## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miriam Laskin and Jennifer Tang</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos E. Cuevas</td>
<td>An Army of One</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arturo Reyes</td>
<td>A New Life</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlene Velazquez</td>
<td>My Power</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthonia Nwaigwe</td>
<td>Greed</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Lopez</td>
<td>The Insanity Defense</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana Monedero</td>
<td>The Children's Hour</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quodus Lawal</td>
<td>Modernity</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig Bernardini</td>
<td>The English Speaking Union</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanynice Richardson</td>
<td>The English Speaking Union</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joselia Hughes</td>
<td>The English Speaking Union</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale Francis</td>
<td>The English Speaking Union</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam Laskin</td>
<td>The Big Read</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damaris Vega</td>
<td>August Afternoon</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Lopez</td>
<td>Chac-Mool</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christelle Dejolie Makouteu</td>
<td>Tell Them Not to Kill Me</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Henrique</td>
<td>Tell Them Not to Kill Me</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marbin Profeta</td>
<td>My Life with the Wave</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assayid Roaches</td>
<td>Women's History Month</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Seon Kim</td>
<td>Women's History Month</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbanys Reyes</td>
<td>Women's History Month</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian Morillo</td>
<td>Marketing of Food</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quodus Lawal</td>
<td>Abolishing Nutritionism</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinaldo Velez</td>
<td>How Water Came to Be</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olga Steinberg</td>
<td>The Energy Saving Project</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Andre Piquant</td>
<td>The Energy Saving Project</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawana Felton</td>
<td>The Energy Saving Project</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Mareku</td>
<td>Earth Day</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadia Ramaniuk</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudolf Mbadinga</td>
<td>The Model Senate</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudolf Mbadinga</td>
<td>The Model UN</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alexander Morfogen    London Boy                  6
Hideki Takahashi     Portrait                     11
Elizabeth Milliner   Portrait                    31
Crisne Lebron        Grandfather and Grandmother 34
Javier Arellano      Guitar Hero                 37
Karen Katrina Garcia Fight Diabetes              38
Ana Avagyan          Self Portrait               39
Hae Young Hwang       Siblings                    40
Nelly Garabito       Psychotic Cat               41
Samantha Hernandez   Tree of Knowledge           42
Edberg Silva         Building as Seen Through Criss-Crossed Glass 43
Yesenia Moises       Boy on Rainbow Bridge       44
Andrew Torres        BAD Sign                    45
Jose Martinez        Obama (yes we can)           46
Elijah Richmond       Carnival of Bullets         47
Edward Arias         Sitting on the Top of the World 48
Serrano Christina    Thoughts                    49
Andre Steinberg      Scream                      50
Bianca Colon         Self Portrait               51
Shin Seungeob        Tiger                       52
Mavel Soto           Potatoes with Eyes          57
Jose Martinez        My Life with the Wave       61
Kenny Baez           Tires                        65
Christine Cortez     Untitled                    77
Welcome to our eighth issue of ¡Escriba! Write! As always, we hope that any Hostos student who has writing or art and would like to share it with others in this publication, will contact the Escriba staff or go to our web page (accessible from the Hostos Library homepage under “Quick Links”) for instructions on submitting your material. A quick IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: we are moving the publication date of ¡Escriba! Write! It will no longer be published in June. Instead, we will now publish it in December and that means we need your manuscripts or artwork as soon as possible. So do not hesitate to contact us and send us your poems, essays, novels-in-progress, personal narratives, short stories, etc. We also publish art and digital art and photography, as you will see in this issue and the art is absolutely indispensible to the success of Escriba!

This year we have fewer poets but more excellent essays and two vivid personal narratives – Carlos Cuevas’ snapshot of a dangerous day in his Iraq tour of duty; and Arturo Reyes’ amusing but bittersweet description of leaving his home in the Bronx to live in Philadelphia. Also new in this issue of ¡Escriba! are some of the fruits of Hostos’ participation this year in The Big Read. Thanks to Prof. Kathleen Kane, we have included several of her students’ reviews of their favorite short stories from Sun, Stone and Shadows (ed. Jorge F. Hernandez), a collection of Mexican short stories that was The Big Read selection.

We also happily include the winners of our annual Women’s History Month and English Speaking Union essay contests. Many thanks to Hostos faculty for their generosity and help in connecting us with students whose work we include here, and those who had winning essays. For the essay contest winners, we thank Professors Jerilyn Fisher, Elyse Zucker, Susan Dicker, Andrew Hubner for the Women’s History Month winners; and Professors Craig Bernardini and Andrew Hubner for the English Speaking Union winners. Big thanks also to Jason Libfeld, Hostos Student Leadership Coordinator, for supplying photographs of this year’s Albany Model Senate and Model United Nations, and for helping us to connect with Rudolf Mbadinga who was a participant, along with other Hostos Student Leadership members, in these activities and who wrote about his experience.

Once again, we are excited about the participation of faculty and students from the Natural Sciences department in our student journal. This year, with the help of Professors Nelson Núñez-Rodríguez, Flor Henderson, and Olga Steinberg Neifach we have some important contributions that showcase the kinds of projects and research our students undertake in science courses. One of our more unique contributions is a monologue that was created from a chemistry assignment about the water molecule (you must read it to believe
it!), and several very timely essays about global warming, the Copenhagen Climate Treaty Summit and personal testimonies of how we can save energy (and money!) at home. Although they were not written for a natural science course, we also offer two essays about how food products can be unhealthy and why.

As we readily admit, our award-winning student journal would not be as great as it is if it did not include the creative artwork of our Hostos students. Whether it’s through digital photography, illustration or painting, our students have created imaginative and thought-provoking artwork that reveals their inner worlds. From expressing a deep love for family in Hae Young Hwang’s “Siblings” to commenting on a serious health problem in “Fight Diabetes” by Karen Katrina Garcia, our students imbue their works with intelligence, humor and social commentary. Inspired by the technology of digital design and photography, they also revealed how they’d change reality, from Yesenia Moses’ “Boy on Rainbow Bridge” to a fiery reimagining of President Obama in Jose Martinez’s work, “Yes We Can.” Less we forget how powerful black and white photography can be, Elizabeth Milliner captures a young man’s fearlessness through a masterly grasp of composition, lighting and perspective in “Strength and Courage.” Many thanks to Professors Ian Scott and Rees Shad for helping our Hostos students bring out their inner genius so that they can share their brilliance with the world.
The temperature was close to 120 degrees Fahrenheit, just like it had been during the last couple of days. It was another day in Iraq and another day closer to go back home. I was on my second deployment and was hoping it was to be my last one.

“Guys, today we are going through Fallujah, destination unknown,” said the convoy commander in her high-pitched voice. I wasn’t concerned about the unknown destination, since unknown had been our destination most of the time. What concerned me was the route through Fallujah, a city located west of Baghdad, on the Euphrates river. It was 2004 and Fallujah had extremely high rates of violence. Just a few days ago I was watching on the news the marines’ operation to gain control of the city. As a result of this operation, some marines and soldiers lost their lives. I was wondering how many times I shared my table at the mess hall with those that had been killed. Would I become another body at the morgue? Or would I be able to go back to my unit in one piece and finally be reunited with my family back home?

It was a relatively calm morning. Troops were coming back to the Baghdad International Airport after their night shift at the city as I was rolling out to the unknown destination. I must have slept well, since not one helicopter woke me up that night. It was common to get woken up by the noise of Black Hawk and Apache helicopters flying in and out of the airport at just a few feet above my head. There were times I thought that if I were to raise my arms I would be able to touch “those birds.”

I made myself comfortable in my truck. To be comfortable means to strip down to your shirt without any armor and to loosen up your boots. It was supposed to be just a two day ride, a relatively short trip when compared to the others that consisted of four to seven days. I felt safe in Baghdad, so there wasn’t the need for a fully armored uniform. After all, the city wasn’t like it was unjustly pictured on the news. Most Iraqis were friendly and cooperated with us. Language was a barrier, but they understood us. They said thank you and threw kisses at us as we drove by. I never saw this friendly side of the Iraqis portrayed on the news.

My heart was beating faster and faster as we were approaching Fallujah. The fact that I was approaching Fallujah was terrifying. Fallujah wasn’t known within my unit as a “friendly” zone. I was not in Baghdad anymore. I started to put on my full armor again. Then a sign of relief came over the radio. “We are not going through Fallujah.” The “Hooahs” an Army way to express joy, bombarded the radio as soldiers expressed their relief. “Amens” also got on the radio’s waves from those that received the message as an answer to their prayers. I lowered my guard.
A few miles into our journey we arrived at one of the towns located along the route. The people in the town were friendly, just as in other towns. They were waving and yelling “Ameriqui! Ameriqui!” They warmly welcomed us into the area. Even though we were welcome in their town, there was an unusual atmosphere in the area. Most people were only on one side of the street, and there were few children out. I decided to put on my full armor gear. I am glad I did it!

When I thought we were leaving town, a place that one can never trust regarding how safe you feel, a thunder-like sound echoed through the area. Suddenly a black cloud of smoke covered the area. My visibility was at a minimum, and I decided to drive through the dense black smoke. After I cleared the smoke cloud I brought my truck to a complete stop. Right next to me was a disabled truck hit by an improvised explosive device (IED). These explosives were handmade by unfriendly Iraqi citizens. They were simple in the making, but very destructive. The occupants of the disabled truck were already out of it. They jumped into my truck as I continue the march. They were lucky to be alive and safely in my truck. That IED had only destroyed a truck and shattered my windshield. Then came the sound of another IED behind me, this time with a deadly result. I never saw those comrades again.

I am grateful to live to recount this story. I was able to save the lives of two of my fellow soldiers. They knew I had their backs and I knew they had mine. We were after all an Army of One.
For the better part of my life I’ve lived in the Bronx ‘til circumstances beyond my control landed me in “The City of Brotherly Love,” Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in November of 1992. The drive there was an exhilarating experience for me at the young age of 12 years. I remember it as an adventure, a journey to a new life. My uncle at the wheel, my little brother Carlos and I saw things along the highway we had never seen before.

We drove into a rest stop and there was a convenience store called Wa-Wa and the picture of a goose-like mascot on the awning sign. They sold items I’d never seen before. For example, there were these cold drinks called slurpys. I was curious, so my uncle bought me a medium-sized blueberry slurpy. It was very sweet and turned my whole mouth blue. Not something that was sold in the Bronx. “What’s it like where we’re going to live, Tio,” I asked while my brother was occupied drinking his slurpy he bought himself at that weird store. “Not like N.Y. Pilon, quiet and peaceful and lots of white people,” he said.

You see, growing up in the Bronx during the 1980s, I really never came across that many white people. The only rare instances were two teachers during grade school and at the doctor’s office. I was thinking about it the whole ride there. Are they nice or mean, and just how different were they from us? These were just some of the things I was thinking about.

Finally we arrived. The houses looked pretty small and attached to each other. “Why are the houses together Tio?” I asked. He told me they were called row houses.. I was confused because I had never seen anything like it before. I was used to living in a building in a small apartment. I assumed everyone lived just like I did.

While my uncle was driving down the street to our new home, my brother and I looked out the sides of the window and saw kids playing down the street. Indeed, they were white, just like my uncle had mentioned. At that moment I had butterflies in my stomach because they were different from the kids I normally would hang-out with. All of my old friends were either African American, Dominican, Puerto Rican, or Mexican minorities and that’s all I ever knew.

There was this one particular kid riding on a skateboard with broken pieces of wood and funky stickers all over his board. He pointed at me and shouted, “Hey! Where do you come from.” I got very nervous at that point, so I lowered myself down the seat to not get anyone’s attention. I took a peek at my new home, and saw three steps heading up towards a porch. A wind chime made from seashells caught my attention for a moment before I saw a big brown wooden door. There were carvings of roses as the design. It was a spectacular door, something I’ve only seen in movies. My parents’ apartment
The door in the Bronx was just a big metal slab, nothing interesting about it except the fact it probably had been painted over thirty times or more.

I walked inside along with my brother to greet my aunt Anna. I went upstairs to unpack my belongings when my brother and I were escorted to our new room. “We get our own room?” I asked my Aunt. “Where did you think you were going to sleep,” she said. Living in an already overcrowded one bedroom apartment with five people was what I was used to. It’s surprising to me that my brother and I get to at least share our own bedroom.

I looked out the window and saw kids standing in front of my new home. Since this was my first big move to an unfamiliar place and not being at all familiar with my new surroundings left me with fear. I thought those kids congregating outside would hate me for being different from them. I stayed indoors for about two weeks before I got the courage to step outside. School was out for Christmas vacation at the time and registering for school was a long process as well, so I had time on my hand.

“Pilon,” my Aunt yelled. I came down from my room and asked what was the matter. “I need you to go to the store and buy me a gallon of milk and a loaf of bread,” she said. “I’ll get lost, I don’t know how to get around yet,” I said. “Well, you need to know you’re way around because you start school soon,” she said. So I took the ten dollar bill that she gave me to purchase the items. “The store is two blocks up to your right and one block more to the right,” she said.

Off I went with my oversized coat. I walked two blocks up to the right just like my Aunt said. “Where you going?” I heard a voice from the left side of me and there he was, sitting on the steps. “My name is Brian. What’s yours?” he said. I couldn’t figure out what to say. Do I say my name is Arturo or my nickname Pilon. I just couldn’t stand the fact that I was about to embarrass myself to someone named Brian. I was used to names like Jose, Tito, or Gustavo. This I thought was the most important moment of my life because a name is very powerful. Kids can be honest and very cruel at the same time, so teasing is very easy if your name sounds funny. I thought of Junior the very last part of my name and simply said, “My name is Junior.” Brian just looked at me and said, “Cool, want to play hockey?” Okay, I said, not knowing what hockey was. I hurried back home from the store with a big smile on my face and shouted to everyone, “my name is Junior, call me Junior.” “Que pasa con el?”—what’s wrong with him,” my aunt said.

I went back outside and met up with my new friend Brian and he loaned me a hockey stick. He also introduced me to the rest of his friends. There was Stanley, Kevin, Joey-Madelyn, John, Crystal, Claude, and Desiree. At that moment I finally realized what it meant to be an outsider. My family and I were the only Puerto Ricans in the neighborhood, and it wasn’t as bad as I thought it would be.

“So what’s your name?” Crystal asked. Crystal was a charismatic Irish American girl with a distinctive mole on the left side of her cheek. “Junior,” I said. “What’s your real name?” she said. How did she know that Junior wasn’t my real name? Maybe she’s psychic I thought. I was tensing up, sweating, very nervous at the fact that I was going to have to say my real name in front of...
them all. Then, I just yelled it out “Arturo,” I said defiantly. They were never going to speak to me again I thought to myself. “That’s cool, it’s unique,” she said. “I like it but it’s kind of difficult to pronounce. I’ll call you Junior then,” she said.

The misconceptions about white people led me to believe the most awful things about them towards us. Yet I was accepted by them. Even though I was not one of them; they sure made me feel like I was.

“Portrait” by Hideki Takahashi
It is true that I was once led by hand through life.

Given all the reasons I should do this or do that
By someone else.
Told how I should live by people older and wiser than myself

But not anymore, because the power has been snatched by me.
I took the power to speak for myself from the individuals in my life

“What a great power!”
There is so much I can do with it.
Should I abuse or should I appreciate?

Would it be abuse if I were to tell a story?
A story some know and others do not.
So many things to do
And so many things to say

And it begins with my heart
With every beat within
And with my heart this power will grow

‘cause I will speak and do all with what’s best for me
No one and no one alone will tell me this time
Where there is a need
There is always greed.
A rotten exploiting deed
That manifests with speed.

When there are mouths to feed
Read between the lines and take heed!
Sneaking around is inspiring greed
Ready to take advantage and proceed

Even when there is no need to succeed
It is agreed, there is always greed.
Our desire for more always exceeds our needs.

We always want more
Sometimes I don’t know what for
I read to understand what generation of breed
Has given birth to this senseless weed
Because life is a circle of endless greed

I urgently need to know
I plead, who planted this
Seed of greed
To deliberately mislead?
THE INSANITY DEFENSE

The insanity defense is a plea that defendants are not guilty because they lack the mental capacity to realize that they committed a crime. On the contrary, in the short stories “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Black Cat,” and “Berenice,” Edgar Allan Poe defends the unreliable narrators by claiming that they are not insane. He uses a persuasive tone to make the reader believe that the character’s actions are not only correct, but normal for a person with his intelligence. He puts the blame on people, animals, and even inanimate objects to defend his state of mind.

“The Tell-Tale Heart” is a story about how an innocent old man is gruesomely murdered. The narrator is obviously crazy, but he tries to persuade the reader to think that the old man’s evil eye is driving him to kill him. He tries to mask his craziness with intellect:

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded--with what caution--with what foresight--with what dissimulation I went to work!” (40). “Ha!--would a madman have been so wise as this (41)?

He is contrasting himself to a crazy person, explaining how someone who is insane could have never completed this task so meticulously. His persuasive tone brings in the reader as if they were simply having a conversation with a friend. “Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in!” (41)

He is assuming the reader would think that this is not only sane, but funny. Nonetheless, Poe is persuading the reader to be on his side in believing that the narrator is not mad. “If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body.” (43). The narrator finds any little detail to blame such as the evil eye, his intellect and even his senses before admitting that he is insane. “And now have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses?” (42). The narrator even goes on to blame the heart’s beating for him getting caught, when in fact we all know a dead man’s heart cannot beat.

“The Black Cat” is a short story about how the narrator kills his pet cat, then later on tries to kill a second cat that reminds him of the previous cat but in doing so, he mistakenly kills his wife. He begins by telling the reader he does not expect to be believed:

For the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not (para 1).

Even the narrator doesn’t believe what he is about to say. He already states that he is not crazy. As in “The Tell-Tale Heart, this narrator finds something to blame:
Perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart - one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should not?” (para 9).

He knew what he had done was morally wrong, but still went along and did it. He sees a silhouette of a cat in his burned house on the wall of his bedroom but it could not have been there because he had hung the cat from a tree.

The cat, I remembered, had been hung in a garden adjacent to the house. Upon the alarm of the fire, this garden had been immediately filled by the crowd - by some one of whom the animal must have been cut from the tree and thrown, through an open window, into my chamber. This had probably been done with the view of arousing me from sleep” (para 12).

Although it’s clear that his mind is playing tricks on him and maybe even his conscience or guilt, he would rather believe any feasible story before thinking he might be losing it.

“Berenice” is yet another story about murder. The narrator Egaeus is once again mad. He kills his cousin Berenice because of her teeth. He explains that the normal reader would not understand him, once again using his intellect to defend himself:

It is more than probable that I am not understood; but I fear, indeed, that it is in no manner possible to convey to the mind of the merely general reader, an adequate idea of that nervous intensity of interest with which, in my case, the powers of meditation (not to speak technically) busied and buried themselves, in the contemplation of even the most ordinary objects of the universe. (para 6)

Once again this narrator’s mind is playing games with him and he is blaming her teeth for his horrid actions. “The teeth! - The teeth! - They were here, and there, and everywhere” (para 17) Obviously the teeth were not everywhere but his acute senses focus so deeply on an object that he can’t control himself. Subsequently, this one object drives him to murder yet again.

My secondary source is Edgar Poe: Seer and Craftsman by Stuart Levine. In the section about madness and credibility, Levine explains how Poe has a certain style that was tied to the nineteenth century, when writers had a fascination with death. Levine goes on to say how the narrators are mad and unreliable. This passage ties in perfectly with my argument on how the narrators are insane and trying to convince the reader otherwise. I agree with Levine and he furthers my claim of madness: “The narrator is mad, a monomaniac capable of losing himself, due to an extreme heightening of the attentive powers of his mind, in morbid contemplation of the most minute items” (26-27). Levine points out that Poe tends to blame his madness on inanimate objects, persuading the reader to believe he isn’t mad but that an object drove him to an obscene act. Writes Levine of a fellow literary critic, “Clark Griffith has defined the situation of such Poe characters as ‘the inner madness,’ which enables the characters to perceive ‘the outer wonders’” (27). A monomaniac is a person
who is obsessed with a single thing, to the exclusion of other concerns. This pretty much sums up the narrators in all three stories.

In conclusion, Poe’s narrators are unreliable first person points of view. These characters are usually crazy. Poe has a persuasive tone to prove to the reader they are not insane but these are words coming from someone who is unreliable to begin with. Others such as Levine also believe that his characters are monomaniacs who are engulfed by one object and go crazy over these things, whether it is a cat or eyes or teeth.

**Works Cited**


Homosexuality is accepted more and more in society nowadays. Homosexuals show their affection in public and although it might be still uncomfortable for some people, society in general respects and accepts them. However, this is something relatively new in our society. In the 1930s homosexuality was considered to be a mental illness. Homosexuals were prosecuted and many laws were passed against them. It was a forbidden theme in society and all art expressions. The film industry, for example, had to follow rules and codes in order to show its movies in theaters. Movies are a good source for seeing how the theme of homosexuality has changed over the time. Two interesting movies based on the play The Children’s Hour by Lillian Hellman show a clear change in societal attitudes towards homosexuality over time. The two movies are “These Three” (1936) starring Miriam Hopkins, Merle Oberon, Joel McCrea, and Bonita Granville, and “The Children’s Hour” (1961) starring Audrey Hepburn, Shirley Maclaine, James Garner, and Karen Balkin. Although both are based on the same play, they each address the plot in different ways. “These Three,” starring Miriam Hopkins, who plays Martha Dobie, and Merle Oberon, who plays Karen Wright, starts when these two friends are graduating from college. Their future seems to be uncertain since they don’t have any money. However, Karen, who has inherited a farmhouse from her grandmother, decides to try to open a school for girls with her friend’s help. Once they move in to the farmhouse, they meet Dr. Joe (Joel McCrea) who encourages them to follow their plan despite the bad conditions of the farmhouse. Martha looks interested in Joe from the beginning, while Joe is clearly interested in Karen. The plan works out and the school is opened. Mrs. Tilford, a prestigious woman, supports the school and sends her granddaughter, Mary, to study there. However, Mary doesn’t like going to school, and she is always causing trouble. Therefore, she is always punished. As revenge, Mary schemes a heterosexual triangle between the two teachers and Dr. Joe. She tells all her stories to her grandmother, who believes everything, and uses her power to destroy the school and the teachers’ reputations. However, the end of this movie is a happy ending. Rosalie, another student who knows the truth, helps Martha to clarify everything. Martha leaves with her aunt, and Karen goes looking for Joe. The end shows them together, as a happy loving couple. Hellman wrote a lot of additional scenes for this film, leaving out the theme of lesbianism which is in the original play. The reason is that this production was under the rules of The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 (Hays Code). One of the general principles of this code states that “No picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of
crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.” Movies, as any piece of art, were considered to have moral obligations so the code made it clear that “everything possible in a play is not possible in a film” because movies are seen by larger audiences and the impact can psychologically affect their lives (The Motion Picture Code). Lesbianism, then, was considered impure love and immoral.

“These Three” differs from the play The Children’s Hour in many aspects. It adds the graduation of the teachers from college, emphasizing more on their friendship. It also adds more scenes to the process of Joe and Karen falling in love. Many scenes are outside the school, while in the play most of it takes place at the school. Some of the added scenes are the day Karen meets Mrs. Tilford on the road; the day Joe and Karen go to the carousel; and the trial. The end keeps the plays dialogues, but it switches the speakers’ roles. Karen seems to have doubts about Joe and Martha, instead of Joe having doubts about Martha and Karen. Martha confesses her love for Joe, while in the play her confession is being in love with Karen. The final confrontation that takes place between Martha and Mrs. Tilford in the movie is a confrontation between Karen and Mrs. Tilford in the original play. Finally, in this movie Martha leaves with her aunt, while in the play she commits suicide.

The Children’s Hour, filmed in 1961 on the other hand, is more faithful to the original play, including its name. Not many scenes were added to the film that were not in the play, and the lesbianism theme is implied although it is never mentioned explicitly. When the movie starts, Karen and Joe have already been engaged for two years, and they are planning to get married. The school is functioning and Mary, a spoiled girl and the granddaughter of Amelia Tilford, goes to the school. Mary is caught in a lie, and Karen punishes her. Furious, Mary plans her revenge by inventing a story about Martha and Karen having a homosexual relationship. The story is part product of her imagination which is fed by a book she is reading, and fragments of a conversation her roommates heard between Martha and Mrs. Mortar. In this conversation, Mrs. Mortar tells Martha that she is jealous of Joe, and that she has “unnatural” feelings for her friend Karen. Mrs. Tilford believes everything her granddaughter says, and the rumor is rapidly spread. All girls are taken out of the school by their parents, and the teacher’s reputation is destroyed. Joe starts doubting about Karen who thinks it is better to end their engagement, so Joe leaves. Once Martha knows about the break up, she confesses that she feels confused, and that she loves Karen in a different way. When the truth is discovered, and Mrs. Tilford realizes that everything was a fabrication of her granddaughter, she apologizes, but Karen refuses to accept the apology. Karen proposes to Martha that they leave together to start their lives somewhere else. However, this doesn’t happen since Martha commits suicide.

The Children’s Hour movie definitely follows the play. However, some scenes are also added to the movie. One of those scenes is when Mrs. Tilford goes to the school to confront the teachers, immediately after Mary had told her the lie about Karen and Martha. Another important scene added is Martha’s funeral, when Karen is shown alone while other people watch her from the distance.
Although both movies are different, the actors and actresses in each one really play their roles close to the original play. I believe that in both movies, Mary is the most wonderful character. Bonita Granville, in “These Three”, and Karen Balkin, in “The Children’s Hour,” perfectly manage Mary’s complex character. Both actresses are able to awake in the audience repulsion for this evil character. Their body language and facial expressions transfer the personality of Mary from the play in a way that viewers want to spank them. I personally like Karen Balkin’s interpretation better than the other one. I think she is more expressive, and characterized better how spoiled Mary is. In my opinion, Mrs. Mortar is better interpreted by Catherine Doucet in “These Three.” She creates a superficial and egocentric woman better. Her tone of voice is more annoying, and she speaks faster.

The performances of Martha in the films are difficult to evaluate in terms of fulfilling expectations based on the play. In “The Children’s Hour,” Shirley McLaine is obviously closer to the original character of Martha. She is able to convey that special affection for her friend without letting the audience see her real feelings, which she doesn’t know either. One of her best moments in the movie is when she confesses to Karen that she has found out that she really loves her as everybody says.

Karen Wright’s character is well interpreted by the two actresses. Merle Oberon, in “These Three,” and Audrey Hepburn, in “The Children’s Hour,” play Karen from the play. They both transfer to the audience Karen’s sweetness and determination. However, as with Martha’s character, it is easier to relate Karen with Audrey Hepburn’s interpretation because that movie is closer to the original play. Audrey Hepburn is so sweet that her characterization contrasts better Martha’s personality which is not as feminine.

Besides the characterization made by actors and actresses, specific film techniques are used to enhance the emotions or feelings that the scene wants to reflect. In “These Three,” there is a key scene that shows the distance between Martha and Joe. A long shot technique is used first to show the whole scenario. Dr. Cardin falls asleep while waiting for Karen in company of Martha, who is sitting in another chair. A close up of Dr. Cardin is followed by a shot of the window. After the window, there is a close up shot of Martha looking at Joe. This technique seems to say that Joe doesn’t have any interest in Martha, while making clear that Martha is in love with him. The movie also uses the technique of fading out between scenes.

“The Children’s Hour” movie runs continuously. There is a film technique that is used many times in this movie as well as in the first version. It consists of dialogue between characters where the audience can see but not hear what the characters are saying; the mood of these shots implies that something important and negative is being said. This is used when Mary whispers into her grandmother’s ears. In this scene, the music and the facial expressions imply that Mary is saying something horrible about Karen and Martha, to her grandmother. Another scene that uses this technique is when one of the parents is explaining to Karen the reason the girls are being taken out by their parents. The audience can clearly see that they are having a conversation but the shot
of the conversation is in the distance. The purpose of this technique is to avoid the word lesbian (Erhart 93). This might be also the reason to omit the trial. Showing the court would have made it necessary to the accusation of lesbianism. There are a lot of close ups of Mary, since the actress is very skillful with her facial expressions. An important close up occurs when she is spying on the teachers. When Karen kisses Martha, the kiss is shot from Mary’s point of view (subjective shot). After that there is a close up of Mary’s face (98). This close up makes the audience infer that Mary is fabricating a story in her mind. It adds more drama to the scene.

The movies are also full of symbolism. One example is the flowers Mary gets for Mrs. Mortar from the garbage. Mary getting the flowers from the garbage is more than disrespectful. It also implies the point of view about Mrs. Mortar, not only from Mary, but the author. Mrs. Mortar is a materialistic, egocentric and superficial woman. Her character is only there to aggravate the situation. It is like flowers taken from the garbage is all she really deserves. Something else in the movie that illustrates symbolism is the fact that Dr. Cardin is a pediatrician. His profession emphasizes the traditional family values such as getting married and having kids, a situation that is of course impossible in a homosexual relationship. Another situation that can have a symbolic meaning is Mary’s fake heart attack. The heart is supposed to be the organ where people’s feelings are. It may signify then, Mary’s necessity for affection and attention.

The two movies, although based on the same play, failed to focus on what was the real intention of the author of the play. In a New York Times article of December 14, 1952 by Harry Gilroy, he writes some reflections on what Miss Hellman has said about her play: “I never see the characters as monstrously as the audiences do . . . this is really not a play about lesbianism, but about a lie. The bigger the lie the better, always (Hellman 4)” In this reflection, Hellman reveals her real intention when writing the play, and the main focus. However, none of the two movie’s versions are concentrated in this matter.

“These Three” is turned into a typical Hollywood love story with a happy ending. The reasons were previously discussed. However, the main focus of this movie is on the love triangle between the two teachers and the Dr. The negative impact of Mary’s lie is offset by the happy ending. Mrs. Tilford gets the opportunity to do something so she can feel better. She gives Karen the message that everything was a fabrication of her granddaughter.

“The Children’s Hour” movie also focuses more on the lesbianism theme. Although it is not explicit, the curiosity to know what is really happening between Martha and Karen is what keeps the spectator connected to the movie. Two important scenes added to this movie are a key to see how the director wanted to address the supposedly lesbian relationship between the headmistresses. One is when Mrs. Tilford goes to the school to confront Martha and Karen, but instead she finds Mrs. Mortar very upset because her niece had just thrown her out. Mrs. Mortar’s words about Martha caring only about the school and her friend, confirms the story Mary had told her grandmother. The other scene is more a change in the sequence of the original play’s ending, than
an addition. In the original play, when Mrs. Tilford goes to apologize after finding out the truth, Martha has already committed suicide. In the movie, Martha is able to hear Mrs. Tilford apologize, and then commits suicide. The play judges Mrs. Tilford harder, because she is not given any opportunity before Martha’s death. In contrast, the movie gives Mrs. Tilford more comfort since at least she gets to the school and both of the teachers are able to listen to her apology. Then, the sequence in the movie emphasizes more in the guiltiness Martha feels because of her “impure feelings”, and because although everything started as a lie, it had become a truth for her. The movie is definitely more about homosexuality, than the power of a lie.

I think the movies were well made, independent of the fidelity to the play. “These Three” is a sweet love story that catches the audience’s attention, and has what most people would expect from a love story, a happy ending. “The Children’s Hour” is also interesting. It touches in a veiled way, a theme that even in the 1960s was taboo. The scenes were made in a way that homosexuality is implied, but never mentioned.

Watching the two movies, and reading the play is a really interesting way to see how the film industry adjusted a story within a gap of 25 years. In the 1936 version, lesbianism was completely banned, which caused a switch of the plot. In the 1961 version, although never mentioned, the homosexual relationship was implied. In addition, both movies show how much damage a lie can cause and both have a moral. The movies might be old, but they both caught the audience’s attention and touched on themes that are still controversial. Moreover, although homosexuality is the main point in “The Children’s Hour,” it is magisterially managed since not a single obscene scene is shown. That might be a challenge for a moviemaker nowadays.

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MODERNITY: A SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

“Modernity was in its first instance, a system of notions: progress, cosmopolitanism, abundance, and an inexhaustible desire for novelty” (Rotker, 3) promising unfathomable freedom and greatness that can make men become, like Marti said, “kings of kings”. It is a word that promised scientific, technological, political and social transformations. In other words, modernity, according to Susan Rotker “meant the perception of the beginning of industrialization and the consolidation of stronger bureaucratic states…” (Rotker, 1). Since industrialization emanated generally from Western civilization, it has more of a Western influence to its interpretation and motives. Therefore, to be modern in Western terms meant having faith in technology: an environment of railroads, steam engines, factories, telephones, telegraphs, daily newspapers and most importantly new scientific discoveries.

However, the enormity of modernity is not limited to science and technology; it had a great influence on literature, most importantly Latin American literature. It introduced a term called Modernism which according to Susan Rotker “is a conjunction of literary forms that explains the different ways in which it was incorporated into modernity” (Rotker, 1). It can be said to be a socio-cultural concept which was indeed generated to counter the bourgeois industrial civilization of the nineteenth century. This tiny thread of rearranged words is what attaches Latin America to Western Modernity while repulsing its exploitative influence.

During the nineteenth century, science and literature played an important role in all ramifications of life. This gave modernity a gateway into politics and economics. The political influence of modernity is one of its most horrendous yet important determinants of human relations in times to come. This change in political relations brought by modernity had a great effect on Cuba and Puerto Rico that are still under the bond of colonization and imperialism.

Since Cuba and Puerto Rico were under the Spanish hegemony, there was intense efforts to integrate them into the hemispheric international economic system. This effort was countered by “Modernismo.” This literary movement was led by Nicaraguan Ruben Dario and it set a standard for new poetry (Allen, xvii). According to Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria in his article, Jose Marti: An Introduction, “modernity was the product of the rationalist forces that, through their effect in science and industry, made social life materialistic and crass, particularly in the growing cities of Europe, the United States and increasingly Latin America.” Modernism, on the other hand, is using “spiritual and artistic elitism to reject the modernist ideology. This critical perspective of modernism against bourgeois values was deeply rooted in the modernistas’ belief in the transformative capability of art and this gave Modernismo, particularly Marti’s works, a political edge.
Marti’s View on Modernity

Marti’s exposure to economic, political and technological modernity obviously transpired during his stay in New York from 1880 to 1895 when he left Cuba to lead the Cuban insurrection against Spain but he would never return to Cuba. Marti’s stay in New York was definitely a memorable experience. They were no doubt, the most productive years of his life. However, what gave Marti’s stay in New York an element of historic quality is not limited to his political activism and revolutionary ideologies, but spans through his observations, quintessentially documented in his writings. He wrote on topics ranging from his view of the United States, in Impressions of America (by a very fresh Spaniard), to a more critical and cynical view in The Truth about the United States.

One of the topics Marti talked about along with modernity is Nature. Marti’s ideas about nature and modernity were immensely influenced by one of the 19th century writers, Ralph Waldo Emerson. According to Oscar Montero in his book, Bilingual Emerson, “in Emerson’s writings, Marti discovered an echo in his own faith in the transformative powers of human creativity and solidarity” (Montero, 109). Although in the 1800s, global warming was not an issue that was discussed, otherwise Marti would have written about it, but now it has turned out to be one of the greatest damage humans has ever done to the planet and it is an example of the effect of the “transformative powers of human creativity and solidarity.” However, Marti dreaded the defeat of love due to greed, poetry smothered by commerce and materialistic thoughts. The greatest of his fears was the consequences of these struggles for the soul of a nation on Cuba, Puerto Rico and Latin America as a whole (Montero, 111).

In one of his letters, Our America, Marti elaborated the qualities of a ‘natural’ man and strongly advocated for the sovereignty of the Cuba and Puerto Rico. He believed strongly in his ideas that he said, “a cloud of ideas is a thing no armored prow can smash through” (Allen, 288). He started this letter by seeking for ‘unity’ of Latin American countries, in which absence made them “nation of fluttering leaves…” He referred to a “Seven-league giant”, which I believe is the Western Civilization or Western exploitation of Modernity, and the urgency of forming ‘ranks’ to block its entry in ‘our America.’

Afterwards, Marti enthusiastically talked about the need for valor amongst the peoples of Latin American countries. Courage, he explained, is deeply rooted in taking pride in what you have. He said valor does not exist in the hearts of “sons of carpenters who are ashamed that their father was a carpenter” nor those “who are ashamed of the mother that raised them because she wears an Indian apron” (Allen, 289). There after, he linked these moral values to government, the most crucial topic he talked about in the letter. Marti’s idea of ‘the’ government is one that is “born from the country it governs. He said “the government is no more than an equilibrium among the country’s natural elements (Allen, 290).” In other words, “the spirit of the government must be the spirit of the country”. The use of the article ‘the’ before ‘government’ and ‘country’ emphasized the sole identity of an administration that is completely dependent on the country that established such administration. Hence, it can-
not be imported from another country; which is the main reason for Marti’s opposition against annexation.

Despite some of the Western manipulations of modernity, Marti saw and wrote about numerous marvels of modernity in New York. However, he wrote an essay that accumulates the totality of modernity and its influence on humans, what John Kasson called, a “symbol of a new cultural order.” “At Coney Island,” like Oscar Montero said, “Marti faced modernity.” He saw the possible future existence of humans. He saw “the greatest show on earth.” (Montero, 21)

By the time Coney Island was built, it was the first of its kind. It provided limitless pleasure for the working class. Its colossal appearance is breathtaking. Like Marti said in his essay about Coney Island, it exhibited the “marvelous prosperity of the United States” (Allen 86). Marti used lots of metaphors and similes to bring the beauty of Coney Island to life through his words. His heart stopped at the size of the crowds that jam-packed the place every summer day. The continuous energetic movement and activities of the people made him quiver in joyful excitement. Like Oscar Montero says in his book, Jose Marti: An Introduction, Marti was “alone in the crowd.” This gave him the sanity to gaze at the landscape, observe the movement of masses and see beyond the happy persona that everyone had on, and the curiosity of his imagination was awakened. Being an incredibly talented and prolific writer, exposed to a world of diversity and advancement which is entirely different from what he used to know or see, Marti’s imagination compelled him to write what he saw, felt and foresaw.

Seeing these things, Marti realized the detachment of the people. This “crushing expansion” is making people lose the communal connection they have. The very evident detachment he observed was the lack of maternal connection between mother and child. The sight of a woman walking along the beach freely, leaving the child with a babysitter was one that Marti could not bring himself to understand. Being a modernista, Marti also discovered the spiritual estrangement that immigrants, especially Latin Americans, go through. He realized, being an immigrant himself, the feeling of acute loneliness and alienation and he was apparently dismayed.

Marti also noticed a slippery slope down to the valley of materialistic thoughts and actions. He realized the sublime sadness and dejection overshadowed by the materialistic instinct of the ‘modern’ people. What broke Marti’s heart the most was the racial and class discrimination which was very evident in the entirety of the United States. No doubt, like Montero said, “Marti admired the pragmatic spirit and ingenuity of the United States. He revered [her] democratic traditions;” however “he immediately recognized the seductive power of mass culture, already in full swing at Coney Island.” The hierarchical ideology of satisfying the ‘upper class’ citizens and hypocritically ignoring the ‘lower class’ immigrants really appalled Marti, and Montero called it the most devastating ‘social vice.’

According to Marti “poverty is not merely lack of fortune but deprivation in the midst of plenty, hunger and abjection disguised in a carnival of plenty (Montero, 24)” And this was exactly what Marti saw about modernity
in Coney Island. The dreadful exploitation of the working people; the deprivation and alienation of immigrants; and the lack of care and affection for the children of the deprived, were all that Marti saw, feared and spent the majority of his life trying to solve.

Marti’s interest in science, its accomplishments, its far reaching technology and the transformations it would bring about was uncontroversial. Therefore, for Marti, it was not opposing modernity, but rather to be watchful about the uses to which it was put. That is why he said in his letter, Our America:

The natural man is good, and esteems and rewards a superior intelligence as long as that intelligence does not use his submission against him or offend him by ignoring him – for that the natural man deems unforgivable, and he is prepared to use force to regain the respect of anyone who wounds his sensibilities or harms his interests.

Advantages of Modernity

This evolving social transformation that has been exploited and flawed by Western materialistic civilization, promised a great deal of positive advances in its early years. It gave man the freedom to determine his future without gazing into a space of uncertainty. It was a period of drastic transition in lifestyle and it was especially a good period for journalism and literature, due to the fact that there was intense curiosity amongst the people. And with the help of newspapers and telegraphs, information is disseminated from place to place. Tobacco workers would hire a reader to read to them the news around the world, or the most recent work of literature. Like Bernardo Vega, said in his memoirs, the tobacco workers would listen attentively and have a debate on the subject of discussion after the reader is done.

Also there was a wide range of subjects to write about; from politics to science, and social life to literature. Industrialization was in its glorious youth; scientific discoveries were finding their way into hearts of men. Women were realizing their importance in the capitalist and materialistic economy. Cuba and Puerto Rico were seeking their independence from exploitative colonial masters. These years were years of new creation and a period of great intellectual movement. The word ‘scientist’ did not exist until 1833, until uttered by William Whewell, due to the expansive exploration of science. With the 1800s, came the Theory of Evolution and natural selection, published by Charles Darwin in 1859, along with Michael Faraday’s electricity and electromagnetism and Gregory Mendel’s theory of Gene Selection and Independent Assortment. While these transformations were happening in science, the likes of Karl Marx, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Jose Marti himself, amongst others, were revolutionizing the world of literature.

One thing that everyone during the 1800s universally admired about modernity was technology. The luxury of travelling in steam boats, affected people just like men landing on the moon during the 1960s. Feelings of omnipotence dominated the crowd and the zeal of creating new things inspired the imagination of scientists. The City of Paris, a steamer referred to as the “epitome of modern transportation” exhibiting, like Montero said “two supreme values of modernity: speed and comfort” was the fastest steamer at the time. “Five days
nineteen hours and eighteen minutes” was all it took this steamer to move from Queenstown, Ireland to Hudson Bay, New York (approximately five thousand miles) at a time when basic transportation was canoes, carriages and horses!

However, as the role of science and technology became definitive in society, there were gradual detachments of the social sciences like sociology, philosophy and psychology. Hostos realized this detachment and its possible repercussion in future global relations. He was able to see, at a time where sciences were embryonic and relatively virtual conceptions, the connection of all sciences and the importance of their integration in learning. He talked about the five universal procedures imperative to the execution of all sciences and emphasized that these similarities are enough to connect sciences (Sainz, 138).

Disadvantages of Modernity

The technological advancements during the post-traditional periods have altered numerous sequences of life. Humans deviated completely from the ‘traditional’ ways of doing things. The role of religion was substituted with scientific laws and theories; the general knowledge of creationism was replaced with the theory of evolution. Parents would rather make their child learn chemistry, physics, philosophy, and political relations than listen to sermons. These gradually disintegrate the sense of communal relationships. Not only was the communal attachments disengaged, the disparity between ‘races’ became more obvious. Only the privileged majority could attend such schools, while the children on the penniless immigrants stayed home. As a result of this, the executive posts were held by certain group of races while another was classified as another man’s job. In The Chinese Funeral, Marti talked about the Chinese men that own restaurants and do laundry “because that is what they [were] allowed to do.” It is astounding to realize that today in New York, it is still so.

Also, with modernity, comes capitalism which is a vehicle driven by the fuel of profit making. It opened the window of chance for the big firms and organizations to trample upon the immature firms. Therefore the countries with capitalist ‘power’ tended to exploit the countries deprived of a capitalist market. This was one of the greatest problems for Cuba and Puerto Rico. Under the Spanish rule, yet dreading the annexation to the United States, these two countries were stuck in the ugly frenzy of the exploitative power of capitalism. Knowing the strategic location of Cuba, the United States offered the Spanish Government a sum of $100 million to possess Cuba in 1848 (Allen, xxvii), but their proposal would not be approved. This is an aspect of modernity that makes one country a prey and the other a predator is what Carlos J. Alonso called ‘uneven modernity.’ It is an insufficiency of modernity that makes it a dreadful ideology especially in Spanish American countries. This created a disparity between Spanish American modernity and the Western modernity of the United States. The Pan-American Congress, which was intended to find a hemispheric unity amongst the countries of the Americas, was a blatant failure due to this fact. The materialistic instinct of the United States was brought to light and the delegates departed the ‘juggernaut’ before it got to its final harbor (Montero).
However, the overwhelming hands of modernity that has encroached into religion, which used to be the strongest foundation of a Country, led to moral decadence. It erased the moral instinct and replaced it with a feeling of ‘gods.’ Marti really saw this in Coney Island and feared the absorption of the mass culture into the future generations which we live in. At the time, Coney Island was referred to as the ‘Sodom of the sea,’ a place for sexual perversion and all sorts of ‘social vices.’ Marti referred to Coney Island as a ‘valve of pleasure’ and realized the difficulty to place the valve back on the lid of a pressure cooker. This immoral mass of people desert their children who Marti said ‘look like broken lilies pulled out from the mud’. Marti realized the children’s beauty is being corrupted by the lack of attention.

As said earlier in this essay, Marti admired the freedom of the masses; however, when the freedom is not evenly distributed, it becomes a major problem. It thickens the line of separation and increases the abyss of disparity between the rich and the poor. Marti said that without a common good (community), freedom turns into the fleeing satisfaction of selfish pleasures (Montero, 34).

**Solutions to the Western Influence on Modernity**

Modernity has its own share of flaws and beauty however; its poignant flaws have invaded the human relationship for more than a century. Marti saw these flaws, the materialistic thinking of people, the exploitative use of freedom, he knew that Cuban independence will not only heal the hemisphere of this exploitative Western influence, but in the long run have a global benefit. “He suggested that Latin difference will be the antidote” (Montero) to the ‘poisonous culture’ modernity was turning into due to this Western influence. His ideology of freedom and citizenship is not based on a stoic coincidence rather a complete participation in the civil activity of where they claim their freedom and citizenship. I believe Oscar Montero will agree with me when he said “Marti felt that citizenship meant not only guarantee of individual rights but a shared sense of civility” (Montero, 34).

Although Marti anticipated the independence of Puerto Rico while he supported the independence of all the Antilles, he believed that the best way to break from any shackle, either of modernity or of any exploitative ideology, is getting to understand such philosophy. Marti was a tremendous advocate for education and he believed that an educated community is strong enough to confront any obstacle that it faces. No wonder he said “teach the people to reason” (Faith Ringgold). However Hostos found it most important to educate women, especially scientifically. His explanation was that scientifically inclined teachers surpass their contemporaries. Since it is a known fact that mothers are the first teachers a child has an encounter with, they should be scientifically educated.

**Conclusion**

The world we live in today is immensely influenced by modernity. Although, it is no longer a term that is widely used to depict technological ad-
vancement and expansion, it has molded our lives in various facets of social interactions. All of Marti’s fears about modernity are quite evident among us today. In a recent journal article written by Bill Moyers, I was surprised to learn that based on a documentary on the BBC network, the top 200 wealthiest people in the world control more wealth than the bottom 4 billion. A recent study found that the top .01% or 14,000 American families hold 22.2% of the wealth, while the bottom 90% - or over 133 million families – hold just 4% of the nation’s wealth, as of June 2008 (Moyers, par. 1). This is how colossally the disparity between the rich and the poor has evidently increased over the years. Now we have “Third World Countries” that the “advanced” countries claim to lend a helping hand.

However this modernity that brought in technology and science has made it possible for man to step on the moon, fly like birds; build a ship three times as big as the Titanic. The sick children Marti saw can now be cured of their cholera. The trip from Ireland to the United States that took almost six day will now just take seven hours, thirty minutes. But that brings us back to what Marti said: that poverty is wallowing in lack among abundance, because the benefits of ‘modernity’ are not universally distributed.

Works Cited
The English Speaking Union is an organization that promotes “international understanding and friendship through the use of the English language.” The New York chapter has been sponsoring essay contests at Hostos for more than 25 years. This year, essay contestants were asked to write on one of two topics: to describe someone the writer knows who “marches to a different drummer,” or to discuss a quote by Thomas Jefferson: “When a man assumes a public trust, he should consider himself public property” and agree or disagree. Prof. Craig Bernardini oversees the contest and he has generously provided Escriba with the three winning essays. Enjoy.
In this vast world of drum beats, piano keys, and guitar strums, it is no easy task to decide which beat is right for one to march to. There is no limit to the amount of expectations society imposes upon its inhabitants, or the obstacles one must defeat to achieve success. But despite such adversity, there are always people who find a way. And if there’s no way to be found, there are always those brazen few who create a way. One such person I’ve had the pleasure of meeting was my 8th grade Humanities teacher, Askia.

I met Askia in the fall of 2003. He was a short man, maybe an inch taller than the tallest boy in the class. He was of Japanese and African-American descent, a peculiar sight for our ignorant 8th grade eyes. But upon getting to know him, we soon felt the familiarity in his soul. He exuded an energy unlike any from any other teacher I’d encountered. He taught with passion and fervor in his voice. When we students spoke, he listened intently and responded as if what we said, meager 8th graders, many below the expected literacy levels, mattered. He strayed from the normal Eurocentric lesson plans and delved deeper into the history of those who looked like us, fought for us. He made us hungry for the history necessary to take pride in our lives. When questioned about the lack of Latinos in our history lessons by a curious student, he returned the following Monday with a lesson on Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution. That was just the kind of teacher he was.

Although he was a phenomenal teacher, that was not the only thing that made Askia the inspiring and amazing person he was. He was born to a Japanese mother, who was born in the midst of World War II, inside of a Japanese concentration camp. After his mother relocated to California’s Bay Area, Askia was born into intense poverty. His father was absent from his life, never to resurface until Askia was a grown man, well into his thirties. Growing up in the ghettos of Oakland, a predominately black city, Askia was often teased about his Japanese eyes and fair skin. He laughed as he would tell me those stories, but I often sensed the hurt that lived in his laughter, wrinkled and nagging. By the 10th grade, Askia was failing out of school and had impregnated his girlfriend. He dropped out soon after. But it was with shining pride in his eyes that he would tell me about getting his GED and eventually his masters degree. By the time I met him, he was working on a Ph.D in Environmental Psychology.

Despite the odds, Askia attained success. And it was because of the odds, that he wanted his students to attain success too. I admire Askia because he made his purpose in life to inspire others and provide them the tools of achievement. He didn’t only march to the beat of his own drummer, he marched to the lively sounds of his own parade, inviting onlookers to accompany him.
down the Fifth Avenue that is life. I dropped out of high school and got my GED, and I strongly believe it is with the help of these fond memories that I’m able to write this essay at Hostos today. These memories are what dreams are made of.

“Portrait” by Elizabeth Milliner
“When a man assumes a public trust, he should consider himself public property.” — Thomas Jefferson

We may or may not be cognitively aware of this truth, but truth is the foundation upon which most significant human interaction rests. It is, quite plainly, the bedrock of knowledge, the cement which rightly binds the sometimes tenuous bonds between us. Still, perhaps, that is not enough when one assumes trust in another, and in this case we should say a person of public authority, one then falls liable to the nature of the person who has been entrusted. Further, when one decides to become a public authority, to become essentially a play-thing of the people, he or she is left completely vulnerable to the tumultuousness of personal morals and virtues that may be in direct conflict with the public which he or she serves. The concepts of trust, ethical autonomy and the accepted norms that accompany roles which are inherently prestigious will be examined critically.

We must properly evaluate the role of trust with regard to the social role of public figures. It may be an overly obvious statement but public officials have attained such status because they are considered to be the best individuals to work for the interest of the general public. America’s system of government promotes representation of its citizens. In theory, (and of course these assumptions teeter on being overly optimistic) by using everyday people as representatives for the masses, we as a nation have assembled a hierarchical contrast based upon conflict. We have assembled this construct and in turn cannot fight against our own beliefs, lest we appear hypocritical. Obviously this certainly does not hold true, but still, like starved children grasping for our mother’s breast, we cling to the ideal. Further, we as a nation have the almost silly proclivity to hold our public officials to this ridiculous gold standard we often won’t even use as a standard for ourselves. Public officials are expected to be our beacons of legislative and moral hope. They are expected to have superhuman abilities, to mimic the gracefulness of God, to never falter, to never err, to never fall victim to being human. Nietzsche coined a wonderfully descriptive word, ‘übermensch,” a person of capabilities which are difficult to obtain and almost divinely virtuous in nature. This serves as an important way to describe the expectations of our public figures. The general public finds it hard not to be completely emotionally invested in the figures they elect. The public also finds it hard to achieve the balance between emotional distance and clear logical functioning. Thus, the public figure is constantly placed in a position where he or she must laughably pirouette between public wants and personal needs.
But why must one, who has taken the duty to represent the people still hold steadfastly to the desire of personal needs? The answer is so painfully clear. Every man, woman and child will at some point desire privacy and space (whether it is emotion or proximinal). We can muse that this need for space is a simple reaction to overstimulation of the senses and sensibilities. We can say, also, that the space may be needed to act out wants and desires that may not be well received by peers. There are certainly more explanations but for the sake of the argument let us grapple with these two. A public representative, beneath the sharp suits and the overly styled hair, beneath the rhetoric and punditry, beneath the sly smile and questionably white teeth, is a human like the rest of us. Being that he or she is a painfully simple human, he or she should be allotted the same rights as any other person in this nation.

With the needs of the public official established, let us look into the delicate dance between fulfilling those needs, the public wants and the ethical quagmire that arises. Essentially, the problem that shifts forth is a problem based upon self interest. For the public, their self interest regarding public officials not only rests upon the legislative power the authority figure wields but also in the morality of the public figure backing the particular legislation. For example, a citizen may have an issue with a congressman who is adamantly against gay rights but the same congressman frequents gay bars and has homosexual relationships. In this example, the citizen would feel it is his or her right to peer into the life of this congressman, to make sure the proverbial bark is matching the bite. Then the citizen would reevaluate their thrust in the particular congressman. All of this would break down the initial trust placed upon the congressman by the citizen which may break down the societal trust.

For the public official, though, their self interest is based upon not only personal needs (whether the needs are morally acceptable or not) by directly addressing the supporting public wants. The public official must then enact an ever-changing façade. In the morning there may be a face for the family, in the afternoon a face for a press conference, in the evening a drunken face that attempts to efface the creations of the day. And all of this is based upon, even forced by, constant public scrutiny. Personally, all of the face-changing would create a massive ethical dilemma. How can a public official ever be trusted if the public is only seeing a façade upon a self? How did the public even properly choose their representative if their reason for trust and faith were based upon a fiction? Oh, but the official does not get off unpunished. How could the public official allow themselves to be in a position of constant public scrutiny and perpetual face changing? It seems as if both parties are wrong; it seems that both parties involved have fallen victim to each other.

Let us conclude not with idealistic, overly presumptuous rhetoric, but with simple, sage advice. As children, our parents often warn us: “do to others what you want others to do to you.” For such little ears and inexperienced beings, that was monumental advice; perhaps, on par with something otherworldly. Yes, we are grown up now. And, yes, we have moved far beyond parables and warning. But take heed to the childhood lessons lost to summers; take heed to the advice of under-praised parents. As a nation, as a people we must
look beyond our self interest and rationally gauge our judgments and assumptions. We must look toward our sisters and our wives, our husbands and public representatives with caring glances. We all are human, nothing more. No title or power changes the one truth - our humanity - we can confidently we know. Each human desires to be treated exceptionally, despite differing opinions, and certainly we must all work together to uphold that desire.

“Grandfather and Grandmother” by Crisne Lebron
My family is made up of very intelligent and strong African-American people with some liberal, but mostly conservative, middle-class values. However, there is one person who personifies the meaning of being an individual who marches to the beat of a different drummer. She is the “standout in the crowd,” the “lone wolf,” and some might say (and come to think of it, do say) a weirdo. My mother’s baby sister, Patricia Lucille Hall, is a vegan, interpretative African dancer who in her spare time travels the world and studies Yuruban culture and astrology. She lives with her lover Pamela and they jointly teach a yoga class using heavy African beats and drums in Brooklyn. Tishy (that’s her family nickname) is just her own authentic self, inside and out, and I just adore her for having the courage to live that way. She lives out loud.

Tishy was brought up by my grandparents, in the same household as my mother and other two aunts, but she was different from the beginning of her life. My grandparents gave their daughter piano lessons and taught them classical pieces, as well as encouraged their innate love for opera, but Tishy rebelled. She would skip her piano lessons and go to the neighborhood recreation center. There she would dance to this music that was becoming more and more popular with young Black people discovering their heritage. It was African tribal music with rich and soul-stirring rhythms that were too exciting for Tishy to ignore. She finally told her parents what she was doing, and they weren’t exactly jumping for joy at the news. My grandfather blamed her “craziness” on my grandmother’s side of the family, and my grandmother reminded him of his “odd-ball relatives,” but in the end, they accepted their youngest daughter’s uniqueness and gave her their blessing to pursue dance.

Tishy proved to be a gifted dancer. She went to the High School of Performing Arts and starred in many dance productions. She went on to college, where she met and eventually married her Black Studies professor. He exposed her to even more aspects of African and African-American culture than she could even imagine. They had a daughter, named Nairobi, and traveled extensively throughout Africa and Europe. The whole time they were globe-hopping, my aunt was gleaning all sorts of knowledge from people she encountered and befriended. She was a “New Ager” before that phrase was even coined; she studied with and became a Yuruban priestess and developed spiritual dances. She became a sponge to all aspects and offerings that life could present her. She lived life out loud.

She faced a very difficult time in her life when she realized that her marriage wasn’t happy or fulfilling to her or her husband. They loved each other, but not enough to go on through life as partners. Tishy had been holding in a secret, but at age 40, she came out to the family. Suppressing her sexuality was
causing her pain, and she couldn’t do it anymore. She divorced her husband, and after a few years, she met and fell in love with my aunt, Pam. (They aren’t legally married, but Pam is part of our family.) My mother totally accepts Pam and calls her “one of the sisters,” and my sons love her to death. (They think she’s the coolest percussionist around.) I just love how happy Tishy is when she’s around Pam. She helps Tishy live out loud.

I have a special bond with my aunt, Tishy, that my father used to laugh about. He would say that I had inherited my “weird, artsy-fartsy” ways from her. I guess I did because I was raised by my grandparents for the first five years of my life (mom and dad were trying to finish college), and Tishy lived with my grandparents and me at that time. She would dance and teach me scaled-down versions of her routines, so I grew up loving ballet, interpretative dance and African praise dancing. I treasure the fact that among my immediate family, I am considered the “odd” one. No matter. I do things a bit differently. I can draw up birth charts based on astrology; I can cook food from many cultures; I am a liberal Catholic who believes in spiritual cleansing. I lived with my husband for seventeen years before I believed marriage was right for us. I believe we can communicate with our family members when they pass over. I know that the average person may not share my views on most subjects (don’t get me started on politics), but I am not afraid to put my authentic self out there and express my opinions. I know that’s partly due to my aunt Tishy. I gotta love her and I do. She taught me to live out loud.
“Guitar Hero” by Javier Arellano
“Fight Diabetes” by Karen Katrina Garcia
“Self Portrait” by Ana Avagyan
“Siblings” by Hae Young Hwang
“Psychotic Cat” by Nelly Garabito
“Tree of Knowledge” by Samantha Hernandez
“Building as Seen Through Criss-Crossed Glass” by Edberg Silva
“Boy on Rainbow Bridge” by Yesenia Moises
“BAD Sign” by Andrew Torres
“Obama (yes we can)” by Jose Martinez
“Carnival of Bullets” by Elijah Richmond
"Sitting on the Top of the World" by Edward Arias
“Thoughts” by Serrano Christina
“Scream” by Andre Steinberg
“Self Portrait” by Bianca Colon
“Tiger” by Shin Seungeob
This year, the Bronx Council on the Arts invited the Hostos Library to take part in The Big Read, a literacy program sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. We called on faculty from the entire college to think of ways they could use *Sun, Stone and Shadows* (ed. Jorge F. Hernandez), a collection of Mexican short stories, in their classes. Hostos art and digital arts students created works based on the stories and acting students put on a dramatic reading. Several English classes read, discussed and wrote about the stories. Prof. Kathleen Kane's students did reviews of their favorite stories in the collection. We have included five of these reviews. We thank Prof. Kane and her Eng. 111 students for their contributions and we hope that they will inspire others to read the stories.
“August Afternoon” is very short, sweet and straight to the point. It is about a fourteen-year-old boy whose father died soon after he was born and whose mom works very hard to support them. He has a big imagination and loves war stories, often picturing himself as a Mexican soldier. He spends most of his time over at his uncle’s house and adores being around his cousin Julia. They listen to music, she helps him with his homework, and she also takes him to the movies, but things start to change when she introduces her boyfriend to him. He starts to become possessive and wants to be Julia’s hero, just like in the war books he reads at night. At the end of the story, he comes to realize that everything is not like he imagines. He knows now that he cannot always be the hero he dreams of. He burns all his war books and is forced to grow up faster than he expected.

This short story really touched me. I felt sad for the boy, that he had to grow up because of the dramatic situation he had to experience. The one person he admired the most was growing up, and he was forced to grow up also. In my opinion, the significance of the burning of the books symbolized his transitioning from a child to a young adult. I would recommend this short story to anyone; it is a very moving story and prompts readers to get sentimental thinking about their own life changes. Jose Emilio Pacheco did a great job portraying the theme of the story to the readers.
This is a short story about a woman who is reading a friend’s journal after he died. Her friend Filiberto drowned in Acapulco. He had lost his job and was accused of stealing. The narrator doesn’t believe these things about her friend. As she reads his writings she begins to think her friend was losing it.

In his journal, he speaks of a statue, Chac-Mool, that comes to life after getting wet during a flood in his cellar. The statue controls him, tells him what to do, and gets very angry if he doesn’t comply. The statue makes him steal money from work which eventually costs him his job. He had no way out since the statue was very observant. He was attempting to escape by swimming away when he died.

She ultimately doesn’t want to believe her friend is crazy so she makes excuses, blaming overworking. She arrived at his house and to her surprise, an Indian, Chac-Mool opens the door. He is very similar to the statue her friend described in his journal.

I really enjoyed the story. It had a great use of imagination and surrealism. It really makes you think about who is really crazy. The end has great irony which I like. I recommend this story it a good read and not too long.
"Tell Them Not To Kill Me" by Juan Rulfo

Published in 1953, this is one of 20 great Mexican stories in Sun, Stone and Shadows. The story takes place in Mexico and its theme is related to social realism, an artistic movement which focuses on social and racial injustice through portrayal of life struggles, most often about the working class. “Tell Them Not To Kill Me” is about Juvencio, a father who is around 60 years old and who committed a crime thirty-five or more years ago. He has just been arrested. Juvencio is begging his son Justino to help him. It is Juvencio who says, “Tell them not to kill me.” But Justino fears that the police would arrest him too and shoot him. He thinks that if this happened, nobody would take care of his wife and his children. He finally thinks about what he can do to help his father. Just reading the title, “Tell Them Not to kill me,” makes the reader curious to read the story, to know what crime was committed. The message in this story reveals something about our society.

Juvencio really wants to stay alive; he doesn’t want to die. The first sentence of the story illustrates that: “Tell them not to kill me, Justino! Go on and tell them that. For God’s sake! Tell them. Tell them please for God’s sake!” By looking at the repetition of the words “for God’s sake,” we notice that he has become religious. Juvencio is so determined to stay alive, he would do anything for that. When his son tells him that he can’t because there would be nobody to take care of his wife and his children, Juvencio says, “Providence will take care of them, Justino.” He just wants his own situation to be resolved. He doesn’t care about what would happen or what is happening in the world. As the narrator says, “All he wanted was to live.”

When Juvencio discovers that there is nothing to do to save him, he becomes very afraid. The story describes “his eyes big with fear and his mouth swelled up with those mouthfuls of sour water he had to swallow unwillingly.” After a while, when Juvencio knows that there is no more hope for him, the Sergeant brings him in front of the Colonel who he hasn’t seen before that moment. But Juvencio hears the Colonel’s voice ask if he “knew Guadalupe Terreros?” In fact, the Colonel’s father was the one who Juvencio killed 35 years ago. The Colonel orders the Sergeant to “take [Juvencio] and tie him up awhile, so he will suffer and then shoot him!” In spite of all Juvencio’s supplications and confessions, nothing could save him.

I really loved the beginning of the story with the phrase “Tell them not to kill me.” The message presents the reality of our society and some of the problems that we face in our lives. The author presents a social story because crimes such as violence, murder, or homicide happen most often because of the economic situation which faces the different classes of society. The theme of the story and the way the story is written makes it very interesting. I really
I recommend this story to those interested in fiction, Mexican culture and social criticism.

“Potatoes with Eyes” by Mavel Soto
“Tell the Sergeant to let you see the Colonel. And tell him how old I am, how little I’m worth. What will he get out of killing me? Nothing. After all, he must have a soul. Tell him to do it for the blessed salvation of his soul” (127). Juvencio was a coward. those were the words that he yelled to his son Justino, to tell the sergeant not to kill him. He should’ve faced his crime instead of running away from it all these years. Every wrongdoing has to be accounted for. He lived his life in fear all the time so that he missed out and lost his family. Did he honestly think that his son was going to risk his own life for a dad who had barely been there for him? Maybe Justino thought his father had it coming for doing what he did and he didn’t feel bad that his father was going to die. I couldn’t believe that after all these years, Don Lupe’s son would even remember the man – Juvencio – who had killed his father and left him fatherless. Don Lupe’s son put all his efforts to seeking his revenge on his father’s murderer? After all, the way Juvencio had killed Don Lupe was heartless and I think he got what he deserved. Everyone knew that he killed that man, so how didn’t he expect his day to come? He thought God was going to take it easy on him and have a peaceful death from old age.

It is unbelievable how considerate the Colonel was to Juvencio by trying to numb him with liquor so he would not feel the pain of the shots, compared to the agony his father went through when he was dying slowly for two days. It was very considerate of Justino, Juvencio’s son whom he had really abandoned, to take his dead body on a donkey and cover his face so his wife and kids would not see the horror of all those bullet holes and to have a wake for him. Is a good short story that shows how karma works. Like the saying goes, “what goes around comes back around.”
Octavio Paz’s “My Life with the Wave” is an intriguing and unforgettable love story. Just like every love story, it is filled with passion, laughter, happiness, sadness, and even anger.

She left everything behind to follow him to the city where he lived. Her energy filled his house and made everything brighter and happier. Their obsession for one another grows bigger and stronger. At times she wasn’t happy but he would try everything to make her happy again. At times he felt mortified by her but the beauty of her voice made him calm and peaceful. They had the characteristics of a typical couple, but this relationship was far from normal because the woman in the story is a wave. A wave made out of salty water was a man’s partner.

As unreal and unbelievable as this story is, I have to say that I liked it. It’s not the typical love story where the magical prince swept the beautiful girl off her feet and its ends in a happily ever after. This story gives the same thrill that any love story gives, but it is meant for those like me who don’t believe in the happy endings. In real life, relationships end and the person who you thought was going to be with you until death was never really meant for you. We make the mistake of believing that there is such thing as happily ever after when there really isn’t. There are always problems, misunderstandings and pointless arguments. It’s not about finding the perfect person; it’s really about finding the right person for you. As surreal as this story seems, it is closer to reality than many I have read. It takes in the reality of those unfixable relationships that we all go through where the best solution is to end it.
Dear NYC History Council,

Women in the 19th Century were not permitted to be as involved in society as men. Women were second rate. If a woman back then was knowledgeable, the woman might be scorned by men. Although women were unappreciated, they still managed to overcome stereotypes. Emily Roebling fits that description. She is both courageous and has overcome stereotypes. Emily Warren Roebling was born in the town of Brampton, Ontario. She was born into a large family of many sisters and brothers, but still managed to get an education. She was funded by her brother Gouverneur K. Warren. Even though her family wasn’t wealthy, she overcame the obstacle and endured. In the 19th Century women weren’t really active in the fundamentals of learning, Emily was courageous when she took the risk and got an education. Emily married one of the engineers serving her brother. The engineer’s father, John A Roebling, died of tetanus. His son, Washington Roebling, took over. After his father’s death Washington took over the Brooklyn Bridge’s construction.

As Washington worked, he soon contracted Caissons Disease. The disease had a great impact upon Washington. His wife Emily had to step in for him. Emily’s courageous act has proved that women can take that step to a higher sense of reality. It took heart for her to approach the construction team, reason with them and let them know that this is how they’re going to cooperate and finish the great task.

During the project, Emily achieved many things. Emily Roebling dedicated fourteen years of her life towards building the Brooklyn Bridge. With much interest she acquired a great deal of knowledge about this project such as “strength of materials, stress analysis, cable construction, and calculating catenary curves through Washington’s teachings.” (Wikipedia). When her husband’s position was jeopardized, she stepped in to speak for him at the American Society of Civil Engineers. She became the first woman to speak to this society. This was an honor for her. She was the first woman to receive recognition for doing something rather than household cleaning. When the Brooklyn Bridge was completed, they honored Emily Roebling at the opening ceremony by Abram Stevens Hewitt who said that the Brooklyn Bridge was “an everlasting monument to the sacrificing devotion of woman and of her capacity for that higher education from which she has been too long disbarred” (Wikipedia). After the Brooklyn Bridge she moved to Trenton, New Jersey. She joined organizations like the Relief Society during the Spanish American War. She was also enrolled in New York University where she obtained a degree in
law. This was a great honor. She stepped beyond the bounds of women and showed great promise.
Dear NYC History Council:

Recently, I have heard that to celebrate women’s history month this year, the NYC History Council wants to recognize one inspirational woman who, in the 19th century, showed extraordinary courage in overcoming hardship as she pursued her specific talent, finally achieving recognition for her path-breaking work. Here are some reasons why I am in support of Emily Roebling, chief engineer of the Brooklyn Bridge.

First, she did an enormous job in completing the Brooklyn Bridge as chief engineer. The bridge is a 15,000-ton, 6,000-foot bridge across the East River, connecting Brooklyn and Manhattan, and to be sure, for the past 125 years, engineers and builders have marveled and admired it. Her job was definitely hard because women’s roles were not emphasized in the 19th century. Due to her husband’s disease and her father-in-law’s death, she came to have the responsibility to build the bridge, however she completed her huge work. The bridge still remains as one of the most famous pieces of architecture in NYC.

Second, she did her best in learning. She attended school at St. Leonard School in Brampton and went to Europe to study the use of caissons for bridges with her husband, even though it was not easy for a woman to study in the 1860’s. After completion of the bridge, she also continued her education and received a law degree from NYU.

Third, she was faithful to her role for working people and her husband. As a woman engineer, it was not easy to communicate with many working people and laborers. Nevertheless, she did a great job in her role, and she completed the bridge. As a wife and coworker of her husband, she was a messenger and spokesperson for him. She grasped his ideas and learned to speak the language of the engineers. She made daily visits to the bridge to inspect the work and to carry his instructions to the staff.

In conclusion, Emily Roebling inspired other women to have the courage to enter into traditionally male-dominated careers, and her achievement was extraordinary. Thank you for reviewing my letter, and I hope you choose her for the woman of this year.
Dear Council,

I have read that you want to celebrate Women’s History Month this year, and that you want to recognize one inspirational woman who lived in the 19th century that had the courage to overcome hardships for her path-breaking work. Also that you have two women that have been recognized for their creative works: Edmonia Lewis and Emily Roebling. In my opinion I realize that Edmonia Lewis represents a woman who was courageous in confronting and overcoming obstacles for the following reasons.

Edmonia Lewis was a very important woman who dedicated her life to making her dreams come true and became an important woman in society. Lewis was the first African-American and Native American woman recognized as an important sculptor. She found her inspiration in the lives of abolitionists and Civil War heroes and celebrated her racial identity. Lewis also went to one of the best colleges, Oberlin College. It was the first college to admit women and African-Americans. In that college she discovered her talent for drawing.

Lewis overcame her obstacles no matter what happened in her life. In a world that didn’t encourage women of color, her achievement was shocking and at the same time mortified those people who said that Negroes don’t have the capacity for intelligence and also felt that her art was particularly bad because she insisted on showing the truth.

Lewis combined a unique blend of talent, emotion and perspective and was inspired by those people who were heroes to her - leaders in the Abolitionist movement and such courageous women as Cleopatra and Hagar, maid to Abraham’s wife, Sara. In 1863 she moved to Boston and studied with a famous neoclassical sculptor named Edward Brackett. Lewis’ first work was very important and honored Abolitionists and heroes of the Civil War.

Lewis’ works were sold for very large sums of money. Also she won high commissions and her studio was a fashionable place for tourists to visit. The “Death of Cleopatra” is 1876 was a very famous sculpture presented as such places as the Philadelphia Centennial and later in Chicago. The last important details they published of Edmonia Lewis is that she was living in Rome in 1911, but they don’t have information about where or when they died. But she will always become part of history because she was an example of a black woman that created a place for her sculptures and herself in the world.
Throughout history, the United States of America has stood out and tried to be the best at everything. From jobs to sports, America has progressed far more than any other country. With all the success, you would think that America’s food production would be one of the healthiest when it comes to food quality.

On January 28, 2007, The New York Times published “Unhappy Meals,” an article by Michael Pollan. This article explains why and how America has taken a bad turn on food production. According to Pollan, Americans went from eating healthy, natural foods, to eating processed foods. Pollan argues that Americans have been taught bad eating habits and goes on to list ways of improving them. He also discusses what “nutritionism” is, its effect on American food production and how it came to be.

Within the sixteen pages of arguments and support, Michael Pollan’s main argument above all is that Americans don’t eat enough plants. He states that for Americans “it might be wise to eat more plants and less meat” (Pollan 8). One problem with this is that America has the biggest fast food distribution, satisfying most people who like good tasting yet fast delivered food. Although the speed of good tasting food is convenient and satisfying at the time, it is dangerous for the human system. Pollan goes on to say that what Americans have yet to realize is that the human body requires natural foods such as fruits and vegetables and not processed foods. The reason is that processed foods have little nutrition. When food is heavily processed it loses some of its natural nutrients during the transition to better taste and longer shelf life, such as milk. This is why Pollan claims that Americans should eat what Americans ate two or three generations ago, “Don’t eat anything your great-great-grandmother wouldn’t recognize as food” (Pollan 14).

Now, the processed food idea is related to what Pollan described as “nutritionism.” In nutritionism “the key to understanding food is indeed the nutrient.” In other words, nutritionism is the value of the nutrition that makes the food rather than the food having any value aside from nutritional value. This complex idea motivates Americans to modify food by adding and removing nutrients to foods such as sugary cereals. This also includes the other foods that I specifically mentioned before within the fast food industry. Pollan explains how many scientists were giving bad health advice which came as a result of bad studies due to bad data. Pollan concludes his nutritionism and science themes by stating that we can’t get health advice from science but rather from our culture.

Science is very sketchy on food experiments but helpful at the same time. On the other hand, biology helps us identify which plants are healthy and ed-
ible. If it weren’t for that research we wouldn’t have known which plants were safe to eat, we’d be trying to eat dangerous plants and putting human life at risk.

In summation, Michael Pollan’s article opened my eyes and revealed the truth about our foods. For Pollan to come out with the truth about how food has taken a turn for the worse is knowledge that readers must spread. His overall main point is short and clear and that is “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants” (Pollan 1).
According to Michael Pollan, American food has been westernized through the introduction of science into the nutritional system. This has resulted in dangerous health predicaments and a devastating decrease in the life expectancy of the American population. The detachment of nutrients from food – an intricate chemical combination that is yet to be solved – has gradually diverted the attention of western eaters from food as a relationship that keeps the ecosystem running, to chemical substances required to make us healthy and keep us alive.

This detachment has made western eaters fall into an abyss of diet difficulties. According to Pollan, this detachment is known as nutritionism. “As the ‘ism’ suggests, it is not a scientific subject, but an ideology. Ideologies are ways of organizing large swaths of life and experiences under a set of shared but unexamined assumptions (Pollan).” This light shown upon the science of nutrition has created a cloud of confounding facts that have left American eaters to the mercy of published science discoveries and the vicious monopoly of the food industry.

The stark message that eating less fats than carbs, is healthy has turned out to be wrong; the claimed, ‘healthy seeds and grains’ have only increased the level of obesity since 1981 among Americans. Cancerous processed foods and the insatiable human gluttony are a few of the numerous ways in which American eating has taken a step down the steep hill of nutritional imbalance. It is therefore not erroneous to say, as Michael Pollan claims, that the American eating problem is caused by various events, but the aspect that takes most blame is “Bad Science.” This is ironic because new scientific discoveries have overall made the world a better place. However, science is at its best when it is factually and fundamentally buttressed.

In this comprehensive article, Pollan makes it clear that most of the so-called ‘scientific researchers’ are driven to find answers to the problems of nutrition but research results effects are vague and completely equivocal. He cites an example of research done by the Woman’s Health initiative. This was a long term clinical trial intended to find out if low fat diets can cut health risks in women and it generated ambiguous and unreliable data that in turn yielded results that were completely, indisputably wrong. This bothers me as a reader and as a consumer, and makes my firm and rigid believe in any scientific research shaky and unstable. Does science really deal with facts? Of course! Even if the facts have been produced by a corrupted source.

With what I have read, I do not only think nutritionism is a problem, I believe strongly that it should be abolished from our nutritional system, as long as its cancerous seeds militate against the health of the nation. As long as food
shall remain, the complete content of it may never be known. For example, it is amazing to find that even the herb called “thyme” has a lot of chemicals and anti-oxidents added to it. It is not wrong to discover nutrients in food, but it is completely wrong to assume that this nutrient is the major nutrient when there are possibly thousands yet to be discovered in the same food product. However, it is even more erroneous to extract a nutrient from its original natural home and infuse it into an environment that is totally unfamiliar.

However, like Pollan acknowledges, this is not the end of the road for ‘food’ consumption. Eating quality not quantity, going back to the days of our fore-parents, cooking our own food, planting a garden, not going for processed foods and lots more were the straight forward solution given by Michael Pollan. However, I believe that even more can be done. Since this nutritional roller-coaster was initiated by political means, the best way to tackle a problem is by going to the source. If what I am insinuating is understood, I think government should pass laws that will curb all nutritionist ideologies that are currently threatening, not only our nutritional future, but also our ability to produce inner digestive mutation, as the digestive lining tries to adapt to the unfriendly guest, ‘nutrients’, not food.

Conclusively and critically, I do not agree with Pollan’s conclusion that food isn’t a fuel. Based on the Merriam Webster dictionary food is a material used to produce heat or power by burning; nutritive material. Based on biological concepts, cellular respiration causes combustion (gives up heat) of glucose (from food) in oxygen to produce energy in form of ATP (Adenosine triphosphate). Also it is apparent that food possesses some nutritive value that can never be collectively viewed by scientists due to the need to use individual variables that will not confound with others. I will say let foods be what they are and nutrients be what they are because the two in a nutritional system can never co-exist without impending atrocities and incredible side effects.
Below is a piece that was written for a Writing Intensive section of Chemistry 210. Prof. Nelson Nuñez Rodriguez notes that the most “commonly-needed skill employers cite in the post-downturn, globalized 21st-century universe is the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing.” Prof. Nuñez Rodriguez’ students research and write about a topic they are studying and can prepare it, as Mr. Reinaldo Velez has done, as both a written and oral presentation. He revised the assignment to work as a monologue which he delivered in his Acting II class.

You know I love you, right? Look, I know I said that we would be together forever, but the reality is, we can’t. Why? Because I need to burn you off so that we can create energy. I wish things were different, but unfortunately they’re not. Of course I’m not making this up. Does this look like the face of a liar? Obviously not, I wouldn’t be doing this if it wasn’t a matter of life or death; Baby please doesn’t cry; No no, it’s not you, it’s me. What? You are smart, beautiful and you’ve got a great sense of humor. And besides, you’re the most abundant element in this universe, I’m sure you’ll find somebody better. You got that carbon guy that keeps looking at you, but if he’s not your type. I’ve seen that chlorine guy over by the stomach area, and I heard he has a lot of isotopes! I mean, who knows? Maybe you guys would hit it off or something. I’m just feeling kind of trapped. I need some space. The only way we could be together is if you were to bring one of your sisters; then we could all react together and make pure, sensual water! Doesn’t that sound better than me burning you? I know it’s your sister, but she has been looking for somebody to hold on to. Don’t you want to help her out? Water is vital to life you know. You don’t want to be the last hydrogen molecule left and be blamed for the extinction of all life forms do you? I think you know what you have to do.
Have you been affected by unseasonable weather lately? Have you seen the reports of melting ice caps, devastating droughts and killer hurricanes? Those are the signs that global climate change is now a reality that impacts us all. Causes of global climate change are still subject to much discussion. While the majority of scientists know that Global Climate Change is mainly the result of human activities, many politicians still argue that Global Climate Change is mainly a natural phenomenon. Nevertheless, while disagreeing on the magnitude of effects that human activities have on climate change, both scientists and politicians agree that humans’ activities are a contributing factor.

One of the human activities adversely affecting our global climate is our ever-increasing energy consumption. Decreasing energy consumption will correspondingly decrease the impact of human activities on climate. While it is impossible to imagine our lives without hundreds of helpful electrical-operated devices, a good portion of the electricity we consume is not used for any helpful purposes, but is, in fact, wasted. Decreasing energy consumption by decreasing energy waste is a good and painless first step in mitigating Global Climate Change.

Ms. Felton and Mr. Piquant decided to do just that: decrease energy waste in their households and thus help mitigate global climate change. It was not easy, and they met with resistance from their own family members, but they were determined. You will find their accounts for energy conservation below, and perhaps, inspired by their example, you will decide to follow in their footsteps.
My household is composed of a family of five: my wife and I, and three daughters, thirteen, eleven, and two. Since we moved to our new apartment, a large, comfortable two bedrooms, our consumption of gas and electricity have skyrocketed to a couple of hundred dollars per month. For some reason that only Con Edison can explain, I am being billed every two months. Furthermore, the gas and electric are combined in one bill, but with separate statements, and I never bother calling to ask why. But one thing is certain: whenever a light is on and not needed, I am the first one to turn it off and this is something I learned growing-up in my native country. To be honest, I did not learn it from a perspective of saving energy. It was more about “not wasting money,” which amounts to the same thing, really. Saving money equals saving energy, and saving energy equals saving money. Isn’t that strange, how a third world country, without knowing it, was ahead of the industrialized world when it comes to energy saving?

For this project, my goal remains the same, but with a broader insight: less energy consumption for the purpose of helping the environment. With one big refrigerator, three television sets, two desktop computers, two laptop computers, not to mention 75 watt light bulbs in each room, plus one all-in-one office-jet machine, and four cell phones that have to be recharged every night, something had to be done, and fast.

The first step was a no brainer. It was to get rid of those energy guzzling light bulbs and replacing them with energy-efficient ones. Second, if the computers are not needed, they should not be turned on. Third, I lowered the thermostat in the refrigerator from eight to five. Fourth, the televisions should not be turned on unnecessarily and turned off promptly at bedtime. Now, dealing with preteens everything has to be repeated constantly, I established one drastic rule of “three strikes and you are out.” It’s very simple. If I tell anyone to turn off a light three times, the fourth time, I unscrew it and lock it in my closet until I get the desired understanding, or until my wife starts talking too much in favor of the kids, or whichever comes first.

My last energy bill, gas and electric combined, was in February and it came out to $240.96. The next one should be coming very soon and already I can start smiling because I can definitely smell the savings.

Since greenhouse gases are bad for the environment and results from high energy consumption, the most effective way to reduce such damage is for everyone to get involved and help in many small ways, for example, by reducing their consumption of energy in their homes and at work. I know that by myself, I may not be saving the world, but if everyone on this planet decides to do their part; I believe the world would be smiling with us, for we would give it its favorite color: green.
I have chosen to participate in a conserving energy experiment. I have always been a believer in preserving the Earth and environment. Although I conserve energy in my home, I have opted to use my brother’s home as my guinea pig. I chose his home because I already know the importance of protecting our environment, and he does not have a clue about going Green. I decided to educate him and save him some money in the process. Hopefully his savings will inspire him to do more to help the Earth that helps us, and to continue to conserve energy. Globally, we produce over 20,000 lbs of carbon dioxide emissions and waste billions of dollars worth energy every year. There are ways to cut energy costs in half and save money while helping to save the Earth. These include switching old bulbs for new compact fluorescent bulbs, unplugging electronics and appliances when not in use, walk or bike instead of driving, using low flow shower heads, and lowering all thermostats. Utilizing these methods will add to saving our earth and saving money.

My brother Peter lives in a two bedroom apartment with his wife and daughter. The age groups of the adults are 26-65 and his daughter is a teenager. In his home he has three television sets, four game systems, two desktop computers, humidifiers, and a host of appliances which are plugged in and running all the time. He also drives his car everywhere he goes, including the corner store. Also Peter is afraid of the dark, so he leaves his lights on all night. Peter is being billed every two months and it is an estimated bill. This is a system Con Edison currently uses to determine your usage. Prior to starting this experiment his Con Edison bill was extremely high, sometimes surpassing three hundred dollars. I explained to my brother that it is important to use your energy efficiently because it pollutes the air and adds to global warming. It is also costly and if he wanted to save a little money, all he had to do was a few simple things around the house to achieve this goal. After which he was gung-ho about the idea, not to mention the savings.

Additionally, I explained the steps I wanted him to follow to get the maximum benefits from this experiment. He should unplug all appliances, televisions, game systems, and computers when not in use; turn off all lights unless someone is in that room; use energy saver nightlights for his fear of the dark; change his shower head to a low flow shower head; turn his refrigerator down from nine to four. He should also walk or bike to places in the vicinity, lower his household thermostat to sixty eight degrees in the winter during the day and fifty five at night, and change his 100 watt bulbs for the 10 watt energy saver bulbs.

We both went to the hardware store to purchase three energy saver night lights at $3.49 apiece and four energy saver bulbs at $5.99 a piece and a shower head for $14.99. We also purchased a surge protector strip for 4.99, so he could plug in what he needed and not occupy all of the outlets. We immediately began the process of conserving energy. At first I made surprise visits to make sure he was doing what I asked, and he was only doing half of the steps. Once
again I told him how pertinent the information I had given him was to benefit from this experiment and he started completing all of the steps. I turned his thermostats to the appropriate temperatures and installed his shower head just to make sure everything would be done. I plugged one game, one TV, his humidifier and one computer into his surge protector strip and asked him to leave it this way for at least one month. I also instructed him to unplug one device before plugging in another if he needed to use additional appliances. This change was extremely hard for him and his family to do because they are used to running every appliance at all times, but they were willing.

Peter and his family received their bill for the month of April and they were a little happy with their savings. Although it wasn’t much, they managed to save a couple of dollars from changing some of the bad habits of wasting energy. They have vowed to continue to help save the earth by conserving energy and hope in the future they could play a bigger part in this endeavor. Now that he has a little knowledge on the subject he will also educate others with this information in hopes to get more people to conserve energy.

When people save energy, they not only save money, they also reduce the demand for fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas. “If we burn less fuels we lower the emission of carbon dioxide which is the primary contributor to global warming. This was an experiment that took some getting used to in the beginning but all parties benefit from it. Conserving energy saves money, time, and more importantly the Earth” (Ecomall 1). Changing the small things around the house and in your activities of daily living can prove beneficial to you and the earth. I feel by conserving energy we are contributing to saving the world and money. I will continue this regimen and so will my brother. I love the fact that by helping the Earth one could save money; whether a dime or dollar, it is worth it. We have to occupy this earth so let’s keep it healthy and clean for our children. Remember: the color Green is no longer associated with the negative word envy. It now stands positively for protecting our Earth.

Works Cited
This year marks the fifteenth year that Hostos Community College has been celebrating Earth Day. The event is organized by the Department of Natural Sciences and it always creates awareness among the student body, faculty and the community as a whole on the need to exercise the necessary measures to protect our Mother Earth on whose bosom we all reside. This year, the college is fortunate to have distinguished professors Steinberg and Sohel of Natural Sciences spearhead the event.

The theme for this year’s Earth Day is “Home Sweet Home.” It was selected purposely to inculcate the need to exercise a sense of responsibility to protect the planet within the student fabric and the community at large. Several activities have been put in place to commemorate the occasion; they include exhibits, movies, shows and speeches by faculty members.

With regard to the exhibits, several posters created by students were mounted to depict factors contributing to global warming. One of them, Greenhouse Effects, highlights the emissions of gases produced as a result of burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gasoline, are used to power automobiles, factories and our homes. Others include Effect of Lead Poison, focused on the environment as well as on human beings. The poster on Lead Poisoning by Crisne Lebron and Hector R. Dominguez, students of Chemistry 220, tracks the effects of lead poisoning on aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems as a result of lead released in the exhaust of automobiles which tend to pollute the air. The poster also highlights lead dust particles released from working facilities which get into the atmosphere increasing air pollution. The effects of lead also reaches the soil level as a result of lead paint that breaks down, and the improper disposal of other materials that contain lead. In addition, the improper disposal of factory wastes contributes to higher levels of lead in aquatic environments. Eventually, this toxic heavy metal ends in human tissues through inhalation and ingestion of lead-infected products. Greenhouse gases, if not minimized, will continue to form pockets of blankets around the earth, trapping heat and raising global temperatures which will pose serious health issues like asthma and skin cancer. Global warming can also lead to extreme weather conditions such as severe and numerous hurricanes and heat waves, flooding and coastal erosion.

Another interesting poster was on Recycling. This poster emphasized the need to recycle to promote a healthy and well-balanced ecosystem, to reduce pollution, to save our natural resources, to reduce energy consumption, and finally, to save money. Part of these benchmarks can be achieved by resorting to electronic mail or electronic data instead of hard copies, the proper disposal of trash and many other greenhouse related products; and changes in life style.
practices such as walking and bike riding instead of driving. Unfortunately, the poster’s creator did not provide his or her name. However the website was provided,  HYPERLINK “http://www.epa.gov/waste/conserve/rrr/index.htm” \t “_blank” www.epa.gov/waste/conserve/rrr/index.htm. I do believe this site gives an in-depth view of all the answer associated with recycling, thus encouraging the world at large to recycle and dispose of waste products in a better manner.

The posters mentioned above deserve recognition for the strenuous efforts that the participants made to come up with such outstanding ideas. I will draw the curtain by first expressing my sincere gratitude to all the participants and organizers for putting these wonderful and educational ideas together, and for ensuring that events like this are open to the college community. The event strived to meet its goal, which is to save the planet Earth from the activities of mankind. I suggest that CUNY incorporate future celebrations into their academic calendar so that on this day, every student be mandated to search for ways to “fight” a battle for our planet Earth. Every student can fully participate and understand the seriousness of this problem. Finally I will conclude by saying there is no better place than home, and since our home is here on this planet Earth, let us all rise and strive to make the Earth a better place for ourselves and for future generations.
Society has used its natural environment as a bottomless resource. For many years, the consequences of this exploitation did not show drastic effects on our biosphere. Only at the end of the last century did changes in the biosphere attract the concerned attention of the scientists. During the earlier half of the 20th century, the environmental changes were growing and now these changes and their environmental effects have crashed on civilization, becoming one of our main concerns. (3) Our constant desire to improve the quality of life drives societies to produce more and more products and utilize more resources without thinking of the consequences those actions cause. With this kind of an approach, the greater part of our consumed resources comes back to the environment in the form of waste, often poisonous, harmful or unfit for further utilization of any kind. This type of resource usage possesses a major threat not only to our environment and biosphere but also to the human existence itself.

So what is global warming? Billions of tons of carbon dioxide gas go up into the atmosphere as a result of burning coal and oil, natural gas and firewood. Millions of tons of methane rise up into the atmosphere from development of gas. Humans are polluting the atmosphere much faster then our environment can absorb it all. “Industrialization, deforestation and pollution of the atmosphere with greenhouse gases are the main causes of global warming” (8).

All these gases released into the atmosphere, trap the heat from the earth and are not letting it escape into outer space. (11).

Today, the problem of the ozone layer concerns many. Unfortunately, people’s fears about an ozone cloud are not unwarranted. Destruction of an ozone cloud results due to various chemical substances such as freons, used in the refrigerating industry and in aerosols. Nitrogen oxides which are formed at nuclear explosions and in combustion chambers of jet planes and rockets are yet another reason for ozone layer destruction. And the last is especially harmful, as at greater heights nitrogen oxides live very long. And don’t discount the application of mineral fertilizers and smoke gases from power stations. Thus, the greatest influence on an ozone cloud of our planet Earth is connected with economic activities of mankind. We must move fast to change this situation; we cannot wait (10, 11).

In 1997, the rich industrialized nations met at Kyoto and agreed on targets for reducing emissions of green house gases, in accordance to a specified timetable. The Kyoto agreement put no obligations on the developing world and was not ratified by the United States Senate. Therefore, as a result of that, the United States has not been a party to the treaty. The Copenhagen Summit is an attempt to resolve the issues of Kyoto in order to implement a more complete and effective international treaty. (1, 5)
The main issues addressed at the Summit were to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to keep the warming under 2 degrees Celsius, carbon trading, as well as deforestation. However, one of the most vital issues was the “burden-sharing”. How will the financial and environmental burden will be distributed between all of the “players”? What is the bottom line? All countries are convinced that as a whole we must reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. However, the industrialized countries such as the UK, US, Japan and even China and India are responsible for the majority of the emissions. Thus, shouldn’t the biggest players who pollute the environment the most be responsible for the major part of restoration of the damage done (2, 4)?

On one side of the negotiations is the industrialized world, including Europe, the United States, Japan, Australia and Canada. With the exception of the United States, these nations are bound by the Kyoto Protocol. These countries are the largest emitters of green house gases, and acknowledge the extra responsibility. Through the Copenhagen treaty, these developed nations are hoping to either extend the Kyoto Protocol to include the United States or to fully depart from the Kyoto structure. However, the United States is stern on their position of not joining the Kyoto, because it puts no responsibility on China and other industrializing nations. “Instead of jointly negotiating emissions-reduction targets and timetables for achieving them, the U.S. suggests that each nation brings to the table a pledge of what it intends to do to address climate change” (1, 5).

On the other side of the bargaining table are the G77 and China. This group of about 130 developing nations has no obligations under the Kyoto Protocol and intends to fight hard to keep their responsibility-free conditions. However, the industrializing and developing nations such as China, India, Brazil and Mexico are under a lot of pressure to make a commitment towards climate control and share the global responsibility to reduce emissions. Since the atmosphere pollution and green house gas emissions are significantly lower in these nations than in the rest of the industrialized world, they believe that they should have minimal responsibility in taking measures to prevent climate change (9). However, there is a difference between the developing nations such as China, India, and Mexico, versus the other more stagnant and non-industrialized parts of the world. These rapidly developing nations are being expected to commit to some international collaborative actions, while the others are in need of not only relief of responsibility, but additional aid to help develop clean energy sources and ways to deal with the effects of climate change (6, 5). Even though not all countries are satisfied with each element of the “agreement” this summit was a giant step forward towards the new climate treaty (7). This is a complex subject with an extensive list of unresolved issues. These nations need not only to agree on the framework of the agreement, but also on the measurements of success.

Contamination of the environment is a problem for the entire world. The blossoming of industry has brought material benefits and riches to society but for a high: the destruction of the world’s biosphere. We have to understand that all of us are interdependent, thus the threat towards any part of our biosphere
poses a threat not only to plants and animals, ocean levels and ozone layer but also to all of us humans. With this in mind, we as a nation should not only hold ourselves to the highest standards when comes to the preservation of our resources and atmosphere, but also help the entire world work together in reaching our common goal, especially help the developing countries realize that they also play a role in the preserving this planet for our future generations.

In conclusion, the Copenhagen Climate Council was a result of partnership not only between the political leaders of the world, but also incorporating scientists and international business professionals. The knowledge of biology, along with the other physical and biological sciences, allows me to view the broad issue of climate change not only from a socio-economic perspective, but through the eyes of a young scientist. This debate is not only about how much money the environmental measures will cost the economies of the world, but also for our societies to realize the vital necessity of these changes in preserving our planet.
RUDOLF AYMAR MBADINGA

MY EXPERIENCE AT THE 2010 MODEL SENATE IN ALBANY

On April 17 and 18, I had the opportunity to be part of an exceptional group of young men and women from throughout the CUNY and SUNY College system to embark in an adventure: The 2010 Model New York State Senate Project in conjunction with the Annual Somos El Futuro Conference. It was a unique leadership development opportunity. As an International student, from Gabon, alongside five other students from Hostos Community College, it was a great way of learning and for unforgettable memories as a student.

During the weekend, we all gathered at the CUNY Graduate center for the trip to Albany to sit as Senators in the New York Senate chamber. Prior to leaving for Albany, we had taken three intensive seminars that prepared us for the moment that we had to spend in the Senate Chamber.

As soon as we set foot in Albany, we were treated to a CUNY Luncheon where all the activities began. Later on we went to the mock State Senate session to argue our points and back them up with facts. It took about three hours, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. During the session, we voted on a specific law called MS14. It is about term limits for elected officials and particularly the members of the Legislature. Each and every one of us had the opportunity to state his point of view and later on voted either for the bill or against the bill. At the end of the procedure, the Republicans defeated the bill, 31 votes to 29 Democratic votes. Later, we were invited to the Somos El Futuro Dinner Gala where we had an exceptional time.

It was an amazing experience for us all. As Hostos Community College student participants, we had the chance to demonstrate how much we have been learning over the past months and years of workshops and seminars at the College, as members of the Hostos Leadership Academy. But also as students from different horizons we learned about politics in the U.S. and particularly in the State of New York. It was certainly a great learning experience and an enriching moments for me as a future leader.
Model Senate Group (above). Model UN Group (below).
RUDOLF AYMAR MGADINGA

MY EXPERIENCE AS A PARTICIPANT IN THE NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

During the course of the Spring break, alongside 13 fellow Hostos students, I had the privilege and the opportunity to be part of a program called the National Model United Nations 2010. It was held at the Sheraton Hotel in New York City.

Between the opening ceremony on March 21, through the closing ceremony on March 25, we had the opportunity to represent the Dominican Republic and Hostos Community College at the conference. During that conference we exchanged, engaged in and shared knowledge, experience and developed better networking skills than we had previously learned during the sessions of workshops that we took as members of the Hostos Leadership Academy and students at Hostos community College.

The thrill of mixing with students, young men and women, advisors and coordinators representing about 165 countries, and from about 200 colleges throughout the whole world, was just amazing. It was certainly the first hands-on experience for me on United Nations rules and procedures and how things actually do work there. How does a proposition become a resolution? What does it mean to become a signer or to endorse a project or resolution of a problem in some part of the world? What does it mean to caucus at the United Nations?

For most of us, it was such an important gathering of intelligence. But mostly it was the experiment that will make the difference in the years to come for any Hostos Community College students, especially those who would like to engage in conflict resolution, peace-making, humanitarianism and jobs available at this huge representative institution, the United Nations. We were the first of our generation, but certainly not the last, to set foot in the United Nations and represent not only the country we were assigned--the Dominican Republic - but also Hostos Community College.