

# Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

## TRACING THE HISTORY OF THE FIRST JEWS IN THE US

ANA DOMINGOS AND PAULO MENDES PINTO

May 5, 2006, the Holocaust Remembrance Day, is a special day for all Jews. Almost one third of Jews in the US call New York home, and they remember this day with special sorrow. But it was a different holocaust that brought the first Jews to New York—the Inquisition. In 1654, twenty-three Portuguese Jews arrived in the city of *Nieuw Amsterdam* (present day Lower Manhattan). These were the first Jewish settlers in the US. This article reviews the history behind their reasons to come to this country.

In 1215, the 4th ecumenical Council of the Lateran was held in Rome and presided over by Pope Innocent III. The council announced seventy decrees reformulating the canons of Catholicism, including laws directly affecting Jews. For example, Jews had to wear a special mark so that they could be easily distinguished from Christians and they were prohibited from living in the same areas as Christians. The Council was attended by ambassadors from Germany, France, England, Aragon, Portugal, Hungary, Jerusalem, and the various Italian states. In principle, they all had to comply with the decree. On the Iberian Peninsula however, the council's orders concerning Jews were not obeyed until the turn of the 15th century, which is when the *judiarias* (Jewish quarters) emerged. Iberia, at the turn of the first millennium, was a mosaic of Christian and Muslim kingdoms where there was, generally speaking, a *convivência* (coexistence) between Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

The compulsory Christianization of Jews and Muslims in Iberia gave rise to the New Christians, also called *conversos*. Many of these, however, remained loyal to their pre-conversion traditions while pretending to be faithful Christians. This gave rise to Crypto-Judaism, a form of Judaism where Christian and Jewish traditions became somewhat in-

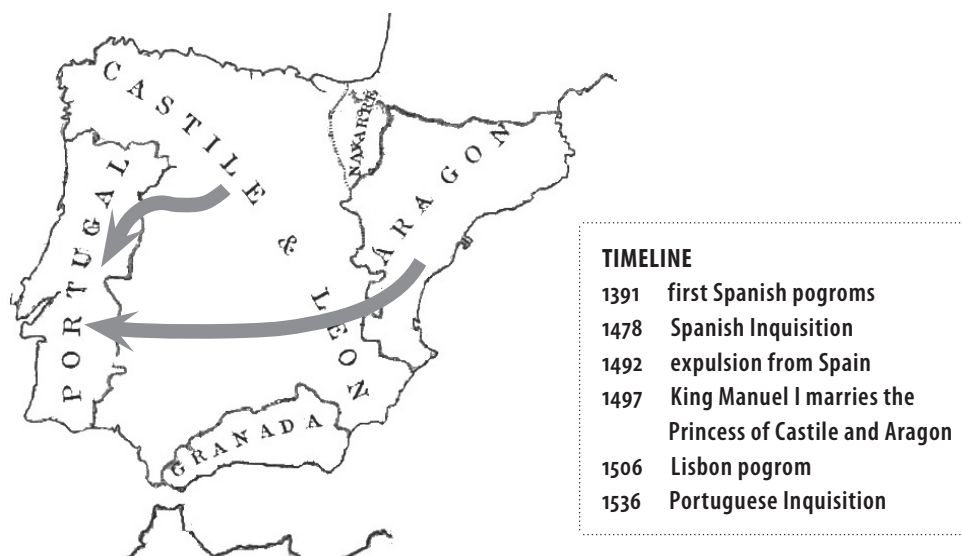
termixed. This form of Judaism still exists in Portugal and in other places in the world where the Sephardim (Iberian Jews) have settled.

The New Christians were at odds with everyone. They were regarded with suspicion by both Christians and Jews. The

ville. This pogrom was the first of many attacks and expressed the presence of intense tension and conflict within Castilian society.

In the meantime, the mottos of the Dominican friars became more and more popular among the masses: *Veritas*,

Figure 1: Migration of Iberian Jews in the 14th and 15th centuries



courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin

latter would call them *marranos*, a derogatory Ladino (the language spoken by the Sephardim) word referring to pigs. In addition, many of the New Christians and Jews had economic and political positions that were seen by the Old Christians (the Christians of non-*converso* origin) as a threat to their status. Jewish people in Iberia were proficient bankers and merchants who were in a position to lend money with interest. The concept of credit was not welcomed by the Old Christians, especially when it was time to pay their debts.

In 1391, anti-Semitic riots exploded in the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, and the Jewish quarters were attacked. In that same year, 4,000 Jews were killed in Se-

*Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare* ("the truth, to praise, to bless, to preach"). The Dominicans were mendicant urban monks and persuasive preachers who fiercely advocated the end of heresy. Queen Isabel of Castile had been influenced from a young age by the words and advice of Tomás de Torquemada, a member of the Dominican Order. In 1478, she and her husband Fernando of Aragon founded the Holy Office of Inquisition, a court where Christians accused of heresy were brought to trial. Tomás de Torquemada was appointed *Inquisitor General*, a position which he used to express his utter cruelty against the New Christians. Paradoxically, there is evidence suggest-

*continued on next page*

ing that he was also of *converso* origin. The Inquisition also prosecuted witches, bigamists, homosexuals, Lutherans, pseudo-holy women (*beatas*), Christianized Muslims (*moriscos*), humanists, or anyone who would challenge the status quo. This court was a new weapon that took social tension to new heights; minor conflicts between neighbors could easily end up in court where confiscation of assets and death would often be the final verdicts. At this time, Torquemada introduced the *auto de fé*, a ritual of public punishment, humiliation, or execution of the convicted.

The kings of Castile and Aragon needed both to please both the masses and defend Jews because Jews helped finance the ten-year war against Muslim Granada. However, once the war ended on January 2, 1492, the monarchs signed the Alhambra Decree, which was a decree of expulsion. For Jews, this was an ultimatum: be baptized to become a Christian, or leave Castile and Aragon. Many Jews converted to Christianity, which made them eligible for interrogation by the Holy Office, but a large number of Jews fled the country. They went to Morocco, Italy, and to the Ottoman Empire, but the greatest number (perhaps half of the total) went to Portugal (Fig. 1).

The emigration of Castilian Jews to Portugal was not a novel phenomenon, especially after the 1391 pogroms in Seville. This influx continuously increased the Portuguese Jewish population, which can be traced back to the 5th century. In 1492, however, about 100,000 Jews entered Portugal in less than a year and this abrupt demographic change was one of the factors that led to social tensions and conflicts.

Portugal's king, João II, welcomed the entrance of Jews, but didn't quite know how to deal with the social problems resulting from immigration. He tried to convince Jews to be baptized, while granting them protection against the fury of the masses that, just as in Spain, ended up following the Dominican mottos. The Portuguese monarchs regarded Jews as precious elements of scientific and economic development, as evidenced by the fact that Jews held most of the powerful positions of science, finance, and administration. Jews were a valuable asset for the Portuguese maritime expansion.

The death of King João II in 1495 created a political crisis. His son, Prince Afonso died before him, so his cousin Manuel I inherited the throne. Manuel I's legitimacy as a king was questioned and he was advised to marry the widow of Prince Afonso, Isabel, one of the three daughters of Isabel of Castile and Fernando of Aragon. The wedding was arranged to take place in 1497 but, as a dowry, Isabel demanded the religious cleansing of Portugal: all Jews had to choose between expulsion or baptism. Soon, Manuel I began to question his choice of bride. He knew the value of Jews and did not want them to flee the country. He wanted to find some way to keep them in Portugal as Catholics, so he designed a fictitious expulsion. He signed a decree on December 5, 1496, officially expelling all Jews; at the same time, he closed off the borders and harbors to Jews, which prevented them from escaping.

The following spring, on the first day of Passover in 1497, King Manuel I commanded all Jews to come to the main harbor cities, including Lisbon. Holy water was sprinkled on them and they were declared Christians—what came to be known as *baptismos de pé* (standing baptisms). King Manuel I then informed the Catholic kings of Spain that there were no more Jews in Portugal. In addition, King Manuel I gave these New Christians twenty years of protection against religious persecution. It turned out a few years later that this expeditious solution intensified the existing social tension—New Christians turned into the scapegoats of society.

1506 was a year of drought, famine, and pestilence that almost forced Lisbon to be evacuated twice. This was the year of the Lisbon pogrom. On the afternoon of April 19, 1506, in a church of a Dominican convent, a New Christian contested a miracle. Back then, it was not obvious to most people that simple principles of optics, such as a reflection from a window, could explain a halo of light on the cross hanging on the wall. The dissident was killed on the spot; chaos and rioting followed, fuelled by two Dominican preachers. The royal authorities were not in town, and for three days, the three *judiarias* of Lisbon were pillaged. This year, the Jewish community in Lisbon remembers with sorrow the 500th anniversary of a massacre that took the lives of



Natural Selections

Editorial Board

Mary Abraham

Jessica Baucom

Rudy Bellani

Ileana Cristea

Ana Domingos

Paula Duque

Barbara Juncosa

Adria Le Boeuf

Aileen Marshall

Bertrand Mollereau

Georgia Patikoglou

Maurizio Pellegrino

Lucine Petit

Sriram

Tari Suprpto

Matthew Swift

Esther Wu

nearly 4,000 Jews.

King Manuel I punished the pillagers and there is indication that he closed the Dominican convent of São Domingos in Lisbon. A year after the massacre, he authorized Jews to leave Portugal. However, it was not until 1536, when the Inquisition was implemented in Portugal under King João III that most Jews completed the exodus (Fig. 1&2). They made their way to Antwerp and the Netherlands, which were both at war with Spain, where they would be out of the reach of the Inquisition.

In the Netherlands, they were also confined to Jewish quarters, but at least had the freedom to practice their religion in temples with entrances facing the street. The *Esnoga*, today called the Portuguese Synagogue of Amsterdam, opened its doors in 1639 and represents the final merging of three Sephardic groups that fled into that country throughout the early sixteen hundreds. The Portuguese Jewish population, which included rabbis, scholars, philosophers, artists, bankers, as well as founders and trustees of major international commercial companies, played a significant part in the cultural and economic development of the Dutch Republic.

In 1630, the Dutch took Pernambuco, in northeastern Brazil, from the Portuguese. In the capital, Recife, they found that the Portuguese community of Crypto-Jews was part of the local economic engine. The Dutch arranged for the “Hebrews of the Portuguese nation,” as they were called in Amsterdam, to settle overseas, mix with the locals, and expand the scope of business opportunities. Soon, Recife became an active site for financiers, brokers, sugar exporters, and suppliers of African slaves that increased the wealth of the Dutch West India Company (*West-Indische Compagnie* or WIC). For twenty-four years, in Recife, the Portuguese Jews were allowed to live freely and in 1637 they created the first synagogue in the Americas, the *Hahal Tzur Israel* (The Rock Community of Israel).

However, on January 26, 1654, General Francisco Barreto de Menezes directed the Portuguese army to reconquer Recife from the Dutch. The Dutch surrendered and were given six months to abandon the area, during which Menezes granted Jews respectful treatment. In fact, Menezes, a Catholic and Old-Christian, helped Jews to flee instead of handing them over to the Inquisition. His name is registered in the annals of Portuguese Jewish history as a man with a noble character (*hassid umot ha’olam*). At the same time, Jews often had to resort to bribery in order to survive.

The Dutch did not have enough boats to deport everybody so Menezes provided sixteen ships from the Portuguese fleet to Jews. About 150 Jewish families used those boats to sail back to Holland. However, those on the long journey had to face the danger of pirates and Spanish boats, and some of these families gave up trying to reach Holland, ending up in places like St. Thomas, Jamaica, Surinam, and Curaçao. One of the boats was attacked by pirates in Cuba, but the lives of twenty-three Portuguese Jews were saved by a French ship, the *Sainthe Catherine*.

On September 7, 1654, the *Sainthe Catherine* arrived in Dutch waters at the port of the city of *Nieuw Amsterdam*. Its captain, Jacques de la Motthe, said farewell to the ones he saved, leaving behind the first Jewish settlers in North America. Among these twenty-three survivors, only six families were represented. Official Dutch records show the names of the

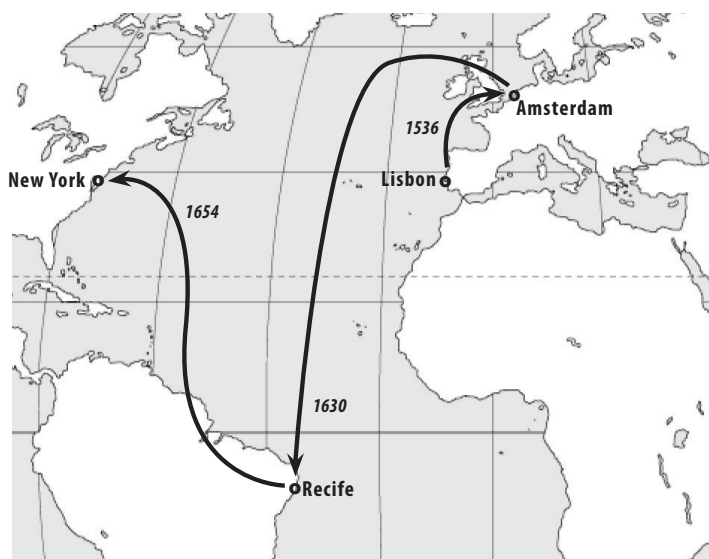
heads of these families: Abraão Israel Dias, Moisés Lumbroso, David Israel Faro, Asher Levy, Enrica Nunes, and Judite Mercado. Peter Stuyvesant, the governor of *Nieuw Amsterdam*, did not welcome the entrance of Jews into the lands he oversaw. However, these Jews were merchants with strong connections to the powerful Dutch West India Company, which soon made Stuyvesant curb his strong desire for a pure Calvinist land.

Not much is known about the fate of those six Jewish families, except that they established the grounds of the oldest American synagogue, *Shearith Israel* (Remaining Israel), also known as the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, located today on Central Park West at 70th Street. *Shearith Israel* still follows Sephardic rituals. Up to the end of the 19th century, despite having many Ashkenazi members, *Shearith Israel* kept a polyglot tradition where prayers and songs were recited in Hebrew or Ladino and documents were written in Portuguese and English.

*Shearith Israel* welcomed people of Portuguese ancestry that played important roles in civic life from the earliest times. Here are a few examples in chronological order:

Gershom Mendes Seixas (1745-1816), *Shearith’s* first American-born cantor (a Jewish religious official who is the chief singer of the liturgy in a synagogue), was a pro-independence activist during the American Revolution. When George Washington was inaugurated as the first president, Gershom was one of three clergymen who participated in the ceremony. In 1784, he was appointed a trustee of Columbia College, which is now Columbia University. Gershom’s brother, Benjamim Mendes Seixas (1748-1817), was one of the founders of the New York Stock Exchange. The poet Emma Lazarus (1859-1887) was the daughter of Moses and Esther Lazarus, direct descendants of the first Por-

Figure 2: Migration of Iberian Jews in the 16th and 17th centuries



tuguese Jewish settlers in 1654. In 1932, her cousin, Benjamin N. Cardozo (1870-1938), also of Portuguese origin, became the second Jew to be appointed to the US Supreme Court. He gave his name to the Yeshiva University School of Law. Abraham Lopes Cardozo (1914-2006), was the cantor at *Shearith* for 40 years and was responsible for the musical direction of liturgical services. In 2000, Queen Beatrix of Holland gave him the title of Knight Of Orange Nassau, for his devotion to preserving Sephardic musical heritage.

History has shown that social tensions emerge when diverse groups are faced with megalomaniac projects of religious homogenization like the Crusades. The Inquisition in Portugal did not have the same magnitude of destruction as in Spain, but it is the reason behind the Sephardic diaspora that brought the first Jews into the US. This is a point not widely known by the world at large and has extensive roots in early European history.

Events like the Holocaust Remembrance Day and various museums around the world, including in the US, keep the memory of the Holocaust alive and teach the rest of the world about the mistakes of history. The Inquisition and the arrival of the first Jews in the US are not marked on any world calendar, but it is nevertheless a point in Jewish history that should never be forgotten. ◉

Paulo Mendes Pinto is at the Center for Sephardic Studies, Alberto Bienveniste, University of Lisbon, Portugal.



Rockefeller University's mission of scientific excellence brings together leading faculty, postdocs, and students to investigate fundamental questions in biology. In its new Strategic Plan, The Rockefeller University made a commitment to enhancing postdoctoral education and training and affirmed that "the education and training of young scientists is a central component of the University's mission."

The University will strive to develop means by which the quality of mentoring of its postdoctoral body can be evaluated, and conflict resolution policies to ensure that mentor-postdoc conflicts can be quickly identified and properly resolved.

The PDA and the Dean's office have formulated a guideline to enhance the quality of mentoring postdocs receive. This document will be elaborated into a handbook that will carefully outline aspects of mentoring that are crucial for good postdoc training. ©

## A hand-drawn sketch of a mechanical device, possibly a clock or a complex timer. It features a large rectangular frame with rivets along the edges. Inside the frame, there are various mechanical components: a large spring at the top, a pendulum-like structure with a spherical weight on the left, and a complex gear or cam mechanism on the right. A banner with the word 'CATION' is draped across the bottom of the frame. The drawing is done in a sketchy, expressive style with heavy shading and cross-hatching. To the right of the main drawing, there is a signature that appears to be 'Alan' and some other markings.

## Natural Selections Speaks to Postdocs About Their Mentoring

**NS:** When you first began your postdoc did you select a project having a specific long-term career goal in mind? Did your PI provide you with a list of possible projects based on your future career goals?

Second-Year Postdoc (2y): My project was more exploratory. My PI was aware that I was interested in an academic position. My PI suggested the project and gave me some choices.

**NS:** How often and for how long do you speak with your PI?

ly: On a monthly basis, it is once or twice. We meet 15-30 minutes each time.

2y: Not very often! Every three weeks, whenever there's a need, 30 minutes each time.

3y: It depends; if there are no papers or important meetings based on collaborators, then it's once a month for about two hours. Otherwise, if there are issues that need to be discussed or papers that need to be submitted, it is twice a week. My PI is flexible.

**NS: Do you feel that you get career advice from your PI? Describe the nature of these discussions. Where do you go for career advice?**

1y: No, we've never spoken about my career. I think it's really vital that a mentor provide career advice and input at every stage of one's postdoc. A postdoc is an important crossroad with so many and so few alternatives at the same time. So far, there have been no discussions about my career, except a minute or two which I brought up about myself that I'm focused on an academic career. I try to talk to postdocs from other labs and try to indirectly absorb what they get. I speak to my Ph.D. mentor, my Ph.D. thesis committee, and other professors that I've come in contact with over the years. It all seems to be external. Also, [I get advice] from Tri-Institutional career workshops because they open my eyes to many things that I didn't know before.

2y: No, I don't get any career advice from my PI. Instead I go to postdocs and other professors, and my old advisor.

3y: I get career support but not career advice. However, I've never really asked my PI what he thinks I should do. I go to my Ph.D. advisor for career advice.

**NS: What is the nature of your scientific interaction with your PI? Do you get very technical advice such as how to run a gel or do you have more general scientific conversations with your mentor?**

1y: We talk about the project in question. It's an update from the previous meeting. We sometimes talk about the goal of the project, but not about the big picture of the project. We haven't had too many technical conversations and I have not specifically asked for that either.

2y: More big picture. I get very minimal technical advice from my PI.

3y: I get no technical advice from my PI. My PI is more big picture.

**NS: How can your communication with your PI be improved? Do you also talk to other PIs and what is the nature of these interactions?**

1y: My perfect type of communication would include more discussions about the big picture of my project and also discussions about how my accomplishments in

the lab would help the project as well as help me to scientifically launch my career. When I walk into the lab every day, there are two questions in my mind: 1) What results am I going to get in my project? and 2) What about my scientific experience and what's next? The second one hasn't been addressed yet. I speak to other PIs but it isn't technical; it's more to help my career.

2y: If there's a conflict of interest or no interest then there is no way to improve the communication.

3y: If the PI was physically in the lab more, I think it would help. Some PIs sit in the office a lot and it makes it very hard. They don't have a feel of the lab dynamics and the technical difficulties. You need to make an appointment with them and it becomes very processed and not spontaneous. No, I don't talk to other PIs about science.

**NS: Do you think there should be postdoc committees?**

1y: It's a good idea. I think that is already happening informally when people need advice. Some of us are shy and having such a committee might help. But I think we should have some level of independence. I think a third person could help with making communication clearer between the PI and the postdoc with respect to expectations and help with evaluations. For example, I think my postdoc is going great, but maybe my PI doesn't think so. So a third person could be an ombudsman. Whenever they foresee gray areas of communication then they can help the postdoc to see more clearly. Sometimes there's a breakdown in communication and a third person could help clarify this. If not for getting career advice, at least you have a third person. It could be very informal.

2y: I think it is a good idea.

3y: It is a good question because I think many times postdocs flounder. If they can't go to the PI, then who do they go to? I've seen pretty nasty things happen between postdocs and their mentors where they needed mediation.

Maybe a co-mentor...But this might be too difficult. An actual physical equivalent like the Dean's Office but for postdocs would be a good idea. Someplace where postdocs could go and confidentially discuss problems with the PI. It could be a PI and they rotate between scientific advisors. There should be an office shared between the PDA and the Dean's Office, some sort of an office for postdocs. ☉

## Cameroon: *Le Pays de Roger Milla*

GODWIN NCHINDA

Cameroon is one of the few countries in Africa with a very high literacy rate. This country, in the very heart of Africa, is known worldwide as the "country of Roger Milla." Roger Milla, a soccer legend comparable only to Pelé and Maradona, took African soccer to a level the world never expected and somehow managed to reduce the history of this Central African nation to the story of soccer.

A famous scientist once visited my former lab in Germany to give a talk on dendritic cells and when I introduced myself, she picked up on the word Cameroon and started to rant about Roger Milla and soccer. I struggled to remind her that many Cameroonian scientists, including Victor Anuma Ngu, who was once a Rockefeller University scholar and also the Queen of England's personal physician, have contributed equally to bring Cameroon into the limelight, but this scientist had her "History of Cameroon" and neither the facts nor I could change her perceptions. Exhausted and frustrated, I tried to seek solace from my former boss but he had even more stories on Cameroonian soccer.

On my way to New York the previous year, I had a stopover at Roissy-Charles De Gaulle International Airport and as I was checking in, the ticket controller looked at my passport and said "Aha! Le Cameroun de Roger Milla!" No "good morning!" no "how are you today, sir?" and of course, no "have a nice trip!" Well, it's good to know that a son of the soil has excelled in his domain, but it's terrible to narrow down the story of a people to soccer and its attendant glory.

It has really been hard for me to convince others that Cameroon is more than just soccer and Milla. Manu Dibango, for example, is a world-famous saxophonist who succeeded in fusing western jazz with Cameroonian melodies to generate a unique brand of jazz. Talk to any good saxophonist and you will be shocked to hear how much they know about Cameroonian music.

Cameroon is a country with 250 ethnic groups with just as many different languages and a multitude of talents in different spheres of life. Cameroon possesses tropical jungles with some of the most exotic plant species in the world. In fact, many have already been documented to be of very potent medicinal value. Cameroon, by design or accident, is endowed with enormous natural resources including coffee, palm oil, peanuts, timber, rubber, banana, petroleum, gold, tea, and cotton.

Due to her economic vitality, Cameroon

*continued on next page*

continues to attract an ever-increasing number of immigrants. Cameroonians have always prided themselves on being "Africa in miniature" but with a large number of Chinese swarming into the country in the recent past, I wonder whether this will hold true in the days to come. Although the official languages in Cameroon are English and French, it's hard to find a Cameroonian who cannot speak at least four different languages. Some languages such as Arabic and Latin crept into the country through religion while others are just mixtures of different languages. While English and French are being emphasized in the academic milieu, "Pidgin," a symphony of African, Asian, Latin, and European languages has emerged as a major means of communication, especially for the multitude of races in Cameroon. Pidgin relies on the speaker's capacity to rapidly filter through many languages and fish out words and sounds that would reach his particular audience, just as a conductor does with a classical piece.

When I was a teenager I thought that

Shell, Total, Elf, Mobile, Pecten, PB, etc. were just some fanciful names used by people to distinguish their businesses from each other. It was shocking later on to discover that these were real multinational firms dealing with Cameroonian petroleum and its accessory products, yet the average Cameroonian does not know the amount of crude oil produced and sold by Cameroon. Even now, I firmly believe that, few people consider Cameroon to be an oil-producing nation.

Before I went to college, Cameroon had a large and booming economy with forty percent of her population consisting of immigrants mainly from Nigeria, Chad, Senegal, Ghana, and other parts of the world. During this time, Cameroonians cared less about leaving their country, worked very hard, and were content with their salary. This was the era of a booming middle class with its attendant luxuries and excesses. Then the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund showed up with their structural adjustment program, and by the

time I was in the job market, Cameroon was actually begging the international community to be considered one of the most indebted or poorest nations in the world. This, I believe, could be one of the most difficult decisions of the century. How would Cameroon convince the people who are buying or simply taking away her palm oil, banana, coffee, cocoa, gold, aluminum, crude oil, timber, rubber, and tea, that she is one of the most wretched nations on earth? Yes, in the last couple of years, Cameroon has been struggling hard to be considered a poor nation, but the collective human community is increasingly seeing otherwise. Today, watching Cameroon whimper to be considered a poor nation is like watching a youth in his late teens whining for diapers and cookies! Believe me, there is no rolling back the clock. When a nation has a booming democracy with 60% of her people literate and her women standing shoulder to shoulder with the men, then that nation has tipped the balance, and poverty is far from being an option. ☉

## Who's on the Sixth Floor?

AILEEN MARSHALL

When the elevator doors open on the sixth floor of Weiss, have you ever wondered, "Which lab is this?" Have you ever heard of the Population Council? Not too many people at The Rockefeller University have, although the two groups share similar roots.

Officially, the Population Council is an international, non-profit, non-governmental organization that conducts biomedical, social science, and public health research in 70 countries. The organization employs more than 500 people with expertise in biomedicine, gender and family dynamics, HIV/AIDS, infants and children, quality of care, reproductive health, social science, strengthening local resources, and transitions to adulthood. The Population Council is headquartered in New York at Dag Hammarskold Plaza and has seventeen other offices in Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

John D. Rockefeller 3rd founded the Population Council in 1952. He was impressed by the intricacies of population growth, which was a major issue at that time. Under the sponsorship of the National Academy of Sciences, he gathered a group of scientists to discuss the consequences of population growth. After two and a half days, they agreed on the need for a new organization to study this issue scientifically, and provide this data to governments and individuals. John D. felt this would fill a need to "improve the quality of people's lives, to make it possible for individuals everywhere to develop their full potential." He endowed over \$1 million in original financial support and became the Council's first president.

Four years later, the Council obtained funding to set up its own biomedical research laboratory at The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (which later became The Rockefeller University) to study reproductive physiology and fertility regulation. This biomedical division of the Council was later

renamed the Center for Biomedical Research (CBR) in 1976. During the 1960s, scientists in the biomedical division helped develop new contraceptive methods, including the intrauterine devices known as the Lippes Loop and the Copper-T. In the late 1970s an increased emphasis was placed on basic and applied research, including male physiology. In addition, with partial funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, they established an international network to develop new contraceptive methods—the International Committee for Contraception Research (ICCR). In 1990 the Council received approval from the FDA for their Norplant® contraceptive implants. Approval for Mifepristone for medical abortion and Mirena®, a progestin-releasing intrauterine system (IUS), was received in 2000. In 2001, the study of HIV/AIDS was incorporated into the research program.

Today, CBR carries out basic research on reproductive processes, and develops contraceptive, hormone therapy, and AIDS-prevention products. One major focus of the basic research program is the cellular and molecular mechanisms of male reproduction and the regulation of gonadal function by the pituitary. There are also projects studying the development and physiology of Leydig cells, genetic mechanisms of androgen action, germ cell dynamics, the physiology of Sertoli cells, sperm maturation, the function of the annulus of the sperm tail, and transcriptional control of FSH synthesis. There are also research projects on the role of dendritic cells in HIV infection. These include work on activating dendritic cells, dendritic cell infection by HIV at the mucosal surfaces, mucosal innate and adaptive immunity and HIV, and transmission of HIV.

In addition, there are labs that focus on product research

*continued on page 8*





This month, Natural Selections features Holly Miller, Reference and Outreach Librarian  
Country of Origin: USA

## New York State of Mind

**1. How long have you been living in New York?** More than 11 years. I moved to Long Island in January of 1995. I have always lived on the North Shore, first Stony Brook and then my current home.

**2. Where do you live?** I don't live in NYC. I live on the North Shore of Long Island, Port Jefferson Station, NY.

**3. Which is your favorite neighborhood?** On Long Island, I really like Huntington. There are nice restaurants, an excellent movie theater and a nice, small downtown for walking and window shopping.

**4. What do you think is the most overrated thing in the city? And underrated?** The most overrated thing about Long Island is shopping at the malls. And the most underrated aspect of Long Island is its wonderful wildlife, especially the birds. As a newly addicted bird watcher, I am amazed at the diversity and richness of Long Island's bird life.

**5. What do you miss most when you are out of town?** Honestly, I miss New Yorkers' sense of efficiency. I have lived in North Carolina and being originally from Pennsylvania, I visit family several times a year and I am often amazed by the lack of urgency in people there. They don't bag their own groceries, the street signs are confusing or non-existent, people walk so slowly! I also miss the wonderful heterogeneity of New York and New Yorkers.

**6. If you could change one thing about NYC, what would that be?** The cost of housing. I would make it cheap enough so I could have an apartment in NYC and on Long Island! And what I would change about Long Island is the seemingly unstoppable growth and development. I would preserve the small amount of undeveloped land and farm land that is left.

**7. Describe a perfect weekend in NYC.** Since I don't feel qualified (yet!) to describe a perfect weekend in NYC, I will describe a perfect weekend on Long Island. Saturday morning, we will get up early, before sunrise, take a picnic breakfast to Smith Point Beach (eastern Fire Island), watch the sunrise and maybe even take an early morning swim. Then we'll head east and visit a few wineries. In the afternoon we will take an easy hike at Elizabeth A. Morton Wildlife Refuge and feed the chickadees as they sit on your hand. We can have dinner at Q, a Thai Bistro and then head to the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival and listen to a concert in the Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church. On Sunday, we would head west, stopping first for breakfast at my favorite overly shiny Long Island diner. The cool of the morning will be spent walking the trails at Caumsett State park and a pleasant picnic lunch. In the afternoon,



photo by Dmitry Mozzherin

we will visit the beautiful greenhouses and gardens of Planting Fields Arboretum State Park. Then we will savor a wonderful dinner in Huntington Village at Ariana, an Afghani restaurant downtown. Finally we will watch a great film at the Cinema Arts Centre. If you think this is a lot to do on one weekend, remember the perfect weekend would last more than 48 hours!

**8. What is the most memorable experience you have had in NYC?** I visited the World Trade Center for the first time on Sunday, September 9, 2001. A family friend had just moved his business to NYC and he was proudly showing my husband and me his office. Because of what happened two days later, that simple visit, the speed of the elevators, the furniture in his office, the promise of the future that hung in the air that day, will be with me forever. Thankfully, our friend and his coworkers were not hurt when the tragedy occurred.

**9. If you could live anywhere else, where would that be?** As a child, I dreamed of living in the middle of a forest in Montana. After living and working in such a vital and energetic place, I don't know how I would feel about the peace and isolation. I would still like to give it a try, as long as I have a fast internet connection so I can read the *NYTimes* online.

**10. Do you think of yourself as a New Yorker? Why?** Well, I would say that sometimes I fancy myself a New Yorker, in the company of non-New Yorkers, but I don't feel I have acquired all the skills and confidence of a true New Yorker yet. ☺

## The Rockefeller Film Series

LUKASZ KOWALIK

The Rockefeller University Film Series has finally taken the bold step of not only screening a movie that does not require subtitles but one that the Academy nominated for Best Picture. But do not write us off as sell-outs just yet. Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* is a beautiful movie, each scene having been directed and shot in a way that makes one want to get wall-sized prints of the movie's stills or go camping in Alberta for a week or two. The story is of the relationship between a Wyoming ranch hand and a rodeo cowboy, Ennis and Jake, played by Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal. Both performances won Academy Award nominations. We follow their tumultuous love (complete with punches) through several decades but it is really the ending, poignant and gripping, that elevates the film to masterpiece status. The romance is old-fashioned and universal, with intertwining themes of passion and loss, but it is as unlike Hollywood romances as the love between two silent cowboys could be. ☺

*Brokeback Mountain* (2005) by Ang Lee will be screened on May 15th at 8 p.m. in Caspary Auditorium.

# Sixth Annual Faculty Club Pool Tournament

KEVIN O'DONOVAN

Over the last several months, there has been a quietly building tension in the corner around the Faculty Club pool table. It came to a head one Tuesday last month. In what was the best-attended pool tournament final to date, Donny Licatalosi (R. Darnell Lab) and Nico Reyes (Gadsby Lab) provided an appreciative audience with a thrilling finale to the marathon 2005/6 6th Annual Faculty Club Pool Tournament. Newcomers to the tournament, experts tipped both of them for success. Fellow lab mate, reigning champion and *sensei* Ru Zhong was rumored to have said of his pupil, "Donny will clean table," while Pat Griffin and others had the upstart Uruguayan Reyes going all the way. Donny took the early lead winning the first two games of the best of seven match and subsequently led 3-1. Unfazed though, Reyes clawed his way back putting the match on level terms at 3-3 and forcing a 7th and final game. The 6th game, however, was not without drama. With a 3-ball advantage and a touch of overconfidence, perhaps due in part to the presence of his home country's quarters that peculiarly decorate the Faculty Club table, the Canadian Licatalosi tried an ambitious bank shot on the black. In doing so, the cue ball found its way into the far corner pocket. In Game 7, Licatalosi again found himself with a difficult bank on the 8, but this time he opted for safety. After potting two of the three remaining solids, Reyes was left with a challenging and long distance cut shot on the 1 ball. Unsuccessful, Reyes left the door open and Licatalosi clinically finished off the match, earning himself the title. ☉



Nico Reyes, runner-up in the 2005-06 Faculty Club Pool Tournament, receives a large box of tissues from the Faculty Club manager Pat Griffin for his efforts. The new champion Donny Licatalosi holds his prize and is accompanied by Kevin O'Donovan, tournament organizer, current darts champion, and two time Tournament winner.



*Natural Selections* is not an official publication of The Rockefeller University. University administration does not produce this newsletter. The views expressed by the contributors to this publication may not necessarily reflect views or policies of the University.

## Natural Selections needs YOU!



Please send articles, letters to the editors, or get involved in the production of *Natural Selections*.

[naturalselections@rockefeller.edu](mailto:naturalselections@rockefeller.edu)

*'Who's on the Sixth Floor?' from page 6*

and contraceptive development. The Council is developing contraceptive and hormone replacement products, and microbicides. There are a few progestins used: levonorgestrel, a synthetic progestin, is found in three Council products: Jadelle®, a two-rod, Norplant, a six-rod subdermal contraceptive, and Mirena®. Another synthetic progestin is Nestorone®. Council research includes finding ways to deliver the hormone transdermally, using a skin gel or patch, for contraception and hormone therapy. They are collaborating with a pharmaceutical company to develop a contraceptive skin spray. Nestorone® is also used in a contraceptive vaginal ring, along with ethinyl estradiol. A single rod implant is under development for lactating women. Nestorone's® potential in treatment for endometriosis is being explored. A progesterone receptor modulator (PRM) is being explored for potential use in a contraceptive vaginal ring,

IUS, and hormone replacement therapy. A testosterone derivative, MENT® (7α-methyl-19-nortestosterone) is used in the development of hormone replacement therapy and contraception in men via subdermal implants and skin gels. Carrageenan, a substance derived from seaweed, is being researched under the brand name Carraguard® as a potential vaginal microbicide to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

The Population Council runs the Endocrinology, Reproduction, and Immunology Seminar series at The Rockefeller University. It occurs at noon in Weiss 301 on selected Thursdays from September through May. It is listed in the RU Calendar and signs are posted around campus.

The Council offers fellowships in physiology and biochemistry of reproduction. Anyone wanting to know more about the Population Council can go to its web site at <http://www.pop-council.org>. ☉