



May 2008

# WCCFT Union NEWS

Monthly Newsletter of The Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers

## Solidarity Beyond the Usual Boundary Lines

**S**olidarity is the theme of this issue of The Union News. It is also the indispensable cornerstone of a union's vitality and viability. But it is especially gratifying to witness when that solidarity extends well beyond the bounds of the rank and file, as it has recently in the New York Catholic teach-

er-  
dents waved to teachers and shook their hands in support of what they perceived as a worthy cause. As one female student, 16, a junior from the Bronx, remarked, "If that was my parents this was happening to, I would want them to do the same thing."

Arriving parents too signaled their solidarity with the striking teachers. They honked horns and waved their support. As one union official put it, "Overall, parents were supportive of the strike. They realize that good salaries keep good teachers in the school." Even passing sanitation trucks and school bus drivers called out and made gestures of sympathy, while a billboard on a truck parked nearby summed up the teachers' complaint: "The Archdiocese: Just Raised \$163 Million but Won't Give a Penny to Catholic School Teachers."

One teacher interviewed by The New York Times painted a dramatic picture of the necessity for the strike. Elysia Meynard, 25, a second year English teacher with two college degrees spoke of her commitment to teaching in troubled neighborhoods, but how her salary of \$34,000 fell far short of providing her with an adequate living and financial future. Long-term teachers at Cardinal Hayes fare little better. Lorraine

Nanko, 69, a 39-year veteran and chair of the fine arts department, makes the highest salary permissible under the present cap: \$53,000! As a result of these woefully inadequate salary scales, many teachers in the Archdiocese find themselves taking second jobs as tutors and coaches to help make ends meet.



*Teachers and graduate assistants demonstrate for higher education in British Columbia, Canada*

ers strike. Students, parents, neighbors and passersby all added their voices to the chorus calling for more equitable treatment of Catholic school teachers during the recent job action.

The strike began on April 15, when 850 members of the Lay Faculty Association (Local 255 of the Laborers' International Union of North America), one of two teachers' unions in the Archdiocese of New York, a district with 216 schools serving about 100,000 students, did not report for work. At Cardinal Hayes High School in the Bronx, one of the affected schools, picket lines began forming around 7:30 in the morning, with as many as 30 teachers at a time signaling their protest of salaries and working conditions that are far below standards achieved by other teachers. Meanwhile, stu-



*Thousands of teachers strike for increased school funding in Oaxaca, Mexico*

Interviews with teacher after teacher underscored not only their commitment to their profession but their frustration with the lack of acknowledgement of their financial needs and the lack of incentives to keep their commitment unwavering. This, perhaps, was a predictable dimension of the Catholic teachers strike, as it would be of any organized union protest. But what struck many onlookers in this particular situation was a phenomenon which is not always visible during controversial job actions. It was the happy way in which the concept of solidarity was embraced and extended by those whose lives are directly affected by the teachers in whose hands they have placed their future.



A Monthly Newsletter of  
Local 2431 American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)  
Affiliated with New York State United Teachers

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## Calendar of Events

**Monthly Meetings:**  
**First Wednesday, 11:00 a.m.**  
**Science Building 102**  
**(Lunch is served)**

**April 30, 2008:**  
Grievance Training Session  
11:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.  
Science Building, Room 367

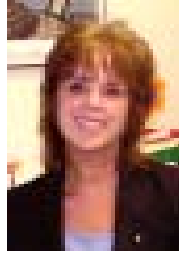
**May 7, 2008:**  
Legislative Luncheon  
With  
Westchester County  
Board of  
Legislators  
11:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.  
Instructional Dining Room



### President's Message

# Moving Forward in Solidarity

By Anne D'Orazio



A union must be a model of solidarity, a community of interests, objectives and standards. It must bring together all its component parts to accomplish shared goals. So in looking back over this past school year, what has this union done to foster solidarity, to combat divisive forces and move the collective body closer to fulfillment of its mission?

We handled lots and lots of problems expressed to us from full time and adjunct faculty all over campus. We listened, we tried to understand, we investigated, we supported, we defended, we advocated, we invested resources in our efforts to restore the ability of individual members to work in an environment free of any kind of infringements of their rights as outlined in the union-management collective bargaining agreement and the American legal system.

- We represented the interests of faculty in disputes with the Administration and in most instances found ways to avoid filing formal grievances.
- We continued our fight for equity for adjuncts and for immediate improvements in their working conditions such as providing them with office space.
- We arbitrated a case and saw that the professor was returned to the classroom.
- We offered assistance in departmental conflicts, calling meetings to hear all sides and were able to mediate positive solutions in two very difficult situations.
- We intervened for a faculty member

with POMCO and are still seeking compensation for a denied claim.

- We sent out detailed surveys to full time and adjunct faculty and compiled the data from over 200 unit members to determine what the primary areas of concern were.

- We convened individual meetings with faculty on specific issues such as distance learning, the grievance procedure and released time.

- We held numerous session of the negotiating team and hammered out a list of proposals for collective bargaining

including a protocol for adjunct faculty.

- We advocated for diversity and sought new approaches to recruiting and retaining teaching faculty of color.

- We sought to build a union culture on campus in our general membership meetings and our News-

*"...of all the union did, what I am most proud of was its relentless crusade to protect due process for all its members against the erosion of that time-honored and essential obligation of someone in power to give notice and a hearing before depriving an individual of a fundamental right."*

letter which highlighted not only our struggles but local, national and international efforts of teachers to improve their working conditions.

But of all the union did, what I am most proud of was its relentless crusade to protect due process for all its members against the erosion of that time-honored and essential obligation of someone in power to give notice and a hearing before depriving an individual of a fundamental right. We will never give up our fight to demand uniformly applied standards and procedures from the Administration.

We remain open to all points of view within the union and optimistic that the entire faculty of Westchester Community College will move forward together in solidarity.



# A Healthier Course

By Richard Rosell

Only by taking an historical perspective can we fully appreciate the administration's recent treatment of Professor Michael Downie. As you may know, Professor Downie, a member of the English Department, was suspended from teaching after April 2<sup>nd</sup> because of what President Hankin has called "abuse of sick leave." (Translation: Professor Downie made legitimate use of his sick leave during the course of one semester and someone in the administration decided to make an issue of it. There is absolutely no evidence of abuse.) And while the administration alleges student complaints, no evidence of complaints has been shared with Professor Downie or the union. Although the phrase "abuse of sick leave" sounds official, it is a term invented to lend the appearance of legitimacy to the administration's claims. Prior to this incident no one I am aware of has ever been disciplined because they made legitimate use of their sick leave or any other type of leave for that matter.

To understand how the administration's treatment of Professor Downie differs from the treatment others have received, I will share the story of a former colleague, the late Professor Steve Friedman.

Steve Friedman joined our faculty in the early 1970's. He was a man who loved every aspect of academic life. He was an historian who enjoyed research and teaching equally. But he loved the political side of campus life as well. After being at the college only three or four years he ran for and was elected Presiding Officer of the Faculty Senate. He was also a member of the Executive Board of the union. He 'hung' with a group who enjoyed challenging a much younger President Hankin on every substantive issue that came before the Senate. As you might imagine, debate was robust and passions ran high on all sides.

To be sure, Steve Friedman could not claim to be on the administration's list of MPMOC's (most popular men on

campus). That became clear when a former chair of the Behavioral and Social Sciences Department resigned in order to return to full time teaching. The Departmental Committee met and nominated Steve as the *only* candidate it would recommend for the position. Not willing to accept the Departmental Committee's recommendation, Dr. Hankin did not appoint Steve, but instead made an offer which the previous chair must have found attractive because he resumed the chairmanship and remained in it until shortly before he retired years later.

As I think about Steve now, I wonder if his zeal was not the result of an expectation that his failing health would eventually rob him of a long and active life. Steve had diabetes. During a chance conversation he and I had after a graduation ceremony on campus, he told me how diabetes was going to attack every part of his body and that in a number of years he would be ravaged

and extraordinary support from his wife, family and friends, Steve continued to come to campus to meet his classes. Knowing that there would be many days that he would not be able to make it in, the administration paid another instructor to shadow Steve's classes as a substitute. With the exception of room changes to accommodate mobility problems, Steve insisted that he not be treated differently than any other faculty member. It was extraordinary.

But the story does not end there. Because of his health problems it was inevitable that Steve would run out of sick days. It was at that time that the union approached Dr. Hankin to ask if he would permit members of the faculty to donate sick days to Steve so he would not lose income on the days he was unable to come campus. When I approached Dr. Hankin with this idea, not only did he agree to it *immediately*, but he said that *he* would contribute the first day! Everyone knew it was a good



Stephen Friedman (front row, second from left) with Social Science Department colleagues circa 1973

by the disease. Although I thought he was exaggerating at the time, eventually everything he told me proved to be true. He died in 1988.

Yet, in spite of amputations, dialysis, and a compromised circulatory system, Steve courageously insisted that he would continue to teach. With ex-

and humane solution to a very difficult situation. No one spoke of "abuse of sick leave" or student complaints (although students may have been inconvenienced). As a matter of principle, Steve did not want to be treated any differently than anyone else, and every-

(See "Healthier" Pg. 8)



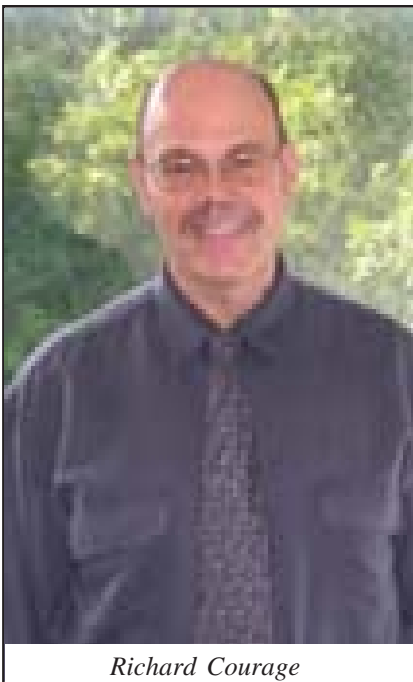
# How Full-Time Faculty Are Growing Professionally

by Patti Sehulster

What exactly do we professionals need? Perhaps we need the simple refreshment of becoming students again, of doggedly following a scholarly pursuit, or of addressing a program we see screams for revamping. Perhaps we hunger for attendance at that one conference ideally suited to our singular presentation. Perhaps we thirst for that engaging exchange of ideas in our discipline or in our two-year college domain. Whatever we want, we need money to help defray the cost of such endeavors, and our union's Faculty Development Fund this year has provided for the needs of 42 of our full-time faculty and ten of our adjunct faculty. A sampling of the activities in which our colleagues have engaged demonstrates that their uses of those funds vary as much as our disciplines and our teaching styles.

## Richard Courage

The late Robert Bone, a "pioneering historian of black literature" and Richard's mentor at Columbia University Teachers' College, as well as Richard's reading of African American



Richard Courage

literature since his teenage years, a habit that brought him to a sincere interest in Richard Wright and 1930's America, inspired his most recent scholarly project: the writing of an interdisciplinary book, *Lost Renaissance: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1930 – 1950*. In order to complete the writing of this text, Richard has combined "research trips, reworking parts of the manuscript into journal articles, writing the catalogue essay for a related art exhibition, writing grant proposals for support to complete the book, co-directing an NEH-funded Faculty Humanities Workshop," and communicating with



Stella Economou

senior scholars in the field. Whether he traveled to Chicago or to the University of California Berkeley's archives, Richard found himself "professionally refreshed and renewed" and gaining "a new lease on my career." He has found that doing this scholarly work has "specifically helped me revise the reading assignments and the literature I teach each spring [and] to understand and explain black writers of the 30s and 40s, eg., Richard Wright, Margaret Walker,

[www.wccft.org](http://www.wccft.org)

and Gwendolyn Brooks, [. . .] to learn a lot more about earlier writers, [and so] enhance what I bring to teaching literature in all my courses."

## Stella Economou



Daryl Nosek

Stella's journey to implement new policy has taken her down roads filled with obstacles as well as discovery, and part of her passage came through faculty development funds. She "identified a need – enabling students and teachers to survive – and just did the work necessary to address that need." Her goal to "implement and research a web-based computerized adaptive exam in Spanish [. . . that would] provide WCC students, both on and off campus, with feedback regarding their level of proficiency in Spanish before they complete their course registration" ultimately took her to Brigham Young University and a meeting with the creator of the one \$1,000 program that her research told her would work best. That program now serves as the placement test for Spanish, French, German, and ESL courses at WCC and helps insure



Sean Simpson

successful teaching and learning for students of foreign language.

#### Daryl Nosek

Daryl used her funds to wing her way to Chicago to attend the four-day C.A.F.E. (Center for the Advancement of Food Service Education) conference at Kendall College. This year's conference, "Leadership: Redefining Excellence in Food Service Education" included many hands-on application activities in combination with the lectures, so Daryl had to "don [her] apron and gloves and roll up her sleeves." She enjoyed "being a student for a day or so, the camaraderie, the sharing of ideas and strategies, and the forums dealing with the challenges faced by educators." She also appreciated seeing what another institution that provided food service education had to offer in the way of facilities and programs and found herself "highly motivated and inspired" by the conference. She has already begun implementing much of what she learned there in the program here at WCC.

#### Sean Simpson

Dividing his funds among expenditures for attending conferences in San Diego, Ohio, and New York as well as partial costs of earning a second Master's Degree, Sean has concentrated on professional development in mathematics. In San Diego, he enjoyed learning new approaches at the Joint Conference of the Mathematics Association of American Math Societies; in Ohio, a conference on teaching statis-

tics; and in New York, a series of workshops designed for professors of mathematics at two-year colleges. Sean has found most rewarding the chance to "bring it back to the classes." Energized with new knowledge and new techniques for teaching, Sean has embraced these opportunities as essential to his growth as well as to his students' development.

#### Barbara Thomas

Can we imagine ourselves with our ears stuffed with cotton, two of our fingers taped, and wearing eyeglasses that barely correct our degenerating eyesight as we try to negotiate the health care terrain of a hospital or doctor visit? The use of exactly this type of scenario



Barbara Thomas

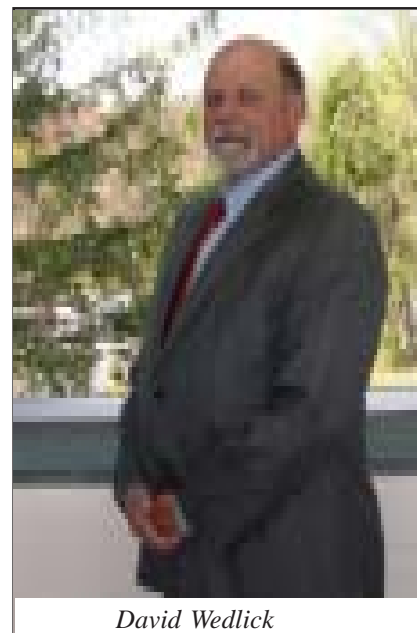
as a teaching tool for future health care professionals served as the basis of Barbara's work as an invited speaker at the Geron Technology Conference that faculty development funds enabled her to attend in Dallas, Texas. In explaining the way she has combined interactive role-playing exercises with computer technology and nursing, Barbara has brought new training ideas not only to nursing programs but also to other health care professions such as radiology. In addition, this work enabled her to become a scholar in residence at NYU's summer program, where she worked with the Hartford Foundation and has been invited back again this summer to continue her research on this type of training exercise. As she con-

tinues to gather data and work with other scholars in the field, she finds her work has resonance with almost everyone because we will all one day face the difficulties of old age and declining abilities.

#### David Wedlick

David's work began in 2006, when, as a part of a criminal justice department consortium with Bergen Community College and Norwalk Community College, he helped create a conference (held at BCC) that focused on gang culture. County executives and district attorneys mingled with law enforcement personnel, teachers, principals, guidance counselors, and guest speakers for a day of information. In the Fall, David will host the follow-up conference right here at WCC. This time, the conference will focus upon the Peer Gang Resistance Program. College students will meet with high school students to discuss resistance strategies as teachers and guidance counselors engage in the discussion as well. David says these conferences become important especially to "the capstone course, the Criminal Justice Seminar" he teaches. In this course, he has the students complete a project that surveys individuals on campus about gang culture and then they come back to class and discuss the results.

*Theresa Cousins, Susan Arietta, Julia Daniels, Chrystolyn Williams and Carolyn Christesen are some of the others who have benefited from these Faculty Development funds, but we save their stories for another day. . .*



David Wedlick



## How Adjuncts Are Growing Professionally

by Diane Urban

**S**pring and growth: they are so intimately linked. So, this time of year is a wonderful opportunity to explore the possibilities for funding our professional growth. I think it is safe to say that there are many adjuncts who do not know that there is funding avail-

ization of photography educators, is an important place to network with other photography educators. As Karen described the experience, "With all the changes in the medium it is an important place to share and dialogue and learn what others are doing around the country. The photography department and the students at WCC/WAW have certainly enjoyed the benefit of my perspective, so it was terrific to be supported in this way."

Last June, Lisa Maxwell attended a two day conference in NYC that launched the Adobe Creative Suite 3. She also received training online for one year through lynda.com. She feels, "It was extremely helpful to be reimbursed for both of those, and both have been big assets to my teaching."

sistance.

"I went to a conference on 'Cognitive Behavioral Psychotherapy for Children and Adolescents with Anxiety Disorders'. The main speaker was Anne Marie Albano, PhD. She is the Director of Columbia University Clinic for Anxi-



Karen Marshall

able for them through their union. This funding has been available since 2004. The guidelines allow for two activities to be funded per academic year. The activity can be a workshop, a course or a conference that enhances ones expertise in their discipline. To be eligible for the funding, an adjunct must have completed ten or more semesters of teaching at WCC; also, the activity must have occurred within the academic year that the adjunct was employed. There is a maximum of \$500 that can be paid to any one applicant. The next deadline for application is Oct. 31, 2008.

Here is how some of us utilized the money provided:

Last March, Karen Marshall attended the "Society of Photographic Education Conference" that was held in Miami. This four day conference, sponsored by this national or-



Lisa Maxwell

Rick Hyland, who attends Columbia Teachers College, used the funds to defray the cost of tuition and books and was grateful for this much needed as-



Rick Hyland

ety and Related Disorders as well as an Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology in Psychiatry. The workshop began with theory, progressed to specific examples from her practice and ended with ample opportunity for discussion. Since all of us feel anxiety from time to time, I will share one simple technique to reduce it: always question how this thought developed, what evidence you have for it and what alternative thoughts are possible. Although this sounds simplistic, once you try it, you will realize how very difficult it is for us to recognize our own irrational thoughts. (It is much easier to recognize them in others!)"

*"I think it is safe to say that there are many adjuncts who do not know that there is funding available for them through their union."*

The WCCFT Executive Board knows that we all find ways to enhance our professional development. We hope that this sampling of activities that were funded will inspire more of you to apply for reimbursement in the future.

# My Experience with a Teachers' Union in Peru

By Naicy Pretill

Peruvian public school is traditional, free, patriotic, and centralist. Public students even still wear uniforms to show equality among students. The teachers' union in my country is called Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores en la Educacion del Peru (SUTEP). It translates to Syndicate Unitary of Workers in the Education of Peru. From what I remember, the teachers' union called for a national strike for a pay increase almost every year. As a primary student, I saw how my teacher had to stop teaching us because she had to be with her colleagues fighting for their rights. It was sad to see them walking all day and chanting messages very loudly. However, those sad feelings would disappear fast when I played games with my schoolmates.

During my secondary school, I was aware of how my country, Peru, was not only in the transition to democracy, but also was going through an economic crisis due to daily terrorism attacks, a high level of unemployment, privatization, poverty, and bad leaders. As public workers, public school teachers started to go on strike until their demands were met by the current President, Alan Garcia.

The experiences of those years were valuable for me because as a member of the brigadiers, a group of student leaders, I had the responsibility to organize and to convince my classmates to support our teachers. Almost all my classmates and our teachers marched on the streets to the meeting points. Students, teachers, and parents were holding messages and flags of our country, SUTEP, and our school. Moreover, females carried their empty kitchen pots and wood spoons as a symbol that the teachers could not afford to eat. Because it was a SUTEP national strike, the SUTEP of each state and their teachers mobilized in the capital, Lima.

When marchers arrived in Lima, the capital city, we walked together to the main plaza, Plaza de Armas. There, the SUTEP would update us about the negotiations that were held between the government and the SUTEP. After that, teachers initiated "las ollas

comunnes," which means common pots which symbolize cooperation and solidarity. For that famous event, female teachers, students, and mothers put together ingredients to prepare a meal while males started to prepare the fire. That was one of the best moments for me because it was like a festival; everybody was happy to share, rest, and play folk music. The next day, if the answer of the Congress was not positive, brave teachers would volunteer to refuse to eat and go on "huelga de hambre" (hun-



ger strike), and SUTEP would block the principal street of the city. When it became a violent strike, the students were asked to stay out. However, I followed it in the news. Again, it was extremely sad to see, because some programs presented only the bad moments of the strike. They showed teachers fighting with police, the destruction of places, buses, tear gas, and detentions of SUTEP leaders. SUTEP leaders were accused of following a terrorist's path. That strike lasted for more than a week. SUTEP gained more support, not only from the teachers, but also from the community. As a result, teachers' salaries increased a little bit.

When I was living and working in Colombia, I did not notice the teachers' union until I was sent to work in a small town where most of the teachers were paid by municipal wages. The majority of the staff and I were called municipal teachers. We were not allowed to participate in the union because only teachers who were paid by the state had the right to do so. As a consequence, we worked without payment for six months at a time without saying anything. All my colleagues

were buying food for their families by borrowing money. Fortunately, I lived with my sisters, and they helped me.

Working without pay brought unhappiness to their duties, and they did not want to speak up because they were afraid to lose their jobs. I was a young and eager foreign teacher and I did not have anything to lose; therefore, I spoke with the leader of the teachers' union, students, and parents for support, and we went on strike for a day. We walked while local instrumentalists played music, danced, and carried signs with written messages for the office of the mayor of the town. After we expressed our demands, he promised to pay us every other month because the town was short of money. This kind of strike was the first and the last that this small town had ever seen.

Even now, when I receive calls from them, they still remember that moment. For without the unity of us all, it would not have been possible to reach that goal.

Most importantly, I have learned to value the teachers' union's mission. I was privileged to march with courageous *maestros* who, as warriors, had been fighting for their rights until the end. Even today, the Teachers' Union, SUTEP, keeps seeking their rights.

They, as one body, keep walking with their red flags in their hands and chanting aloud: "No podran, no podran nuestra huelga silenciar!" (They cannot, cannot silence our strike!). Their efforts and sacrifices are making a solid foundation for the benefit of all Peruvian *maestros*. Therefore, one day Peruvian teachers will enjoy great benefits, the same as New York public school teachers have. I, however, feel that it was here that I really understood the meaning of the union in the work place, not only by gaining knowledge about unions through American history, but by seeing all the progress that unions had contributed for the sake of their workers.

Naicy Pretill is a student at Westchester Community College and the first winner of the \$1,500.00 WCCFT Union Scholarship.



## Healthier

*(Continued from Pg. 3)*

one else, administration and faculty alike, did all they could to make sure he was not. I should mention, it was because of Steve's experience that the union and the administration agreed to include a sick bank in the next contract.

As I noted above, Dr. Hankin's early years on the campus were very turbulent. Anyone who was here at time knows that there were important grievances, long court cases, as well as important battles over substantive issues that came before the Faculty Senate. Yet as the case of Steve Friedman demonstrates, when it came to issues of health and sick leave, a truce was called and we all did the right and humane thing. As I reflect on the administration's handling of Michael Downie's absences today, I am struck at how much the tone, language and reaction of the administration has changed. When we met with Dr. Hankin recently to discuss his approval of Professor Downie's suspension, I reminded him how differently he responded to Steve Friedman's situation. Under the pressure of the moment

and unwilling to back away from his decision, his response was: "that was 30 years ago" and that the decision on Professor Downie was "final." Knowing his reaction to Steve's case many years before, I wondered to myself what the outcome would have been if his subordinates had not already reached a decision on Professor Downie or if he had invited the union in to discuss the matter before the decision was made. Would the outcome have been different? We will never know.

Steve Friedman's health issues were certainly treated differently than Professor Downie's. How do we explain the difference? Has the president changed? Is it because we have different deans making the decisions? Would we deny a teacher who was required to do 30 days of jury duty the right to return to class (Professor Downie used eleven days spread over the course of the semester.) We understand this is not a perfect world and that sometimes students will be inconvenienced. But is suspension the answer?

I write here about Steve Friedman's case because I believe that it exemplifies our college at its best. I could point



*Stephen Friedman Circa 1978*

to other instances when counselors, librarians, and teachers took more than eleven days sick of leave during a semester to recover from surgery, chemotherapy or chronic illnesses. As in Steve's case there was never an issue of days missed. If we study our history I think we can discover a healthier course.

## SAVE THE DATE!

**Wednesday, 24 September 2008**

**11:30 a.m. Academic Arts Auditorium**

# Professor Lani Guinier



**First Black Woman  
Tenured Professor  
at Harvard Law School  
Acclaimed Author and  
Civil Rights Scholar**

**Co-sponsored by the WCCFT  
and the WCC Affirmative Action Committee**