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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
**TheRecord**

VOL. 37, NO. 04

NEWS AND IDEAS FOR THE COLUMBIA COMMUNITY

NOVEMBER 28, 2011

**LENFEST PLEDGES  
\$30 MILLION FOR  
NEW ARTS CENTER**

By Record Staff

The name Lenfest is ubiquitous at Columbia. There are Lenfest professorships, Lenfest faculty awards, a law school residence named Lenfest Hall, the Lenfest Center for Sustainable Energy.

The gifts of University Trustee H.F. “Gerry” Lenfest (LAW’58, HON’09) total more than \$100 million, placing him among Columbia’s most generous donors. Now, he has added to that sum with his pledge of \$30 million for the arts at Columbia. The gift will support the construction of a 53,000-square-foot, multi-arts venue on the University’s Manhattanville campus. And it will add the name Lenfest to Columbia once again, as the building will be called the Lenfest Center for the Arts in his honor.

The gift was announced by Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger Nov. 17 at the annual Alexander Hamilton Dinner, where the Columbia College Alumni Association honored Lenfest with its highest award. “The breadth of his generosity to Columbia, when considered in the aggregate, is quite stunning,” Bollinger said. “It has produced something that could be called the ‘Lenfest Effect,’ rippling across our campus and well beyond.”



H.F. “Gerry” Lenfest and his wife Marguerite at the annual Alexander Hamilton Dinner.

On the Manhattanville campus, the Lenfest Effect will be embodied in a six-story arts building, to be designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop, that will contain an art gallery, a state-of-the-art film screening room, a flexible performance space, and presentation space for readings, symposia and seminars. It will stand prominently on a small public plaza on West 125th Street between Broadway and 12th Avenue.

“For Marguerite and me, naming the new arts center is a wonderful way of doing two things we care deeply about—supporting the arts and supporting Columbia University as a leading center of creative thought in New York City and throughout the world,” said Lenfest.

With a range of spaces suited to presentation of work in multiple genres, the Lenfest Center will regularly feature the work of students, faculty and guest artists, and “open the doors to new and established

continued on page 8



**DOCUMENTING  
AN ERA OF NEED**

BROWN BROS. CRIPPLED BOY

The century-old, black-and-white photographs now on display at Wallach Art Gallery include 125 works by such influential photographers and social critics as Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine and Jessie Tarbox Beals. Hired to illustrate the conditions in the slums of lower Manhattan, their best-known images are invariably seen in isolation and appreciated for their haunting artistry. But as the exhibit, “Social

Forces Visualized: Photography and Scientific Charity, 1900-1920,” makes clear, they were hired to capture images of pressing social problems such as tenement housing, tuberculosis, food safety and widow’s pensions. See page 2 for a story on the exhibit. For a contemporary take on issues of poverty, turn to page 7 for a Faculty Q&A with the School of Social Work’s Jane Waldfogel.

**Rating Scale Successfully Predicts Suicide Attempts and Guides Intervention**

By Record Staff

Kelly Posner is trying to save lives. As director of the Center for Suicide Risk Assessment, she led a team from Columbia’s Department of Psychiatry in developing a tool that successfully predicts suicidal intent.

In a study published in the November 8 *AJP in Advance*, the early edition of *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, University researchers found that the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) is not only pivotal to assessing suicidal behavior, but it can help predict an attempt.

“The results are likely to have tremendous impact both nationally and internationally,” said

**“We know that 50 percent of people who die by suicide see their primary care doctor the month before they die.”**

Posner, an associate clinical professor of medical psychology at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. “Now clinicians have a real scientific footing on which to base treatment interventions.”

Before the scale, researchers and clinicians had no clear way in which to define risk. “Treatment was initiated at great cost for patients who didn’t need it and increased the burden for clinicians with unnecessary referrals,” she said. “What our study shows is that using the [scale] helps to identify patients that

would have fallen through the cracks. It’s about saving lives and directing limited resources to the people who actually need them.”

The assessment tool is available in 103 languages and consists of a series of questions that determine a person’s suicidal thoughts and behavior. It can be administered in minutes in emergency rooms, clinical settings, schools or primary care offices by anyone trained in the protocol. If patients reach a certain threshold on the scale they can be referred for further evaluation and possible intervention.

“We know that 50 percent of people who die by suicide see their primary care doctor the month before they die,” said Posner. “We should be asking these questions the way we monitor for blood pressure.”

Before the scale was introduced, researchers and clinicians had no diagnostic screening guidelines by which to define suicide risk. In 2002, the Institute of Medicine, a non-governmental advisory group, noted that a lack of definitions and standardization presented major obstacles to suicide prevention. The FDA then requested the creation of a standardized assessment tool for suicidal behavior, selecting Columbia researchers to lead that initiative. The study, which builds upon that work, was carried out at three sites that treated adolescents and adults who had attempted suicide, and who had been admitted to emergency rooms.

“It gives us a great deal of hope that those individuals at greatest risk can be identified and treated,” said Jeffrey Lieberman, chair of Columbia’s Department of Psychiatry and director of the New York State Psychiatric Institute. “The



Kelly Posner and Jeffrey Lieberman talk about the development of the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale.

public health benefits in terms of lives saved could be enormous.”

The ratings scale is used worldwide in intervention studies and clinical trials across a broad range of disorders and diseases. Institutions—including the U.S. military, the World Health Organization and local fire departments—have successfully used it to better identify people who need intervention—and to manage the cost of treatments. One California correctional facility spends almost \$20 million a year on suicide watch; a cost that could be greatly reduced with effective screening.

Funding for the study was provided by the National Institutes of Health and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

**COLUMBIANEWS ON THE WEB**

To see a video about the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale, visit [news.columbia.edu/scale](http://news.columbia.edu/scale)



## ON CAMPUS



BRUCE GILBERT

## SUPREME LEGAL ADVICE

Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor spoke to an audience of students and alumni at Columbia Law School on Oct. 21 at an event co-sponsored by the Center for Gender and Sexuality Law and the Center for Study of Ethnicity and Race. Sotomayor, the first Latina and third woman appointed to the country's highest court, grew up in a low-income housing project in the South Bronx and said she hoped her presence on the bench will attract people to the law. "That is part of the legacy I'd like to leave behind," she said. And she had this to say about her fellow justices: "Imagine eight super-smart colleagues—nothing you say goes unchallenged even if they agree with you. It's a stimulating process in its own right." As for being a judge, "This is the best profession in the world—practice honorably and with integrity."

## MILESTONES



The American Historical Association named History Professor **ELIZABETH BLACKMAR** 2011 recipient of the Nancy Lyman Roelker Mentorship Award, which honors history teachers "who taught, guided and inspired their students in a way that changed their lives." Blackmar, who was nominated by her current and former students, has also won Columbia University's Presidential Teaching Award and Columbia College's Mark Van Doren Award for Teaching.

**TIMOTHY FRYE**, director of the Harriman Institute, has won two awards for his 2010 book, *Building States and Markets After Communism*. He is a co-winner of the American Political Science Association's Best Book Award in its Comparative Democratization Section, as well as the Slavic Association's 2011 Ed A. Hewett Book Prize.



Szabolcs Marka



Franck Oury



Valentino Tosatti

The New York Academy of Sciences has named three Columbians as winners of the 2011 Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists. Szabolcs Marka, the Walter O. LeCroy, Jr. Associate Professor of Physics, won in the faculty category. Franck Oury (physiology) and Valentino Tosatti (mathematics) won in the postdoctoral category. The Blavatnik Awards honor noteworthy young scientists and engineers in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

## GRANTS &amp; GIFTS

**WHO GAVE IT:** Penates Foundation and Dr. Paul Montrone (BUS'66)

**HOW MUCH:** \$1 million

**WHO GOT IT:** Columbia Business School

**WHAT FOR:** A longtime member of the Business School's Board of Overseers, Montrone made the gift to support construction of the school's new facilities in Manhattanville.

**WHO GAVE IT:** American Legacy Foundation

**HOW MUCH:** \$850,000

**WHO GOT IT:** Mailman School of Public Health

**WHAT FOR:** Endowment support for the Donald H. Gemson Assistant/Associate Professorship Fund at the Center for the History and Ethics of Public Health.

**WHO GAVE IT:** Audi of America

**HOW MUCH:** \$250,000

**WHO GOT IT:** Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

**WHAT FOR:** To support the yearlong Experiments in Motion project, through which students and faculty will participate in programs to develop new paradigms in the relationship between mobility and design.

**WHO GAVE IT:** Lincoln Fund

**HOW MUCH:** \$50,000

**WHO GOT IT:** School of Nursing

**WHAT FOR:** Scholarships for nursing students

**WHO GAVE IT:** Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD)

**HOW MUCH:** \$3.34 million

**WHO GOT IT:** School of Social Work Associate Professor Fred Ssewamala

**WHAT FOR:** A family-based economic empowerment intervention for AIDS orphans and vulnerable children in Uganda

**WHO GAVE IT:** Gates Foundation Grand Challenges Explorations

**HOW MUCH:** \$100,000

**WHO GOT IT:** Laboratory of Chemistry Professor Virginia Cornish

**WHAT FOR:** To develop a household sensor cell that can detect cholera. The project will be led by Ph.D. student Nili Ostrov and includes Alastair Ager, professor of clinical population and family health at the Mailman School of Public Health.

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*Social Work History*

What are the origins of the School of Social Work?

—Budding Philanthropist

Dear Budding,

Some of the worst living conditions in the world could be found in New York City in the 1890s, where newly arrived immigrant families lived in overcrowded tenements and waged daily battles against crime, unemployment, hunger, poor sanitation and vermin. The effort to cure those and other ills across the nation sparked the Progressive Movement and created a generation of social reformers, many from families of great wealth and social status.



*Melting Pot*, gelatin silver print, by unknown photographer, 1910.

There was no obvious path for those with a social conscience—except for digging into their purses—but interest in social reform sparked a movement in higher education. In 1894, sociology students at Columbia College could do six hours of field work with the Charity Organization Society. Two Columbia professors chaired the society's committee on statistics, and their students helped work on studies on homelessness, unemployment and the state of children.

In 1898, the Society launched a free six-week long summer program in "prac-

**ASK ALMA'S OWL**

tical philanthropic work." The 27 men and women who attended came from 14 colleges and universities, and either had some experience in philanthropy or were recommended by their college instructors. The curriculum included classes in childcare, charity organization and visits to hospitals, jails and homes. With the success of the summer program, attendees began paying a \$10 fee, and in 1904 the newly named New York School of Philanthropy offered a full-time, eight-month program.

The next year, students at Columbia and what was by then called the New York School of Philanthropy could attend classes at either institution. Columbia later made it possible to earn its master's degrees and Ph.D.'s through coursework at the philanthropy school. This relationship became official in 1940 when the University formally affiliated itself with the school, granting master's of science degrees in social work and, later, doctorates. Two more name changes created the Columbia School of Social Work, which celebrated its centennial in 1998.

—Bridget O'Brian

Send your questions for Alma's Owl to [curecord@columbia.edu](mailto:curecord@columbia.edu).

Happening at  
**COLUMBIA**

For the latest on upcoming Columbia events, performances, seminars and lectures, go to [calendar.columbia.edu](http://calendar.columbia.edu)

# Pioneers of Documentary Photography Featured in New Exhibit on ‘Scientific Charity’

By Nick Obourn

A boy with leg braces and crutches rests against a fire alarm. A woman hangs laundry from a clothesline strung across an airshaft behind a row of tenement buildings. Pushcarts line a crowded street in lower Manhattan.

These haunting black-and-white photographs are featured in a new exhibition at the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery that explores the role that social welfare organizations founded in the 19th and early 20th century played in documenting and alleviating the plight of the urban poor.

“Social Forces Visualized: Photography and Scientific Charity, 1900-1920” includes 125 photographs by such influential photographers as Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine and Jessie Tarbox Beals, who were hired by the charities to illustrate the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions in the slums of lower Manhattan.

The photographs, many of which have not been seen in public for close to a century, were selected from 1,300 images in the Community Service Society (CSS) records donated to Columbia’s Rare Book & Manuscript Library in 1979. The CSS was formed by the

1939 merger of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, started in 1843, and the Charity Organization Society, founded in 1882. The latter organization’s summer course on philanthropy in 1898 pioneered the formal study of social work, which eventually led to the creation of Columbia’s School of Social Work.

The exhibition was organized by Drew Sawyer and Huffa Frobese-Cross, both Ph.D. candidates in the Department of Art History and

Archaeology. They first learned of the CSS archives in 2008 through an independent study with Elizabeth Hutchinson, an associate professor of art history at Columbia and Barnard.

“‘Social Forces Realized’ does more than offer a chance to see extraordinary documentary images from leading American photographers,” says Hutchinson, faculty adviser for the project. “The show helps viewers see the role photographs played in the watershed public reforms of the early 20th century.”

Riis and Hine have long been acclaimed as key figures in the tradition of social documentary photography. But their best-known images have usually been seen in isolation, without the publications and annual reports in which they first appeared.

The exhibition places their work, and that of other documentary photographers, within the broad framework of the “scientific charity” of the organizations that hired them to capture images of such pressing social problems as tenement housing, tuberculosis, food safety and widows’ pensions. Though intended purely as documentation, the photographs are now recognized for their artistic merit.

“Many were published in Community Service Society periodicals and brochures as a means of raising awareness of the living conditions of New York’s poor and advocating for change,” said Eric Wakin, the Lehman Curator for American History at the library and adjunct assistant professor of history.

“Social Forces Visualized” is divided into four categories: housing, health, social surveys and welfare. “As you move through the exhibition to the later images, you can see the shift these organizations made from producing images as scientific research primarily for a



This black-and-white photograph, *Mother with Baby in Swaddling Clothes*, taken by Hiram Myers around 1917, is currently on view at the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery in a new exhibition about the social uses of documentary photography.

professional audience of social workers and sociologists to making images as publicity materials for a broader public,” says Frobese-Cross.

Sawyer said he and Frobese-Cross sifted through hundreds of boxes in the CSS records before deciding to focus on the years 1900 to 1920. “We wanted to recreate some of the diverse and multimedia visual strategies that were just being tested during these years,” he said. “Many of the photographs would have been seen in lantern slide shows, exhibitions, annual reports, journals, pamphlets and posters alongside other visuals and texts such as

graphs, statistics, maps, charts, three-dimensional models and even films.”

In keeping with the goals of the original charities, the library is now working to make the CSS photography collection, one of the most used in the library, available to the broader public by digitizing its contents. The project, headed by Wakin, also will allow the library to link the material to its other historic collections related to social welfare.

The exhibition, which is accompanied by an illustrated book published by the gallery, is on view through Dec. 17.

## COLUMBIANews ON THE WEB

To see a video about the exhibit, go to [news.columbia.edu/socialforces](http://news.columbia.edu/socialforces)

## ON EXHIBIT

### A Closer Look: Student Photos of Asia

A Buddhist monk checks his cell phone in the shade of a 17th-century temple complex in Beijing, suggesting that even the spiritually devout can’t resist the temptations of modernity.

This striking image is part of an exhibition of photographs by 15 Columbia and Barnard undergraduates sponsored by the Weatherhead East Asian Institute and the Columbia University Photography Society.

The 25 photographs in the show were culled from about 120 submissions by a panel of judges. Students were asked to send their five best photos taken anywhere in East or

Southeast Asia over the past year.

The images, which range from riot police on the streets of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to a durian fruit vendor on a street in Bangkok, reflect a variety of experiences. Some were taken by students doing internships or studying abroad; others were visiting family members or live in the region.

The show, which can be seen on the ninth floor of the International Affairs Building, will be on view through Feb. 29, then will move to a gallery in Queens. This is the third annual exhibition organized by the institute.



*The Modern Monk*, photographed in Beijing by Teresa Shen (BC’15), is part of an exhibition of undergraduate photography on view in the International Affairs Building.

## GREENE LAUNCHES PBS SERIES AT CAMPUS EVENT

By Meghan Berry

What is space? Does time really exist? Is ours the only universe? Brian Greene, professor of mathematics and physics, as well as co-director of Columbia’s Institute for Strings, Cosmology and Astroparticle Physics, returned to PBS Nov. 2 to tackle these and other mind-bending questions in a new NOVA series, *Fabric of the Cosmos*. In the four-part dose of alternate reality television, based on Greene’s 2005 book of the same name, the genial physicist makes the answers to these complex scientific questions accessible—and even entertaining—to a general audience.

The University joined the World Science Festival, which Greene co-founded in 2008 with his wife, former ABC News producer Tracy Day, to host a special screening and live online talk-back immediately following the show’s premier.

Hundreds of Columbia students and local science fans filled Miller Theatre to ask questions on theories such as whether or not the universe is a hologram, while participants watching the event streaming online posted questions on topics such as neutrinos, a type of subatomic particle recently recorded traveling a small fraction of a second faster than the speed of light.

Working the live and virtual crowd like a Borscht Belt comedian for the digital age, Greene said he doesn’t expect that finding on neutrinos to hold true. “I would bet everything I hold dear—well almost everything I hold dear—that the result won’t hold up to scrutiny. I do say almost everything because there’s a small chance that my two little kids may be watching online right now,” Greene said. “Daddy learned his lesson last time. I will not bet on you this time around.”

Stanford physicist Leonard Susskind, who

appears in the series, joined the live conversation via Skype to weigh in on black holes. “Anything that could be outside a black hole could also be inside a black hole—a whole civilization, a whole solar system, the whole works,” he said.

Aided by creative visual effects, Greene—whose 2003 NOVA special was based on his earlier book *The Elegant Universe*—travels through time in *Fabric of the Cosmos* to illustrate that our notion of past, present and future may be nothing more than an illusion.

He also enters the counterintuitive world of quantum physics—the study of the behavior of discrete microscopic particles. This played out for television at a fictitious nighttime hot spot, the “Quantum Club,” where the patrons (particles) move from one area to another, vanishing and reappearing in surprising places, to illustrate their behavior.

The final episode challenges the audience to look beyond what we’ve long considered our entire existence—the universe. There may be more than one, said Greene, and these alternate realities could mirror our own lives. “It won’t be easy to prove, but if it’s right, our understanding of space, time and our place in the universe will never be the same.”

“This is a report from the frontier of cosmic thought, as fresh as last month’s Nobel Prizes,” a *New York Times* review of *Fabric of the Cosmos* said, “uncompromising in its intellectual ambitions and discerning in its choice of compelling scientific issues.”

During the Miller Theater Q&A, Greene proved what many have suspected—that he can answer any question that comes his way. A young boy stood up to ask Greene, “Could you explain string theory briefly and simply please?” He did. Then an online viewer wrote, “What causes inertia?” Greene, without hesitation, quipped, “A big Chinese meal.”



## RESEARCH

# Professor Imagines the Limitless Potential of Sewage

By Beth Kwon

Most people would rather not think twice about their waste, but Kartik Chandran spends hours a day considering the limitless potential of sewage. Chandran, an associate professor of earth and environmental engineering, studies how to improve wastewater treatment and extract energy from sewage.

His latest work involves converting the dangerous greenhouse gas methane, a by-product of sewage treatment plants that is typically burned off or released into the atmosphere, into the reusable biofuel methanol. He does this by finding microbes that can be put into giant treatment tanks to render the substance harmless.

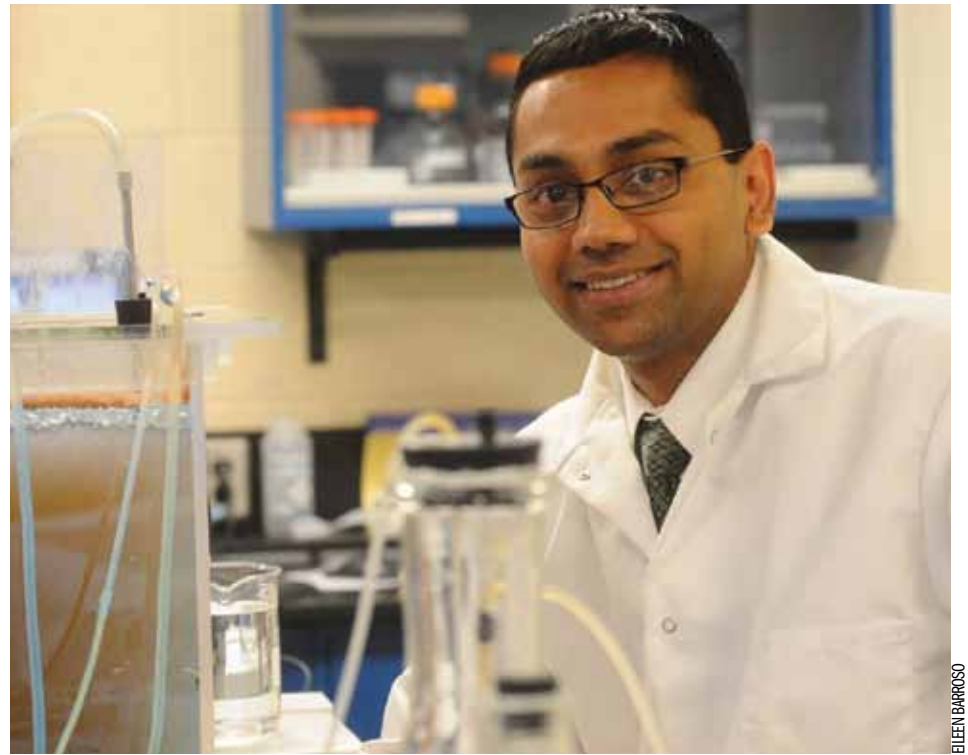
Right now sewage treatment plants use microbes that break down waste by oxidizing ammonia, a chemical in sewage that has uses in fertilizer and cleansers but is toxic to wildlife when released into the water stream. In a treatment plant, a combination of microbes turns ammonia into benign nitrogen gas; the process has been standard in wastewater

and converting it into methanol," says Chandran. "The beauty of it is, The tanks we use are already in place."

For now, Chandran is developing the process in his lab in Mudd but is working toward perfecting the technology so it can be incorporated at existing sewage treatment plants around the United States. "Today, chemists are trying to create catalysts to convert methane to methanol, but it's not a trivial problem," he says. "On the other hand, these bugs do this conversion anyway, so I thought, 'Why not use a process that happens in nature all the time?'" Chandran is the first to study implementing this conversion process on a large scale.

The work involves studying which strains of bugs are most effective and developing mathematical models to describe the process and better understand how the microbes work. In October, Chandran presented preliminary results of this project, which was funded by the \$100,000 Paul L. Busch award from the Water Environment Research Foundation, to the largest conference of water quality experts in the world.

Chandran has a complementary project in



Associate Professor Kartik Chandran is studying ways to extract energy from sewage.

**"The plants are just blowing off methane, but we're putting it right back into the tanks and converting it into methanol."**

treatment plants in the United States for the last century.

These bugs are equally useful for processing methane because they don't have the ability to completely oxidize it. If methane is oxidized, it simply turns to carbon dioxide—another greenhouse gas—but if it's only partially oxidized, it leaves methanol, which can then be recycled and sold.

"The plants are just blowing off methane, but we're putting it right back into the tanks

Accra, Ghana, for which he won a \$1.5 million Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation award, to develop technology to transform fecal sludge into biodiesel fuel and create an urban sanitation facility in the country's capital. The goal of both projects is to understand how to convert a wastewater treatment plant using existing technology into a biorefinery that can also be a source of fuel.

Chandran's other research involves implementing a more efficient type of sewage

treatment with microbes that don't require oxygen—a process called anaerobic ammonia oxidation, or anammox. This method of breaking down human waste takes 62 percent less oxygen (and thus less energy) and emits much lower amounts of the byproduct nitrous oxide than other processes.

Nitrous oxide is a more dangerous greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide as it traps heat at a rate 300 times as effectively as carbon dioxide, and the molecules can remain in the atmosphere for up to a century. With Chandran's help, anammox will be introduced in plants within the next two years in New York City, Washington, D.C. and the Hampton Roads region in Virginia.

Chandran has always been interested in technology, taking apart transistors and other gadgets when he was growing up in New Delhi, India. His interest in waste conversion was

piqued as an undergraduate studying chemical engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology. "I was learning about how to build reactors and use technologies to synthesize chemicals, but I realized we should probably do something with all the pollutant streams we were creating," he recalls. "My dream dissertation project was to develop technologies to address these pollutant streams."

Chandran moved to the United States to get his Ph.D. at the University of Connecticut and was a research associate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute before arriving at Columbia in 2005. In the interim, he was involved in helping to redesign the wastewater treatment plants of New York City. "My adviser at the University of Connecticut planted the seed of the nitrogen cycle, and it was a real eye-opener," says Chandran. "And I've been doing this ever since."

## ADVOCATE FOR TOUGHER LAWS AGAINST DRUNKEN DRIVING

By Meghan Berry

It's not every day that a professor buys a breathalyzer. But Dr. Barron H. Lerner, whose latest book is a cultural history of drunken driving, wanted to know what a .08 blood alcohol concentration—the nation's legal limit for drivers—really means.

During his research, Lerner, a professor of medicine and public health, took three shots of vodka on an empty stomach over the course of an hour at home. Then he waited 20 minutes, so the alcohol had time to enter his bloodstream. "My wife said I was giddy and more annoying than usual," he confessed. The breathalyzer determined that Lerner, with a 0.05 level, could legally drive. Over the next hour, Lerner had two more shots of vodka, becoming visibly intoxicated. Yet he blew a 0.08—just meeting the legal limit. "That's why I did that little experiment," he said. "In this country, it's legal to drive impaired."

Lerner's book, *One for the Road*, published in October by Johns Hopkins University Press, traces America's response—or lack thereof—to drunken driving from the post-Prohibition era to the modern day. He criticizes the alcohol industry for blocking measures that could decrease deaths and proposes raising alcohol taxes and increasing use of sobriety checkpoints—measures that make both the industry and civil libertarians balk.

The United States' first anti-drunken driving laws were passed in the early 1900s. After Prohibition there was an "enormous tolerance" for intoxicated driving, Lerner said. "No one said drunk driving was good, but the laws were lenient," Lerner explained. "Judges and police were tolerant because they were driving drunk, too."



Barron H. Lerner wrote *One for the Road*, a cultural history of drunk driving in the United States.

In 1968, a federal report estimated that roughly 25,000 people died in drunken driving accidents each year. Yet this didn't become a national issue until activists organized in the 1980s, a period that benefited from the progressivism of the 1970s and President Ronald Reagan's emphasis on victims' rights, Lerner said. Groups like Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID) were formed by people who had lost family members at the hands of those drivers.

Lerner, who has taught at the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Mailman School of Public Health since 1993, spoke with dozens of these victims-turned-activists and dedicates the book to them. "They had all been told, 'I'm sorry, there's nothing we can do,' or that they were just in the wrong place at the wrong time," he said.

MADD, in particular, with hundreds of chapters all over the country, had great cul-

tural influence, Lerner said. Hundreds of new anti-drunken driving laws were passed—for the first time drunken drivers' licenses could be revoked at the time of arrest—and the national legal limit was eventually lowered to 0.08 from 0.15. In 1984, President Reagan signed a law raising the national minimum drinking age from 18 to 21.

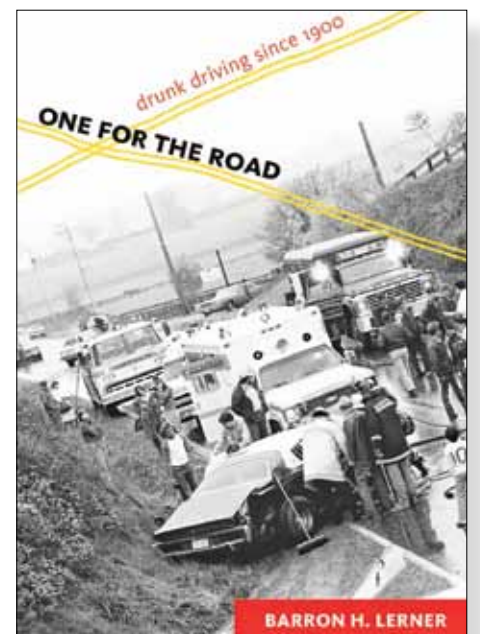
Drunken driving fatalities have dropped to under 12,000 per year, but, Lerner said, "It's a job half done." Cars have become safer, roads have been improved, and speed limits are now more strictly enforced. And while drunken driving has become somewhat stigmatized, some Americans still see it as something they can get away with, Lerner said. In Scandinavia, for example, where the legal limit ranges from 0.02 to 0.05, the notion of drunken driving "is analogous to more serious crimes, such as robberies, arson and assault."

The alcohol industry, Lerner said, plays an active role in shaping how our culture views drinking. Lobbyists are fighting to prevent the legal limit from being lowered to .05. Pro-

**"Judges and police were tolerant because they were driving drunk, too."**

vocative advertising, while regulated in many countries, glorifies drinking and often targets the group most likely to drive drunk—men between the ages of 21 and 35.

Even the recent movement against distracted driving—driving while texting or talking on a cell phone—is getting in the way of drunken



BARRON H. LERNER

driving prevention, Lerner believes. "They should unite under one umbrella, but it's not very sexy," Lerner said. Lerner would also like to see the U.S. increase use of a practice used actively in other countries—roadblocks. Here, it's illegal for police to stop a car and issue a breathalyzer to the driver without probable cause. "People are less apt to drink and drive if they think they are going to be pulled over."

He also believes that the U.S. isn't making sufficient use of ignition interlocks, a device mounted on a car's dashboard that blocks a car's ignition unless the driver's blood alcohol content is within legal limits. Just 12 states require them to be installed after a driver's first DUI conviction. "Sure we love our civil liberties" said Lerner, "but these measures could save lives."

# In the Middle East and the West, Oil and Democracy Don't Mix

By Eric Sharfstein

Two fossil fuels powered the rise of the modern industrial state. But only one—the hard, chunky rock extracted from the ground by legions of coal workers—has been a force for the development of democracy.

So says Timothy Mitchell, chair of the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies, who has written a new book titled *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. The work examines the complex relationship between coal, oil and democracy, and it's being published at a time when a rise in the price of oil is contributing to discontent and demonstrations around the world.

An expert on political theory, political economy and the politics of technology, Mitchell asserts that “it was coal that helped create the possibility of modern democracy, and it was oil that helped create its limits.”

He argues that dependence on coal—a single, concentrated energy source—enabled people to build collective political power around the flow of that material. Workers wielded power because they could, through a general strike, shut down the entire system if their demands were not met. The sheer number of workers needed in the coal industry, and their access to critically important mines, rail yards and processing plants, gave them workers political power.

**“It was coal that helped create the possibility of modern democracy, and it was oil that helped create its limits.”**

By contrast, oil workers are comparatively few, and they do not have to go into the ground themselves to bring up the oil. It goes right into a pipeline, onto a tanker and around the globe.

“Oil is not vulnerable to the same kinds of political pressures,” says Mitchell, who joined Columbia in 2008 after teaching for 25 years at New York University, where he served as director of the Center for Near Eastern Studies. “The fluidity—literally—of oil makes it much more difficult for people to build power.”

The “oil curse”—the idea that countries dependent on oil revenues are less likely to have democracy—doesn't just apply to the oil-rich Middle East. As oil supplanted coal as the fossil fuel of choice, “it weakened democracy not only in oil-dependent countries like those in the Middle East, but also in industrialized countries in the West,” Mitchell says.

From the 1940s through the early '70s, the leaders of industrialized countries believed unlimited economic growth would continue because of the cheap and apparently limitless supply of oil. Mitchell argues that this notion led to a political framework in which debates about economic inequality had no place. “Politics became organized around increasing the pie rather than addressing relative shares of it,” he says. “Problems of inequality would be solved by growth.”



In his most recent book, Mitchell examines the political implications of U.S. oil dependence.

But such unlimited growth faltered, says Mitchell, as it became more expensive to find enough oil to meet increasing global demand. Oil is now \$98.64 per barrel, compared to an inflation-adjusted \$11.85 in 1971.

Although Mitchell's book was finished before the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, Mitchell sees the rising price of oil as a critical component in the recent demonstrations. Higher food prices resulting from higher oil prices were a driving force in those Middle Eastern revolts, he says. In the United States, higher oil prices have driven up the cost of living, compounding the political anger brought on by the 2008 recession.

“The recent occupational movements—from Tahrir Square to Zuccotti Park—are examples of people attempting to build political power in the most fundamental way—putting themselves in public spaces and refusing to leave,” he said. “Wherever you are in the world, having a vote is not enough. What matters more is the ability to get your political leaders to act based on your collective political demands.”

# NEW GLOBAL CENTER OPENS IN ISTANBUL

By Record Staff

The University launched its sixth Global Center in Istanbul in early November with a series of events and scholarly panels in that city attended by University President Lee C. Bollinger, Interim Provost John Coatsworth and a host of Columbia faculty and deans as well as scholars of the region.

Ipek Cem-Taha (SIPA'93, BUS'93), a Turkish journalist and businesswoman, was appointed interim director of the new Global Center. A prominent columnist for major daily newspapers in Turkey, she has also produced and hosted a television program called *Global Leaders*, featuring one-on-one interviews with international political and business figures.

As with the University's existing global centers, Istanbul's will be a regional hub for a wide range of activities and resources available to the University community. The inaugural events held Nov. 1–3 focused on free speech and democratization—pressing issues in a nation that is part of the European-based NATO alliance even while it plays an increasingly assertive role in a changing Middle East.

The first event was a panel on Nov. 2 titled “Is the Internet Too Free?” moderated by Journalism School Dean Nicholas Lemann and Professor Sheila Coronel, who



From left: Asli Tunc, of the School of Communications at Istanbul Bilgi University; economist and writer Mohamed El Dahshan of Egypt; and Jillian York, advocacy director, Electronic Freedom Foundation

directs the Toni Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism. Writers, scholars and human rights workers discussed the difficulties faced by journalists reporting in countries hostile to an open press, including the technical challenges posed when governments block access to the Internet or to social media services like YouTube.

The following day, another panel compared Egypt's democratic transition to the more gradual process that took place in Turkey in the early 20th century. Moderated by Safwan Masri, who directs the Columbia Global Center Middle East, and Professor Karen Barkey, chair of the Global Centers faculty steering committee, this discussion centered on whether an evolving Middle East could follow Turkey's example. Panelists also discussed the role of the military in filling the power vacuum left by toppled regimes, as well as influential groups in the region such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and whether the Arab Spring represents a unified movement.

Both panel discussions were streamed live on the web by the Columbia Alumni Association.

There are already several Columbia programs and projects based in Istanbul, including initiatives led by the School of the Arts, the School of International and Public Affairs, the Mailman School of Public Health and Columbia Engineering. The Global Centers generally pursue activities and programs that evolve over time based on the active engagement of faculty and students.

The first two Columbia Global Centers—in Beijing and in Amman, Jordan—were launched in March 2009. Centers in Mumbai, India and Paris opened in March 2010. Last month, a center in Santiago, Chile, was announced. A center in Nairobi, Kenya, will open in early 2012.

# More Confessions From a Former Wall Street 'Quant'

By Adam Piore

Emanuel Derman knows a thing or two about the mysteries of quantitative analysis. Derman, now a professor in Columbia's Industrial Engineering and Operations Research Department, spent 17 years on Wall Street writing mathematical equations aimed at helping make sense of overwhelming masses of data. He left Goldman Sachs in 2002 acclaimed for his work modeling the volatile derivatives market and helping banks manage risk.

His latest book, *Models. Behaving. Badly: Why Confusing Illusion with Reality Can Lead to Disaster, on Wall Street and in Life*—yes, the punctuation is correct—attempts to pull back the curtain on the arcane financial models used to move money. It follows his well-received 2004 work, *My Life as a Quant: Reflections on Physics and Finance*, which explained how a South African particle physicist ended up on Wall Street in the first place.

**“We need free markets, but we need them to be principled.”**

“I wanted to get across that people are really naive if they believe anyone can write down an equation that will accurately describe the way markets behave,” says the onetime head of Goldman's quantitative strategies group. “That's a form of idolatry, to think a human artifact can describe life. Models aren't useless, but you have to know their limitations.”

It's a message Derman felt compelled to write after the financial crisis of 2007, which led to widespread hand-wringing about how

modelers and speculators alike could have gotten it so wrong. At best, Derman says, quantitative models are “metaphors” that can be used to help gauge risk and provide guidance. But they should not be confused with a mathematical representation of reality.

When he talks about the government's response to the financial crisis, he sounds more like a member of the Occupy Wall Street crowd than a former managing partner at one of the street's most powerful firms. The banking bailouts “disgusted me,” he said in an interview with *The Record*, since they led to “socialized losses” followed by “private gains” for Wall Street.

“In any other business if people screw up, they get fired or are forced to resign,” he says. “In finance there's a tendency to behave as if it's so complicated that you can't get rid of people in failing firms because only they know how to deal with this.”

Derman, who co-invented a tool for pricing options on Treasury bonds and received the securities industry's “Financial Engineer of the Year” award in 2000, is just as blunt in his book.

“I am ashamed at the hypocrisies of the system,” he writes. “If you want to be in the business of benefiting from the seven fat years, then you must suffer the seven lean years too, even the catastrophically lean ones. We need free markets, but we need them to be principled.”

The Wall Street bailout of 2008-2009, he argues, was a continuation of policies that may



Former Wall Street strategist Emanuel Derman

be dooming the U.S. to repeat the same mistakes, by encouraging reckless risk-taking. Ever since a bad bet by the hedge fund Long-Term Capital Management cost its creditors \$4.6 billion and sparked a financial crisis in 1998, the Federal Reserve has responded by lowering interest rates to combat crises, he notes. And every five years or so, there is a new crisis, worse than the one before.

“They always try to save you by stimulating when things get bad,” he says. “But they never try to decelerate when things get overheated. Long-Term Capital Management's \$4 billion loss seemed like a lot. Now the crashes are in the trillions of dollars, and we're again trying to provide easy credit. There's a chance the cure will be worse than the disease.”

The idea that our actions can have unintended consequences lies at the heart of his book, which was first conceived as a novel but evolved into a series of nonfiction sections covering a vast range of material, from childhood recollections to quotes from the 17th century philosopher Baruch Spinoza.

“One of my messages,” Derman explains, “is that models in social sciences like economics and finance have a great superficial resemblance to mathematical models in physics, but their meaning is very different. Physics theories can make accurate predictions; economic models can't. People get fooled, because the language the models are phrased in is similar.”

At Columbia, Derman's courses are aimed at helping students understand the limitations of quantitative analysis and learning how to use models effectively.

“All of these courses are aimed at trying to bridge the gap between theory and the real world, to understand clearly the assumptions being made when you build or use a financial model,” he says.



## SENATE DISCUSSES COLUMBIA'S ENGINEERING PROPOSAL, GLOBAL CENTERS, FRINGE BENEFITS



If passing legislation is the measure of action, then the University Senate did nothing at its Oct. 14 plenary. But it heard and queried President Lee Bollinger and Interim Provost John Coatsworth on Columbia's proposal for an expanded engineering presence in Manhattanville, its global centers initiative and its new fringe benefits policies for officers. There was also a brief skirmish on smoking policy.

Coatsworth said Columbia's engineering bid, developed in response to a request for proposals from New York City earlier this year to build an engineering and applied sciences campus on city-owned land, envisions a data sciences and engineering institute just north of the Mind Brain Behavior building with centers on five themes: new media, health analytics, smart cities, cybersecurity and financial analytics. The Engineering School would play the lead role in the initiative, with the collaboration of several Columbia schools.

Bollinger said Columbia was an underdog in the competition, which drew six other proposals, including from Stanford, Cornell and NYU, partly because it proposed its own Manhattanville campus as the site. The city had offered space on Governors and Roosevelt islands and at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Bollinger and Coatsworth both said the University had tried to persuade the city that the new enterprise should focus more on biotech initiatives.

Bollinger invited discussion of Columbia's global centers initiative. He repeated earlier explanations of the university's preference for the more flexible and cautious approach of opening up centers around the world instead of branch campuses.

On fringe benefits, Coatsworth said predictions of huge increases in health premiums for 2012 had not come true, for reasons that remained unclear, and pressure on the

university's fringe pool for the time being was not as acute as had been feared. He said two issues remain unresolved from the work of last year's task force on fringe benefits. One is discontent over cuts in tuition benefits for non-faculty officers imposed this fall—to one degree course a semester and one non-degree course a year.

The other involves retirement policy. Coatsworth said the university has not yet been able to produce a less costly retirement plan for new officers (current officers are "grandfathered" under the existing plan) that consultants think will pass "discrimination testing"—the process by which the IRS determines whether employees at different compensation levels are getting institutional benefits that are proportional and fair.

In a brief exchange on smoking policy, Sen. Mark Cohen (NT, Bus.) said he would bring a resolution calling for a university-wide smoking ban to the November plenary. Sen. Alex Frouman (CC), co-chair of Student Affairs, reminded senators that the December 2010 resolution enacting the current smoking policy, which forbids smoking within 20 feet of any building on the Morningside campus, called for a review after two years. He said that if Cohen's resolution reached the Senate floor in November, Student Affairs would move to have it referred back to External Relations for another year.

Cohen and Frouman were both panelists at an Oct. 10 Senate hearing on smoking policy, attended by about 45 people. A hearing transcript, along with all documents distributed at plenaries, is available at [www.columbia.edu/cu/senate](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/senate).

The Senate meets next on Nov. 17. Anyone with a CUID is welcome.

*Tom Mathewson is manager of the University Senate. His column is editorially independent of The Record. For more information about the Senate, go to [www.columbia.edu/cu/senate](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/senate).*

## Mario Batali's Recipes for a Healthy Balance

By Meghan Berry

Wearing his signature orange clogs and matching ginger-colored ponytail, Mario Batali sounded more like a politician than a chef when he addressed an audience of students at the Italian Academy late last month. The famed restaurateur, who advocates a family-centric food revolution, was here to discuss American dietary habits with Dr. Sharon Akabas, director of Columbia's Institute of Human Nutrition. The Cordon Bleu-trained Batali champions home cooking, designated family meal times, support for local and organic farming, and an end to fast food.

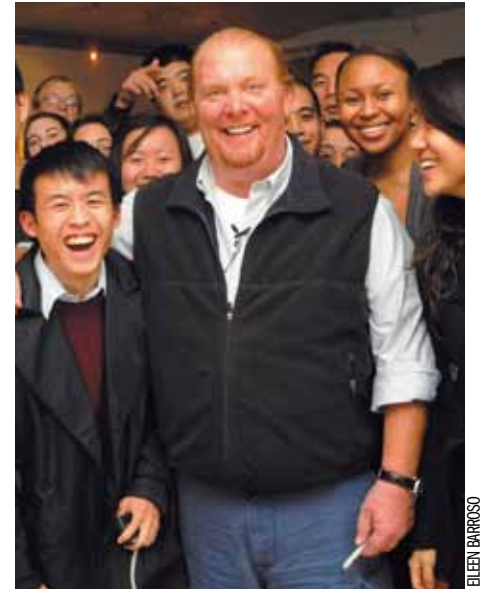
Batali, raised in an Italian-French Canadian household in Seattle, ate dinner at 6:00 p.m. every day. Now his two sons enjoy a different kind of consistency with a routine that includes Meatless Mondays and Takeout Tuesdays. "I make my kids power down," Batali said. "No phone. No TV. Just 30 to 60 minutes of uninterrupted family time." At mealtime, the chef also likes to ask his children the same questions every night, including "What's the funniest thing that happened to you today?" and "Who did you sit with at lunch?"

"A consistent experience around a meal will create self-confidence," he said. "Kids will be less likely to shy away from a challenge."

This year, Batali and the Food Bank of New York City launched CookShop, a class that teaches low-income families how to shop for and prepare healthy, affordable meals at home. American families, Batali said, rely too heavily on fast food because it is cheap. But the strategy doesn't pay off, he says, because the food lacks fiber and other nutrients. So people eat more.

"It isn't less expensive because people are going to pay for it later," he said. "Fast food is made from the stuff they can't sell elsewhere. It's at the same level as animal feed."

The outspoken Batali, who owns 19 restaurants, generated controversy when he criticized the banking industry and compared bankers to infamous dictators during a panel discussion hosted by *TIME* Magazine. He later



Celebrity chef Mario Batali spoke about culture and cuisine at the Italian Academy on Oct. 27.

apologized for the inapt comparison after bankers called for a boycott of his Manhattan restaurants Babbo and Del Posto.

Batali lives by his mantra: "Buy stuff. Fix it up. Sell it for profit." He's thinks the U.S. could bounce back from its economic woes if it adopted a similar approach. "We can come back if Americans get back into production," Batali said, "make stuff with their hands and grow things people can afford. We can produce things here that can be sold to the world." Batali is also a proponent of urban agriculture, and said he would happily support roof garden projects in New York City. "Just fly over the city," he said. "There are thousands of acres that could be planted."

Through the Mario Batali Foundation, which offers a dollar-for-dollar matching gift program, the philanthropist and chef focuses on hunger relief, disease research and literacy. Batali sits on the board of the Food Bank, which distributes 1.3 million meals each day. "One of the fundamental things we have to think about is giving. Go do something for someone you've never met," Batali told the college students. "Use your advantage and influence. Just give and give."

## COLUMBIA PEOPLE

# Miriam Beyer



Miriam Beyer winning the Queens Half-Marathon on July 30th.

**WHO SHE IS:** Web editor at the Graduate School of Journalism

**YEARS AT COLUMBIA:** Six

**WHAT SHE DOES:** Beyer is editor-in-chief of Columbia Journalism School's website. She writes home page news, builds slide shows, edits copy and updates content on the site. She also manages the school's social media, including its Twitter and Facebook pages. "I enjoy the immediacy of the Web and social media," said the energetic Beyer, who is taking a course in Final Cut Pro video editing software so she can produce videos for the site.

**BEST PART OF THE JOB:** "I'm astounded by the quality of students' work here, especially knowing how demanding their schedules are," said Beyer, who highlights published student clips on the site. "I love seeing what students are producing and having a means to publicize their incredible work."

**ROAD TO COLUMBIA:** Beyer, 35, has risen through the ranks of the University's communications departments. In 2004, she started as a temp in the Office of Communications and Public Affairs, where she was quickly hired as a full-time assistant. The Michigan native left Columbia briefly in 2007 for the publishing firm Henry Holt and Company. She was lured back to the University in 2008 with the offer of a managerial position on the inaugural communications team at the School of the Arts. Among her many roles at School of the Arts, Beyer helped with the school's website redesign, making her a top candidate for her current position at the J-School, where she started in September.

**MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT:** Beyer enjoys lunchtime concerts in Philosophy Hall, but like so many others at Columbia, she was awestruck by her first University Commencement. "I was in tears," she confessed, her eyes welling up once again. "You

just realize how enormous this place is, and how many different students come here from around the world and for different reasons. The way it's presented here, in the center of campus—it's my favorite time of year."

**IN HER SPARE TIME:** "I like to run," Beyer said humbly. She was the 92nd woman—out of more than 16,000—to finish the 2010 New York City Marathon. For this year's race, Beyer was awarded a "sub-elite" starting spot, placing her just behind Olympic-caliber runners. "It's hard to believe," she said before the Nov. 6 race. "I'll be near my running idols." This year she finished in 204th place. Also this year, Beyer finished first among women in President Bollinger's Tenth Annual Fun Run 5K and the Queens Half-Marathon, her "happiest running moment of the year," she said.

Beyer quit smoking at age 30, with the support of her longtime partner, Tom, and started running in Riverside Park on her lunch breaks. "I'd come back to work so clear-headed with solutions to problems," she recalled. After finishing third in her age group in a 5K, Beyer realized her potential. She now trains with Athena, a women's running team, and the North Brooklyn Runners. "Running has changed my life," she said. "I am a different person now. I hope I can always do it."

**2011 MARATHON RESULTS:** 3:12:28 "The weather was so gorgeous this year that I went out quickly and then hit the wall hard," Beyer said. "The last miles were some of the toughest I've run. Still, I'm pleased with my race and I continue to fiercely love this course. If anyone is considering a marathon, I highly recommend New York."

—Meghan Berry

FACULTY Q&A

# JANE WALDFOGEL

**POSITION:**

Compton Foundation Centennial Professor of Social Work for the Prevention of Children's and Youth Problems  
Visiting Professor at the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at the London School of Economics

**JOINED FACULTY:**

1995

**HISTORY:**

Associate Professor of Social Work, 1999-2003  
Assistant Professor of Social Work, 1995-1999

*Interview by Eric Sbarfstein*



At the Republican presidential debates, the recent Occupy Wall Street protests and kitchen tables across the nation, Americans are debating the impact of government, taxes and programs on the rich and the poor. For two questions in particular—exactly who are the poor and how much does policy have an impact on them?—Jane Waldfogel made a career searching for answers.

A one-time social worker, Waldfogel is now a professor at the School of Social Work and researches issues of poverty, inequality and social mobility. She is particularly focused on how public policies affect a parent's work scheduling and child care arrangements, and how those, in turn, affect children and families. "I've been interested in that question for as long as I can remember," she said.

Before earning her Ph.D. in public policy from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, she spent a decade as a child protective services worker and then a policy analyst for the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. "I saw over and over again families facing the same issues, challenges around housing and around employment," she said. "I realized there's only so much you can do case-by-case without changing the larger structural framework in which families live."

Today, Waldfogel is a principal investigator with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, part of the National Institutes of Health. At the behest of the Robin Hood Foundation, she has also worked as part of a team designing a survey that will create a broader measure of poverty and well-being in New York City.

Waldfogel spoke to *The Record* about her research, as well as the U.S. Census Bureau's new supplemental poverty measure.

**Q.** Can you talk about your research on pay inequality?

**A.** When I was in graduate school in the early 1990s, there was a lot of attention on income inequality, the growing gap between the high income and low income. The one bright light at that time was the narrowing gender gap in pay between women and men. Yet it flew in the face of everything I knew about pay for women. It occurred to me that if I looked just at women with children—mothers—I would find that their wages were as low as they'd ever been. And that in fact turned out to be the case. Women who don't have children earn 90 to 95 percent of men's pay, but women with children still lag very far behind, earning 70 to 75 percent of men's pay.

**Q.** Your last book, *Britain's War on Poverty*, showed that it's possible to reduce child poverty. How did the Brits do it, and what lessons can the U.S. learn from their experience?

**A.** The U.S. and Britain both have high levels of income inequality and recent increases of that inequality, as well as very high rates of child poverty compared to other advanced industrialized countries. Two years after the Labor government came into office in 1997, Prime Minister Tony Blair made an unbelievable announcement—that his government was committed to ending child poverty in a generation and cutting it in half in 10 years. Although they did not achieve all their goals, they did cut child poverty in half in 10 years as measured in absolute terms as we do in the U.S. It's a remarkable achievement and shows that if you make that kind of commitment, you can do it. They made work pay, as we did under welfare reform. They raised incomes for families with children even if parents were not working, which is not what we do in this country. And they made a bunch of investments in children: universal preschool

for 3- and 4-year-olds; increased spending on education; doubling the length of paid maternity leave; paid paternity leave. If you're a parent with young children, you can request to switch to part-time or flexible hours without jeopardizing your employment.

**Q.** Does the new U.S. Census Bureau method of measuring poverty (a revised formula announced in early November) make sense to you?

**A.** The new census measure, the supplemental poverty measure, is a great improvement. It sets the poverty line based on families' expenditures on food, shelter, clothing and utilities (rather than just food as the old measure does), and uses a more complete definition of income, including taxes and transfers. The overall poverty rate doesn't change too much, but what changes is who is poor, and that's as it should be. What I really like about the new measure is that we can see the effect of government programs. We can see in the new numbers that were released that if we didn't have the Earned Income Tax Credit at the levels that we have now, poverty among children would be 4 percentage points higher—22 percent instead of 18 percent. So yes, it's a great improvement. Even so, there are other things to measure. Are families having a hard time putting enough food on the table? Paying their rent? Are they behind on their utility bills? Are they forgoing medical care? Are children in good health? Are they coming to kindergarten ready for school and, at the other end of childhood, are they graduating from school with the skills they need? Should we be measuring those things? Absolutely. If we're ultimately interested in what government can do to improve child and family well-being, then it's not just about income, it's also about material hardship and other aspects of well-being.

**Q.** Why has it been so difficult to change the poverty measure, and why has it only now happened?

**A.** A few years ago, there was a wonderful *West Wing* episode about whether to move to a new measure under which you'd find slightly higher poverty. The political operatives killed it, because nobody wants to be president the year that poverty goes up simply because the measurement has changed. The other barrier has been that the official poverty line is used in many government programs to set eligibility for benefits. So it's been difficult to get Congress to shift to a new measure. What the Obama administration realized was that they could simply release the supplemental measure alongside the official one.

**Q.** There's a widely held view that government has done more for the elderly than for children. Does the supplemental poverty measure change that view?

**A.** Elderly poverty actually goes up quite a bit under the supplemental measure compared to the official measure. It's still lower than child poverty, so children are poorer as a group. Some of this is because we got rid of the assumption [in the official measure] that the elderly need to eat less than everybody else, but quite a bit of it has to do with taking into account medical out-of-pocket expenditures. That one change alone raises the elderly poverty rate from 9 percent to 16 percent. But medical out-of-pocket expenditures are important for families with children, too. So I take away from the new numbers not that we need to spend more on the elderly, but that we need to get health care costs under control for everyone.

**Q.** In your 2006 book, *What Children Need*, you recommend a wide range of policies such as more flexibility

for parents to take care of family responsibilities and expanded paid parental leave. Are these goals even possible given our current economic and political state?

**A.** Absolutely. Several of the things that you mentioned don't cost government anything including the right to request flexible or part-time employment. Take paid parental leave; I think we assume in this country that we're talking about employers paying employees while they're out on maternity or paternity leave. But that's not how it works in virtually all advanced industrialized countries. There is a social insurance fund, like a disability or unemployment insurance fund. Employers and employees pay into it and when an employee is out on parental leave, they're paid through that social insurance fund.

**Q.** You have also suggested changing the school calendar. In what way and why?

**A.** We have a school calendar that dates back to agricultural times. Not that many American schoolchildren are working on family farms bringing in the harvest these days. We're lagging badly behind other countries in educational achievement and especially in the gaps between low-income kids and higher-income kids. If we want our kids to be learning more, and especially low-income kids who don't have so many resources outside of school, we need to have them in school longer hours and more days.

**Q.** Your research last year showing that mothers who return to work are not putting their children's well-being at risk made headlines around the world. Can you explain why?

**A.** There have been studies for years, including my own, that showed negative effects on kids' cognitive or behavioral development of moms working in the first year. The recent study that I did with Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Wen-Jui Han used a different analytic method that takes into account the various factors that change with employment. If the mother is working full-time, that's going to put the family on a path toward higher income and lots of things that might benefit kids. Kids might actually go to higher-quality child care; the mom might be happier and in better mental health. But the downside might be that the child might be entering child care earlier, and there might be more stress and strain. Our models took these effects into account. Once we did that, there was no overall significant effect of working full-time in the first year on kids' later development.

**Q.** What are the most important things that policymakers can or should be doing to reduce poverty and improve well-being?

**A.** The British case shows us that it's possible to achieve substantial reductions in poverty. And, whether it's paid parental leave, universal preschool or giving parents the right to more flexibility at work, there are a host of things that we need to be doing to improve child well-being, and we're just not there. But this raises the political question: How do we generate the political will to seriously tackle child poverty and make the kind of investments in children that we should be making? I hope that with a better measurement of poverty, we can show more clearly who is poor and also what role current policies are playing in reducing poverty. That can only help.

# COLUMBIA COMMUNITY SERVICE

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors



Let's continue to make a difference.



### The Westside Campaign Against Hunger

The Westside Campaign Against Hunger received a CCS grant this year that purchased 3,600 meals—enough to feed 400 individual clients. It also provided those clients with three weeks of fresh produce and eight weeks of fresh milk.



### StreetSquash

The CCS grant supports StreetSquash's Physical Education for Public Schools program, where more than 300 local students are served each year. This project is aimed at supporting public schools that lack sufficient athletic facilities and staff to ensure that their students receive formal, weekly physical education. The CCS grant allows StreetSquash to provide shoes, rackets and other gear to the students when they come to StreetSquash for their weekly sessions.



### Behind The Book

Behind the Book Executive Director Jo Umans is grateful for the partnership with CCS. "When we needed help with a workshop for our high school teachers, [CCS board member] Lin Goodwin sent out a request to her entire department and we had three doctoral candidates working with us—that's an incredible resource for a small literacy organization like ours." To find out more about Behind the Book, visit their website, [www.BehindtheBook.org](http://www.BehindtheBook.org).



### Gymnastics

The Wendy Hilliard Foundation provides gymnastics programs for underserved youth in the Harlem community. CCS grants provide direct support for the Community Gymnastic Program. Through CCS, the Hilliard Foundation has been the beneficiary of support from other Columbia University departments, strengthening the overall Hilliard organization and its commitment to the community.

[www.columbia.edu/cu/annualappeal](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/annualappeal)

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## WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?



Hint: Though the plaque attributes this gift of wrought iron to the class of 1891, some sources credit the class of 1916. Send answers to [curecord@columbia.edu](mailto:curecord@columbia.edu). The first person to email the right answer wins a Record mug.

ANSWER TO THE LAST CHALLENGE: The University seal at the entrance to Hamilton Hall

Winner: Lalla Grimes

## Lenfest

continued from page 1

neighborhood relationships and to fostering stronger connections to the always vibrant art scene in Harlem and beyond," said Carol Becker, dean of the School of the Arts. "The new building will make the School of the Arts really visible. Every inch of the building will be utilized and it will have a wonderful piazza that acts as a gathering place for events and people and the community."

A graduate of Washington and Lee University and Columbia Law School, Lenfest rose to become managing director of the communications division of Triangle Publications in 1970. He started Lenfest Communications in 1974 with the purchase of two cable television companies from Triangle. He sold the company to Comcast in 2000, turning his attention to philanthropy at a level that is notable for both its scale and variety.

Lenfest's 2006 pledge of \$375 million to match gifts for endowed faculty chairs in the Arts and Sciences inspired other donors to create 25 new endowed professorships. The Distinguished Columbia Faculty Awards, which he established in 2005, has so far recognized and supported 53 faculty members who excel not only in research but in the instruction and mentoring of students. At Columbia College he established a matching fund with Board of Visitors Chair and University Trustee Jonathan S. Lavine (CC'88) to endow five assistant professorships in the Core Curriculum.

Indeed, in his speech after receiving the Alexander Hamilton Medal, Lenfest praised the College's Core Curriculum. "There may well be new and innovative teaching methods in the digital age that will generally improve education and learning," he said. "But the value of small classes and the interaction between a gifted and dedicated teacher and an intelligent student will never be replaced. And that is the fundamental success of the Core Curriculum."

This latest gift to Columbia reflects not only Lenfest's philanthropy at Columbia but his legacy of donating to other institutions. He has given generously to the Philadelphia Museum of the Arts, and he chairs the board of the Curtis Institute of Music. He has also given generously to his undergraduate alma mater, Washington and Lee; while Columbia Law School "was a great help in my professional life," it was his undergraduate liberal arts education that "better enabled me to enter into the different chapters of my life."