



LAFF

THE LAFF SOCIETY Promoting Social and Professional Contacts Among Former Staff Members of the Ford Foundation

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DETROIT BANKRUPTCY: A WORK IN PROGRESS

by James A. Kelly

It's the largest municipal bankruptcy in American history: a once-thriving city now in court-supervised bankruptcy following decades of population loss, economic decline and city mismanagement. But it's also a city with considerable reason for optimism about its future—well, let's qualify that and call it "guarded optimism."

It's a fascinatingly complex story involving every major aspect of a city's political economy: declining revenue, budget deficits, overhanging pension obligations, state-imposed "emergency" financial management, federal bankruptcy, state-local politics,

public posturing in the media and, last but not least, an unprecedented philanthropic initiative to help Detroit move forward to a more promising post-bankruptcy future.

And the Ford Foundation's new president, Darren Walker, is front and center among foundation leaders who are involved in that initiative.

Is Detroit broke? Yes, the city government is really bankrupt with between \$16 billion and \$18 billion of debt (depending on who does the accounting). The city simply does not have money to pay its bills or meet future obligations.

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Riet Schumack of Neighbors Building Brightmoor.

LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE

by Jon Funabiki

From a distance, Detroit's problems seem all too clear and simple to understand: The street lamps don't work, houses by the score lay abandoned and the city is broke.

Listen to the people and you quickly understand that the situation is complicated and that it

didn't sneak up on them.

"Bankruptcy has been going on for 30 years," said Riet Schumack, one of the founders of Neighbors Building Brightmoor, which has been helping residents start programs to combat blight, drug trafficking and prostitution in her neighborhood. "We have had to become self-sufficient hustlers."

I was listening to local residents addressing a group of journalists preparing to launch a yearlong campaign to examine the causes, impact and solutions to the financial crises facing not only Detroit but other cities and agencies in Michigan as well.

I was in Detroit because Renaissance Journalism is playing a critical role in organizing the campaign. It is unique in that nine local news organizations are participating, and they have agreed to collaborate and to share news stories. The Ford Foundation, which has longstanding interests in Michigan, asked Renaissance Journalism to set up the collaboration with a \$250,000
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PETER BELL: "AN UNRECONSTRUCTED IDEALIST"

When Peter Bell was an undergraduate at Yale University he was awarded the Hatch Prize, given to a senior "who, motivated by spiritual and ethical considerations, proposes to further his studies of international problems and their peaceful solutions."

Years later Princeton University honored him with its Madison Medal, the university's



highest honor for a graduate alumnus, describing him as "a humanitarian and leader in the struggle to give hope and voice to the most vulnerable in this nation and throughout the world."

Together these honors framed his life and work and provide an apt description of what he himself said was more a "calling" than a career, a lifetime of helping others whose lessons he

shared with a Princeton audience in 2005, not long before he retired.

"Hang on to your idealism," he said, "let it be the source of your inspiration and energy. After 40 years of public service, I remain an unreconstructed idealist, wiser perhaps but not the least jaded by my decades of experience....What makes my blood run faster about public service are the opportunities to resolve conflict, to make peace, to bring about justice, to pro-
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Detroit Bankruptcy

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Widespread corruption during the administration of a recent mayor (now in the federal penitentiary for the next 25 years) exacerbated the fiscal problems but was not the fundamental cause. In response, an overwhelmingly African-American population elected a new mayor last year: a white politician promising to fix problems and get the city moving forward.

It's important to keep the city government's difficulty in perspective. Detroit's population of about 750,000 is only one-sixth of the total population of the seven-county Detroit metro region. Southeast Michigan, in fact, enjoys a strong and growing economy based not only on a once-again healthy automotive sector but increasingly

CORRECTIONS

In the "In Memoriam" article in the Winter 2014 issue of the newsletter, the date Mary Kroski retired from the Foundation was incorrect. She retired in 2003.

The story "LAFF Elects Two Vice Presidents" in the same issue had the wrong middle initial for Barry Gaberman. The correct name is Barry D. Gaberman.

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on significant high-tech and entrepreneurial activity.

Contrary to images seen frequently in national media focusing solely on blighted neighborhoods, downtown and midtown areas (Wayne State University and dozens of museums and other nonprofits) are booming. For example, one employer, Quicken Loans, has moved almost 10,000 young professionals into downtown in just the past two years. Two major hospital complexes (Henry Ford Hospital and Detroit Medical Center) are doing well and stimulating new startups. New rental housing units in downtown and midtown Detroit are snapped up within days, and vacancy rates are near zero.

Three professional sports teams draw millions into downtown; two of them (Tigers and Lions) are in relatively new stadiums and the third (Red Wings) is breaking ground on a new arena. Three large casinos draw millions annually into the downtown area. The Detroit Symphony Orchestra emerged three years ago from a long strike and supplements programs at Orchestra Hall in midtown with new neighborhood programming across the entire metropolitan area.

The Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), the nation's sixth largest general art museum and located in midtown Detroit, is both an iconic symbol of the wealth that built Detroit and deeply enmeshed in the bankruptcy proceedings. Even though it is operated by an independent non-profit with virtually no support from the city, the city actually owns it. Decades ago, the city used tax revenue to purchase some of its most valuable works of art. But its vast holdings are viewed by some creditors not as sacrosanct and privileged but as just another city asset. They demand that major works of art (think Monet, van Gogh, etc.) be sold to raise money to pay off some of the city's debts.

Bankruptcy was officially declared in 2013. The federal bankruptcy judge who controls the eventual outcome has put the proceedings on a fast track intended to resolve all major aspects of the bankruptcy and get Detroit restored to independent operations by later this year.

Detroit's state-imposed emergency finan-



Darren Walker: Front and center in Detroit

cial manager has proposed an overall "plan of adjustment" that, if adopted, would result in all creditors getting less than they are owed, the typical outcome of bankruptcy. For example, those holding unsecured bonds would get about 15 cents on the dollar. Banks that loaned the city money would also get far less than they are owed.

It's very important to note that the proposed plan would set aside almost \$1.5 billion over the next ten years for a wide variety of program and infrastructure improvements in the city of Detroit. The bankruptcy judge has made clear that just selling major city assets to pay off debts was not going to be accepted, and that the settlement of the bankruptcy would set aside funds needed to assure a viable future for the city.

Politically, retired city employees are the most sensitive class of creditors. It's important to note that retired city employees themselves are hardly to blame for the city's bankruptcy. The average pension for retired public safety officers (police and fire) is about \$39,000 a year, and for other retirees only \$20,000 a year. Cutting these pensions drastically would not only be unfair to the retirees themselves but also so controversial politically that pension fund trustees could be expected to fight any proposed settlement and tie it up in litigation for many years to come. So finding a way to mitigate or even eliminate reductions in pensions was seen as a crucial element in getting a settlement accepted by all.

Enter into this drama a team of court-sanctioned mediators, led by the Chief Judge of the Federal District of Eastern Michigan, Gerald Rosen, and a team of mediators working under him on several major parts of the bankruptcy. Under Judge

Rosen's leadership an idea emerged to ask private foundations to contribute substantial amounts to a fund that would be used to help achieve a negotiated settlement of the bankruptcy. Judge Rosen also proposed to remove the DIA from city ownership and re-establish it as an independent non-profit, thus free from the threat that it would ever have to sell art to settle municipal debts.

In early November 2013, Judge Rosen enlisted Mariam Noland, president of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan (disclosure: Mariam is my wife) to help him convene a group of foundation presidents to consider this idea. The New York Times reports that Mariam's initial response to the judge was, "Are you nuts?" But just ten days later presidents of a dozen local, regional and national foundations met in Judge Rosen's chambers. Three of them met again that same evening at our house for further discussions with the judge.

A key leader involved in those early discussions was Darren Walker, then only in his first few months as President of the Ford Foundation. Over the following weeks, with Darren actively involved in the process, a group of foundations pledged a total of \$365 million to help Detroit move out of bankruptcy. Ford has been in the lead throughout this process and has committed \$125 million to the initiative.

These unprecedented philanthropic commitments to help a major city right itself and prepare to move forward have led Michigan's governor to promise an additional \$350 million and to publicly call on the DIA itself to raise another \$100 million. Thus, in what is now called The Grand Bargain, more than \$800 million has been committed to this extraordinary effort, contingent on the pension funds accepting the proposed settlement and the DIA becoming independent.

In the originally proposed settlement, public safety retirees would see their pensions cut by 14 percent, but if they were to accept the proposed settlement, their pensions would be cut by only 6 percent, with similar impact on other retiree pensions.

Following months of intensive negotiations, tentative agreements were reached in mid-April between both pension groups and the city that would result in almost no reduction for public safety pensioners, and 4.6 percent for other city retirees. It's difficult to believe these agreements could have been achieved without the additional \$800 million being available to help fund the pensions.

The bankruptcy judge has indicated he will hold the major bankruptcy trial in June.

Listen to the People

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grant. In addition, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation has allocated \$250,000 to the news partners in the collaboration.

The news partners are the Center for Michigan, a policy group that publishes the online Bridge Magazine; Detroit Public Radio (WDET); Michigan Public Radio; Detroit Public Television (DPTV); and New Michigan Media, itself a collaboration involving five ethnic newspapers: Arab American News, The Jewish News, The Michigan Citizen (an African American newspaper), the Latino Press and The Michigan Korean Weekly.

The journalists also are launching ambitious community engagement efforts that have the potential to connect with a vast range of communities through the combined reach of printed newspapers, public broadcasting and online publications. The journalists organized the community meeting at TechTown Detroit, a business development incubator, to develop story ideas and community contacts.

We heard a multitude of ideas and perspectives. What we didn't hear was begging. Quite the opposite. More than one speaker proudly used the word "scrappy" to describe the people here and urged reporters to pay attention to those who are "Detroiters by choice." Some bemoaned the belief that suburbanites and residents of other cities

If he holds to that schedule, he could order an overall settlement of the entire case by early Fall of this year, including terms of the tentative agreements with the pension systems.

It's just not possible at this point to predict the outcome. Will enough local stakeholders in Detroit accept the proposed settlement? Stakeholders across the country are watching this with keen interest. Detroit is hardly the only American city facing massive financial obligations that exceed likely available revenue.

Will foundations elsewhere step up to help? Will any solution be found for unfunded public retiree pensions other than to reduce them dramatically? It's a work in

have "given up" on Detroit or criticized state politicians who oppose help for Detroit as a way to win elections.

Others urged journalists to shine some "sunlight" on no-bid contracts executed by bankruptcy and emergency law managers. Others urged journalists to take an in-depth look at race relations, the tensions between new and longtime residents and how immigrants have revitalized some areas, especially Latinos in the city's southwest sector.

The participants almost uniformly criticized the national news media's pre-occupation with "ruins porn"—images of abandoned and broken-down houses—and "one-size-fits-all" assessments of what's wrong and what should be done in Michigan. The real story, many said, is at the neighborhood level.

Chastity Pratt, a reporter for Center for Michigan, summed it up best: "We need to ask people what they want." ■

*This article appeared originally as a blog on the Renaissance Journalism website. **Jon Funabiki**, a journalism professor at San Francisco State University, is the founder and executive director of Renaissance Journalism, a center promoting "media innovations that strengthen communities", and director of the Dilena Takeyama Center in Japan. He is a veteran journalist and former deputy director of the Foundation's Media, Arts and Culture Unit.*

progress. Stay tuned! ■

James Kelly is president of Kelly Advisors, LLC in Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich. Jim worked at the Ford Foundation from 1970 to 1981 in the Education and Research program and has had a long career in education policy, education finance, philanthropy and teaching standards, assessment and certification. He was Founding President of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, is co-chair of Learning to Give, and is Chair of the Board of Advisors of TeachingWorks, a nationally influential teaching program at the University of Michigan. He can be reached at jakmcm@mindspring.com

Peter Bell

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tect the vulnerable, and to support the poor and disadvantaged.”

Peter Bell died April 4 at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston after a long struggle with cancer, surrounded by his family. He was 73.

He lived in nearby Gloucester, an old fishing town where he was born and grew up, having moved back there with his wife, Karen, in 2007, a year after he retired as president of CARE.

It was in that ocean-side town, while in high school, that his interest in international affairs, nurtured by a family involved in the community, blossomed into a commitment.

Crucial to this development was a trip he took to Japan on an American Field Service scholarship as a member of the first group of high school students to visit that country after World War II. He was impressed by his host family's desire to seek reconciliation with the United States. His host mother's maxim, "make the world more wonderful", and his relationship with the Okajimas, he often said, strengthened his faith in the "oneness of humanity". A diary of his experiences was published as the book *Junket to Japan*, one of his many writings.

His youthful education in international affairs developed further when, as an undergraduate at Yale University, he traveled to the Ivory Coast in the summer of 1960 with a racially integrated group under the auspices of Operation Crossroads Africa to build a school.

And it was at Yale that he was inspired by a command to his students from a philosophy professor, Paul Weiss, the first Jewish full professor at the university: "Go forth and make the world less miserable."

But retirement to Gloucester did not mean he stopped caring and continuing to work on humanitarian issues. He wrote and spoke about the need to reduce poverty worldwide, and for increased human rights and peace-making efforts, and backed up his vision through voluntary work with a vast and varied group of organizations.

Most notably, he became a Senior Research Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and, recently, had been chair of the NGO Leaders Forum, which brought together the heads of America's largest humanitarian non-governmental organizations to explore major issues of na-

tional and international concern.

He began his career with Ford after receiving a master's degree at the Woodrow Wilson School of International Affairs at Princeton. He stayed with the Foundation for 12 years, all but two of them as its representative in Brazil and then Chile. Those were eventful years in both countries and Peter was at the center of efforts to preserve and protect human rights under military dictatorships.

In Chile, where he became head of the Foundation's office, he was declared a "suspicious person" by the government and warned by the United States government that he should leave the country. He stayed, however, and with the Foundation's support helped save the lives and careers of hundreds of Chilean scientists and scholars, many of whom at some point had been detained and tortured.

"...his first love and strongest connection was with Latin America," writes **Abraham**



Peter Bell in Afghanistan for CARE.
Photo by Sherine Jayawickraa.

Lowenthal in the Spring issue of the Latin American Studies Association's LASAFORUM, "especially with the disadvantaged, the victims of human rights abuses, and the courageous social scientists and civil society activists striving to build democratic governance.

"In his years with the Ford Foundation, Peter took farsighted decisions, opposed at the time by local governments, U.S. government officials, and powerful private interests, but importantly supported by Foundation president **McGeorge Bundy**," writes Lowenthal, who worked for Ford with Bell in Latin America.

Peter Hakim, who also worked with Peter Bell in Latin America, says that in Chile in 1971 "Peter moved quickly to reshape the Foundation's program so it reached beyond one political party. He built a grant portfolio that reflected Chile's political and

IN MEMORIAM

Gustave Rasis, who worked for the Foundation in overseas offices, died last October. He was hired as a program assistant in 1957 and then served in Pakistan as assistant to the representative and as a program specialist in economic development. He left the Foundation in 1961 but served as a consultant for programs in Southeast Asia, Dacca and Cairo through 1976.

ideological diversity. In the process, he secured the credibility and access the Foundation subsequently needed to respond to the military repression following Salvadore Allende's overthrow in 1973.

"What the Foundation did was to assist a great number of academics and policy analysts pursue their careers outside Chile, where they feared their lives were in danger. It aided an even greater number continue their work in the country, often in institutions it helped create. Nothing the Foundation did in Chile—perhaps in Latin America—received more attention or is more remembered."

Further testament to his imprint in the region came from **Ana Toni**, Ford's representative in Brazil from 2003 to 2011 and now head of a consulting firm in Rio. "Peter Bell left a huge legacy to the Brazilian office," she wrote. "The essential and very difficult role that the Foundation

played during the Brazilian dictatorship, especially for being an American foundation, created the conditions for Ford's important work during the democratization process."

Raymond C. Offenheiser, president of Oxfam America and a Foundation official in Peru from 1986 to 1996, praised Peter's personal and professional skills. "In an era when the art of statesmanship is rare," he wrote in a tribute published in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, "Peter Bell carried himself in a way that allowed him to build relationships with unwavering integrity. He could eat breakfast with peasants, lunch with presidents, and dinner with human-rights activists.

"He moved fluidly across boundaries with humility and grace, seeking little recognition while achieving tremendous impact by imparting wisdom gleaned from each of these unique worlds...."

"While ever the gentleman, he brought gravitas, courage, charm, and a passionate sense of conviction to a life devoted to human rights and social justice. As an activist in a pinstriped suit, he gave respectability to the vocation."

After leaving Ford, Peter became a special assistant and then Deputy Under Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare during the administration of President Jimmy Carter. He then began work with a series of private organizations, all devoted to humanitarian and human rights causes.

He was president of the Inter-American Foundation, supporting grassroots development in Latin America; Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, working toward the return to democracy in Chile and settlement of the civil war in El Salvador; president of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, improving conditions for people who are poor and disadvantaged in the United States, and president of CARE, one of the largest relief and development organizations in the world.

He headed CARE from 1995 until he retired in 2006. The current president of the organization, Helene D. Gayle, noted at his death that Peter was "an unwavering champion for the rights of the poor, for social justice and had an important role in shaping CARE into the organization it is today."

Raymond Offenheiser wrote that "...Peter pushed all of us to see poverty as social exclusion and to fight the policies and barriers that limit the poor from securing the resources and opportunities they need to pull themselves out of poverty. Peter had come to see poverty as less about scarcity and more about lack of power. The solution lay in enabling the powerless to use their voices and make reasonable demands for the realization of their rights." (Offenheiser's full article appeared in the April 16 issue of *The Chronicle* and is on its website at philanthropy.com)

In addition to writing and speaking engagements, he was involved through volunteer efforts as co-chair of the Inter-American Dialogue, chair of the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, chair of CARE USA, a director of Human Rights Watch, a director of the International Center for Research on Women, a trustee of the World Peace Foundation, a member of the advisory board of the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard, a member of the Steering Committee for the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, and a trustee of Rockport Music, an organization devoted to excellence in classical music and jazz.

In a message, the family painted a picture of his private side. "Peter reveled in visiting his two granddaughters in London," they said, "having monthly breakfasts with his

"Peter Bell could eat breakfast with peasants, lunch with presidents, and dinner with human-rights activists."

large, extended family in Gloucester, walking with Karen and their dog, Sophie, in all weather along the granite-bound Black Shore, playing tennis, attending special exhibits and lectures at the Cape Ann Museum, enjoying performances in the concert

hall at Rockport Music, picnicking in the glow of the sunset at Halibut Point State Park, going to services and concerts at the Unitarian Universalist Church, and hosting family members and friends from near and far."

In addition to his wife, Peter is survived by his son, Jonathan Neva Bell, and his wife, Veronique, of London, England; his daughter, Emily Dexter Bell, and her fiancée, David Tyree, of New York City; his granddaughters, Melanie and Jessica; his brothers, John and his wife, Janis, of Gloucester, David "J.J." and his wife, Jacquelyn, of Gloucester, and Timothy of Gloucester; a sister, Diana Bell of Palo Alto, Calif., and a brother-in-law, Cleveland Cook of Gloucester. ■

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Coincident with this newsletter issue, Brazil's leading political commentary magazine, *Piaui*, published a detailed article on the industrial history, more recent ills and hopeful future of Detroit. A friend familiar with Rio de Janeiro's current woes wrote and asked me: "Is Rio Detroit?"

Clearly not, except in some outward manifestations, most notably the segregation that marks the boundaries between black inner-city and white suburbs in Detroit and between the hillside slums, inhabited by people of color, often black, and the middle class and wealthy neighborhoods pinched between Rio's mountains and the sea. Corruption, drug trafficking, crumbling infrastructure, failing public services, widespread public insecurity and disregard for governing institutions are other surface similarities, but the comparisons end there. Unlike Detroit, Rio is far from broke, but its spirits have been severely dampened.

Rio's colonial and imperial past are a sharp contrast to Detroit's. Instead of a brisk trading post that evolved into a formidable industrial engine fueling the growth of a once dynamic and thriving middle class, Rio was founded with the trappings of European courtly life, sustained by a wicked slave trade that outlasted any other in the world and gives the "marvelous city" the dubious distinction of having imported more slaves than any other port of entry.

When Brazil became a republic in the late 19th Century, Rio became its default capital, but title, privilege and autocracy remained its dominant features. Those halcyon years lasted until 1960 when the political capital moved to the neo-modernist Brasilia and the economic capital moved south to Brazil's true Detroit, São Paulo, where automobile assembly plants and blue-collar labor unions became emblematic of a more energetic Brazil.

Rio's half century of subsequent neglect took its toll on a city sapped of its energy. Small-bore politics and a service economy kept the city alive while successive rural-urban migrations from the impoverished northeast swelled the hillside slums, encircling the city with poor, under-served communities that became the seedbeds for drug trafficking and rival gang warfare. After a brief moment of euphoria fueled by seabed oil discoveries, speculative real estate and Rio's designation as host city for the World Cup soccer games starting in June and for

the 2016 summer Olympics, the city now finds itself in the doldrums. The brief economic spurt, easy credit and government income transfers lifted millions of Brazilians out of poverty, but their mobility has been eroded by rising inflation that now ranks Rio among the most expensive cities in the world.

The discontent is everywhere, evident in almost daily strikes of sanitation workers, bus and taxi drivers, bank guards, civil police and teachers. Street demonstrations have resulted in the looting and depredation of buses and public buildings. Shoot-outs between drug traffickers and police are a daily occurrence in hillside communities supposedly cleansed of gangs, and street crime is rampant.

Sullenness has settled on Rio's population, the Cariocas, known for their joyfulness, love of samba and soccer, and hospitality. Streets normally festooned for soccer-league championships are devoid of decoration, and chants of "there will be no COPA" (World Cup games) decry the billions spent on stadiums rather than schools, public transportation, health and security.

As in Detroit, extraordinary social entrepreneurs work tirelessly in the hillside communities to provide services and opportunities that the government leaves wanting. And neighborhood associations implore the government to clean the streets, remove the garbage, provide refuge for the homeless and deploy more and better policing. But unlike the efforts described so well by **James Kelly** and **Jon Funabiki** in this issue, there are no civic leaders or public-private partnerships or foundations of scale pushing the government to do the right thing. There's a lot that Rio, despite the differences, can learn from Detroit.

Each of my messages has become a lamentable noting of the passing of colleagues, this time of my dear and greatly admired friend, **Peter Bell**. We have all left our proud marks on the Foundation and will be remembered in our own way for our efforts, but Peter was singular in his courage and persistence during the darkest days of the Latin American military dictatorships, one of the most lustrous moments in the Foundation's history. His obituary in this newsletter merits a quiet and reflective read.

Shep Forman

LAFfing Parade

Tom Malinowski, who had been Washington director of Human Rights Watch since 2001, was sworn in April 3 as the new assistant secretary of state for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. He worked as a research assistant at the Foundation from 1992 to 1993 after earning a master's degree in political science from Oxford University's St. Antony College on a Rhodes scholarship.

He entered public service after leaving Ford, first as a speechwriter and member of the Policy Planning staff at the State Department under Secretaries of State Warren Christopher and Madeleine Albright and then as a senior director for foreign policy speechwriting on the National Security staff under President William Clinton.

When he left government after the 2000 election he went to work for Human Rights Watch as its Washington director.

Malinowski was born in Poland and came to this country with his mother when he was six years old, settling in Princeton, N.J. He was an intern in the office of Sen. Bill Bradley, a New Jersey Democrat, while still in high school and received his bachelor's degree from the University of California at Berkeley.

He was a special assistant to New York's Democratic Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan when he was awarded the Rhodes scholarship.

John Colborn, who worked at the Foundation for 15 years as a program officer and then vice president of operations, has been named director of the Aspen Institute's Skills for America's Future, a private-sector initiative that advocates for workforce development practices to address the national workforce skills gap.

Since it was created in 2010, the initiative, part of Aspen's Economic Opportunities Program, has helped create or expand partnerships among more than 40 employers and 200 community colleges, and formed strategic partnerships with major industry associations.

He started at Ford in 1998 as a program officer and deputy director for Economic Development, working on program strategy for workforce development grantmaking that focussed on community colleges, workforce development policy and workforce intermediaries.

He became director of program manage-

Richards, a member of the Cherokee nation, oversaw grantmaking at Ford for Native American and place-based cultural communities.

ment in 2006 and then, in 2010, vice president for operations, where he oversaw grants administration, information technology and operations of the New York headquarters and overseas operations.

Elizabeth Theobald Richards, a former program officer in Media, Arts and Culture, has been appointed to the board of the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA), which works to build connections among artists, arts organizations and funders.

Richards, a member of the Cherokee nation, oversaw grantmaking at Ford for Native American and place-based cultural communities. Prior to joining Ford she was the inaugural director of public programs at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, where she directed all its educational, interpretive and cultural activities.

She is senior creative fellow at Opportunity Agenda, a progressive communications think tank in New York City that promotes work linking the arts and social justice.



GETTING TOGETHER IN BANGKOK

Ten people got together in January in Bangkok for an informal lunch of the LAFF Society's Thailand chapter.

Pictured are, from the left, Tom Kessinger, chapter head Peter Weldon, Sheldon Shaeffer, Varyam Kessinger, Diana Peterson, Sunanthana Kampanathsanyakorn, Ditas Weldon, Sisamorn Plengsri, Suzanne Siskel and William Klausner.

Elizabeth McKeon is the new Program Director of the Ikea Foundation, based in Holland. The foundation works "toward a world where children living in poverty have more opportunities to create a better future for themselves and their families."

Its mission is to "create substantial and lasting change by funding holistic, long-term programmes in some of the world's poorest communities that address children's fundamental needs: home, health, education and a sustainable family income."

The foundation spends more than \$130 million a year on its programs, including grants to organizations in 35 countries. Last year alone it raised more than \$10 million through its Soft Toys for Education campaign for UNICEF and Save the Children.

McKeon worked at Ford from 2008 to 2011, as its representative in Moscow and then as director of the Special Initiative in Urban Poverty in Developing Countries.

She is a cabaret singer as well, and her successes in that part of her life are explored in a story now on the Society's website about current and former Foundation staff working in the arts. ■

ELEVATOR JUSTICE

by Richard Magat

When the new Ford Foundation building opened in November 1967, a barely literate memo was circulated to the staff. It read, in part:

“Today, the first day of the fully automatic operatorless elevators serving our floors has been placed in operation. This car has been fully checked and tested, so you should have no qualms about using it....It should be remembered...that the passenger must touch the selection button on the control panel for the floor he wishes. If you are traveling just one or two floors, it is suggested that you touch the signal quickly.”

Now, a long-deserved tribute to the modern elevator has been issued by Daniel Levinson Wilk, an associate professor of history at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City and a board member of the Elevator Museum in Queens.

“The lack of interest scholars have shown in the cultural life of elevators is appalling,” he has said, as quoted in an article in *The Boston Globe*.

“For most city dwellers,” the article notes, “the elevator is an unremarkable machine that inspires none of the passion of interest that Americans afford trains, jets and even bicycles.”

Wilk, says the article, “...would like everyone to be more conscious of the elevators in their lives. But he is particularly disappointed with his fellow academics—people who

are supposed to be studying how the world works—for failing to consider just how much elevators matter.”

Wilk, says the article, is a member of a small group of elevator experts who believe this to be “a travesty. Without the elevator... there could be no downtown skyscrapers or residential high-rises, and city life as we know it would be impossible.”

In that sense, according to the article, “the elevator’s role in American history has been no less profound or transformative than that of the automobile.” In fact, according to Wilk, says the article, “the elevator and the automobile have been locked in a ‘secret war’ for over a century, with cars making

“The elevator’s role in American history has been no less profound or transformative than that of the automobile.”

it possible for people to spread horizontally, encouraging sprawl and suburbia, and elevators pushing them toward life in dense clusters of towering vertical columns.”

One of the “peculiar uncertainties” that came with riding elevators was that they felt “simultaneously public and private, taking people out of the broader world while locking them into a narrow, self-contained one alongside a random assortment of colleagues, neighbors and strangers....elevators created vague expectations of interaction—a smile, a nod, even a bit of small talk to acknowledge that everyone on board lived or worked in the same building.” ■

Richard Magat is a co-founder of the LAFF Society and former editor of the newsletter.



Brian Mori, Dick Cavett, and Jan Buttram, director.

“A Lively Theatrical Imagining”

Brian Mori’s new play, *Hellman v. McCarthy*, whose genesis was the subject of an article in the last newsletter and on LAFF’s website, was given a favorable reception when it opened in March in New York City’s Abingdon Theater.

The play focuses on a famous literary feud between Lillian Hellman and Mary McCarthy, sparked by an appearance by McCarthy on Dick Cavett’s television talk show in 1979. Cavett portrays himself in Mori’s play.

Mori created “a lively theatrical imagining of how the two women, especially Hellman, might have behaved behind the scenes while the libel suit ran its course,” wrote Jennifer Farrar in her review for the Associated Press.

“(Mr. Mori) does a credible and creditable job of both bringing these figures to theatrical life, and sketching in the background to their conflict.”

Christopher Isherwood, reviewing the play for *The New York Times*, said, “Mr. Mori has researched his play diligently. He does a credible and creditable job of both bringing these figures to theatrical life, and sketching in the background to their conflict.”

The play finished its scheduled month-long run April 13, but the cast can be seen discussing the play and their experiences during its creation and New York run on Theater Talk, a syndicated program distributed to more than 100 public television stations. It’s also available online at www.cuny.tv and www.theatertalk.org

Mori worked for the Foundation for 24 years in the Rural Poverty and Resources and Community and Resource Development units. He now is a consultant in the Metropolitan Opportunity and Education and Scholarship units. ■

Film Series at Ford

Cesar’s Last Fast, a film chronicling Cesar Chavez’s 36-day water-only hunger strike near the end of his life, is scheduled to be shown June 5 at the Ford Foundation as part of the Philanthropy New York Documentary Series.

The event will begin at 5:30 with a wine and cheese reception, followed by the film and then a panel discussion with the film’s creators.

The film, directed by Richard Ray Perez and Lorena Parlee, uses never-seen foot-



age to follow Chavez’s effort to draw attention to “the horrific effects of unfettered pesticide use on farm workers, their families and their communities.”

The Foundation is the host for the month-long showings in the series. ■

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WHAT MEMBERS ARE WRITING

Money and Politics

Fran Korten writes on the website of Yes! Magazine that while the recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions in the Citizens United case and *McCutcheon v. FCC* make it “easy for someone with a lot of money to influence our elections...The good news is that the momentum for a constitutional amendment is growing. Already, 16 states and more than 500 towns and cities have passed referendums recommending an amendment to overturn the effects” of the decisions.

Korten, publisher of the magazine, worked for Ford from 1978 to 1997 in Community and Resource Development and in the Jakarta, Manila and New York offices. The full article is available at yesmagazine.org/people-power

Beware Emerging Neo-Malthusian Concerns

Rosalia Sciortino writes in The Jakarta Post in its April 8 edition that “recent developments indicate reemerging neo-Malthusian concerns about population growth and its impacts on economic and environmental

sustainability....In this heightened enthusiasm for family planning...sexual and reproductive health seems to be left out.”

Sciortino worked in the Jakarta and Manila offices from 1993 to 2000 and is regional director of the Southeast and East Asia International Research Center in Bangkok.

The Need for Executive Action

Alan Jenkins notes in a blog posted on the website of the online political journal The Hill that “...President Obama is on solid ground—both constitutionally and politically—in using executive power to protect and expand opportunity...but much more is needed....he should issue an order requiring that agencies administer federal appropriations—programs, contracts, grants and loans—so as to maximize job creation, foster economic mobility, and ensure equal opportunity. He should operationalize that commitment by requiring Opportunity Impact Statements as a precursor to any major spending.”

Jenkins, who is executive director of The Opportunity Agenda, a public interest orga-

nization in Washington, D.C., was Director of Rights and Social Justice at Ford. This article is available at thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog ■

FINANCIAL REPORT 2013

BALANCE ON 12/31/12 \$9,658.07

INCOME

Dues, donations, interest \$2,910.67

EXPENSES

Newsletters \$1,816.31

Secretarial services (Dorothy Nixon) 160.00

PO Box, supplies, postage 298.47

Bank and Google Checkout fees 35.97

TOTAL EXPENSES \$2,310.75

Income/Expenses \$609.44

BALANCE ON 12/31/13 \$10,267.51