



## Legal Community Hit by Layoffs, Trying to Cope

By Andrew Kloster '10

The economic downturn is, needless to say, affecting everyone, including lawyers. Hit particularly hard are the classes of 2009, 2010, and 2011, or prospective graduates, rising 3Ls, and rising 2Ls respectively. In order to stabilize numerical employment without causing partners to jump ship, a variety of cost-cutting measures have been introduced at firms around the country, big and small, low on the Vault rankings and high.

First: the layoff. Be it Heller Erhman or Thelen, firm dissolution has thrown a number of 3Ls on the streets. Yet the scorched-earth policy is not relegated to firms that go belly up, or, for that matter, private practice in general—even the District Attorney of Philadelphia has rescinded all offers of employment to 3Ls. Some firms have provided severance, but most have not. Total

legal personal laid off in March and February totals over 5,000, with about 2,200 lawyers losing their jobs.

Second, a number of firms have pushed their 3L start dates back, including Cravath, Latham, White & Case, Ropes & Gray, and Morrison Foerster, to name a few. Some start dates have been pushed back as far as 2010. Other firms that have traditionally offered multiple potential start dates for their incoming classes have condensed everything to a single start date this year, to save on training costs.

Finally, a variety of 2L summer programs have been scaled back. Kirkland & Ellis, Gibson Dunn, Shearman & Sterling, Akin Gump (which has even rescinded some 2L offers), and Dechert have, for instance, cut their summer programs to ten weeks or fewer from the traditional 12 to 14.

All these measures are cause for concern on one level, but

cause for optimism on another. Irene Dorzback, Assistant Dean for Career Services at NYU, notes that each of these tactics (aside from the sheer layoff) is designed to keep employment on the table. If a firm doesn't push back a start date or shorten a summer, it might not be able to continue employment on the margin.

So how is the economy changing the way the Office of Career Services (OCS) operates, and what advice is out there for 2Ls, 3Ls, and recent graduates? Dorzback's first response to this type of question is to say, "I want everybody on top of their game." Having recently noticed a heightened seriousness in the job-search process, OCS is expanding their programming, offering multiple meeting times with counselors to accommodate

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## Korematsu Lecture Puts Minoru Yasui on Trial



Jessica Wang '10

The prosecution presents its case in the re-enactment of Yasui's trial for violating a military curfew order instituted in the wake of the Pearl Harbor bombings.

By Jessica Wang '10

On the evening of March 10, 2009, students, alumni, attorneys, faculty, and community members gathered in Vanderbilt Hall's Greenberg Lounge for the 10th Annual Korematsu Lecture on Asian Americans and the Law.

For the 10th anniversary year, a special presentation was planned—"The Trial of Minoru Yasui: The Administration of Justice in a Time of War." Breaking away from the traditional lecture format, the presentation was a dramatic re-enactment of Yasui's trial performed by a team of attorneys from the Asian American Bar Association of New York and students from area universities and law schools. Yasui, a US citizen, was a Japanese-American lawyer and the first of four Japanese-Americans to challenge the military orders instituted after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. All four cases would reach the Supreme Court.

After brief opening remarks by Korematsu Lecture Committee Co-chairs Jessica Wang '10 and Connie Tse '10, the presentation opened with a clip of the attacks on Pearl Harbor. The trial itself began with the presentation of the government's case, laying out Yasui's story.

Within hours after the curfew took effect, Yasui began walking the streets of Portland, Oregon, holding in his pocket proof of his Japanese ancestry and a copy of the military curfew order. After walking for three hours he grew tired, but—undeterred—he arrived at a police station and demanded to be arrested. At trial it was undisputed that Yasui had knowingly violated the order. The government painted Yasui as a Japanese

loyalist; key to their case was his work with the Japanese Consul General's office.

The defense presented only one witness—Yasui himself. After graduating from law school, Yasui had a hard time finding a job at a law firm. It took him almost a year to eventually find employment at the Japanese Consulate, a position he was given because of his ability to speak both English and Japanese. The day after the declaration of war against Japan, Yasui quit his work there. Although much of his work had centered on the preservation of peace, he felt that, as a loyal American citizen, he couldn't work for the Japanese Consulate after war had been declared.

Yasui's trial lasted only a day and, aside from some editing for length, the words of the re-enactment were the actual words spoken at his trial over 66 years ago. The presiding judge, the Hon. James Alger Fee, played by attorney Francis Chin, ruled that the military orders, as applied to citizens, were unconstitutional. But he further ruled that, through his work with the Japanese Consulate, Yasui had relinquished his American citizenship, and thus was guilty. At sentencing, Yasui, played by attorney John Flock, said, "I have lived, believed, worked, and aspired as an American. The decision of this honorable court to the contrary notwithstanding, I am an American citizen, who is not only proud of that fact, but who is willing to defend that right." Unmoved, Judge Fee imposed the maximum sentence. After spending nine months in solitary confinement, Yasui was later interned in Minidoka.

The Ninth Circuit certified the Yasui case directly to the Supreme

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## Sorcerer's Apprentice Films on Campus



Andrew Gehring '09

Thursday, March 19 saw production crews take over the courtyard of Vanderbilt Hall to film part of an upcoming Disney movie, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Starring Nicolas Cage (of countless terrible movies, as well as *Con Air*) and Jay Baruchel (the skinny guy in *Tropic Thunder* and *Knocked Up*), the movie brings the realm of magic to modern-day New York City as Cage, as sorcerer, takes Baruchel on as his apprentice (hence the movie's title). Left, a rain machine makes the already-cloudy day a bit drearier (for ambience). Filming also occurred at another NYU building, just east of Washington Square Park on University place.

## Legal Briefs



Raphael Golb (left), J.D. '95, was arrested earlier this month for impersonating NYU professor Lawrence Schiffman. Golb used internet aliases to "influence and affect debate on the *Dead Sea Scrolls*," "harass[ing]... scholars who disagree[d] with his viewpoint," according to Manhattan district attorney Robert Morgenthau.

Speaking of committing fraud, an associate at Weil Gotshal—and an almost-NYU Law grad—was recently fired for pretending to have graduated from law school. Problems with his credits prevented him from graduating, but he pretended he had anyway.

Infra

Still undecided about whether to see *Watchmen*? We'll help you make an informed decision. page 4

A fond farewell to *Battlestar Galactica*, the show that revitalized television sci-fi. page 5

Find out which of your friends have potential and which don't—the 2009-2010 journal and moot court mastheads are here. pages 6-7



# DADT Will Only Change If “Tolerant” People Are Willing to Join the Military

By Molly Wallace ’10

I recently read a book called *AWOL: The Unexcused Absence of America’s Upper Class from Military Service—and How It Hurts Our Country* by Kathy Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaefer. Ironically, even though it’s been sitting in the NYU undergraduate library since 2007, I seem to be the first person to have checked it out. The premise of the book—in case the title isn’t clear enough—is that “the best and the brightest” no longer engage in military service, creating a chasm between civilian leadership and military leadership. Those making decisions about domestic and foreign policy have sharply diverging experiences from those making decisions on the ground. In discussing reasons for the disparity, the authors dismiss

the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy (DADT) as an excuse that well-educated people use for not serving. I believe the story is a little more complicated: it’s not an excuse; it’s a symptom of the divide. A handful of law students served in the military before coming to NYU, and a small number hope to become JAGs. But most of us seem to have the sense that we wouldn’t really like the military, and the military wouldn’t really like us. DADT is one of the things we can point to for support of that belief. There are myriad ways to serve your country, and those of us at the law school are well positioned to go into government work in the Department of Justice, at the US Attorney’s Office, or in politics. Even those who prioritize maintaining national and international security gener-

ally see their skills as being more effectively used in these civilian positions rather than by serving in the military. Many of us want to make a difference, and it’s not necessarily the physical hardship or the logistical difficulties of being in the military that are stopping us. It is the perception of a military culture that is hostile to our values and achievements.

All too often this perception goes unexamined. It is the military’s responsibility to reform policies like DADT that are based on prejudice, but it is our duty to investigate our own prejudices. At its heart, the military’s mission is humanitarian. Those in the service are asked to risk their lives to defend the decisions we make as a democratic society. What could be more in line with the value of public service than this potential sacrifice? Yet we tend to think of service members as kids who like to kill, or as victims of a powerful and deceptive military recruiting campaign.

Unfortunately, defending democratically made decisions entails defending both good decisions and bad ones. Many, if not most, students at top colleges and law schools were against the war in Iraq from the get-go, just as many of our professors were against the war in Vietnam. Personal disagreement with a legitimately enacted authorization for the use of force does not mean you’re off the hook. Unless you believe our system is fundamentally broken, or that the use of force is never justified, being willing to defend such decisions is fundamental; it is as fundamental as defending a person’s right to vote or a person’s right to free speech—whether or not you are in agreement with how they’re voting or what they’re saying.

If you disagree with how the military conducts itself in the process of carrying out its directives, there are ways to change that. These include voting, protesting, petitioning, and numerous other avenues. But Congress only has so much control over the military, and—as the White House is increasingly populated by people who lack military experience—the executive must give greater deference to military leaders. If we want to see a military that better reflects our values, a military that would have long ago ended discrimination against gays, then the military must be populated by people who share those values. The only way that will happen is if we take it upon ourselves to join their ranks and influence their policies.

# Steele: More Than a Republican Obama

By Dennis Chanay ’11

I’ve got to admit, I was pretty excited when the GOP finally elected their new chairman: former state-level chairman and successful politician in a solidly blue state; experienced head of GOPAC, a committee that offers grass root election help to republican candidates; and a charismatic orator whose 2008 convention chant “Drill, Baby, Drill!” resonated across the otherwise dull event.

Everything about Michael Steele’s impressive resume seems to make him the man that, in time, can bring the Republicans out of the political wilderness. Mainstream comedy, however, seems to have already written the last disturbing word on Steele: “B-L-A-C-K.”

From Stephen Colbert’s invitation to have a “rap battle,” to *SNL*’s trite caricature (“Republicans, can I get a what-what?! Holla!”), the punch line is set. While humorists continue to tip-toe around our first African-American president, the joke comes all too easy when the target is a conservative.

As Jon Stewart of *The Daily Show*, reporting on Steele’s election, put it, “You want black, America? We got black!” At first I laughed, but as Stewart’s joke wore on without a new angle—“He’s like the Republicans’ Florack Shoshama”—I realized they were denigrating his accomplishment simply because he’s black.

I know what you’re thinking: *The Daily Show* is only satire. And you’re right, it’s satire—except when it’s not.

When Stewart interviewed financial analyst and *Mad Money* host Jim Cramer on Thursday, March 12, ironically faulting Cramer for putting “entertainment before journalism” while ignoring signs of the impending recession, satire was no where to be found. Stewart’s self-righteousness was incredible. Not that his questions weren’t fair; by all accounts they were (“Where was your sober financial expertise prior to this recession, Jim?”). I just kept waiting for what should have been Cramer’s natural response, “Where was your outrage prior to my criticism of Obama’s economic policy, Jon?”

The question never came, but we don’t have to imagine the answer. Stewart’s outrage simply wasn’t there.

Cramer wasn’t brought on *The Daily Show* because he failed to “warn us.” Like nearly everybody else, he dropped the ball and admitted it several times during the interview. Where were the warnings, the action by then-Senator Obama and the democratic Congress between 2006 and 2008? Cramer was brought on the show because of his recent remarks about the “destruction of wealth” at the hands of the Obama administration. In short, he was brought on the show to be embarrassed, punished, and—most of all—marginalized.

And what about comedy? Cramer’s disappointed face, like Steele’s color, was the entire joke. Without missing a beat, humorists

have adopted their new tone for the Obama era, and it sounds suspiciously like the last four years of the Bush era: “We are smart. You are dumb. Let’s all laugh at you.”

As a conservative, I can attest that the feeling is mutual. Still, this trend of marginalization wouldn’t be so upsetting if it were limited to Stewart or *Saturday Night Live*’s “The Rock Obama.” But the marginalization of serious and humorous criticism alike of Obama doesn’t stop on television. Two weeks ago, I sat in a midtown diner discussing politics and movies with friends. After a few minutes of swapping funny news stories we had read, I asked the group what they thought of Obama’s recent gift of 25 DVDs to British Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

After being asked to explain how Obama met Brown’s gift, an ornamental pen-holder carved from the hull of a 19th century Royal Navy anti-slavery ship, with a box set of DVDs (how tacky, right?), silence fell over the table. A blank stare came across the face of one of my friends. It was as if I had dragged my friend out of a safe place and thrown her down a rabbit hole. “But...why? Why would he do that?” my friend soon responded. No one laughed.

I call it the “Obama humor-prompt” phenomenon, and it’s understandable. Even light-hearted negative representations of our president are a rare occurrence in the mainstream. They’re pushed to the edges of media.

But is it all that surprising? The man himself, one of the most popular politicians in recent memory, has needlessly become the king of creating marginalized straw men to do battle with. From the forces of *anti-science* to those who believe the government has *no role* in fixing the economic crisis, Obama loves publicly going toe to toe with fringe groups that sit far right of where his opposition actually is. Maybe the president is the source of this phenomenon; we can call it “trickle-down snobbery.” Cramer is one victim, looking like a deer in the headlights in front of a hack comedian.

Steele is no stranger to this phenomenon, either. During his impressive rise through the Republican Party, he’s been called an Uncle Tom, had Oreos thrown at him, and had just about every position he’s attained chalked up to the color of his skin. Steele has repeatedly come face to face with a type of fringe Obama would love to imagine he is battling on a national scale right now. And this is what makes Steele *exactly* the right man to lead the GOP; it’s why he was elected to the post—not because Republicans are looking for a “Florack Shoshama.”

While the rest of the Republican establishment may still be getting used to the trend, Steele has lived it over and over and made a name for himself despite it. He has repeatedly shown exceptional character and an ability to fight his way through the fog of marginalization, coming out stronger than ever. I have confidence that he will teach his party to do the same.

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## Alternative Spring Break in Newark Runs Gamut from Construction Work to Representing Clients in Court

By MOLLY TACK '09

The morning of Saturday, March 21 was the kick-off of Alternative Spring Break Newark: a day of manual labor building a new house with Habitat for Humanity. On my pre-dawn walk to school to meet up with my ride to the construction site, my contacts stung my tired eyes and my secondhand Caterpillar boots weighed my legs down. I began to question my decision to spend my 3L Spring Break working in Newark. Wasn't two years of Alternative Spring Break enough? Mightn't it have made more sense to dedicate the week to writing any one of the half-dozen papers hanging over my head?

A year ago, I headed into Spring Break in Newark anxious about spending a week in a city known to me mainly for its airport and reputation for violence, but I came out of it awed and inspired by the people I met during the week and their efforts to address the city's many problems. With a deeper understanding of Newark after those positive experiences and a 30% drop in the city's murder rate in 2008, there was little fear to keep me on edge this year. My main concern was how I would battle my need for sleep. But I came away from this year's trip with a new respect for the power of simply saying, "I'm here. How can I help?"

At Habitat for Humanity, before setting us loose with sheet rock nails and a circular saw, Fred Powell, the project manager, recognized ASBer Megan Cunningham '11 for being a "hard-core" Habitat Newark volunteer over the summer. Megan assured us novices that we needed only tenacity, not strength or skill, to make a meaningful contribution to Habitat's work. Fred also talked about the Habitat program, explaining that Habitat's partner families who would own the houses Habitat constructed must put in 400 hours of "sweat equity"—time spent participating in the construction of their new home—to qualify for a \$0 down payment and 0% interest mortgage. I was reminded then—and many times during the week—of something my grandma once said: "Time I have. Money I don't." By the end of break, I understood Newark to be a place where time and talk were valuable, even if money was short, and where the will to change things went a long way towards making ideas a reality.

On Monday morning, we accompanied Paul Halligan, Chief Public Defender for Essex County, to Part 20 of the Newark Municipal Court to observe arraignment proceedings. In Essex County, home to the most criminal cases in the state, all "disorderly persons offenses"—which might be called misde-

meanors or violations outside of New Jersey—are tried in Municipal Court, while "indictable" offenses—felonies—are tried in Superior Court. Our mission was to get a feel for the types of defendants who pass through the court as part of a broader effort to identify test cases for Newark's budding community court program. Based on the model program in Red Hook de-

the public defender to give us each a case. In between arraignments, Paul flipped through his papers to identify something suitable and eventually handed me a file, explaining that the defendant wouldn't be appearing because he was at his first day of work. "Dance on your feet with that," he added, grinning.

When the judge called my client's name minutes later,

Although our days were packed to the gills with new knowledge and training, we tried to find time to make ourselves helpful, too. When two ASBers headed back to Municipal Court on Tuesday, Judge Montes drafted them to research the legislative history of a statute. On Wednesday, several of us staffed the Reentry Legal Services (ReLeSe) table at the Reentry Providers'

there are 400 ways to get your license suspended, most of which are unrelated to traffic offenses), expunge their records, which can often stand in the way of employment, and modify orders of child support against them to account for their changed financial circumstances.

At the fair, other providers like ReLeSe set up tables to share information with people with criminal histories who could benefit from their services. Our intake form was long, and the process for getting paired with one of ReLeSe's volunteer attorneys could be slow. And many problems were beyond ReLeSe's capacity to solve—the organization can't pay the accumulated fines that prevent some clients from getting their driver's licenses back; certain offenses are not expungeable; and federal law prevents judges from ever retroactively modifying child support orders, so ReLeSe could seek prospective relief only. But our willingness to listen to people's stories and brainstorm areas in which we might be able to help went a long way toward abating the frustration that seemed inevitable.

In between fairs, meetings, and court observation, we all kept busy with research projects related to various aspects of NJISJ's work, including juvenile waiver, juvenile life without parole, child support modification procedures, the Fair Credit Reporting Act, tenants' rights, and Obama's foreclosure response. Many of the projects were too big for us to finish in one week, but Craig Levine, Senior Counsel and Policy Director of NJISJ, reassured us that simply being willing to spend our Spring Break with them was "no small thing." Showing up might not have been the whole—or even half—the battle, but it was part of it.



Sissy Phleger '09 (front) works on a construction project for Habitat for Humanity during the Alternative Spring Break trip to Newark. The group also conducted research, appeared in court, and attended fairs and meetings.

veloped by the Center for Court Innovation, the community court seeks to divert offenders from the criminal justice system, imposing community service as punishment and combining it with access to needed social services. The program would begin with a partnership with St. Michael's Hospital, which had agreed to provide drug abuse treatment to any treatment-ready people whose cases the prosecution and defense had agreed to settle.

Most of the cases took only a minute or two. Judge Diana Montes seized every opportunity to teach us about what we were seeing, explaining relevant aspects of New Jersey criminal law to us, such as the requirement that guilty pleas have a factual basis and the standards for setting bail and for when a defendant is entitled to an interpreter. She passed us a sample attorney waiver form and criminal case history. Despite her clear propensity for embracing "teaching moments," I was surprised when she asked any 3Ls present to approach. When the two of us had made our way to the bench, she explained that, in New Jersey, third-year students—under the close supervision of a licensed attorney—may argue in court. In her view, all the observation in the world wouldn't compare to the experience of actually speaking on your feet. She instructed

I stood, addressed the court, introduced myself, managed to accurately cite Rule 1:21-3(b)—the rule allowing 3Ls to appear—and did my best to answer the judge's questions about why "my" client wasn't present, with Paul by my side, reassuring me with subtle nods and filling in some of the blanks. The stakes were exceedingly low for that particular appearance, and it felt a lot like improv theater, but with a few words and the spirit of helpfulness, Judge Montes and Paul had transformed the day's court visit from something I watched into something I had a real part in.

The next morning we attended a recruiting breakfast at the law offices of McCarter & English with representatives from several NGOs that offered opportunities to mentor Newark youth. The president of Big Brothers Big Sisters told us about a contractor who made a big impact on a boy just by occasionally taking him along on his runs to Home Depot, and reminded us of the luxury of free time that we enjoyed as students. Mayor Booker arrived and greeted us warmly, thanking us for coming to town. As he addressed the room, he underscored the message that donated time and positive attitudes could make a powerful difference in a young person's life.

Fair at Essex County College.

Founded by Laurel Dumont, an attorney with the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (NJISJ), ReLeSe assists ex-offenders with civil legal matters arising from the collateral consequences of being incarcerated. ReLeSe helps clients navigate the process of getting their driver's licenses restored (in New Jersey,

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## Watchmen: A Graphic Novel Brought to the Big Screen

*The biggest movie event of the year so far has divided critics—some adore it and its source material; some can't understand the hype or why it prominently features a naked blue man. To contribute to the critical morass, The Commentator presents two more reviews, one from someone that has read the original graphic novel and one from someone that hasn't.*

### The Literate

BY CHIP BOISVERT '09

I confess that I had a healthy dose of trepidation in the months preceding Zack Snyder's adaptation of the classic Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons graphic novel *Watchmen*. Although my first exposure to the work was just this past fall, I quickly became a fan and was concerned that the film, if terrible, would deter people from reading this fine piece of literature. While the film could very easily have been better, it's certainly not the disaster I feared. A large part of the core of Moore's work survives the transformation into film, and—though there is certainly a significant loss of nuance and depth (which was inevitable, given the medium)—the film is still worth seeing on its own merits and hopefully will lead the uninitiated to read the (vastly superior) novel.

In a description that fails to do the story justice, *Watchmen*—set against the backdrop of a potential nuclear war with the Soviet Union in an alternate version of 1985—tells the tale of six costumed heroes and their investigation into the murder of one of their number. The heroes, with only one major exception, are human beings who, while well trained and possessing various technologies and skills which make them formidable fighters, do not possess superpowers (think the Batman-style of superhero). Only Dr. Manhattan (played by Billy Crudup), a superbeing created in an accident at a nuclear research facility and possessed of the ability to create and destroy matter at will (as well as see through time) has any powers beyond that of a normal human being. Both the graphic novel and film use the juxtaposition of super- non-superheroes to take a probing look at the psychology of the characters and costumed heroes more generally. The characters frequently question why they have chosen to dress up in costume and fight crime, and in doing so a number of issues of morality and human nature are explored. These themes are made all the more acute by the presence of a colleague who has effectively become a demi-god.

Unfortunately the depth of the characters in the graphic novel is not replicated to nearly the same extent in the film. The characters, by and large, are shadows of the ideas they represent in the novel, which was surely inevitable given the expository limitations inherent in film, particularly one with so many characters. Yet even with that in mind, certain characters, most notably Nite Owl II (Patrick Wilson) and Ozymandias (Matthew Goode) are altered in a fashion that fundamentally alters some of the key tensions in the underlying work. The alterations add little to nothing to the film and seriously detract from one of the key issues of the Moore and Gibbons's work.

The acting in the film ranges from decent to borderline unwatchable. Jackie Earle Haley does a nice job in his portrayal of Rorschach, the sociopathic moral objectivist antihero, capturing the character's voice and delivering the lines—many of which are over-the-top in their intensity—in a fashion that prevents them from sounding silly through most of the film. After Haley however, there is a major drop in the acting quality, with Malin Akerman (Silk Spectre II) and Goode being particularly bad. Many of Akerman's lines—particularly when she is attempting to portray distress—are downright cringe-worthy. She also delivers one of the worst representations of asphyxiation I've ever seen. Goode, an Englishman, attempts to affect an American accent in his portrayal of Ozymandias and, in addition to being inconsistent throughout the movie, it makes him sound just silly at points. The remainder of the cast delivers passing perfor-

mances but largely struggles to reveal the depth of Moore's original characters.

Despite these deficiencies, the movie is enjoyable. Snyder does an excellent job of recreating images directly from the graphic novel. From the perspective of one who's read the novel, it makes those scenes come alive and was definitely a fun experience. Perhaps the most clever bit of the film occurs during the opening credits, a montage of background events, mostly concerning an earlier generation of costumed heroes. The



background is a critical part of the novel (it explains how the world of *Watchmen* differs from our own because of the presence of costumed heroes) but would not have translated smoothly into the film. The montage was an innovative way to introduce these events for a first-time watcher as well as provide a knowing nod to the novel. The fight scenes, largely expanded from their novel counterparts, are also very well done and enhance the overall viewing experience of the movie. While the film can be critiqued in a variety of ways, one must admit that it is extremely visually appealing throughout.

If you approaches the film hoping for either a scene-by-scene, rigid retelling of the story or a work that truly encapsulates the depth of the novel, you'll leave disappointed. It would be impossible to accurately capture the characters in the original tale. Certain characters have been altered in a fashion which does violence to the themes and detracts from some of the core tensions present in the original. *Watchmen* absolutely could have been improved with better acting, further character development (although it should be noted that extra footage, reportedly as much as 45 minutes, will be included in an extended edition and could partially alleviate this qualm), and increased coherence. These problems prevent it from being either a great movie or a great adaptation. That said, I enjoyed watching the characters come to life on the big screen and do not regret having taken the time to see it. I also highly recommend picking up a copy of the graphic novel; you will not be disappointed with your purchase.



BY MICHAEL MIX '11

Several works of literature have long been considered "unfilmable." The graphic novel *Watchmen*, written by Alan Moore and illustrated by Dave Gibbons, has traditionally been so considered. (In the interest of full disclosure, I have not read the graphic novel.) Originally published in 1986, many believe it is the greatest graphic novel of all time, and *Time* magazine even named it one of the 100 greatest English-language books written since 1923. After years and years in development

hell, with several different directors attached at various times and a highly publicized lawsuit to prevent the movie from being released, *Watchmen* finally hit theaters.

It's easy to see why many thought there was no way to ever adapt the novel to film. It takes place in an alternate 1985, where Richard Nixon has just won his fifth term

as president. The "Watchmen" are a group of superheroes who have been forced into retirement by Congress. As the film opens, the Comedian (Jeffrey Dean Morgan), one of the Watchmen, is murdered by an assassin. The rest of the Watchmen have disparate reactions to his death. Rorschach (Jackie Earle Haley) wants to use the Watchmen's full force to go after the killer. Nite Owl II (Patrick Wilson) prefers to

for casting mostly character actors and not giving in to pressure to cast a huge star.

The real problem is the performances turned in by Akerman and Goode. Akerman is relatively obscure, known only for roles in *The Heartbreak Kid* and *Entourage*, but she is very good looking; I'm sure the studio just wanted an up-and-coming female to fit into the character's tight, revealing outfit. Unfortunately, Akerman cannot act for her life. She has the same wooden expression on her face throughout the film, and she never connected with her character the way the other actors do. Goode similarly struggles in his role. Frankly, I have no idea why he was cast, aside from the fact that he looks like the character in the graphic novel. Even in *Match Point*, where he used his natural accent, Goode was the weakest link. Here, he tries an unconvincing American accent, ending up sounding very strange, not even like a real person. Part of the problem is that his character doesn't develop much, but Goode really could not act his way out of a paper bag.

Snyder's direction is also inconsistent. I was expecting big things from the man after he directed the wonderful *300* two years ago. He recognized that the plot of that film was completely ridiculous, and directed accordingly. As a result, *300* ended up hilariously and effectively over-the-top. *Watchmen* takes itself much more seriously, but sometimes Snyder slips into his old style. For example, one sex scene plays out like second-rate porn, with over-the-top music and clumsy dialogue, joining *The Matrix Reloaded* in the pantheon of awkward sex scenes in film. Furthermore, Snyder struggled with fight scenes. The movie is not an action film, so the fight scenes don't need to be as good as those in actual superhero movies. But Snyder throws in gratuitous fights that don't add anything to the film.

Not to say that Snyder didn't do a commendable job. He has matured as a director, and that is apparent in certain places, particularly his handling of Rorschach and Dr. Manhattan. Snyder directs the Dr. Manhattan backstory scenes with a deft touch. Additionally, the color yellow is a strong and ably employed motif throughout the film.

The last aspect of the film that deserves mention is the soundtrack. Many analysts were excited when the soundtrack was announced, given the variety of songs. Like the rest of the film, though, the soundtrack was not fully utilized. The most effective use of music was in the opening credits, when Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin'" was played over scenes depicting the origins of the Watchmen and their predecessors, the Minutemen—one of the best opening credit sequences I've ever seen. Some of these scenes included reworked historical moments, such as Dr. Manhattan shaking the hand of JFK or one of the Minutemen kissing a woman on the street after the end of WWII, rather than the sailor in the iconic image.

Most of the other songs on the soundtrack don't have the same effect, though. Part of the problem is that Snyder uses songs traditionally associated with other films. For instance, he includes Simon and Garfunkel's "The Sound of Silence" and Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries," which were famously used in *The Graduate* and *Apocalypse Now*, respectively. It's a little disconcerting to hear them used here.

Overall, I definitely enjoyed the film. Haley's nuanced performance, the opening credit sequence, and the development of some of the film's themes are worth the price of admission. But part of me feels that Snyder missed out on a chance to film a classic. The film's issues will keep it from rivaling the graphic novel's influence and legacy.

reminisce about the old times without putting on his superhero outfit. Dr. Manhattan (Billy Crudup), the only Watchman with actual powers, is content to do research with his girlfriend Silk Spectre II (Malin Akerman). Ozymandias (Matthew Goode) has cashed out on his fame and is now more philanthropist and businessman than superhero.

The acting in the film is hit or miss. Haley is clearly the best of the bunch and is an absolute revelation. His comeback role in *Little Children* a few years ago established him as a serious actor, but his performance as Rorschach cements him as one of the industry's best. Even though he dons a mask for most of the film, Haley is able to simultaneously be both terrifying and sympathetic. Crudup—despite playing a sometimes-giant, always-blue, often-naked man—manages to convey real emotion. Wilson and Morgan both stand out in their roles as well. Director Zack Snyder should be commended



## Battlestar Galactica: That's a Frakkin' Wrap

By JOSEPH JEROME '11

When a television series is about evil robots, the show is already fighting against itself to be taken seriously. When that series is a re-imagining of a cheesy 1970s sci-fi show airing on Friday nights, well, it's really an uphill battle, but somehow Ronald Moore's *Battlestar Galactica* became the best show on television. After four seasons, last Friday saw the show, and the titular Battlestar Galactica, go out in a three-hour event full of high drama, splashy action, and a few lingering questions.

The show's premise: humans developed a race of sentient robots, the Cylons, which rebelled and annihilated all but 50,000 human survivors trapped aboard old spaceships. These survivors had to outrun a ruthless enemy and hope to find the mythical planet known as "Earth." The twist? Some of the Cylons, far from being metal-clanking "toasters," looked and acted just like humans, and—it turned out as the series progressed—some of them even wanted to be human.

What made the series so effective was that it cloaked important real-life questions in a sci-fi facade. Yes, *Star Trek* did Cold War metaphors for years, but in that universe, the captain of the Enterprise never wrong. Moore, a *Star Trek* veteran, populated his sci-fi show with real human characters. Immediately we learn the ship's second-in-command is an alcoholic; its ace pilot Starbuck likes a good "frak"; the civilian president suffers from breast cancer; and, oh yes, the show's initial antagonist snaps a baby's neck in order to spare the child the horror of impending nuclear war.

With a roster of such flawed characters, Moore had the pieces to explore both contemporary concerns and timeless questions. Cylons were the perfect post-9/11 analogy, and *BSG* directly confronted questions about social class, free speech, abortion, and the rule of law in times of trouble. But the show's key philosophical inquiry was whether humanity was governed by fate or free will. "All this has happened before, and it will happen again," *BSG* prophesied again and again about humanity's violent fate. But in the final three hours, that mantra was challenged.

While *BSG* had an overarching mythology, the series was never planned out like *Lost*. The writers flew by the seat of their pants, somehow forcing disparate story lines to a conclusion, not without some retconning and head-scratching exposition. The resulting final season and final episode became an exhilarating—albeit poorly paced—race to make all the different pieces come together into a coherent whole.

If you haven't seen the show out of some misplaced fear of television with spaceships, put down this paper and rent the four hour miniseries now. You'll credit



me with having enriched your life, and—otherwise—my thoughts on the finale will be spoiler-filled incoherent gibberish.

As finales go, "Daybreak" was phenomenal. Big-budget action, tear-jerking exchanges, and enough questions answered to go home happy. When last we left off, things were frakked: Galactica was falling apart and Cavil had kidnapped Hera, the only half-human/half-Cylon, with the help of—deep breath—his lover and protégé, the duplicitous Boomer, herself a copy of Hera's own mother.

The finale's first hour was a slow crawl, full of flashbacks to our character's lives on Caprica before the war. But with only a hundred minutes of *BSG* left, these flashbacks felt like a waste of time while lingering questions remained ignored: Why does half the cast share visions of Hera in an opera house? What exactly are virtual-Six and virtual-Baltar? What is Starbuck's special destiny? How does anybody in this universe know Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower"? Also, is there any chance humanity can end the cycle of violence that wiped out the original colonies, Kobol, and Earth?

Somehow "Daybreak" squeezed in the answers. After Admiral Adama spends the first hour realizing his ship's a lost cause and decides he wants to go down fighting to rescue a little girl, plans for the final battle happen fast. The old man calls for volunteers to take Galactica on what, with great cadence, "is likely to be a one-way trip." But, for most of these characters, this final mission is not a real choice—it is their fate.

Thus commences one of the most thrilling space battles ever seen on film; the effects budget must have been enormous. The dance of Vipers flying around a black hole, Galactica being lit up like a Christmas tree with explosions, and old and new toasters beating up on each other combined with a thumping musical score.

Hour two of "Daybreak" is also one of the greatest hours of television ever produced. While

a massive battle rages, the finale takes time for some remarkable character moments. The fleet's resident lawyer, Romo Lampkin, is named president. Boomer, who spends the entire series wavering between good and evil, manages to redeem herself. And Baltar, whose self-preservation has been a priority for four seasons, mans-up and joins the rescue at the last moment.

As for Hera, she gets back aboard Galactica after a tremendous rescue, forcing the finale to start answering questions. Caught in a firefight, Hera skips away from her parents and, in a flash, Galactica itself is revealed to be the opera house that predominated so many episodes. The little girl is scooped up by Six and Baltar and brought to the CIC where Adama and the Final Five are desperately firing pistols at the Cylon invaders.

Getting Hera to the CIC with Baltar may have wrapped up three seasons worth of visions, but it's not much of a resolution. However, notions of the divine do inspire Baltar to direct a stirring speech at Cavil, who conveniently has snuck into the CIC to grab Hera, to convince him the cycle of violence can only stop if we choose to stop it. Surprisingly, Cavil concurs and it seems like everything is all wrapped up. The remaining characters assemble in the CIC as Cavil agrees to go peacefully if the Final Five give him the information to rebuild Cylon resurrection technology.

Unfortunately, doing so requires outing one final *BSG* secret: Tory's murder of Tyrol's wife earlier in the series. The show did a fantastic job with this storyline, burying it for a season, and the revelation predictably sends Tyrol into a rage, strangling Tory to death. As chaos breaks out on all sides, the cycle of violence looks like it's been re-engaged. Cavil eats his own pistol, and, before you know it, nukes are going off everywhere, and Adama screams to Starbuck to jump the ship out of there.

So what does she do? She uses numbers derived from Dylan's

music to send Galactica spiraling toward *our* Earth. It makes no sense, but it works in context. We see the ship bend and buckle like a slinky, and it's apparent Galactica is done for, so it's convenient that it comes to rest orbiting a prehistoric planet Earth.

Was it fate or free will that got everyone to our Earth? We're left to ponder, but the survivors conclude that their own technology is what caused so many centuries of violence. As the original 1970s *BSG* theme plays, Galactica is sent on a final course into the sun, and the survivors settle on our planet with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. With a fresh start and humanity saved, it's time for a string of farewells rivaling *The Return of the King*.

While ending on a hopeful note, *BSG* gives most of its characters pretty somber send-offs. The show's de facto first family says a fast, tearful farewell as Adama hugs Lee and Starbuck before departing to give his dying love a last glimpse of the world they led humanity to. As Roslin finally succumbs to cancer, Adama places his wedding ring on her finger. If that didn't start the water works, he then promises to build the cabin she always wanted and sits, staring at the sun, next to her grave—the end of Bill Adama's long voyage. It was remarkable that the series was able to have its primary love interest be an old man and a cancer-stricken woman, but—from day one—you knew a real happy ending would be denied to them.

As for Starbuck? After returning from the dead a season ago, Katee Sackhoff's character has been a real question mark. In the final moments of "Daybreak," she literally vanishes into thin air while talking with Lee about the future. We flashback to a scene between the two where she admits she fears not death but being forgotten, and Lee smiles and whispers aloud that he'll never forget her.

Moore knew Starbuck's vanishing act would be controversial, but I could appreciate what he was going for. The *Chicago Tribune's* Maureen Ryan noted that Adama,

Lee, and Starbuck made up a sort of metaphorical Holy Trinity, with Starbuck playing the role of Holy Spirit, and I think it's appropriate. We learn early on in the series that Starbuck has a destiny, and, even as Lee and Adama were portrayed as leaders of the fleet, Starbuck was the guide in the show's mythology. Her role ended once she had found "a perfect world for the end of Kara Thrace," as the whole series' prophesy went.

The rest of our characters come to terms with their lives: Baltar and Six, the pair responsible for the nuclear holocaust that launched the series, manage to atone for their sins and find true love in each other; Tyrol sets off to become the first Highlander; and the Tighs live happily ever after. Finally, we see a happy Hera, while her parents debate whether she should be a hunter or a farmer. It's a cute resolution, and the one storyline wrap-up I could really cheer on.

But *BSG* had one final message to give: flashing forward 150,000 years to Times Square, New York City, we see virtual-Six and virtual-Baltar, finally revealed to be some sort of divine force, talking about everything that has transpired. It is a surreal conclusion, but oddly appropriate. The pair view reports about the discovery of humanity's first shared-DNA ancestor, a little girl they knew personally as Hera; they also notice all the complicated technology fueling our world.

Virtual-Baltar wonders if humanity is doomed to repeat the mistakes that led to the destruction of the colonies, Kobol, and the first Earth; virtual-Six, for the first time, sounds an optimistic note. Humanity is different this time, she suggests. With that, the two walk into Times Square, and "All Along the Watchtower" begins playing over a montage of footage of modern-day robotics. Evidently Dylan is the music of the universe, and free will versus fate is the ultimate question of humanity's existent—or at least in the wonderful world of *Battlestar Galactica*.



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## SBA President Says Farewell, Looks Ahead

BY CARLY LEINHEISER '09

Well, NYU Law, it looks like my time as your fearless leader is coming to an end. And I think we've had a pretty good year. We certainly didn't accomplish everything that we at the Student Bar Association (SBA) set out to, but I'm proud of the progress that we did make.

One of the most important things we've worked on this year is figuring out how to improve communication between the administration, the SBA, and the student body. Your class representatives and the other members of the SBA have always done a great job bringing your concerns to SBA meetings, and we've tried to bring those concerns to the attention of the administration in our monthly meetings with the deans. But we also think it's important that students who aren't directly involved in the SBA have more opportunities to communicate directly with the administration.

This year, Pascale Walker created a student working group charged with re-evaluating the school's alcohol policy. This group included some members of the SBA, members of other student groups and journals, and students who are not affiliated with any student groups. The diversity of views and perspectives really added to the conversations we had with Pascale, and we realized that this group could be incredibly useful for communicating general student concerns to the Office of Student Affairs. So Pascale and I decided that this group should continue in some form next year. We're not sure yet what it will look like, but I'm envisioning

that membership will be fairly open to anyone interested in participating. If you're interested, please let me know, or look out for information in one of the SBA weekly emails.

Of course, I have to put in a pitch here for the SBA elections and the Student-Faculty Committees. Election packets were mailed out to you before Spring Break and are due on Thursday, March 26. Running for the SBA is really simple: you get a few signatures from your classmates, you write a short personal statement about why you're running (or whatever you feel like talking about for 500 words), and you're on the ballot! If you're considering running, I'd encourage you to get in touch with the SBA member who currently holds the position you're interested in; we're all happy to answer questions. And, you definitely do not need to have previously been on the SBA to run.

I'll also be sending out information on how to apply for the Student-Faculty Committees soon. You just need to type up a short statement about why you're interested in serving as a student representative and the new SBA board will make the appointments. These committees are a great opportunity to get to know faculty members and administrators and have a hand in making important decision about the future of NYU.

Lastly, I want to say thank you to everyone on the SBA this year. You guys were an absolutely amazing board, and I feel very lucky that I got to work with and to know each of you this year. And, thank you NYU Law for being so awesome—you kids rock my socks off!

## Environmental Law Journal Hosts Symposium on Climate Change



Professor Richard Stewart introduces the first panel of the Environmental Law Journal Symposium "Regulatory Climate," taking place on March 13. Panel members discussed the implementation of climate legislation from a regulatory perspective. Four of NYU's eight journals have hosted symposia so far this year.

## LAYOFFS: OCS Continues to Push Preparation, Research as Keys to Success

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student schedules, and web-streaming all career-related events. Already OCS has experienced a doubling of alumni using their services, particularly in quantity of job resource sheets provided and

conference calls between alumni and OCS counselors.

For rising 2Ls, Dorzback suggests that students research and submit their early interview week (EIW) selections to OCS for review, in part because she does not anticipate as many "free sign-up" interview slots in the fall as have been available in past years. Given the recent change in grading policy, some students may have an "inflated" view of their interview prospects. That said, Dorzback notes that last year 340 firms interviewed at EIW, offers were extended from 294 of those firms, and students accepted offers from 146 of them. "That means that about 150 EIW employers extended offers to NYU and were turned down—and these offers occurred after the bubble burst," Dorzback said. "This is a testament to the high regard employers have for this institution. Students should feel heartened by these numbers and enthusiastic about opportunities in varied-size offices in several major markets nationally."

For rising 3Ls, Dorzback suggests attending the "How to Succeed as a Summer Associate/Intern and Beyond" information session on April 15. Given the job market from last year, she anticipates a larger number of 3Ls who will want to participate in EIW. "Presently, we don't anticipate a large number of 3L employers using the early interview week program because of their large summer programs and uncertainty about how many of their deferred class of 2009 entering class will return to the firm," Dorz-

back noted. "Third-year students will be encouraged to supplement their job search with a mailing during the summer as well as extensive networking in the cities in which they would like to work."

So what is OCS doing differently to cope with the economic climate? Dorzback insists that the main focus of OCS is going to be the tried-and-true methods they have used in the past: "It's more the students' responses that are going to be different. They will conduct more employer research, prepare for interviews more diligently, step up their correspondence and communication with employers, and there will be a heightened professionalism in the process." Still, OCS has gone out of its way to assist current 3Ls in these difficult times. For example, Dorzback has been successful in encouraging firms to adjust their deferral schedule, to reclassify certain jobs as "public interest" for deferred NYU grads, and even to negotiate a bar salary advance in lieu of a bar reimbursement.

Interestingly, the slowdown in the private sector has driven many students to search for government and public interest jobs, and the newly established Judicial Clerkship Office is gearing up for a larger number of applicants as well. Given that some law firms are deferring post-graduation employment for up to a year, clerkships are looking even more attractive to many students who might otherwise not apply.

What's the bottom line? Whatever your year, avail yourself of the resources the law school provides.

## KOREMATSU: Students, Attorneys Re-enact Famous Trial



"Minoru Yasui" takes questions from the mock defense.

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Court, and the Supreme Court reversed the trial court. The Court ruled that the application of the military order to American citizens of Japanese descent was lawful, so—although Yasui's citizenship

status was restored—his conviction was upheld.

Notable performances in the re-enactment included Vince Chang, an attorney playing the part of a prosecuting attorney, who, as the Hon. Denny Chin put it, "does an excellent job of making 'Japanese' sound evil."

Andrenette Sullivan, a student of King's College, delivered a powerful and moving rendition of Justice Jackson's dissent in the infamous case *Korematsu v. United States*. The crowd hushed as she spoke, "Korematsu was born on our soil, of *parents* born in Japan. If any fundamental assumption underlies our system, it is that guilt is personal and not inheritable. But here is an attempt to make an otherwise innocent act a crime merely because the prisoner is the son of parents as to whom he had no choice, and belongs to a race from which there is no way to resign."

The evening closed with a discussion moderated by the Hon. Denny Chin of the Southern District of New York and included issues such as the *coram nobis* cases and whether *Korematsu v. United States* is still good law.