OUR PAST ENGAGED:
FOUR TURNING POINTS IN COLUMBIA’S HISTORY

April 20, 2004

ROSALIND ROSENBERG
BEYOND THE KNICKERBOCKERS:
INCLUSIVE COLUMBIA

Welcome and Introduction

Robert McCaughey: Good evening. My name is Bob McCaughey. I’m the moderator of these talks wherein Columbia engages with its own past, a series of four talks sponsored by the Office of the Provost and by Columbia 250. Tonight is the occasion for the third talk, “Beyond the Knickerbockers: Inclusive Columbia.” This talk, like the other two, will go along with a fairly regular format. It will be the talk, in this instance from Professor Rosenberg, then two respondents will offer comments. Then there will be, we hope, a considerable amount of time left for audience comments, questions, both of the speaker and of the respondents as well. And following all of that a reception for everyone in the trustees . . . excuse me, in the Faculty Room immediately behind us.

The first two talks were given . . . in the first instance, by Ken Jackson on Columbia and the relationship of the University to the City of New York. The respondents were Evan Cornog, associate professor of the School of Journalism, and Mike Wallace, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and coauthor of Gotham. The second talk was given by the university provost, Alan Brinkley: "Columbia in the 1950s: Intellectual Capital of the Nation?" Respondents that evening were Fritz Stern, professor of history, ex-provost of the University, university professor, and Casey Blake, director of American Studies and professor of history. Both these talks are now available on audio and videotape on the Columbia 250 site, which can be reached going directly from the Columbia home page.
The last in this series will be next Tuesday evening, when I be talking on "Columbia '68: A Chapter in the History of Student Power." The respondents that evening will be Theodore William de Bary, Columbia College 1941, Columbia PhD 1953, provost and John Mitchell Mason Professor Emeritus, and currently active in the Columbia Core teaching program. Also Lewis Cole, Columbia College '68, and currently professor of film in the School of the Arts, and third, Jacqueline Russo, Columbia College 2004. The moderator that evening—following on the Gerald Ford principle that one shouldn't try to do two things at once—will be Eric Foner, the Dewitt Clinton Professor of History.

Before introducing tonight's speaker, Ann Whitley Olin Professor Rosalind Rosenberg, I'd like to introduce her two respondents. Monica Miller has her bachelor's degree from Dartmouth in 1992, and her PhD a decade later from Harvard in the Department of English and American Literature and Language. She's currently a resident fellow at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. She's been a member of the Barnard English Department since 2000, when she came as a Mellon predoctoral fellow. She's now an assistant professor. Her teaching at Barnard and at Columbia has consisted mostly, of course, as relating to modern literature—American Literature Since 1945 is a large lecture course that she regularly offers, as well as Home to Harlem, Literature of the Harlem Renaissance. In her research and writing she's focused of late on completing a book with the title *Slaves to Fashion: Dandyism in the Black Atlantic Diaspora. A Cultural History of the Black Dandy from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*.

Gillian Lindt is our second respondent this evening. After receiving schooling in her native London, England, she came to Columbia in New York in the late 1950s for her Masters and PhD degree in sociology and religion. Her dissertation, which was later published as *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities*, won the Bancroft Dissertation Prize in 1967. After teaching at Howard and American University in Washington, Gillian returned to Columbia in 1973 as professor of religion. Shortly thereafter, increasing administrative responsibilities characterizes her involvement with the University. She was chair of the religion department in the 1970s, dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in the 1980s, and then returned after retirement for another stint in that job in the late 1990s, and dean of General Studies in the 1990s. And through all those years, I might add, a great friend of Barnard College. She's an authority on religious cults and sects, but she's also a keen observer of academic folkways.

And I take this opportunity shamelessly to peddle a story I once heard that Gillian Lindt offered at a conference honoring Paul Lazarsfeld. Unfortunately for my purposes in writing *Stand Columbia*, I heard this story too late to include it in the
book, but there ought to be some posterity attached to this. And in a sense it connects up with Alan Brinkley's talk last week about some of the great notables at Columbia, particularly in the faculty, in the 1950s. Alan made brief reference to Robert Merton but I think he made no reference at all to Paul Lazarsfeld.

And the story goes, as Gill tells it, something like this. Merton's teaching was the subject of some conversation among sociology graduate students, and the conversation was generally very favorable . . . actually very impressed with the elegance with which he went about his teaching. And the conversation was loud enough and friendly enough that Professor Lazarsfeld overheard it. Now these are two men who have worked together at Columbia since coming the same year in 1940, and together they put together the Bureau of Applied Social Research, which by the 1950s was clearly the premiere institution of social research in the country. And Lazarsfeld was not known as a particularly effective teacher, but he never thought he was a poor teacher—no reason to think that—but hearing the comments and laudatory remarks about Merton he asked one of his trusted graduate students, in this case Gillian Lindt, to explain the situation as best one could. Well there's a certain amount of hemming and hawing that you can imagine would be appropriate at that point—you don't want to badmouth one professor to another when you're dependent upon both of them and enjoy their good support all the way through—but Lazarsfeld was not about to let the graduate student off and wanted to know what the difference was. So after some pause, Gillian began to say, "Well, it may be a matter of when Professor Merton prepares his lectures . . ." And Lazarsfeld said, "Stop right there. We needn't go any further if that's what he's been doing."

Professor Rosenberg is currently the Ann Whitney Olin Professor of History. There's some confusion about that, because sometimes I'm identified as the Ann Whitney Professor of History. It relates to Barnard, and Barnard being Barnard. Some have thought that maybe the two professorships represent not a chair but a kind of settee, or a two-person couch that we cohabit. That bespeaks a lack of knowledge of Barnard. What it really is is not a chair and not a settee, it's a kind of scooter that professors are allowed to check out from the Barnard carpool when they are leaving campus and going off to other places where their reputation may be questioned if they do not carry a name chair with them. Professor Rosenberg has the scooter tonight, I am just a professor of history.

A girl of the golden West, one might say—raised in Arizona and educated in California—Rosalind has her bachelor's and PhD from Stanford University. She's taught at Stanford, at Columbia in the early eighties, and at Wesleyan before coming to Barnard in 1983. Her teaching is mostly focused on American women's history, but also a continuing interest in American legal history. Her first book, *Beyond Separate Spheres: The Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism*, won the American
Historical Association's Frederick Jackson Turner Prize for the best first book by an American historian. She's also author of *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century*. Her forthcoming book is *Changing the Subject: How the Women of Columbia Shape the Way We Think about Sex and Politics*, scheduled for publication by Columbia University Press this fall, just in time to catch the concluding aspects of the Columbia 250th celebration. Professor Rosenberg.

**Columbia: Vanguard of Inclusiveness**

**Rosalind Rosenberg:** Thank you, Bob. I don't want to disappoint anyone this evening, but in addressing the topic "Beyond the Knickerbockers," I will not be talking about the Boston Celtics or the New Jersey Nets. My grasp of sports is so feeble that I did not even think about this possible confusion until the more culturally attuned members of my family pointed it out. So to be clear, this talk is not about basketball, but concerns instead those other Knickerbockers, the Anglican and Dutch-Reformed elite who long dominated New York City, and their failed effort to maintain control of the school we know as Columbia.

As you know, Columbia began as King's College, founded in 1754 as a small day school for the sons of the Knickerbockers. It remained a small day school for the sons of the Knickerbockers, even in the face of declining enrollments, until the arrival in 1864 of Frederick A. P. Barnard, Columbia's tenth president. Barnard provided a diagnosis for those declining enrollments, as well as a solution. The diagnosis was simple: the country was suffering from a glut of colleges—too many schools competing for too few students. The solution was provocative: Columbia should become a different kind of school, a university. Moreover, Barnard insisted, Columbia should cease its pointless efforts to hold onto its diminishing Knickerbocker clientele and seek to attract a wider constituency. Never one to mince words, Barnard called on Columbia in 1880 to welcome all "seekers after knowledge, of whatever age, sex, race, or previous condition."

Some of the Columbia Board of Trustees approved the idea of Columbia's growing beyond its original small-college mission. They had already approved the creation of a School of Mines. But even these progressives resisted Barnard's call to welcome all comers. The only gesture that Knickerbocker men had made toward diversity before Barnard's arrival was in the design of the Columbia College seal, which you walked across as you came into this room. It featured Alma Mater in the form of the goddess Columbia. An eighteenth-century creation meant to represent liberty, the goddess Columbia was everywhere in the early American republic—on broadsides, in political cartoons, and on coins. At Columbia, however, she stood alone, a pseudo-Greek symbol of female freedom in an all-male Knickerbocker setting.

http://c250.columbia.edu/c250_now/symposia/history.html
But time and the city were on the side of the goddess and of the president. Despite the reluctance of most of the members of the board of trustees, the faculty, the alumni, and the students, Columbia became a vanguard of inclusiveness in the decades that followed. By the 1920s, the turning point in the University's history that I will focus on this evening, Columbia had the most diverse student body of any university in the country; it did so for two sets of reasons, the first external, the second internal.

**Pressures to Diversify**

The chief external force working against the Knickerbocker elite was simply the diversity of New York City. New York was first and foremost a city of immigrants. Indeed the influx of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe was so rapid in the late nineteenth century that by 1900 four out of five New Yorkers were either immigrants or the children of immigrants. Even the neighborhoods around Morningside Heights, which were a bastion of Episcopalian gentility in the 1890s when Columbia moved here from Midtown, changed dramatically over the next two decades. By 1920 Jews together with Italian and Irish Catholics had displaced the white Protestants in the surrounding area. Jews in particular threatened Knickerbocker control. Eighty percent of the students at nearby City College were Jews, and growing numbers of them were beginning to knock at Columbia’s gates.

Second, New York was a city of black refugees from the Jim Crow South. By 1920 their numbers had grown so large that they began to displace white immigrants around Columbia. Gradually these newcomers, too, began to knock at Columbia’s gates.

Third, and this I think is less often spoken of, New York was a city of women. Because New York City was the commercial and cultural capital of the United States it offered economic opportunities to women that no other city could match. There were more women in New York than any other American city. Not surprisingly, New York was the largest city. But more importantly for my story, there were more women than men in Gotham.

Finally New York was a city of radical protest. Among these immigrants, blacks, and women were an unusual concentration of heterodox thinkers, unionists, socialists, communists, feminists—protesters of every conceivable stripe. They organized, they were vocal, and under the right circumstances they egged each other on.

Columbia might have resisted these external forces of diversity longer than it did, but for an important internal factor. For reasons I shall explain in a moment, Columbia developed a unique system of academic affiliations in the late nineteenth
century, which included links to two schools in particular, Barnard College and Teachers College, with their own boards of trustees and faculties. These schools became sites of alternative discourse at the University, places where the prevailing Knickerbocker orthodoxy was subject to searching criticism, and, in the 1920s, to all-out attack.

My goal this evening is to explain the dynamic interaction between the external forces of diversity and the internal fact of affiliation. But first a little backtracking to the days of F. A. P. Barnard, and how Columbia developed its unusual structure.

The Woman Question

It all began when Columbia was forced to confront the woman question. In 1883 a well-organized campaign, initiated by suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lillie Devereux Blake—the descendent of two Columbia presidents whose portrait hangs next door in Columbiana—produced a petition signed by over 1,300 prominent New Yorkers. The petition called on the Columbia trustees to admit women. President Barnard cheered them on, but the faculty and students, for the most part, opposed them. Some raised the oft-voiced concern that women would distract men from their studies. As mathematics professor John Howard Van Amringe complained, "You can't teach a man mathematics if there's a girl in the room. And if you can," he added with homophobic flourish, "he isn't worth teaching." Others warned that allowing Knickerbocker daughters to attend college would hasten the decline of the Knickerbocker elite. College study, according to this theory, would redirect energy from the development of female students' reproductive organs to their brains and produce infertility. Still others maintained that the admission of women would destroy Columbia's prestige, reducing it to the level of a state university or worse, in the feared eventuality of male flight, to a female seminary.

Professor John W. Burgess, dean of the new Graduate Faculty of Political Science, had an additional concern: that if female students were admitted other undesirable groups would follow. In the context of New York City, with its burgeoning immigrant population and growing African-American community, opening Columbia's doors to white middle-class Protestant women risked opening it to other dangerous groups: Jews, Catholics, perhaps even Negroes.

Faced with such compelling arguments, the Columbia trustees flatly refused the demand to admit women. Columbia's trustees did, however, make one concession. They voted to allow female students who were able to pass Columbia's entrance exam to study the Columbia curriculum on their own. If these students succeeded in passing Columbia's final examinations the trustees would consider granting them some kind of certificate. It wasn't clear at first what kind that would be.
Annie Nathan Meyer, one of the early women to take advantage of this unusual privilege, indignantly withdrew after failing an exam that was based on material not mentioned in the syllabus. She denounced the offer of a college education in which admission to classes was denied, and she led a successful campaign to open Barnard College in 1889. Reluctantly, the Columbia trustees agreed that Columbia be affiliated with the new college and remarkably to grant its students Columbia degrees. The trustees insisted, however, that the new college must have its own board of trustees, and perhaps more importantly, to be entirely responsible for its own finances.

Three years later in 1892, the trustees made another concession. Approached by a group of New Yorkers who wanted Columbia to create a college for the training of teachers, they followed the pattern already adopted with respect to Barnard College. They agreed to be affiliated with what came to be known as Teachers College, and again the trustees required that the new school have its own board of trustees and be responsible for its own finances. The Columbia trustees were then in the midst of incorporating a number of professional schools into the growing university, schools that would join the already existing law school and School of Mines—a medical school, a school of architecture, eventually a school of journalism, and a business school. But the trustees drew the line at a teachers college, and they were explicit about why they opted for affiliation and not inclusion: they were afraid that the students who came to train as teachers and school administrators would be overwhelmingly female. Be careful what you wish for.

In wishing to contain women on Columbia's periphery the trustees encouraged greater inclusiveness in the long run. The boards of trustees of both Barnard and Teachers College, unlike the board at Columbia, included women, Jews, and Catholics, though not yet blacks or Hispanics or Asians. By 1900 each college also had its own faculty, which compared with the Columbia faculty proved to be heterodox in terms of gender, political opinion, and methodological approach. Together they brought pressure on the Columbia Board of Trustees to open the graduate faculties to the students they were training, and by the 1920s Columbia was producing more female PhDs than any other school in the country.

**Black Students**

Thanks to Teachers College, Columbia was also producing the largest number of black doctorates in the country by the 1920s. This relative openness was largely a product of the liberal and entrepreneurial design of Teachers College's first dean, James Earl Russell. In contrast to the racist tone set by John W. Burgess in the Graduate Faculty of Political Science at Columbia, Russell established a welcoming
atmosphere by actively recruiting blacks, not only from Harlem but also from the South, especially from Hampton, St. Augustine's, and Tuskegee. As early as the academic year in 1901 Russell had traveled throughout the South, visiting black colleges and encouraging students to come to Teachers College. In the years that followed Teachers College attracted hundreds of southern black teachers who rented rooms in Harlem and took post-baccalaureate courses, often in summer school. The training they received not only raised the educational level among African Americans in the South, it also improved public health. The courses in chemistry and nutrition they took at Columbia allowed them to teach others how to avoid pellagra and other diseases rooted in nutritional deficits.

After James Earl Russell, the person most responsible for recruiting black students to Columbia was Professor Mabel Carney. In the 1920s Carney founded a program in rural education at Teachers College devoted in part to the study of Negro life, as it was called, and she introduced courses in African-American education in which students did field work in Harlem. Wanting to teach those courses in a broader context, Carney traveled and conducted research in South Africa and Latin America, bringing back more students with each visit. Always she emphasized the need for interracial work. As a result of her efforts Teachers College produced more black doctorates between the world wars than any other institution in the country.

Nothing better symbolized the effort of the city and Columbia satellite schools to influence the direction of Columbia University than the statue of Alma Mater in front of Low Library. In 1901 Columbia President Seth Low, the former mayor of Brooklyn, the soon-to-be mayor of New York City, a close friend of Teachers College Dean Russell, and most importantly, the husband of Barnard trustee Annie Curtis Low, pushed one final directive through the Columbia Board of Trustees. He called for a statue to be based on the image of the goddess Columbia. That statue was sculpted by Daniel Chester French, who had fashioned the statue of Abraham Lincoln for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. It depicted Columbia seated with a Bible open on her lap and with her arms stretched out in welcome. The positioning of Alma Mater was important. She was positioned to face south toward the city in symbolic welcome.

**Containing Diversity**

This symbol of welcome notwithstanding, most Columbia leaders continued to believed that their institution's effectiveness as a training ground for the city's and nation's leaders depended on preventing its student body from becoming too diverse. As Columbia College Dean Herbert Hawkes declared in 1923, "From the point of view of the institution, it is an important matter not to allow the student body to become so heterogeneous as to render impossible effective work."
could admit only as many non-Knickerbockers, Hawkes believed, as it could effectively assimilate. Hawkes wanted bright students, but not students who made too ostentatious a display of hard work. To admit too many strivers, he feared, would scare away Columbia’s core constituency. But how to keep the strivers out?

Interestingly, Columbia administrators, and Barnard administrators, too, briefly believed that the best way to do this was through the adoption of an IQ test as part of the admissions process. Believing as they did in the hierarchy of races, with western Europeans at the top, eastern and southern Europeans in the middle, and blacks at the bottom, they theorized that an IQ test would separate the innately intelligent—read Knickerbockers—from the overachievers—read the children of Jewish immigrants. The early tests had enough culturally specific questions to accomplish this aim. But fearing that the IQ test would not guarantee homogeneity, as it quickly proved not to do, admissions officers added questions to the application form that inquired about applicants’ religion, school clubs, and parents’ background. Through these latter devices admissions officers managed to limit Jewish enrollment to about 20 percent and black students—including Langston Hughes, who studied engineering for a year in 1921–22, and Zora Neale Hurston, who graduated from Barnard College in 1928—to two to three new students a year.

By the 1920s, however, there were no longer enough Protestant applicants, not to mention Episcopalians, to fill either a Columbia or a Barnard class. Admissions officials had to look elsewhere, and in the end they made do with the children of Catholics. Columbia managed to remain overwhelmingly white, but by the mid-1920s had it ceased to be a predominantly male Protestant institution. That is, female enrollment had outstripped male enrollment at the University, and Jews and Catholics had come to outnumber Protestants.

The numbers, I think, are interesting, but they’re only part of the story, and I think they’re not the most important part. What really distinguished Columbia from other institutions of higher education in the 1920s was the ideological shift that began to take place toward a more inclusive vision of what a university should be. And here the structure of the University again played a part. The resistance of Columbia admissions officers to greater diversity provoked a spirited response among Columbians who saw the University’s growing heterogeneity as something to celebrate rather than regret. Significantly, the University’s unique structure enabled those critics to articulate that vision more effectively than could critics at more conventionally structured universities, where a single faculty worked under a single administration. Columbia’s unique relationship with Barnard and Teachers College encouraged this dissent, as can best be seen by examining the history of the Columbia Department of Anthropology following World War I.
The Example of the Anthropology Department

Relations between Columbia President Nicholas Murray Butler and anthropology chair Franz Boas—an outspoken socialist and a Jew, hired by Seth Low—had never been especially warm. When Boas protested American entry into World War I, however, matters went from bad to worse. Among other things, Butler cut Boas's budget. Only by drawing on the resources of Barnard College and University Extension, which was a spin-off of Teachers College that later became General Studies, was Boas able to hire faculty to staff his courses. Among these faculty members were a number of women. Boas turned first to Barnard dean Virginia Gildersleeve for assistance. In many ways Dean Gildersleeve was as much a Knickerbocker as Dean Hawkes, and was concerned to hold onto the core constituency of both colleges. But she entertained heterodox ideas more easily than Hawkes did as part of her passionate commitment to advance the cause of women. She devoted most of her career at Barnard to opening Columbia's professional schools to women and securing them the right to teach in Columbia's graduate faculties. She therefore quickly promised Boas that Barnard would provide funding for a position in anthropology—the first of any liberal-arts college in the country—if Boas would allow the person who held that job, preferably a woman, to teach in Columbia's graduate faculties. Boas agreed, and recommended that his student Gladys Richard take the position.

Boas next turned to the dean of Extension teaching to secure funds to hire another of his students, Ruth Benedict. By 1931 Boas was able to parlay that job into an assistant professorship on the graduate faculty, and in 1937 Benedict became the first woman in the graduate faculties to win promotion to tenure.

At a time when the Ku Klux Klan was on the rise in America and National Socialism was on the rise in Germany, Boas and his students, half of them women, recruited mostly from Barnard by Gladys Richard, mounted a determined battle against racism and sexism. Administering countless IQ tests to white immigrants and to African Americans, they challenged the idea that intelligence was fixed by showing that the longer their subjects had lived in New York the better they scored on the tests. The lesson: IQ was not fixed and therefore not a reliable measure of racial superiority. Boas's students challenged not only the theory that some races were inherently more intelligent than others but also the belief that some cultures were better than others. In studies of native American Indians, as well as peoples as relatively free of Western cultural influence as those in the South Pacific, they challenged first the belief these peoples were innately different from Anglo-Americans by showing that they could be just as cutthroat in their economic dealings as any Western capitalist, and in addition they challenged the conviction that the cultures of so-called primitive people were inherently inferior, in part by showing that some were more democratic in their social arrangements than the supposedly democratic United States.
Boas had been advancing these ideas for a long time, but he had been hampered in his effort to influence public opinion by what the historian George Stocking has called the "mutual inhibition of his scientific caution and his compulsion to assemble all available evidence." Boas's students, especially his female students, proved to be much more successful in winning a broad audience for his theories as well as their own. Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Zora Neale Hurston in particular made popular the idea that not just race but also gender are social constructions, and they thereby lay an important part of the intellectual foundation for the modern civil rights and women's movements.

In welcoming female students Boas inadvertently encouraged another kind of heterogeneity, that of sexual orientation. Boas thought that homosexuality was abnormal, but he made tolerance such a badge of honor that he turned a blind eye to the sexual experimentation that flourished among his students. Gladys Richard and Ruth Benedict were what we would now call lesbians, Margaret Mead was bisexual, Zora Neale Hurston was complicated. As one of her friends once said, Zora was willing to do anything at least once. The sexual freedom of Manhattan in the 1920s, the welcoming home that Boas provided in anthropology, together with their own experience, inspired these scholars to challenge conventional assumptions about sexuality, as well as ideas about Anglo-American cultural superiority, in books that achieved a huge audience. Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* issued a call for greater sexual freedom in the guise of an ethnography of adolescence. Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* opened the way to a more tolerant view of sexual difference in America through its sympathetic treatment of the *berdache*, men who dressed as women among the Plains Indians. And Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, with its freewheeling literary style, provided a pioneering depiction of female autonomy and sexual expressiveness.

My point is that Boas was able to reach a wide audience because Columbia's institutional arrangements allowed him to do an end run around its Knickerbocker leaders in order to secure the resources and the dissident voices he needed in order to accomplish his goal.

By arguing that the 1920s constituted a turning point away from the homogeneous ideal of the Knickerbockers and toward the heterogeneous ideal of the anthropologist, I do not mean to suggest that by 1930 Columbia was an inclusive institution. The story of inclusion at Columbia is a story about process, one that is not fully complete even today. But process began earlier and progressed more quickly at Columbia than elsewhere because of a combination of external forces and internal structure that were unique in the country. That progression was never lineal. There were some notable setbacks, particularly in the 1950s in the era of
McCarthyism. But even then Columbia was more inclusive than comparable institutions and more given to heterodox pronouncements. One thinks in particular of Barnard sociologist Mirra Komarovsky, with her 1953 critique of conventional gender roles *Women in the Modern World*, which anticipated Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* by a decade.

As the Immigration Act of 1965 brought a new wave of immigrants to the United States in the final third of the twentieth century, not only Columbia, but the nation more generally, was better prepared than it had been a century before to take advantage of this new talent because of the pioneering efforts made at this University to transform heterogeneity from a vice to a virtue. As events of the past year have shown, Columbia still has some distance to go before it can be said to be truly inclusive, but it has come a long way since the years after the Civil War, when F. A. P. Barnard shocked Columbia's Knickerbockers by urging that their institution be open to all.

**Monica Miller Responds to Rosalind Rosenberg**

**Robert McCaughey:** Professor Miller, would you care to respond?

**Monica Miller:** Thank you, Professor Rosenberg, for that. And also I'd like to thank Professor McCaughey and Professor Rosenberg for inviting me here tonight.

In her talk tonight, Professor Rosenberg very eloquently elaborates on the transformation of Columbia from a Knickerbocker stronghold to a vanguard of inclusiveness for women, Jews, and blacks. Interestingly, she describes how this change occurred by a method familiar to scholars of African-American history or culture: through the back door. Getting in through the back door was at first a necessity for African Americans, a necessity that quickly became a strategy. We entered the back door because we had to. Once in we strategized about how to take advantage of what we found inside. Tonight I'd like to say a few words about this methodology and its results for two early black Columbians who Professor Rosenberg mentioned, the writers Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston.

In 1920 Langston Hughes graduated from Central High School in Cleveland, Ohio "an unusual student"—and this is a quotation from one of his teachers—"of fine appearance, fair financial resources, good mental ability, pleasing and gentlemanly manners," and wanted more than anything else to take these talents to New York and Columbia University. Some of his closest friends, mostly Jews, had been accepted to Columbia. Already aware of the fact that he wanted to be a writer, Hughes knew that an education was necessary to success and aimed high. Though he encountered resistance from his father, a relatively wealthy rancher living in
Mexico, Hughes nevertheless pursued his dream, and as a kind of advance guard sent poems to New York first, primarily to the NAACP's magazine The Crisis, itself a vanguard journal for the emerging Harlem literary renaissance. When his father saw the young Langston in print, he was impressed and cut a deal with his son. He would pay for a year of Columbia in which Hughes would study for an eventual place in the School of Mines.

What Hughes wanted most was to come to New York. His father's money and Columbia were a way to get there. That Hughes managed to get a room in Hartley Hall was also through a back-door method. Because his application came from Mexico with no mention of his race he was given a place, and only the embarrassment of the woman giving out the rooms—when they realized that he was actually African American—allowed him to get into the dorm that year. He was the only black student of about a dozen at Columbia that year to live in the dorm.

Constantly estranged from his father, Hughes was poor and anonymous on campus, but used his time in Morningside Heights to become increasingly well known in Harlem. Within a month of his arrival he found himself both enduring French-class drills and lunching with W. E. B. DuBois. He tried to negotiate what he called a tight color line at Columbia with a Chinese friend, Yee Sing Chun, even while gallivanting around town with one of DuBois's assistants on his winter vacation. He was not able to write for the Columbia Spectator because when he applied they assigned him to the fraternity beat, a task impossible to fulfill at that time as a black student. But the Spectator did publish four of his poems. He skipped a final exam to attend the grand Harlem funeral of black theater star Burt Williams.

Hughes found Columbia relatively inhospitable but Harlem very welcoming. As you can see from these examples, Columbia was both a curse and a blessing for Hughes. At the end of his year, when his father threatened to cut him off entirely, Hughes decided to leave Morningside Heights for Harlem permanently, having made good marks on campus and better marks in the literary world.

Hughes' contemporary Zora Neale Hurston practiced a similar back-door policy with regard to her experience as Barnard's first black student. Like Hughes, her literary work preceded her arrival in New York and at Barnard/Columbia. Hurston was invited to New York and to Barnard on the strength of her short stories and plays. Harlem renaissance principal, the Howard professor Alain Locke, encouraged her to join the Harlem literary renaissance in 1925.

When she won two second-place prizes in literary contests in 1925, Barnard trustee Annie Nathan Meyer was so impressed with her personality at the awards dinner that she immediately decided that Hurston was the person to integrate Barnard. A 34-
year-old black woman, passing for age 26, Hurston made some famously difficult adjustments to life at Barnard, which you can imagine, passing for 26 . . . even the passing is a problem. She felt at different moments unwanted, and as she herself described, "both unwanted and a sacred black cow."

Though unable to sneak into a dorm—Hurston lived in Harlem and then in Midtown while she was at Barnard—she did sneak into popularity at Barnard with the help of some very important friends. Like Hughes earlier, Hurston was in constant need of money, and in absolutely dire financial circumstances during her first fall as a student. But she managed to secure an important patron through Annie Nathan Meyer, the novelist Fannie Hurst. When her Barnard classmates and Dean Gildersleeve found out that she was employed by and then just friends with America's most popular writer, Hurston's position on campus improved dramatically. However, her popularity got everyone into trouble when it came time for the junior prom at the Ritz-Carlton. She was urged to go by her classmates, but only if she would—and this is from a letter that she sent—"She would bring a man as light as herself." Although praising her classmates for their frankness and claiming to be unoffended, a later letter to Annie Nathan Meyer hints equally at offense, hurt, and understanding. She says to Meyer, "No doubt you're right about the prom. But even if things were different I could not go. Paying $12.50 plus a new frock and shoes and a wrap and all the other things necessary is not my idea of a good time. I am not that ritzy yet. Of course I don't want to make any false steps, and I am most fortunate in having you to halt me before I sprout donkey ears." Not yet ritzy, but also not a fool, Hurston both suffered from and benefited from the complications of what she called "living on Earth, but trying to board in Heaven."

Hurston's heaven in New York included two other important outlets: the literary renaissance in Harlem and her growing interest in anthropology, fostered primarily by Franz Boas, which Professor Rosenberg spoke about. Given that her early life in Florida had been full of oral folklore, porch stories, and tall tales that she recreates so well in her famous novel Their Eyes Were Watching God, Hurston had a natural talent for anthropology. Before leaving Florida, Hurston said—and this is from her autobiography—that she had "draped folk culture around me like a magnificent shawl. But it was fitting me tight, like a chemise. I couldn't see for wearing it. It was only when I was off in college, away from my native surroundings, that I could see myself like somebody else, and stand off and look at my garment. I had to have the spyglass of anthropology to look through at that."

When Hurston met Boas here at Columbia an important moment occurred in the development of anthropology as a discipline. Mentor and student trained each other. Boas taught Hurston to discipline her observations in recording folklore. Hurston's natural approach to field research, the anthropologist as participant-observer,
reinforced Boas’s thoughts about the importance of a balance between scholarly distance and immersion in the culture being studied. Hurston took these lessons with her well beyond the Barnard/Columbia gates when she graduated in 1928, and she continued her correspondence with Boas for many, many years after graduation. Her work took her back to Florida, to New Orleans, to many places in the Caribbean throughout the 1930s. While she did not attend the prom, she revolutionized the field of anthropology and African-American literature through her natural talent and some of the opportunities she had and made in Morningside Heights.

So what to make of Columbia's reluctant inclusion of Hughes and Hurston in the 1920s? As Professor Rosenberg emphasizes, when confronted with a potential Negro invasion, Columbia in the 1920s worried about its ability to preserve its network of Knickerbocker elites. What it did not anticipate was that some of the Negroes invading, at least at that time, both wanted access to Columbia and Barnard networks as well as the opportunity to create their own networks . . . equally important extra-campus networks. They did so by means of the front door, for instance at Teachers College, and the back door elsewhere in the University.

By way of conclusion I’d like Langston Hughes to have the last word, in a poem of this era of the 1920s, in which we might, if you listen, substitute Columbia for America in this poem. And this is Langston Hughes' poem I, Too, Sing America

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
Eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—
I, too, am America.

Thank you.

Gillian Lindt Responds to Rosalind Rosenberg

Robert McCaughey: Professor Lindt.

Gillian Lindt: I'm afraid after these eloquent testimonials to members of this University at Barnard that we're not always welcomed as openly as some of us would hope today. I have just a few, much more mundane, perhaps more methodologically oriented, comments to make on Rosalind Rosenberg's paper.

Let me say first of all that, at least for those of you who have attended some of the other sessions, I was struck that today's was much more challenging in terms of meeting the format that had been established for all four, in which one sliced up the 250 years of Columbia's history into periods and then linked a particular period to a specific theme or issue. And as I think Rosenberg correctly pointed out in her paper, what she was really describing is not something that can be readily summarized as a high point, a turning point, in the 1920s. In fact she was forced to go back to the 1880s just to talk about the initial effort by Barnard to create opportunities for women at Columbia. And I think that as a result—also by focusing primarily on the 1920s, although with anthropology again she was forced to go beyond that—we are missing some very important further turning points that, I think, from a sociological standpoint are essential if one is going to be able to better understand and thus describe the trajectory of how these different groups came to be included in that Columbia that originally was fashioned by those Knickerbocker ideals.

Secondly, with regard to the evidence that she provides about the place of women in Columbia, and the ways in which race and religion entered into questions of who is included and who is not, I was struck by the fact that her qualitative material was really wonderful. There are again vignettes and documentations that really speak directly to just what some of the issues and problems were for truly, in many cases, extraordinary individuals who came ultimately to be part of Columbia and whom today we justly celebrate as part of our heritage.

However, on the quantitative data I was not quite so convinced. But that's perhaps because I was more raised on the quantitative material to look at statistics that are frightfully boring to summarize in a talk such as this. But I do think that the issue of whether or not Columbia really was the most inclusive university in this country in the 1920s needs to be looked at perhaps in a number of different ways, because I have difficulty if we simply summarize across the board, for instance, the number of
women PhDs, because that, for instance, depends obviously in part on the size of the graduate school. And Columbia was unusual in that the decision was made by Butler and others at the beginning of the twentieth century that the way to transform Columbia College into a university was to model the University after the major research universities of Europe, and he was particularly impressed by the German ones. What that meant, however, is that this university had an extraordinarily large graduate school relative to its undergraduates, and that was an enormous advantage in the earlier decades, particularly in the 1920s when Columbia in fact was ranked, in terms of its PhD programs, third in the nation, and the University as a whole gained from that kind of luster. But given that, therefore, I think one needs to look much more carefully in a sense school by school, discipline by discipline, at the representation of minorities in the institution.

Now my third point relates to the, I think, fascinating juxtaposition she has here of external and internal, or one internal factor that influenced these outcomes. I think the external ones are certainly persuasive. Although again if one could bring up the story to more recent years, one would have to add some additional factors that changed things. Because by World War II and the aftermath of World War II, this university, as indeed most in this country, could no longer really simply determine its mission and future. It was very heavily influenced by the federal government and by the support that was being given and then increasingly was given to the sciences. So that also had effects that altered the issue of diversity.

But if we come to this fascinating idea that the affiliation factor really made a difference . . . because it provided two unusual laboratories in Barnard and Teachers College to, in a sense, go far beyond what the central part of Columbia was doing in not only experimenting with a different group of a much more diverse faculty and student body, but proving the consequences of just what that could do to higher education was enormously important. However, it seems to me that at the same time that may have been . . . in fact had serendipitous consequences for Columbia itself—what was left outside of the Barnard-TC combination—because it gave Columbia an opportunity to say look, when issues of women came up—and I remember that, even in the fifties—look, you can get that at Barnard, we don't really need that much at Columbia. And I think many of the other issues also in a sense gave Columbia a way out that some of us, at least, think was unfortunate.

Now one other point I'd like to make that relates to the matter of inclusiveness, but where I want to raise a slightly different issue, namely the nature and degrees of inclusion. Because if one had never been in an institution like this I think one could read Rosenberg's paper and come away marveling at the way in which these different groups that previously had been excluded were suddenly in, and everything was all right. But in actual fact when you look at the histories of what happened to
these groups as they came into the University, for many of them their problems had only just begun. And I find it in fact slightly ironic that Margaret Mead, of all people... you have her picture reminded you of, you know, what extraordinary alumni we had... and members, you know, extraordinary individuals as teachers and as scholars. But there's nothing there that tells you that Margaret Mead, notwithstanding the history of anthropology we have just heard, never was offered tenure at Columbia. In fact she couldn't have made a living here if it hadn't been for the fact that the Museum of Natural History gave her a full-time appointment. And she was quite frankly simply an adjunct at Columbia. Now she was still able to teach, she did her research, but I think we should be careful not to rewrite the historical record in a way that makes it sound as though the issue of inclusion was largely solved, at least in the lives of these rather remarkable figures.

And I might say that I also find it in some ways ironic that Rosenberg chose to illustrate some of these trends with reference to the anthropology department, because as graduate dean fifty years later I dealt with a department that was a problem because fifty years later it still did not have a single woman tenured faculty member. Now fortunately, finally by the 1990s that changed. But again it suggests that there can be a different story if what we focus on is not, as I think these two presentations did, the remarkable intellectual contributions that women made to our understanding of gender, to our understanding of race... and different ways also of religion. But if we also focus on to what extent did these radical ideas become accepted not simply in the larger intellectual world, but to what extent were they accepted in this university, discussed in this very building? And I think that there you will see that the picture suggests at the very least that we still have some ways to go, because there are still women that disproportionately are found, at least in the faculty ranks, at the lower levels, and often marginalized in all kinds of ways. Now again it has been changing, but I think it's very important to be aware that even 250 years after the founding of this university we certainly do not yet have a social system in which these issues have been resolved.

And finally let me then come back in fact to the symbolism, not so much of Alma Mater, but this building, because it was made... referenced already in Ken Jackson's lecture and Rosenberg again came back to it. And I want to suggest to you that some of you might like at one point to go over to Avery Library, because there's a perfectly delightful drawing there of Low Library, not from the inside but from the outside. And in fact you would recognize it, it looks just as it does if you stand down 116th Street today, except it is of course facing, as the architects at that time had thought was appropriate, the river. It was facing west. And we know that the idea was that like other Ivy institutions you would have your president, as is shown in this drawing, disembarking from a very grand barge, and coming up this greensward—what today we know as Riverside Drive—to this magnificent building on Morningside...
Heights. But what I want to add to that point is that I found in some of those same materials a notation from one of the architects which said something to the effect, "Please note: the University to the north of Low Library is to be walled off from," and I quote, "the barbarians." Now all right, you could say that's, you know, over a hundred years ago. But looking forward it's very interesting that, I think, historians—we have great difficulty in looking forward and anticipating what in fact will be the barbarians excluded from an institution such as this in the next hundred years.

And so if I leave you with a little bit of caution, it's not because my own experience here was negative. In fact I had a wonderful time. But I'm also very much aware that there's still a tremendous amount of work to be done that would be neglected if we simply think that we can celebrate only the successes.

Thank you.

Robert McCaughey: I think Professor Lindt was absolutely on target in suggesting this is what we hoped we would have in terms of not only engaging Columbia's past but engaging its historians. And perhaps Professor Rosenberg would like to respond. Then we would turn to questions from the audience.

Rosenberg Responds to Miller and Lindt

Rosalind Rosenberg: Thank you both, Monica and Gillian, for your comments. To begin with, Monica, I think the notion of the back door is a telling one, and in a way the effort at Teachers College to actively recruit blacks from the South was a back door into Columbia University. And certainly Barnard is often referred to as a back door into Columbia, for all of the students at Barnard.

I was particularly struck by your discussion of Hurston, who really is a figure larger than life. And I think that this woman, who always lied about her age, turns out to have been 34 years old passing as 26 and a multiple prize winner before she could get the attention of someone—in this case Annie Nathan Meyer—to be admitted to Barnard, is extraordinary. And even with that, when Annie Nathan Meyer went to Gildersleeve and said, "I have a really talented student here," Gildersleeve reviewed Hurston's academic record from Howard and said, "I don't know, not very good grades here. But the short story is interesting. We'll try." So I think it says a great deal about how difficult it was to crack into this place, that it took a prize-winning almost-middle-aged author to be able to accomplish it.

To address Gillian's comments on demographics . . . Between 1920 and 1970 Columbia ranked sixth in the country in the production of male PhDs. Gillian is absolutely right that this was a university which was built in the late nineteenth
century expressly to minimize the college and maximize the graduate school, and it was a large graduate school. It wasn't as large as some, but it was certainly large. But compare Columbia's ranking as sixth in the production of PhDs with its ranking first in the ranking of production of female PhDs, by a comfortable margin, and not including Teachers College doctorates. So I think that even if you look very closely at the numbers, and I've looked at them for Columbia in a wonderful compendium of numbers of a century of doctorates. The numbers for women at Columbia are really extraordinary, and not just because Columbia is big. Part of the reason for that is the affiliation with Barnard College, because Barnard College sent more women on to graduate degrees in this same period—1920 to 1970—than any other school in the country, with two exceptions: the much larger Berkeley and the much larger Hunter College, which until after World War II was an all-female institution. That means that just in terms of raw numbers Barnard led the country with these two exceptions. If you control for enrollment, then Barnard leads by a huge margin. So I think that a closer look at the demographics than I could do and succeed in staying within my 30-minute limit really does bear out that this is an unusual place, and in part it's an unusual place because of its structure.

Ah, the marginalization of women. This is a celebration, so I wanted to emphasize the upside, but there's no question there are real problems with marginalization. And Gillian is absolutely right, if you have some other institutions, Teachers College, Barnard College, General Studies, taking care of women and the issues that women are interested in, then Columbia proper doesn't have to. That's absolutely true. Nonetheless, the women who came here for graduate education in these years had an opportunity that I think was greater than most elsewhere, in many other places... most other places, to be able to pursue heterodox ideas. In part it's because it's New York City, and New York City is a heterodox place. But this was an intellectually intense place that took ideas seriously. So I'm willing to back off somewhat from the celebration of marginality, but not completely.

Margaret Mead. It's true that once in, the problems had begun for many of the non-Knickerbocker men who came to Columbia. And certainly Margaret Mead is an ironic example because she may have had the name that was best recognized around the world of Columbia products. And it's true she was never other than an adjunct professor here. Part of the reason for that was that anthropology was very small, and anthropology was very small in part because Nicholas Murray Butler didn't provide very much funding for it. But then anthropology did not tend to be a big department—I have members of the audience who will correct me if I'm wrong—anywhere. The problem was that Franz Boas did a pretty good job of finding jobs for his male students, and he had a lot of trouble getting jobs for his female students.
Stopping in 1920 and only kind of glancing over the next eighty years, yes, that's a problem. And it is always a difficulty in giving a talk. You have thirty minutes. Do you try to cover all of the ground or do you try to concentrate on one small piece? And I did the latter. But the story of anthropology is most positively told by focusing on the 1920s and 1930s, because the fact of the matter is that when Ruth Benedict died in 1948 the student body, which had been 50 percent female throughout the years that she was there, ceased being so, and there wasn't another tenured female in the Columbia department until the end of the 1980s, and not one in the Barnard department until Paula Rubel gained tenure in the 1970s. So that is absolutely the case. The stars have to be aligned in a particular way for things to work out.

**Question-and-Answer Period—Part 1**

Robert McCaughey: Thank you. And now we can turn to questions or comments from the audience. There are two microphones midway on either aisle. Sir.

Man: Yes. There's no doubt that Columbia, as has been described and is well known, had a very elitist Knickerbocker attitude for an extremely long time, and only belatedly, and through the back door, was a much more equitable institution. Is it not true that virtually all racial, ethnic, religious—no matter how close they seem to an outside observer—groups always are elitist unto themselves, want to discriminate, restrict, as long as they possibly can. Columbia College was belatedly coed, very late in the Ivy League, and Barnard College hasn't been coed very long either, has it?

Rosalind Rosenberg: I'm not sure what the question is, but as a statement it's hard to quarrel with. I think the anthropologists in particular would say that this is an oft-observed point. The lateness of Columbia College in admitting women is not something that I think Columbia College should be blamed for. That is to say, there was sentiment in Columbia College to admit women from the late 1960s, at the same time that other all-male colleges admitted women. And the problem was there was Barnard College. And unlike the seemingly parallel situation with Harvard with Radcliffe, where a merger did take place over the course of the 1970s in steps, Radcliffe never had its own faculty, and Barnard did. And one of the things that I talk about in my book is the way in which the challenge to Barnard of Columbia's threatening to admit women, or merge with Barnard—although Columbia people tend to talk about absorbing Barnard—that led in the 1970s to a great deal of soul-searching at Barnard and an attempt to come to terms with what its mission really was. So that the fact that Columbia College only admits women in its first class in 1983, an exact century after the delivery of the petition from Lillie Devereux Blake, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, is as a result of this institutional
structure working its way a century later. I don't know if that's fully responsive to your question.

**Man:** Thank you for a wonderful lecture and a wonderful series. Just to follow up on your answer, what do you foresee . . . I mean, President Bollinger in his brief stay here has questioned the fundamental need for institutions, for example the journalism school. What do you see as the future for all women's colleges as we go forward, given the problems that you've raised, the draining of resources away, the lack of pressure on the main institution to fully integrate its faculty? What's the purpose of undergraduate all-female education at this point in time?

**Rosalind Rosenberg:** I was teaching at Columbia when the decision was made to admit women, and my immediate reaction was well, that's the end of Barnard. And you may, I think perfectly understandably, perhaps even justly, attribute my current position and what I'll say in a moment to the fact that I've sort of gone across the street, but I must say I've become a true believer. I don't think that gender is going away anytime soon as a category of analysis, and I've come to see the virtues, as I suspect came across tonight, in the small institution able to maintain autonomy. Certainly in the 1980s, it was a very hard time for Barnard, and it wasn't clear that Barnard was going to make it. Barnard has been the beneficiary, as has Columbia, of the tremendous resurgence of New York City. And Barnard has been the beneficiary of Columbia's success. Historians always like to say that they try to do their best with the past, but they leave to weathermen or weatherpeople a prediction of the future—and they don't do such a good job either. But certainly for the foreseeable future I think that institutions like Barnard are going to thrive and will offer wonderful opportunities for their students.

**Robert McCaughey:** I, too, was at Barnard in 1983 when the decision was made, and there was lots of crepe laid out, except in the most public of circumstances. And as Rosalind describes I think the 1980s at Barnard were much like the 1970s at Columbia—a period of real uncertainty whether there was going to be light at the end of the tunnel. There's something called inelastic demand that I think may come to Barnard's benefit. There are so few women's colleges left that make serious pretense at being a liberal-arts institution and are not just living off their endowment that I think may come to Barnard's benefit. There are so few women's colleges left that make serious pretense at being a liberal-arts institution and are not just living off their endowment that I think Barnard has some life in it for a good bit longer. Judith Shapiro, the president of Barnard, made the comment in her inauguration that when Columbia becomes fully coeducational then we can revisit the question. Gillian Lindt's acerbic comments about Columbia's status at least allow me to think that I can renew my driver's license. Alternating, I think we're back over here.

**Man:** The main lecture and the responses to the lecture illustrated quite well how the evolution of Columbia from an exclusive institution to an inclusive institution
paralleled the increasing academic prestige of this institution. Because after all diversity of ideas which are discussed in grounded and valid argument, it's what makes for scholarship. But as a point which we have to take note, particularly in the present reality, that inclusivity to the extent to which it is not being properly supervised, like democracy, can bring to the opposite effect... to exclusivity. And in fact we know now that at Columbia there is an investigation which is based on the fact that a chair in literature which is funded by money from the Middle East is being used for political correctness in order to advance ideas to exclude other valid points of view. And I was wondering how one goes about to have this kind of supervision that inclusivity doesn't lead to the opposite result, to exclusivity, which is actually going to have a decrease in the academic significance of an institution.

**Rosalind Rosenberg:** I'm not sure that I can answer that competently, and I'll defer to anyone else on the panel if he or she thinks they can. But certainly just because someone is allowed in the front door doesn't mean that that person is excluded in any full personal or intellectual sense. And the principle that the funding of chairs not be linked to any dictate about what is said in that chair is a fundamental principle, I think, of an open academy.

[Inaudible response from the man who posed this question.]

**Rosalind Rosenberg:** It's one of the most difficult problems that any teacher faces, how to advance a point of view without shutting up other people. And I can't comment specifically on the chair you mentioned because I don't know what's going on with the investigation. But I do recognize it as a fundamental problem, and I think that it is one of the most important principles of academia, that there be free and open discussion and that people be able to speak their minds.

**Paula Rubel:** Your paper dwelt primarily on heterogeneity on the level of the students. I think if you had dealt with the level of the faculty over the period of time that you were considering you would have gotten a somewhat different picture, as Professor Lindt pointed out. In other words, how heterogeneous did other departments' faculty members become over the period from 1900 to 1970? It's a very interesting area to investigate, and I think you would've found it probably less heterogeneous than the student body.

**Rosalind Rosenberg:** There's no question but that is the case. Certainly when Columbia's Women's Liberation did its study in 1969 and sent it to the General Council of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and argued that at the senior level, where only 5 percent of the faculty were female, that just taking statistics for the country at large over the previous twenty years that figure should
have been double that. That's just one example. And certainly the faculty have followed significantly behind the students in terms of this greater heterogeneity.

**Paula Rubel:** It creates a kind of interesting tension, if you will, between a more homogeneous faculty and a more heterogeneous student body over the years, because I think Boas was really quite an exception, and he himself was a Jew, so he was not part of the Knickerbocker elite when he was brought in.

**Rosalind Rosenberg:** I certainly agree that he was an exception, but what I was interested in trying to sort out is when and under what conditions does change begin. It's certainly not my contention . . .

**Paula Rubel:** I'm not sure how much you've covered this in the book, but to what extent did what Boas was doing influence other departments to become similarly heterogeneous in their student bodies, and perhaps in their faculty?

**Rosalind Rosenberg:** Very, very slowly.

**Paula Rubel:** I think he was rather unique. On another point which is of interest, again in response to what Gillian was saying, the faculty members at Barnard in the anthropology department who were tenured were by some outside groups counted as tenured members of the anthropology department at Columbia because they were members of the graduate faculties as well as being members of the Barnard faculty. So there was a lot of double-dipping going on in the seventies, especially with regard to the Anthropological Association, which was beating down the necks of departments to be much more inclusive as far as including female members in the faculty.

**Rosalind Rosenberg:** That's absolutely right, and not just in anthropology.

**Robert McCaughey:** I think there is a difference in the rate of feminization, for example, of the various constituencies at Columbia. And faculty have been, I think, including in the last thirty years, the slowest of the group. But I would include the trustees in this matter as being more capable of altering their composition than the faculty has been. And I'm certainly not going to now take a stand against tenure, but I do think it does operate as a kind of slowing mechanism on the process. Nonetheless I think anthropology becomes a somewhat unusual department in its most recent history, just as it was an unusual department in its openness in the 1920s. I think other departments that had no women in their departments as late as the early 1950s now have substantial numbers.

**Woman:** Well I think that before we congratulate ourselves too much on the number of women professors, particularly tenured professors, we do have to remember what
the federal government did to us in, I think it was my senior year, 1973. We had the first affirmative-action program imposed on a major university in this country, and I think we have to consider what the disconnect was between having a diverse student body at the graduate-student level in the twenties and a faculty which was so hostile to women in the seventies that the federal government stepped in and told us who we would have.

Rosalind Rosenberg: Let me say something about that. There's no question that the male faculty here was very slow to promote the female faculty, and that there were obviously serious discrepancies. But the reason that Columbia was the first university to lose contracts for a period of time, and to have to come up with an affirmative-action plan in quite such blinding light, was in part because it was in New York City. And there's a lot of media around here. But it was in part because Columbia was in such disarray administratively that those who were trying to come up with an affirmative-action plan couldn't put their hands on the numbers. I mean it was an incredible mess. And once the University Senate established the Commission on the Status of Women in 1971 and the commission was able to do its own work, which it printed in 1975, the commission found that as bad as Columbia was, other major research universities were significantly worse. In other words, Columbia had a higher percentage of female faculty at every rank than any other major university. So Harvard had its plan all tied up with a bow very early on. It didn't have Stanley Pottinger on their case, but Harvard had a huge endowment, was very well organized, and had all of its ducks lined up. Columbia was doing much better. If only it could've been in better administrative shape, it could've done the same.

Gillian Lindt: I think as long as we're talking about something other than the graduate students and the graduate faculty, it's interesting, because as I read Rosalind's paper I was struck by the fact that you could make a very strong case—based on the external variables that you talk about, and you combine that with what Ken Jackson was saying about New York in terms of cosmopolitanism and a liberal imagination, and in some ways those factors suggest—that Columbia should really be much more on the forefront of leadership in these areas, rather than as we see so often, in fact being prodded and pushed to do something. And one has only to look, for instance, at the issue of the higher administrative positions to still see there's clearly a Knickerbocker effect, because if you say well, it's an issue of cosmopolitanism and liberalism, well how come it is Brown University in Providence—which with all due respect I don't think compares on these variables with New York—that has a president who is not only a woman but an African American? Why is it that Princeton—that otherwise you'd say well Princeton is so elitist and everything else, and certainly not cosmopolitan the way we in New York are—but they have a woman president and you saw there the trickle-down effect, where that then influenced the other positions? And right now in this university it is still a glass ceiling.
Monica Miller: Actually I've been thinking about this a lot and have come up with an answer, temporarily. One of the things you mentioned that I thought was really an excellent point was about the way in which the presence of Barnard and Teachers College makes an easy displacement of the problems of women. Or at least in Teachers College early incarnation about . . . if there's a woman question or a Negro question, for instance, it can be easily referred somewhere else. And I do think that one of the challenges that Columbia/Barnard is facing at the moment has to do with the fact that issues of diversity at large are often displaced onto New York City. Therefore the presence of the cosmopolitan city actually makes it easier for questions of diversity not to be dealt with effectively on campuses, but rather students, administration, people who occupy these spaces are sent out into the city for diversity, because it's so present around us. So I think that it's a similar problem that's happening. And the idea of New York as a cosmopolitan place, if we compare it to Providence, the cosmopolitanism of Providence needs to happen at Brown, where Barnard and Columbia do occupy a position within New York in which cosmopolitanism should be in both places, not something that people need to transport themselves to.

Question-and-Answer Period—Part 2

Man: Professor Rosenberg, Professor McCaughey, my concern might be inappropriate for this forum, but as Columbia pulled away from reliance on the Knickerbockers, and I heard it said that Nicholas Murray Butler could create an endowment, finance the University through his personal contacts with a few of New York's most wealthy families, but as the Havermeyers gave way to the have-nots, how has this been altered? I recall an alumni meeting in 1979, my 25th, and President McGill commented that when he took over the presidency at Jacques Barzun's request, that the administration of the University was a total mess, there was really no effective alumni program, budgeting was on the back of an envelope, and so forth. And I'm wondering has government or have corporations stepped up and if you follow the money, have new forces come to bear to finance the University and to make it possible in this age of inclusion and diversity?

Robert McCaughey: Well I think on that score the Knickerbockers have been somewhat overrated as loose with their pocket change. I think that's what keep these multigenerational groups going for so long. It's not quite the situation that William McGill . . . and I thought you were going to that position where he spoke to an alumni group and he said, "From my experience alumni mostly give advice." I think the Knickerbockers, including the trustees, were a particularly skinflintish group through the nineteenth century. The largest single gift given to Columbia University into the 1890s was given by F. A. P. Barnard . . . was money leftover from his
residual estate when his wife died . . . was 90,000 dollars. By this time Harvard and Yale and Princeton were beginning to tap their alums in a kind of way that Columbia never did under Seth Low. Seth often paid for it himself and then passed the hat around his immediate trustees. And Butler had his own reservations about going to the alumni for money. With that kind of alumni gift giving that he saw at Princeton or at Smith College came alumni influence, came alumni control, and Nicholas Murray Butler would much prefer to make a call downtown, as you suggested, but not for endowment money . . . something to tide the University over in perhaps five digits and meanwhile have this aura about him of being able to tap into New York's old money. New York's old money was moving not necessarily to other universities—but certainly was doing that—but into other eleemosynary institutions in New York City. So in that sense the money left before the Knickerbockers departed. Your tougher question is who has replaced them? There was a bubble in the forties and fifties and it was called the federal government. Since that time it has been corporate support, foundation support, and a growing effort to once again tap into the goodwill of the City of New York in terms of wealth connected with Columbia, philanthropic wealth. But the whole notion of tying into the alumni constituency is still very much a work in progress, I would think.

**Woman:** I feel a little bit like an interloper. I am a Wellesley alumna but I have a Columbia College husband and two Columbia College daughters, so I think I can ask my question. Are there any high points that you might mention, all three of you, with respect to the de-Knickerbockerization of the curriculum here at Columbia?

**Robert McCaughey:** The Core never struck me as particularly Knickerbockerish. It was Western, it was not even necessarily Christian except that some of the books in the canon were that way, and I thought it was taught largely by people who took a very skeptical view of the Knickerbocker notions. There were a number of Catholics, Jews, who found teaching in the Core a kind of exciting opportunity, and I would not have . . . I mean it has its faults, it has its problems. We at Barnard have gone quite a different route from the Core, but I would not fault the Core or the undergraduate curriculum on that. Of course the more recent would be the globalization of the curriculum, with a major cultures requirement in the 1970s, and a general opening up of general education courses that deal with parts of the world that were not part of the Core's original sense of the world. I would consider those openings up.

**Man:** Contemporary Civilization: I remember when I took it, it was described variously as a course in Catholicism taught the Jewish students in an Episcopalian school. Going just very briefly back to Barnard. The comment was made, and I remember this also quite well, was how was a virile young male student to learn surrounded by nubile young females, and therefore it had to be a segregated-for-sex school. Be that as it may, Barnard still exists. I would ask how many—I have no
idea, but I can guess—how many all-female colleges are there, and how many all-
male colleges are there, and have they out served their usefulness or not?

Rosalind Rosenberg: Well we were trying to deal with that earlier. I can't give you
the exact number, but there are very, very few—certainly more all-female colleges
than male colleges. Have they out served their usefulness? No, I don't think so in
that women's colleges remain a place where female students get to be just people.
And it's something that is not so easy in other environments. So on this issue of
leadership from the top, and what a difference that can make, when 25-year-old
Annie Nathan Meyer went about trying to drum up support for Barnard College, and
she put together the first board of trustees, that's sort of leading from the top. She
insisted that there were 22 trustees, that half of them be women, half of them men,
and there were a couple of Jews and a Catholic, which for 1889 was pretty
revolutionary. But I do think that coeducation is something that has often been
advanced more effectively by a women's college like Barnard than by many
coeducational institutions where I've taught or been a student.

Robert McCaughey: I used to have to do this for a living when I was dean of the
faculty at Barnard and a male. I've changed both those characterizations since. But it
is possible to make the case that Barnard right now is considerably more selective in
its entering class than Columbia was on the eve of going coeducational. And the
numbers are getting ever smaller. Catholic colleges, which were the principal
colleges of women's colleges up until the 1960s, are down to a mere handful. It's
taking a while to have an impact on the Seven Sisters because of substantial
endowments and ongoing loyal alums, but among those schools Barnard is doing
very well. It becomes a tremendous advantage to Barnard to have the Columbia
affiliation. The talk tonight suggests that that's a back and forth reciprocal
arrangement, but I think Barnard's recent history would suggest that the connection
to Columbia is crucial, perhaps life determining, certainly valuable.

Man: Just a comment actually, and maybe it is a prelude to next week's discussion.
But as the question of the Core, the change of the Core, I would think in 1968 what
came out of that had a lot to do with a substantial reevaluation of what the
composition of the Core should be. So that could be discussed more next week
perhaps.

Rosalind Rosenberg: Just one comment on the Core. When the Core first got
underway in the 1920s there was a great deal of debate back and forth between
Columbia and Barnard about this, and I don't know that it's really true to say that it
was a Knickerbocker curriculum. But certainly there was a great concern about how
to provide the best general education for a student body that was becoming
increasingly diverse. And the vote of the Barnard faculty at that time, and this will
shock some of my Barnard colleagues, was to go completely the opposite direction. Barnard eliminated all requirements in 1925. And when Virginia Gildersleeve brought the resolution of the faculty who voted on this to the university council, Dean Herbert Hawkes said, "Well, I wouldn't want to see this happen at my college, but if the Barnard faculty insists I won't stop them." So it hasn't been a steady progression, Barnard has lots of requirements now, but it certainly was an ongoing debate.

**Robert McCaughey:** I'd like to thank our speaker and respondents, and thank the audience. You've once again proved that a Columbia audience is incapable of sustained self-gratification over any length of time.