

**UFCT
LOCAL
1460**

Spring 2012

Vol 4 No 1

The New Voice

of the Pratt Faculty Union

- Student Debt** Page 3
- Strategies For Action** Page 4-6
- Healthcare** Page 6
- Labor History** Page 7
- Faculty Rights** Page 8
- Contingent Labor** Page 9
- Collective Bargaining** Page 11

FACULTY LINE
DO NOT CROSS

Editor's Note

On a bright morning last October, a former student handed me a photocopied pamphlet as I was heading, harried, in one direction and she in another. When, later that day, I looked closely, I found in my hands a "zine" created by a student group called Pratt Collective. As I read through the 12 pages of essays, collages, and quotations, I was both thrilled and a little bit heart-broken. Thrilled because these students were astutely critiquing the social and economic structures in which they found themselves, reaching out to one another in order to further these critiques, and taking action to improve their own situations and communities. (And—full disclosure—I was also thrilled to see students utilizing the writing skills developed in my classroom to discuss issues that mattered to them) Yet, I was also a little bit heart-broken because for 12 pages students posed argument after argument for why "Pratt Apathy" needs to be overcome. I had to step back and ask myself, how, as a faculty member, have I been complicit in allowing such a burden of apathy to accumulate in the larger learning environment of Pratt?

But then how much complicity should I assume when as part-time faculty, the administration does not compensate me for anything I do beyond the classroom? When, in order to make a living, I have to rush between jobs. Clearly these students were thinking of themselves as part of a larger student movement reinvigorated by Occupy Wall Street. I think therefore I should consider whether I, as a faculty member, might be part of a larger labor movement—a movement whose ranks include myriad contingent workers, such as domestic workers, service workers, and, yes, part-time faculty. Upon what or whom are we contingent? Should the core constituents of higher education, students and professors, really be subject to the variegations of a bubble-pocked market rather than the sustained project of teaching and learning?

To these questions I answer a resolute "No." I am afforded the confidence to be resolute in this "No" because of our Faculty Union. Unlike many part-time faculty, I am protected by a strong collective bargaining

agreement and represented by a union that militantly fights for and protects my rights. As a rank-and-file union member, it's easy to consider myself as already part of a larger labor movement, one that recently fought back against attacks on collective bargaining in Wisconsin, one that has occupied New York Board of Education meetings, protested on behalf of striking Sotheby's workers, and recently offered an MTA fare holiday. One that is opening up a space to talk about conditions of labor, our worklives, and even what part-time faculty do and—very importantly—don't share in common with domestic workers and service workers.

To be clear, I don't think this consideration should be easy. These discussions, as these students know, are difficult ones. Uncomfortable ones. Ones that raise differences which take some commitment and solidarity to understand. And, of course, these discussions must be concurrent with actions—actions that might range from small changes in disposition towards those with whom one works to joining or organizing with others in public spaces of contestation. In order to better understand how to proceed through such difficulty, I turned, in the best tradition of the university, to my colleagues and to students.

In editing this issue of *The New Voice*, I invited faculty, students, and union members across campus to write about how they articulate their worklives with activism. I wanted to know how and why they are part of larger social movements, including but not limited to the Occupy movement. I hoped to learn from them more creative ways be as both "professor" and "worker." And as is my experience with colleagues and students at Pratt, the responses exceeded my expectations. It is my hope that this newsletter will help to foster discussion, that you pass it along to a colleague or student you might encounter and stop, even if just for a few minutes, to add your voice to the conversation.

In solidarity,
Emily Beall
Adjunct Assistant Professor
Humanities and Media Studies

The New Voice

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UFCT Local 1460

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The Left Hand Doesn't Know...

By Rick Barry

Professor of Digital Arts

Americans were terribly divided in the late '60s. They struggled with extraordinarily difficult social and geo-political issues like an unpopular war, racial tensions and economic inequality. Young people and minorities, who suffered great injustices under the status quo, banded together in solidarity and took to the streets in an attempt to effect socio-political change.

Fast forward to 2012 and Americans are once again terribly divided. They struggle with extraordinarily difficult social and geo-political issues including two unpopular wars, racial tensions and economic inequality. Some young people, minorities, and workers have banded together in solidarity and have taken to the streets in an attempt to effect socio-political change.

And yet, more than ever before, there remains a stubborn level of apathy about political engagement among a great many young and middle class people, and it scares me. I can see exactly where this apathy will lead us, and in fact I'm not simply scared, I'm terrified. In 2011, I decided to do something about it and became civically engaged for the first time in nearly four decades. Among other things, I created a student organization called "Pratt For Change," to provide an outlet for Pratt students to explore civic issues and to get out the vote in 2012.

I printed up handouts and had them posted across campus. I visited a number of classes by faculty invitation. I developed a contact list of interested students and faculty. However, there were never more than two students and two faculty members at any meeting or event. There were certainly many factors in the lack of response. The aforementioned apathy undoubtedly played a role, but my own unfamiliarity with other civics-related activities, courses, programs, and people at Pratt was a key factor.

There is no clear and easy path to overcoming apathy. What can we, the faculty of Pratt, do to bring like-minded students and faculty together for civic discourse and political action? And what can be done to establish an ongoing structure for Institute-wide collaboration, including curricula connecting internal academic activity with external civic engagement?

A Debt in Question

By Sarah Wrigley

Second Year Writing Major

As college students benefiting from a 50-thousand-dollar-plus university education, we live in a dream world of unimaginable numbers and debts. My question is: what does it mean to be taking on this kind of debt? The average college student graduates high school with a rudimentary knowledge of finance, if that. Graduates often choose to attend schools beyond his or her parents' financial means. Parents, who want to afford their children with every tool to make their dreams possible, will often decide to take on the burden of this debt without really informing their children of the responsibilities or difficulties that burden entails.

The implications of accumulating four years of student debt are rarely grasped beforehand by these young students—the numbers are abstract. As we go through high school, elitist ideas of our attendance at America's best universities are shoved down our throats as the only possibly route to success. We are trained to obsess over our GPAs, our resumes, and the packaging of our identity, while those for whom a university education is not a reality become marginalized and looked down upon for their inability to enter into the university system.

The corporatization of the education and job systems of 21st century America dictates that we almost have no choice but to fork over inordinate sums of money to receive an education. To put it simply, the university has become a business. Obviously, there are certain schools where one pays higher fees for a higher quality of education, but it has become more about the name of the institution rather than the quality of the education or the personal intellectual experience of the student. Even the qualifications we graduate with have become almost null—to say you have a bachelor's degree in communications doesn't mean anything when the job market is floundering in the gutters. My aim is not to devalue education in the least—we do not attend school solely to be able to enter into a job market and be-

come financially stable. However, the kind of debt I—along with so many others—am taking on for such questionable return is difficult not to question. Why should such widespread debt be necessary for us to have one of the most basic of human rights: education?

For me, the Occupy movement illuminated a crack in the otherwise closed door of corporatization, a coping mechanism against this kind of overwhelming awareness of a bureaucratic, inaccessible system at work. People become apathetic when they perceive themselves as powerless, feeling the ineffectuality of the individual. What does one student's ability to pay tuition for the next semester really mean in the grand scheme of things? How does one more failed future register in the national economic climate? It doesn't.

A population is made up of individuals—without the individual there is nothing. By uniting under something like Occupy, whether you question its political efficacy or not, a space is created for some kind of genuine society to form. Personally, I finally felt—admittedly after years of relative political ambivalence—that I had

...IT HAS BECOME MORE ABOUT THE NAME OF THE INSTITUTION RATHER THAN THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATION...

some kind of platform no matter how small it may be. I felt and do feel as though I am part of the system rather than a product of it. To be in a constructive, un-hierarchical political environment, (something that I don't think I could have ever conceived) is something that is strikingly powerful.

Occupy has been compelling to me because I always felt some level of resistance or disconnect to American politics, being an immigrant without American citizenship. Now, more than ever, I feel a weight of responsibility to involve myself in the political landscape. We cannot complain about oppressive systems if we do nothing in our power to try and change them. The power does lie in the individual. I have discovered that by examining your specific political environment and trying to effect change in the community that you inhabit, you prevent the problem of feeling swallowed by a system. We need to fix the parts to fix the whole.

Ambiguity and Multi-Vocality as Strategy of Action

By Kumru Toktamis

Adjunct Assistant Professor w/CCE

I was peering down the 7th floor window of Center for Workers' Education on Saturday morning. It was September 17 and around the aggressive symbolism of Wall Street's touristy bull, there were a bunch of young protesters instead of the regular tourists. I had heard that there would be some sort of a demonstration that weekend, but my jaded eyes were not willing to pay much attention to it. "After all," I was saying to myself, "my working class immigrant adult students are up here and have no idea what these protesters are complaining about."

A couple of weeks later, I announced to my Saturday morning students that we would visit Zuccotti Park to observe the protesters. Only two out of 26 students had heard about the Occupation. It had not yet been a news item in the media, but for my working class, immigrant students, our field-trip ended up becoming an experience to remember. The library, the kitchen, the art work, the conversations, but especially the protesters who were willing to spend the day and night at the park deeply impressed my students. "I can see that they are doing this for us," said one 36 year old security guard. "I applaud them," said another one with three kids. One critically-minded student posed a sincere question, "why are there not any Hispanics among them?" "Yes," responded another student, "they should be reaching out more to Hispanic people." One pregnant student disagreed, "why aren't more Hispanics themselves reaching out to the Occupiers?" A middle-aged woman stated the obvious, "because we are already too busy working in our low-paying jobs, feeding our kids, trying to get a degree...we do not have much time to protest!" The 99% was speaking out in our classroom, and had the will but not the time to participate in this "Direct Action," the preferred modus operandi of the Occupiers.

Around that time, various Unions in the tri-state area mobilized their immense support for the Occupy Wall Street movement, turning it into a coalition of interests and demands. The demonstrations that took place seemed to have the full support of the rank and file union members. Almost one month into the Occupation of the park,

when the eviction threats loomed over the well-organized chaotic lives of the protesters, it was the union members who joined forces to reveal the absurdity of the excuse of "sanitary concerns." The night before the declared eviction, sanitation workers came in as individuals and helped to clean the park, which was already in a pretty decent shape with its flower beds in place, trash in bags and almost no obvious littering. Many occupiers worked all night in order not to provide grounds for the eviction. Before dawn, fresh support came in as many union members, mostly much older than the occupiers, strolled in and around the park. It was a sentimental morning to remember; we were there to defend the young protesters, the youth we were so proud of. When it was announced that the eviction order was postponed, I found myself hugging a very tired and sleepy young man with joy. He was cautious though; "they will be back" he said. And he was right. Despite massive demonstrations, the Park was evicted by mid-November, leaving a global legacy and inspiration of activism and protest.

Now the question is, what is that legacy and what are we inspired to do? Is the Occupy movement anti-capitalist, or merely anti-corruption? Is it working class activism based on class interest or is it a popular movement for participation and democratic rights? Is it for smaller government supervision or is it for more government regulation? Most of the protesters, occupiers and demonstrators are by now well trained by the anarchist direct action crowd, so much so that we do not ask that silly question "what are the goals of this movement?"

As most of the occupiers proudly declare, there are no set goals, and the movement does not have any marching orders for its participants. Such ambiguity, as well as multi-vocality, seems to have great strategic impact on the mobilization while leading to at times creative tensions between and among the activists and more traditionally organized, clunky yet powerful unions.

While harder to discuss conceptually, OWS proved that ambiguity can be a productive tool for collective activism. Larger segments of the society can attribute their

own understanding of protest and join in. The protest itself becomes the message, and the establishment responds to that message, most of the time creating room for further action. This dialogical nature of the protest's relationship with the government and security forces can help the movement expand, as it further identifies its *raison d'être* and clarifies its priorities. The actual occupation of Zuccotti Park was an avant-garde action whose principal aim was to resonate with larger segments of the society and draw them into action.

However, the multi-vocality of this process, i.e each new social segment, organized group or interested participant walks in with their own framing of interests and goals, at times challenges other activists' positions and demands. At this point, for example, there does not seem to be any unified understanding of exactly why and how corporations are being targeted by the OWS movement. Is it because the profit orientation of capitalism is inherently destructive, or is it just a matter of prevailing criminal greed and corruption? What indeed is the relationship between profit and corruption? There seem to be several conflicting responses coming from diverse groups that make up the movement. Similarly, what role does the "free-market" play in all this? While some participants, such as Ron Paul supporters, adamantly defend free-market capitalism as the solution to the crises, many others ask for the reversal of the repeal of the Glass-Steagall act which was created in 1930s to regulate a free-market that had proven over and over to not be capable of self-regulation and self-adjustment. Do we need a new Social Contract or Bill of Rights for Consumer Protection, as some posters at Zuccotti Park asked for, or do we need to abolish the government all together, as many protesters seemed to be demanding?

Most importantly when and how we are going to clarify our responses to these questions so that my working class immigrant students would be eager to mobilize their scarce resources for action? After all, without them, the message of OWS is just a great idea with no substantive impact.

Initiative for Art, Community, and Social Change

By Ann Holder

Associate Professor of History

The acronym IACSC does not exactly roll off the tongue, but each letter stands for a very important concept, all of which the Initiative for Art, Community and Social Change aims to keep in play with every event, workshop, conference, class, panel discussion and exhibit it sponsors.

For a group that is relatively small, highly decentralized and linked together more by principles than by institutional structures, the IACSC has carried out a remarkable range of projects over the course of its existence. Started as a planning group in 2005, IACSC convened a nation-wide conference, *Art in the Contested City*, by November of 2006. This day-long event brought together artists, planners, designers and community organizers to consider the role of art and design in contests over communities, representation and resources that will shape the future of urban landscapes and the people that live in them. Since then, IACSC has sponsored workshops, a speaker's series, forums and initiated two interdisciplinary courses, "Art, Community Development and Social Change," and "Art, Design and Community." Taught by faculty from City and Regional Planning, Art and Design Education, and Social Sciences and Cultural Studies, these classes utilize the resources of arts and cultural organizations all over Brooklyn, and offer academic credit for students interested in pursuing these themes in their creative work or future careers.

Since 2010, IACSC has been partnering with the Pratt Center on a Rockefeller grant for New York City Cultural Innovation. In December of that year, we held a forum on the controversy over the Park 51 project called *Communities of Circumstance and Communities By Design*. The event critically examined the public furor over the proposed Cultural/Community Center in Lower Manhattan sponsored by a segment of the city's Muslim community, and open to all who wanted to use its facilities. In the fall of 2011, IACSC along with many partners across campus produced *Celebrate Life*, an event designed to make the one-day October break a time of creativity, exchange and fun beyond the boundaries

of the studio/classroom. We dedicated the first of what we hope will be an annual event to our IACSC colleague Monica Shay, who was tragically murdered over the previous summer.

Upcoming events include *Amplify Action: Sustainability Through the Arts*, a collaboratively produced exhibit featuring over 25 local and internationally recognized artists. In addition to IACSC, sponsors include the Pratt Center, Rockefeller Foundation, Rasu Jilani and the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation. A panel discussion with three of the artists was held during Pratt's Green Week. The show will be up through the end of July at the Skylight Gallery, 1368 Fulton Street.

This diversity of projects is linked by a common commitment to urban arts and cultural life, awareness of the multiplicity of communities in Brooklyn/NYC and belief in the necessity for social change that arcs toward justice. As our website states, IACSC seeks to "harness the resources of Pratt to cultivate awareness, discourse and action in support of the arts as a critical catalyst."

On a more personal note, it is my experience of IACSC that keeps me connected even when I'm "too busy." The most noticeable feature is the friendliness and solidarity of the group. We really work together. Any member is free to propose a project, and when we adopt an idea, everyone pitches in. The work is evenly distributed and resolutely non-hierarchical. What you can do in IACSC is not based on your official title, but on the skills, ideas and enthusiasms you bring to the table.

As a result, you get to meet a lot of really wonderful people! For me this is a nice change of pace. Pratt's structure tends to keep us all—staff, students and faculty—in a particular routine, whether it's our office, studio, hallway, building or department. Through the IACSC I have the opportunity to interact with folks I might never have encountered, from the other parts of campus to the art world and the larger community. This includes many who may not be a formal part of our group, but are drawn in to help plan, present, or exhibit at one of our events. Finally, the IACSC is one place where I am reminded of the enormous creativity that

co-exists with all the hard work of learning, making, doing, teaching, mentoring and supporting that goes on at Pratt. As part of IACSC, I am continually impressed by the inventiveness, imagination and ingenuity that emerges when people step out of their usual roles, to make thoughtful and challenging spaces that highlight the larger contexts in which all of us live.

IACSC is always open to newcomers and new ideas. To learn more about the projects IACSC has done, find out what is happening next, or join the group, visit our website: <http://www.prattiacsc.org>.

Amplify Action: Sustainability Through the Arts

An exhibition of work by artists both local and abroad that will demonstrate how arts, culture, and media can be powerful catalysts for social change.

April 21st – July 27th

Skylight Gallery
1368 Fulton Street, 3rd Floor,
Brooklyn, NY

Gallery Hours:
W–F: 11AM – 6PM
Sat: 1PM – 6PM

amplifyaction.org/



The Aaron Burr Society and Occupy Wall Street

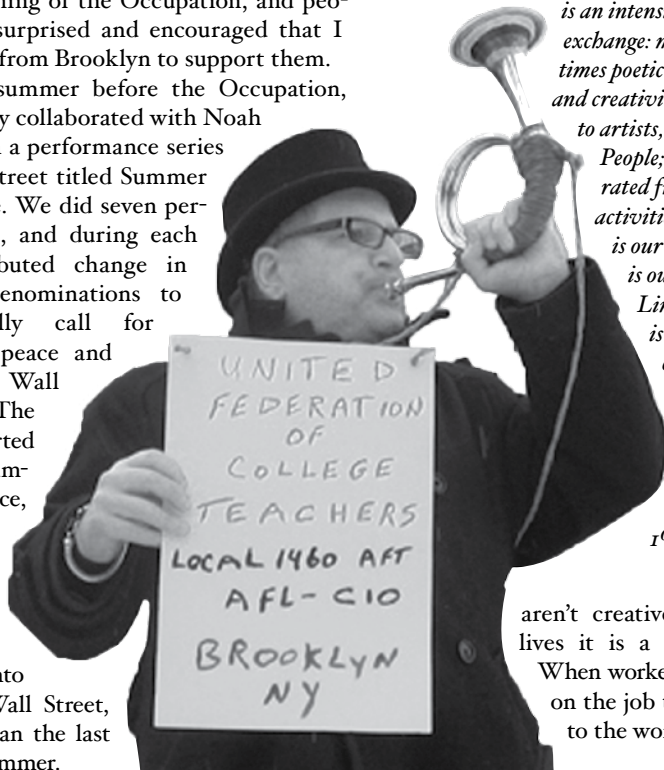
By **Jim Costanzo**

Founding Director of aaronburrsociety.org

I started the Aaron Burr Society in the summer of 2008 before the international financial collapse. The Society is an absurdist conceptual construct whose goal is to re-write American economic history from a progressive perspective. In 2009, the Society launched the Free Money Movement by distributing one-dollar bills stamped with Free Money on one side and Slave of Wall Street on the other. I have continued to spend stamped dollars to this day.

In February of 2011, I flew to Madison Wisconsin to join the Occupation of the State Capital Building as a member of this Union. The Union helped defray part of my travel expenses. I wore a sign that proudly stated, "United Federation of College Teachers, local 1460, AFL-CIO, Brooklyn NY." It was the beginning of the Occupation, and people were surprised and encouraged that I had come from Brooklyn to support them.

The summer before the Occupation, the Society collaborated with Noah Fischer on a performance series on Wall Street titled Summer of Change. We did seven performances, and during each we distributed change in various denominations to symbolically call for freedom, peace and justice on Wall Street. The series started on the Summer Solstice, ended on the day before the Equinox, and folded into Occupy Wall Street, which began the last week of summer.



"ART IS NOT A MIRROR TO HOLD UP TO THE WORLD ART IS A HAMMER TO SHAPE THE WORLD"

—Bertolt Brecht

The Aaron Burr Society has been particularly active with Occupy Museums, which has performed actions at various institutions including Sotheby's, MoMA and the Whitney. At Lincoln Center, Philip Glass joined our General Assembly on the final day of his opera on Gandhi. At Sotheby's, we collaborated with Teamsters' art handlers, who were locked out of their jobs last summer. Occupy Museums has helped to reverse the trend of declining interest and attention from the press for union activities. Interestingly, we have been invited to the Berlin Biennial.

"Gold & Silver is not money! Aristotle understood that money is a form of social exchange. The artist Joseph Beuys called this process social sculpture and proclaimed that all people are creative in the way that they live their lives. Art is an intensified form of social exchange: more specific, at times poetic. But intensity and creativity are not limited to artists, it belongs to all People; it cannot be separated from our daily activities. Creativity is our Commons, Art is our Commons.

Limiting creativity is limiting social exchange; limiting creativity denies liberty.

It is a form of oppression: the tyranny of the 1% over the 99%."

When people aren't creative in their daily lives it is a sign of poverty. When workers aren't creative on the job they are reduced to the working poor.

Healthcare Fact Sheet

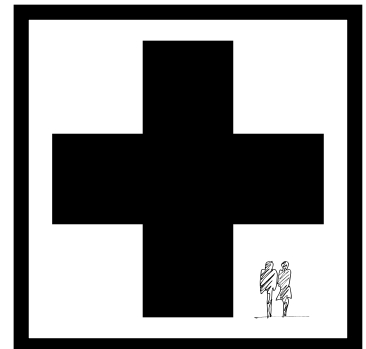
The Faculty Union is currently in negotiations with Pratt administration to determine the content of our next contract. Healthcare is a major demand in these negotiations.

Currently...

- 75-80% of Pratt faculty are deemed ineligible for any form of health insurance benefits through the Institute
- Of Pratt's yearly operating budget of nearly \$190 million, less than 20% is spent on faculty (that's including all full-time and part-time salaries and benefits)
- The Pratt administration has agreed to provide healthcare benefits for part-timers in the past 2 contracts, but has yet to honor these agreements in practice
- Every other college of Pratt's prestige and caliber in NYC provides healthcare benefits to both full and part-time faculty (including The New School, Cooper Union, School of Visual Arts, CUNY, NYU, and Columbia)

What you can do...

- Wear a "Does Pratt Insure Your Prof?" button (available in the Union Conference Room, North Hall 123)
- Share and discuss these facts with fellow faculty, staff, and students
- Join the Union—each member makes us stronger!



May 1, 2012 – Reclaim the Day

By Cindy Klumb

Drawing Resource Center Coordinator Senior Shop Steward Local 153 OPEIU

This May Day, labor, immigrant rights groups, community organizations and Occupy Wall Street are planning a “national day of action.” There will be a Unity Rally and March starting at 4 p.m. in Union Square. At around 5:30 p.m. participants will begin marching via Foley Square to Wall Street.

Here at Pratt, Local 153 OPEIU (academic/administrative support staff and security) is inviting you to the “Occupy May Day Solidarity Lunch” from 12 noon to 2 p.m. on Tuesday, May 1st. Pack your lunch, bring it to the “cannon” and join us in a show of unified strength. “Pratt works because we do.”

The Origin of May Day

The call for a general strike on May 1, 1886 was put out by the “eight hour” leagues. After the civil war and the Emancipation Proclamation, workers began to think about what they called the “slavery of the twelve to thirteen hour day” referring to it as “wage slavery.” They believed that if the U.S. congress could abolish the real slavery of African Americans, then they could create an eight hour day. By 1886, a national labor movement had grown up around the fight for the eight hour day. Some legislatures passed eight-hour laws, but employers ignored them and the courts refused to enforce them.

There was an upsurge of labor struggle in the 1880’s following the economic depression of the 1870’s, particularly in Chicago. Mother Jones in her autobiography describes Chicago in the lead up to the strike: “The city was divided into two angry camps. The working people on one side hungry, cold, jobless, fighting gunmen and police clubs with bare hands. The other side the employers, knowing neither hunger nor cold, supported by the newspapers, by the police, by all the power of the state itself.”

On May 1st, 1886, 340,000 workers participated in strikes and demonstrations across the U.S. Cities large and small participated, with at least 65,000 strikers in Chicago. The employers and the state responded. On May 3rd, mounted police charged strikers at Chicago’s McCormick Reaper works without warning, killing six workers.

The following day, 3,000 workers occupied Haymarket Square. Mounted police again arrived on the scene; a bomb was thrown at the police, killing an officer. Hysteria followed with the police firing into the crowd. Six more police officers were killed in the cross-fire. Hundreds of people were injured in the panic and confusion. In the subsequent days, the leaders of the movement were arrested and later tried for the deaths of the seven police officers. Only August Spies and Samuel Fielden actually attended the May 3rd action, but that didn’t matter. There was no evidence that traced the bomb back to them. The trial was a show trial and was put on just to scare the workers into submission and to marginalize the radicals of the movement.

Of the leaders, Spies, Albert Parsons, Adolph Fischer and George Engel were executed in 1887. Louis Lingg committed suicide, Fielden, Michael Schwab and Oscar Neebe were later pardoned. August Spies at his trial made the following statement:

“But if you think that by hanging us you can stamp out the labor movement – the movement from which the downtrodden millions, the millions who toil and live in want and misery, the wage slave, expect salvation—if this is your opinion, then hang us! Here you will tread upon a spark, but here there and behind you, and in front of you, and everywhere the flames will blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out. The ground is on fire upon which you stand.”

In 1888, the AFL put out a call for a national strike for the eight hour day to begin on May 1, 1890. In the summer of 1889 the AFL sent a letter to the “Second International” asking for workers around the world to join them in solidarity. May Day 1890, International Worker’s Day, was born as a tribute to sacrifice of the “Haymarket Martyrs” in the struggle for workers’ rights and continues to be celebrated annually across the globe.

In 2011, we saw the subterranean fire that was ignited 125 years earlier burning first in Wisconsin and then again in the fall with Occupy Wall Street. It is time that U.S. workers reclaim the day in solidarity with all workers and oppressed people of the world.



*Local 153 OPEIU invites
faculty, staff & students
to join us in Solidarity
with the
“Day Without the 99%”*

OCCUPY MAY DAY

SOLIDARITY

Lunch

May 1st 2012
12 Noon – 2 PM

**Brown bag your lunch
and break bread together
by the Cannon**

**Wear red for May Day
or black for
Occupy Wall Street**

We Must Not Be Beautiful Souls

By Suzanne Verderber

Associate Professor Humanities and Media Studies, Vice President UFCT Local 1460

This Spring, the Academic Senate has been trying to address an ephemeral issue. At the April 3 All-Institute Senate meeting, the issue of a “culture of fear and intimidation” on campus was raised. Not challenging the validity of this conversation, I would like to ask another question: what role does our unionized faculty play in contributing to and sustaining this culture of fear? We are not “beautiful souls,” innocent victims standing apart from the structures of power in which we operate. We all play some responsibility in creating our “atmosphere.” Here I want to think about how the fact that we are unionized and have a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) is a crucial factor in faculty assuming their responsibility to change the atmosphere, and to consider the responsibility we have to each other, as faculty, to exercise and recognize those rights. What happens when a few faculty are willing to speak out, when the majority remain silent?

“If you don’t exercise your rights, they don’t exist. They are merely words on a piece of paper. Sometimes, it takes guts to exercise your rights, but people will respect you for it.” These words of wisdom were passed on to me by my sister, at the time a labor organizer for nurses under the auspices of the United Federation of Teachers (yes, they organize nurses too; teachers and nurses being jobs “traditionally” reserved for women).

Holding this truth to be self-evident, I thought I would summarize a few rights embedded in our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) that I feel should be understood and exercised more, and that pertain directly to the atmosphere in which we work. The full contract is available on the UFCT 1460’s website, www.pratt-union.org.

1. Article 3: Academic Freedom and Responsibility.

This article goes to the heart of what it means to be a professional educator. The reasoning behind this article is that the administration has the duty to “manage” the institution, including its finances, which in recent decades throughout the country has led universities to be run more and more like corporations. We should be at

peace with the fact that this is the job of the administration, but should fight equally as hard for our own interest: educational quality. The responsibility of the faculty is to speak out and stick up for what should be our sole interest: the quality of education that is provided to the student. This article protects—in addition to “free discussion of material relevant to a course...consistent with the published syllabus and established curriculum”—the faculty’s right to speak out on broader educational matters in ways that may contradict the interests—often financial interests—of the administration. This right is not exactly the same as the First Amendment; rather, here, “freedom and responsibility” pertain to the faculty’s responsibility and right to freely and openly address issues related to our professional field of expertise: education. As the article says, “academic freedom is inseparable from professional responsibility and ethics...”



2. Article 7: Grievance and Arbitration.

The quote I started with has the most resonance here. If you realize that your CBA rights are being violated and you do not bring this to the Union to evaluate your situation to determine whether you have a grievance, it is as if you do not in actuality possess those rights. This is an intimidating

step for many to take; many would rather just “let it slide.” Faculty “don’t want to make trouble” or “fear retribution.” To address these fears as effectively as it is possible to do so, the article includes the following: “7.4: Every employee or group of employees shall have the right to present grievances through the Union to the Administration free from interference, coercion, restraint, discrimination or reprisal.” In other words, if you feel you are being retaliated against because you filed a grievance, you have the basis for another grievance. I know it sounds Kafka-esque, and hopefully it would never go this far, but these are your rights. From the Union’s perspective, if a faculty member has a valid grievance and chooses not to pursue it, this weakens the CBA for all faculty, since over time, such infractions will come to be condoned. The CBA starts to lose its efficaciousness and becomes a piece of paper.

3. Article 16: Appointments, Reappointments, Promotions, and Tenure (ARPT).

This article clearly lays out the faculty’s responsibilities in the ARPT process in making recommendations pertaining to their colleagues, and establishing the standards that form the basis for these recommendations. A poorly-understood part of this article is embedded in 16.3, known in shorthand as the “right to append and affix.” The faculty member should promptly receive his or her recommendation letter from the Chair, the Dean, and the Provost, in order to allow the faculty member sufficient time to compose a letter addressing any discrepancies or disagreements in the recommendations. Imagine that there is an error, or an intentional misrepresentation, in one of the recommendation letters? This article gives the faculty member the opportunity to set the record straight. The faculty member’s response to the recommendation letter must be forwarded with the application to the next level.

Clearly, the importance of tenure (Articles 23 and 30) in assuring these rights cannot be contested. However, the CBA assures these rights for all faculty, part-time and full-time, tenured and untenured. The question is, are faculty willing to exercise these rights?

At What Cost?

By Anonymous Adjunct

Nationwide, only 27% of college faculty are tenured or tenure-track. According to the same report by the U.S. Department of Education (2007), this means that over one million people belong to an instructional workforce made up of part-time/adjunct faculty, full-time non-tenure-track faculty, and graduate employees. Put differently, these one million college educators are contingent: they work from semester to semester with minimal guarantee of reappointment, few or no benefits, and remarkably low wages (on average, less than \$20,000 a year—and in some places significantly less—according to the New Faculty Majority).

This trend towards increasing reliance on contingent faculty has been building over the last 40 years, and has accelerated in recent years. The percentage of full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members declined from approximately one-third of the instructional workforce in 1997 to one-quarter in 2007, according to the American Federation of Teachers. It seems clear, therefore, that this heavy reliance on contingent faculty is a long-term trend that we need to consider seriously.

The causes of this trend are complex, and certainly warrant further discussion. But for now, I want to ask: at what cost does this heavy reliance on contingent faculty come? Clearly, those who control the budgets at institutions of higher education save significant amounts of money by relying on contingent faculty. There are, however, serious intangible costs that don't have dollar-values.

First off, mentorship suffers. Since a student can't be sure that her professor will be around from semester to semester, or if a favorite professor has a second job and can't spend much time on campus, it's difficult for that student to approach her professor with questions about her course of study, advice about her intended profession, or even ask for a letter of recommendation. This might mean, too, that the few tenured and tenure-track faculty who are around end up being overburdened with this kind of work...but more on that in a minute.

Academic freedom also suffers. Academic freedom in this sense means a

professor's right to teach freely within her given area of expertise, even when the subject matter might be controversial or contentious (editor's note: please see "We Must Not Be Beautiful Souls.") It's not difficult to imagine that a part-timer, with no guarantee of work from semester to semester, might shave the sharper corners of discussion as a hedge for better student evaluations—which are, at some institutions, one of the few metrics for re-hiring. (Although, most of the part-time faculty I know are incredibly brave people and hold themselves to a very high standard when it comes to honoring academic freedom, they're often put in the impossible position of following their ethics against their own material self interest!)

Third comes the matter of academic governance. Part-time faculty are paid only a pittance, if compensated at all, for attending department meetings, senate meetings, curriculum committees—the faculty bodies that are meant to, through discussion and consensus—direct the academic life of the institute. As a colleague reminded me recently, colleges are one of the few institutions where we can really imagine building a future beyond our own lives, in addition to shaping pedagogy and curriculum in the short-term. When there aren't enough faculty to have these conversations, it is often the interests of administrators (who aren't necessarily educators) that takes over and, well, that makes me less optimistic about that long-term future.

Notice how this trend clearly effects tenured and tenure-track faculty as well. I've never met a faculty member who doesn't value academic freedom, I've never met a faculty member who doesn't believe that scholarship or artistic practice are the foundation of teaching, and I've never met a tenured or tenure-track faculty member who isn't swamped with committee work. The potential weakening of academic freedom in 73% of college classrooms would inevitably erode academic freedom in all classrooms, thus causing a serious blow to a society built on the values free inquiry.

Also, the fact that part-timers are compensated for their teaching but rarely if ever for their practice or scholarship or participation in governance similarly degrades the liveliness of learning and free inquiry. Now, like I said, most part-time faculty tend to hold themselves to high standards even if it means potentially shooting themselves in the foot or going a little bit hungry

THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SERIOUS INTANGIBLE COSTS THAT DON'T HAVE DOLLAR-VALUES.

at the end of the month—which is why some have called these effects “deprofessionalizing without deskilling.” It's a wordy moniker, but I think it gets at how these matters affect all faculty.

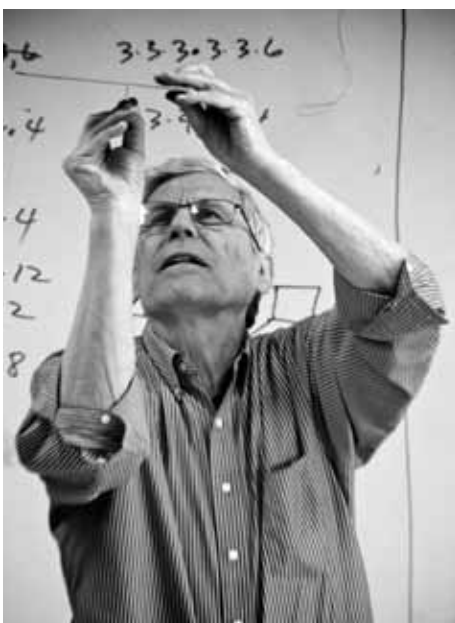
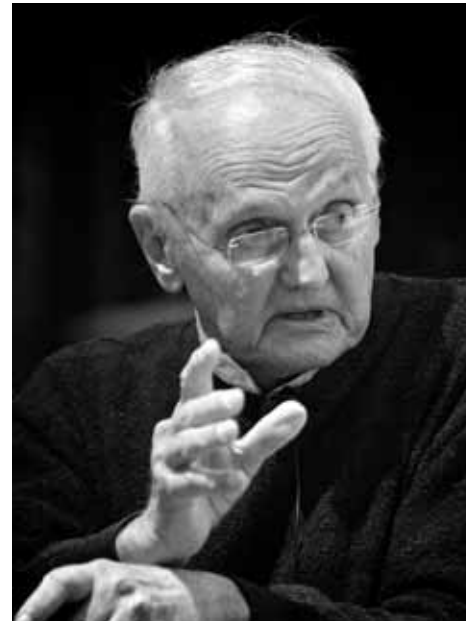
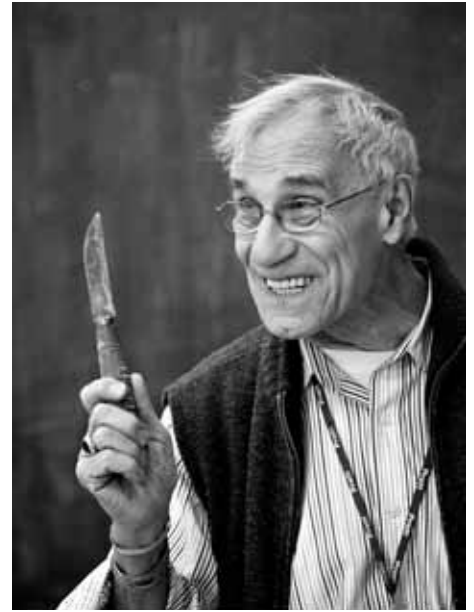
And then, there's healthcare. Some institutions offer it, many don't, but suffice it to say, it's immoral not to offer health benefits to faculty who spend more than half of their working hours at a given institution. You can't teach well if you're not healthy, or if you're constantly worried about your health. Faculty suffer, students suffer, families suffer, communities suffer. Regardless of cost, healthcare must be treated as fundamental to the purpose of higher education.

To this point, I've been discussing the costs of heavy reliance on contingent faculty. Nationally, less than 20% of part-time faculty are represented by collective bargaining units. Unionization often makes the difference between being completely “contingent” and at least being around “for-some-time.” Pratt faculty are fortunate to be part of that “20%”! We're fortunate that our union has always kept a tight focus on matters that affect part-time faculty. Indeed, if I review my list of “costs,” I note that on each count, our Collective Bargaining Agreement offers protections to part-time faculty—and what's more, provides a special status of “tenure for part timers” (i.e. the “Certificate of Continuing Education.”) But as we know, too, there's still much work to be done—particularly regarding healthcare and fair pay—and some very committed people are currently pushing for better treatment of part-timers at the bargaining table. That bargaining position is only as strong as our union. Helping to strengthen our union, here and now, doesn't just help to control these exorbitant costs for ourselves, but for higher education at large.

TEACHERS TEACHING

Photographs by Chris Richard
MID Candidate 2013

Top: Licio Isolani, Fine Arts/Foundry
L to R: Bruce Hannah, MID Program
Harvey Bernstein, MID Program
Bill Katavolos, Architecture
Gerson Sparer, Mathematician
Theo David, Architecture
Lucia N.DeRespinis, Table Top ID Program



THE STATE OF THE UNION

BY KYE CARBONE

“Any additional spending would require our having to raise [student] tuition...” Such is the reflex-response from Pratt administrators in our current contract negotiations, conduits as they are for the Oz behind-the-curtain, Pratt Institute’s Board of Trustees, the “final authority” in all matters of Pratt’s operations. What gets built, what doesn’t, who gets x%, who gets squat, and most insidiously, how much the perennial and inevitable hike in Pratt’s tuition will be for our beleaguered (and indebted) students are BoT prerogatives.

In the larger context of these United States of America’s special “brand” of laissez-faire capitalism, Pratt Institute is but a microcosm of the larger pathologies, and corruptions, underlying an enterprise that is in no way “free!”

“Share the Wealth” is the suggested slogan of a distinguished professor of many decades who remembers Pratt “before there was a union,” for a campaign or picket if necessary, in what are indeed difficult negotiations. When I was first elected president of the United Federation of College Teachers, Local 1460, Estelle Horowitz, this union’s guiding light and god-mother (as only a ‘red’ secularist could be!) sent me a copy of a letter she received upon her retirement from Pratt’s then president Jerry Pratt. In the letter, he thanks her and the union for bringing a level of “civility and order” to Pratt. In other words, despite years of heated battles, legal fights and grievances, a robust adversarial relationship between management and union, between employer and employee, might a union in fact be beneficial to a workplace?

A [ny] union’s main function – the basis for its being – is in bringing a modicum of order, as well as act as a counterweight to, the inherent chaotic forces underlying unfettered capital. This, while ensuring that

its “bargaining unit members” have a voice at the table in contract negotiations and through redress of grievances when employee “terms and conditions of employment” are being exploited or violated. Imagine a government without checks-and-balances or a society without law(s)...are we not all fodder absent a “voice at the table?”

Globally and nationally, where then, and to whom, do the 99% bring their grievances? Who has their back? How much profit is enough? Should every worker [or employee] have a right to unionize? Should just the select few be the “deciders” for all of how a finite pie of capital is divided? Locally, at what point is Pratt’s tuition too high? When are administrative costs and salaries bloated? What is fair pay for a Pratt faculty member?

Note in the opening quote the Pratt Administration’s attempt to tether increases in faculty expenditure to student debt, as if it were the students who paid the faculty. This is both diabolical and ingenious, when something like 70% of Pratt’s total operating budget (upwards of \$190,000,000 for this year) is directly “funded” by student tuition dollars. Thus, the remaining 30% is from fund-raising, and interest on what is in the aggregate, an ineffectively small endowment. In other words, Pratt’s terminal inability in providing sufficient scholarships to its students is the by-product of such self-made budgetary constraints.

Understand, it is not the case that Pratt is claiming austerity, or a lack of funds in our negotiations. The money is there as best as I can see, they just don’t wish to allocate it in a fair way to its distinguished faculty or its students. “We only raised tuition 4.5% last year, maybe we can’t afford to continue to do this...” is muttered behind closed doors! No, the absence of funds is usually tied to some abstract notion about “budget-

ary priorities,” “deferred maintenance,” or so-called un-funded budget-lines (as if the only thing holding them back is that there is no line?), and a whole assortment of nonsensical merry-go-round rationales lacking all reason and order. And, it is this lack of reason that leaves the rest of us in temporal reality truly exasperated: Why do they? Why would they? Why? Questions asked futilely...

In the end, it is always about power, the concentration of it, and the absolute protection of such concentrated power for few at the ‘expense’ of the many (you see? It’s never free!!)

In solidarity with all groups and movements demanding a seat at the table!



Kye Carbone
Adjunct Professor w/CCE
President UFCT Local 1460

JOIN US!



United Federation of College Teachers

- tenure track for our full-time faculty
- CCE for our adjuncts
- any rights for our visitors
- academic rank for all faculty
- a due process for faculty action
- medical, pension and fringe benefits
- protection from discrimination
- right to academic freedom
- a legal right to a grievance process

Pratt Institute 125 North Hall 718 636 3614

pratt-union.org