-like room that was only nine feet long and seven feet wide, with rats and mice, for seven years. She only came out at night for exercise. Then in 1845 she went to Philadelphia for a short time, finally going to New York to get her daughters. After that, she traveled to Rochester, New York to live with her brother John.

Even though she was living with her brother, she was still being pursued by her slave owner, Dr. James Morcom. Finally, she moved to Massachusetts with friends who were abolitionists, and they arranged for her purchase. Then, and only then, was she a free woman. After this, in 1860, she became a nurse. Now that she was a freed slave, she was encouraged to write a book about her struggles as a slave, which a lot of people didn't want to be published. But in her heart of hearts, she knew what had to be done. She called the book *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Although times have changed, people are still going through the same struggles and people are still blind to this hate in the world. Still things are being said, but nothing is being done. With this in mind, please help us to recognize the impact of Harriet Jacobs on our world.

 **CRUEL REALITY**

It was beautiful to meet you and it was even better when we started to talk. We used to play between sheets, and you used to put your skin so close to mine. I loved it, when in the shower you gave me thousands of once-lost illusions. You used to scrub my back, and I used to feel what you felt for me in my heart. We used to talk about past experiences and shared advice. Although we did not understand it at that time, we understood it much later, the advice we shared together.

When I was going to see you I used to feel tickles in my stomach, and my heart used to beat a thousand times a minute. My hands used to sweat, and I would nervously laugh. My nerves used to betray me, at times causing me to forget my earrings. When I returned to get them I would then forget my cell phone, my keys, my purse; an infinity of things, making me late on our dates. I don't know which was crueler: to make me believe that you enjoyed being with me, or to leave without telling me why! Little by little, I was getting distant from you and I justified it by saying I had too many classes. Little by little, I realized that it wasn't my classes; it was you that put a distance between us. What an error!

When I woke up to cruel reality, I saw myself lost in the middle of many roads. I was naked and hurt. I had tripped on a "rock" that hurt me while I fell. I fell so hard that I ended up in a deep dream, from which I almost didn't wake up. Seeing my tardiness, my father went out to look for me. I was hurt and naked, so I tried to hide from him. He dressed me with a beautiful white silk dress, he took the "rock," which turned out to be a small stone, in his hand and threw it so far I could not see it any more.

Then he asked me to show him my wound. When I looked for my wound that had bled without stopping, I now saw that it was only a small scrape. Looking at it, we laughed. This was because when I was a little girl, I would cry, thinking that I had gotten hurt, when in reality there was no wound. My father felt so proud of me, seeing his little girl was growing up. At the same time, she was not so little. She did not cry for simple things any more. Proud, with his chest high, he left me on the road he chose for me.

AT THE MODEL NEW YORK STATE SENATE IN ALBANY 🌸



On April 25, 2008, Hostos students presented arguments about Congestion Pricing in New York City. They represented both Republican and Democratic points of view in this model senate session. The participants were (left to right, back row first): Yissely Ortiz, Andreina Martinez-Hiraldo, Maria Delgado, Sandra May Flowers, Liliete Lopez, Mayi Custodio, Kerri-Ann Mchayle, Marie-Jo Arthis; front left, unidentified friend, and Dewin Andujar.

 **THE COVER ART: GEN ED CONTEST WINNERS**

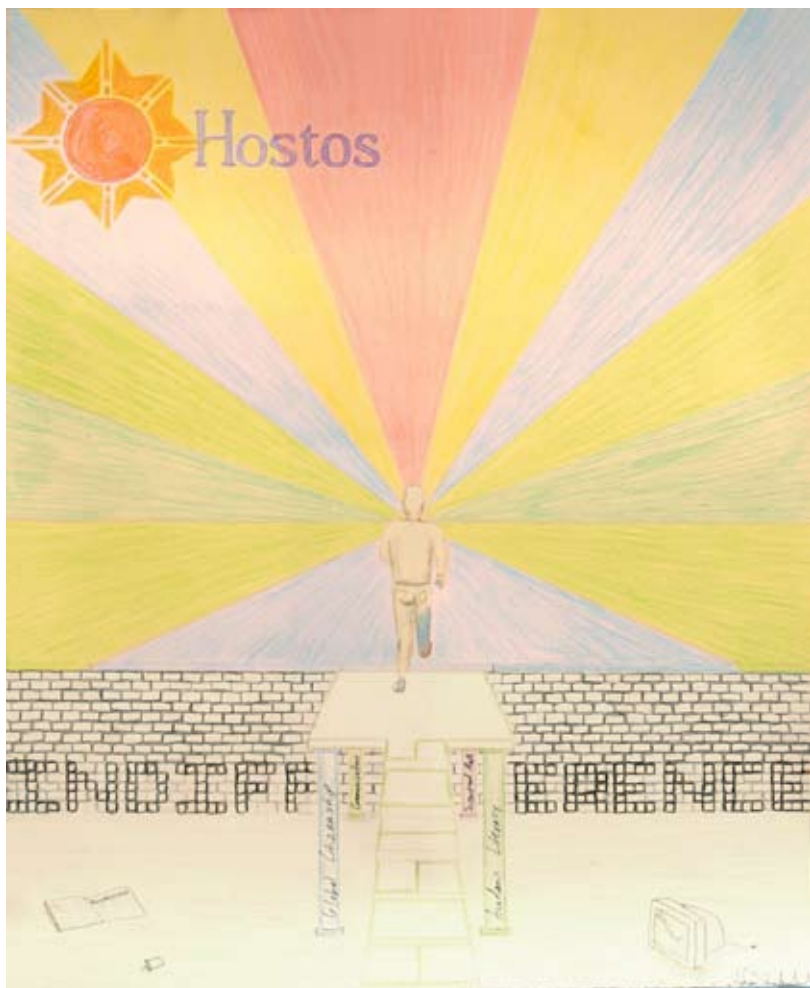
There is a story about our cover art this year.

I was getting a bit anxious as the deadline approached and no entries were coming into the art room for the General Education Poster competition. Then suddenly, just before the deadline, the Heavens opened up and a positive Niagara Falls of entries poured through my door! Students had been putting everything they could into the works and needed the time! Now to the difficult task of choosing the winners! The head of Hostos by Andreina Martinez with all the strands of General Education synergistically emerging from his head spoke out immediately as the worthy first prize winner. You'll find that one on *Escriba's* cover. Adam Speck- enbach came in second because of the complex intricacy involved in his piece; he engages the mind and leads us into a puzzle. You'll find his piece on back cover. Bien Pocorni came in third on the strength of her drawing. This "Muse of General Education" has an exquisite flow and would make a good emblem or badge. Finally, Special Recognition was awarded to Robert Velez who, in his own indomitable style, produced an oil painting of Hostos riding a cart packed with the goodness of General Education. Both Bien Pocorni and Robert Velez's works are in with the other artworks in the middle of the journal.

All the other entries were commendable as well and as I said it was an extremely difficult job to choose the winners

I'd like to take this opportunity to offer a big thanks to all the students who put in an entry (sorry we couldn't give you all a prize!). Also special thanks to Lucinda Zoe and Carl James Grindley, who, with the Gen-Ed committee, made this fantastic competition possible. Well done everyone!

Professor Ian Charles Scott



HOSTOS IS **CU**
NY