



LEHMAN  
COLLEGE

# 1946

The Early Days of the U.N.  
Inspire an International Legacy  
At Lehman College





## A Message from Ricardo R. Fernández, President, Herbert H. Lehman College

**T**he history of the United Nations on our campus predates Lehman College, but the legacy of those months remains an important part of our history, institutional mission, culture, and values.

In March 1946, when the U.N. began its meetings in the Bronx, the four buildings that existed then on these grounds were the home of the uptown branch of Hunter College. During World War II, the campus had been vacated to become the “U.S.S. Hunter”—a training station for 80,000 U.S. Navy WAVES (“Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service”). Turned back to the City of New York after the war ended, the campus had not yet welcomed back any students when the U.N. began looking for a temporary place to convene.

For five months in 1946—from March 25 until August 15, when the U.N. moved to another temporary home on Long Island—the eyes of the world often turned to this corner of the Bronx. Then in its infancy, the U.N. faced a shattered and volatile world that represented a significant test of its viability. The decisions reached while meeting on this campus proved the organization’s value in mediating, calming, and resolving international crises.

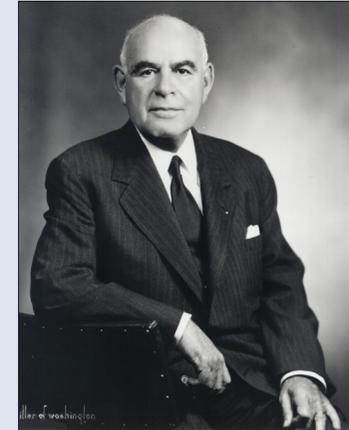
**On the Cover:** The campus on March 25, 1946, the first day of meetings of the U.N. Security Council. Flags of the original 51 members of the United Nations were raised on flagpoles planted in the grass along the inner rim of the circular driveway that separated the Gym Building from Student Hall (since renovated and renamed the Music Building). The present sloping grassy area was created during construction of Lehman Center for the Performing Arts.

When Lehman College was established in 1968, a year of conflict and upheaval both at home and abroad, the historic role of the campus in the formation of the U.N. struck a powerful chord. It was a promising reminder that peaceful solutions can be found and progress toward social justice can be achieved, even in tumultuous times.

In that spirit, Lehman College has maintained strong ties with the U.N. We have encouraged its international spirit to flourish both academically and culturally and worked in different ways as an educational institution to support and advance its goals. For us, the story of the U.N. on this campus began in 1946, and, along with hundreds of other institutions, organizations, and individuals, we continue to play a part in its history.

In 1946, local workers readied the campus for the world scene, installing a floor, paneling, and other elements needed to create the Security Council’s first meeting space on American soil. Long before the days of electronic voting, one carpenter carefully crafted the delegates’ first “ballot box.” When the box was later opened, U.N. staff found a note left by the craftsman, which read: “Let me cast the first ballot for world peace.” Through our work, Lehman College casts that same vote today.

### Herbert H. Lehman: First Director General of UNRRA



The campus connection with the United Nations can also be traced to the life and public service of Herbert H. Lehman, the four-term New York Governor and U.S. Senator for whom Lehman College is named. Governor Lehman worked for the U.N. before the organization was formally established, serving from 1943-1946 as Director General of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Under his administration, UNRRA became the largest relief operation in history, providing twenty-four million tons of food, clothing, and medical supplies to 500 million people in seventeen countries affected by World War II.

**At left:** The Security Council of the United Nations held its first formal meetings on American soil in Lehman’s Gym Building. In just fifteen days workers had paneled the walls and installed a new floor and false ceiling. The new meeting room accommodated 692 people, including delegates, multilingual staff, and the press. The acoustics, it was reported, were ‘perfect’.



The United Nations was an idea whose time had finally come, after two world wars in as many generations. Though its Charter was drafted in San Francisco in Spring 1945, a permanent home for the U.N. had not yet been decided upon when the Security Council held preliminary meetings in 1946 at the Henry Hudson Hotel on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. But this and a couple of borrowed boardrooms at Rockefeller Center were far too small to conduct business with any regularity. What's more, the vision of an appropriate site for the United Nations was that of a landscaped suburban setting where the world's problems could be discussed in the peace and quiet of shade trees, gardens, and lawns.

Aware of the inadequacy of the temporary Manhattan sites, New York City Mayor William O'Dwyer urged Hunter College to make its branch facility in the Bronx available. Both the location and timing were ideal. There were large white-stone buildings on the 37-acre Bronx campus, destined a generation later to become Lehman College. World War II, however, had interfered with the operation of the campus as a college. The U.S. Navy had used the facilities as a training station for the WAVES, a military service for women volunteers. By 1946, with the war over, the WAVES no longer needed the site. Moreover, the tree-lined campus and the broad vista over the waters of the Jerome Park Reservoir coincided with the conventional wisdom of an ideal location for the United Nations. Ultimately, of course, this vision of serenity was

At left: James Byrnes (center), United States Delegate to the United Nations, leaves the Gym Building.

modified when the Rockefeller family contributed \$8.5 million to purchase land and build the U.N. permanent headquarters on the banks of the East River, in the heart of Manhattan.

As soon as permission was received to use the Bronx campus, a swarm of architects, carpenters, and painters began working around the clock to make the necessary alterations for its use by the United Nations. In just fifteen days, the Gym Building was transformed into formal chambers for the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Classrooms and faculty offices were used by delegates and U.N. officials. On March 25, 1946, the campus was ready with flags of the fifty-one member nations raised as the delegates arrived.



The college campus became the "diplomatic center of the universe," as A. M. Rosenthal of The New York Times described it. Above: Dr. Quo Tai-chi of China opened the first meeting of the Security Council. New York State Governor Thomas E. Dewey welcomed the delegates to New York. The Security Council immediately confronted critical issues as representatives tried to resolve problems in Iran, Greece, Spain, Indonesia, Syria, and Lebanon.



Above: On March 27, 1946, Soviet Union representative Andrei Gromyko walked out of the Security Council debate over the presence of Soviet troops in northern Iran, the first of many Soviet walkouts from the United Nations. He returned April 9, however, and the Soviet Union eventually complied with the Council's decision that Soviet troops be withdrawn. Thus, at its meetings in the Bronx, the U.N. faced its first real test and achieved success.



Some of the U.N.'s first efforts at disarmament and arms control took place on the campus in June 1946 during the first meetings of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission. Bernard Baruch of the United States was chosen as temporary chairman of the Commission, which soon deadlocked with the Soviet Union over the Baruch Plan for international control of atomic energy. Above: Baruch and U.N. Secretary General Trygve Lie.



Above: Mrs. Roosevelt is photographed with a copy of the Declaration of Human Rights.

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In his 1995 commencement address, William vanden Heuvel, former Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, told the Lehman College graduating class that what had happened on this campus 50 years ago represented an "opportunity of humanity to devise a system of international cooperation...which would control war and the barbaric violence that has been a hallmark of human history."

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The United Nations Economic and Social Council established a preliminary Commission on Human Rights, headed by Eleanor Roosevelt. Its purpose was to consider how the U.N. could best implement the provisions in its Charter calling for the observance and protection of human rights. These efforts in the Bronx culminated in the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations moved on to other quarters, but left behind a historical legacy that remains an inspiration to the Lehman College community.



Above: The former First Lady meets in her office in Gillet Hall with Henri Laugier, an assistant to the Secretary General for social affairs.

At right: U.N. Personnel Office staff at work in Student Hall—now the Faculty Dining Room, Music Building.



THESE FREEDOMS HAVE BEEN WON  
AND LOST, AND WON AGAIN - WHEN  
THEY ARE LOST, THERE IS NO PEACE  
UNTIL THEY ARE RE-WON

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

FREEDOM OF SPEECH



"The Bedford Park section of the North Bronx [was] known worldwide, according to the mothers of the area in those days, for the freshness of the air, a hundred, a thousand times better than downtown. . . . We would daydream about taking the boys of the Security Council out in a bus to Van Cortlandt Park, picking a nice grassy spot for them, and then seeing how fierce Pakistani versus Indian or American versus Russian could sound while swatting flies and smacking ants while Bolivia over there dozed sweetly, face to the sun."

— A.M. Rosenthal, "A Memoir: When the U.N. was Young," *The New York Times*, September 25, 1985



Above: Headlines were often made as a result of actions taken during these early days of the U.N.



Above: The U.N. cafeteria in the lower level of Student Hall is now the Student Cafeteria in the Music Building.

At left: The press center was the boarded-over swimming pool in the Gym Building, with The New York Times office placed in the hairdrying room.

## We the peoples of the United Nations

determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

and for these ends

to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims. Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.

Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, Signed June 26, 1945, San Francisco, California

### THE 51 ORIGINAL MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Argentina	El Salvador	Norway
Australia	Ethiopia	Panama
Belgium	France	Paraguay
Belorussian SSR	Greece	Peru
Bolivia	Guatemala	The Philippines
Brazil	Haiti	Poland
Canada	Honduras	Saudi Arabia
Chile	India	South Africa
China	Iran	Syria
Colombia	Iraq	Turkey
Costa Rica	Lebanon	Ukrainian SSR
Cuba	Liberia	USSR
Czechoslovakia	Luxembourg	United Kingdom
Denmark	Mexico	United States
Dominican Republic	The Netherlands	Uruguay
Ecuador	New Zealand	Venezuela
Egypt	Nicaragua	Yugoslavia

At right: At the first session of the Security Council, Russian and Chinese delegates chat.





MR. NIVELLE



Above: U.S. and British members of the Commission on Rules of Procedure for the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission meet on June 17, 1946.



Above: A session of the United Nations Economic and Employment Commission.



Above: Security Council Delegates to the first session are besieged by questions after meeting on March 25, 1946. Among others are delegates from Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the USSR.

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The United Nations used the Hunter (now, Lehman) campus for nearly five months—from March 15, 1946 through August 25, 1946. The first U.N. budget, \$27 million, was drafted in the Gym Building, and U.N. chauffeurs staged their first strike here.

At left: Members of the U.N. editorial staff at work in the Gym Building.

In the decades since the United Nations met on the campus, Lehman College has commemorated the organization's founding in anniversary celebrations, academic symposia, art exhibitions, and other events, including several that have focused on international and peace-related issues.

## Commemoration Activities At Lehman College 1995-1996 During the U.N.'s Fiftieth Anniversary

Symposium on Arms Control Education sponsored by the International Association of University Presidents and the U.N. Commission on Arms Control Education (April 1995)

Commencement Address by William J. vanden Heuvel, former United States Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations (June 1995)

Convocation/CUNY Student Forum with U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, moderated by A. M. Rosenthal of The New York Times (September 1995)

Exhibition of U.N. Commemorative Medals (Library Gallery, September – November 1995)

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first meeting of the Security Council on the campus (March 25, 1996)

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary luncheon of U.N. Society of Mohicans (March 1996)

Sir Brian Urquhart, former U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, who worked with the first five U.N. Secretary Generals, delivers the Herbert H. Lehman Memorial Lecture (March 1996)

Academic forum on Women and the United Nations (April 1996)

Exhibition on campus history and Herbert H. Lehman's role as Director-General of UNRRA (Library Gallery, May – June 1996)



Above: During the year-long commemoration of the U.N.'s Fiftieth Anniversary, a commemorative grove of dogwoods (top) was planted and dedicated (center) to the U.N. staff who served on the campus. Among them was Margaret ("Molly") K. Bruce, a member of the U.N. staff for 32 years who worked with Eleanor Roosevelt in drafting the Declaration of Human Rights. "It was a period of great enthusiasm, great idealistic approaches, great hope for the future United Nations," Mrs. Bruce recalls. At left: Also during the U.N.'s Fiftieth Anniversary, a weeping cherry tree was planted outside the building that had housed the Security Council in its infancy.



During the United Nations' Fiftieth Anniversary, the American Medallist Sculpture Association held an exhibition in the Lehman College Library Gallery of U.N. Commemorative Medals. The exhibition honored the humanitarian goals of the United Nations.

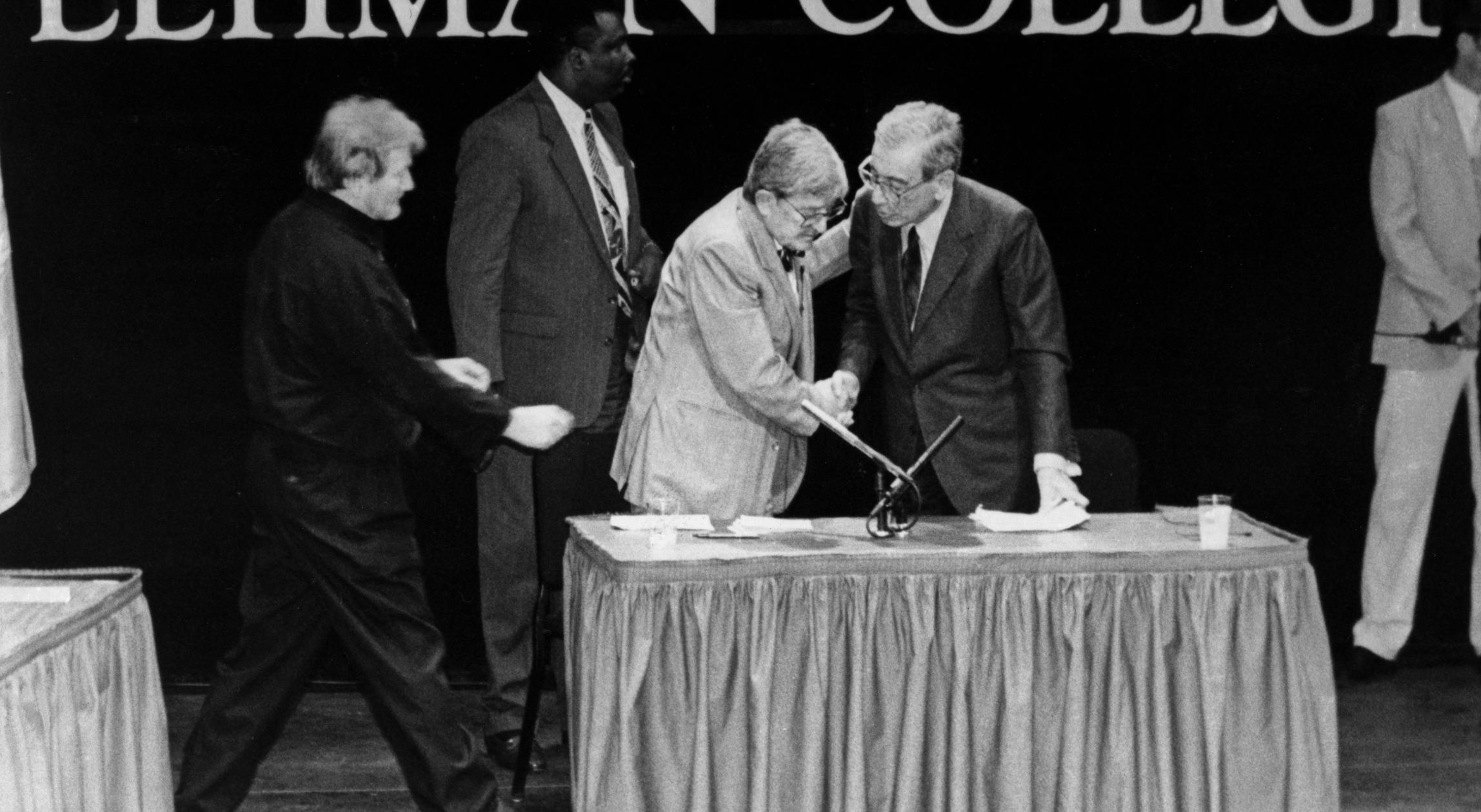
September 18 – November 18, 1995

### Participating Artists

Barbara Arum  
Francoise Bilodeau  
E. Richard Bonham  
Edith Rae Brown  
George Cuhaj  
Don Everhart  
Leonda Finke  
Rusdi Genest  
Amanullah Haiderzad  
Mary Hecht  
Virginia Janssen  
Masaharu Kakitsubo  
Mico Kaufman  
Herbert Leopold  
Jacqueline Lorio  
Gwen Marcus  
Yefkin Megherian  
Anne Mirvish  
John Molloy  
Annette Needle  
Ann Pollack  
Marion Roller  
Maryvonne Rosse  
Bernard Schmidt  
Jean Schonwalter  
Alex Shagin  
Jeanne Stevens-Sollman  
Bud Wertheim  
Karen Worth  
Barbara Yared

At right: A.M. Rosenthal greets U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali at the start of a 1995 forum held at Lehman as part of the U.N.'s 50th anniversary celebration.

# New York LEHMAN COLLEGE



New York - Dominican Republic  
Model United Nations Conference  
**NYDMUN**  
Dal 18 al 19 de marzo 2005



**LEHMAN**  
COLLEGE  
The City University of New York



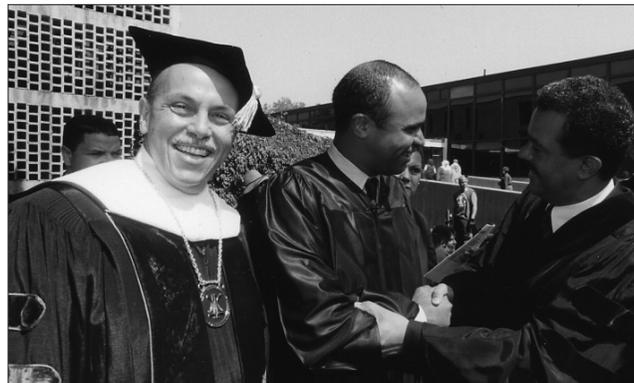


Above: On March 25, 2006—exactly 60 years after the U.N. had begun its meetings on the campus, Ambassador Yishan Zhang (top left), Deputy Permanent Representative of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations, and Ambassador Andrey I. Denisov (top right) of the Russian Federation keynoted a day-long symposium at the College that explored the issues facing the two nations. Afterwards, Lehman College President Ricardo R. Fernández (below, second from right) led both ambassadors and their wives on a tour of the campus that included a stop at the plaque on the Old Gym Building, where the U.N. meetings had been held.

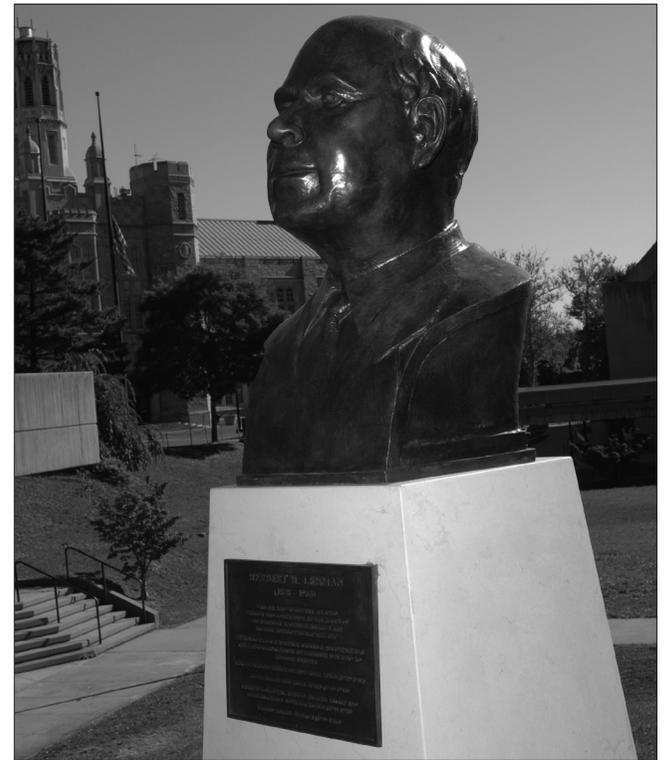
At left: When students from the Dominican Republic came to New York in March 2005 for sessions of their Model U.N., both Lehman College and the U.N. itself became their base. Here, they attend a plenary session in Lehman’s Lovinger Theatre.



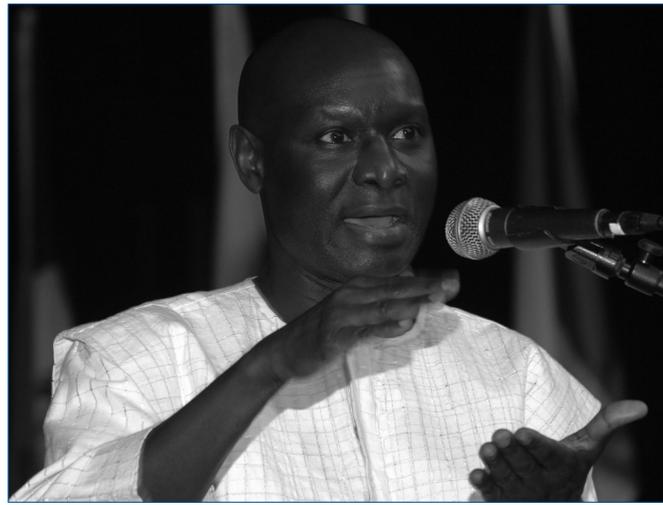
Above: Members of the Lehman family join in February 2004 with former members of his staff, as well as Lehman faculty and alumni, to remember Governor Lehman’s service to his country and the world. Seated from left are Julius C.C. Edelstein, June Bingham Birge, Henry Morgenthau III, and Sarah Morgenthau. Standing from left are historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Ambassador William vanden Heuvel, New Yorker writer Jane Mayer, Lehman President Ricardo R. Fernández, Lehman History Professor Duane Tananbaum, and New York City Commissioner of Records (and Lehman alumnus) Brian Andersson.



Above: Welcoming another international guest to the campus are President Fernández (left) and Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión (center), greeting former President Leonel Fernández Reyna of the Dominican Republic at Lehman’s 2005 Commencement. He would return to the campus later that year (as President once again) to launch discussion of a new report on the future of his nation, prepared as part of the U.N. Development Program.



Above: A portrait bust of Governor Lehman, created by sculptor John Belardo of the Lehman Art Department, is unveiled in November 2004 at the FDR Museum in Hyde Park. Those at the event included, from left, Ambassador John L. Loeb, Jr., Robert Birge, June Bingham Birge, Steven S. Lash, Wendy Lehman Lash, and William L. Bernhard. In 2005 the bust was on exhibit in the State Capitol and then moved to a permanent location along College Walk on the Lehman campus.



Above: Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi (top) receives the Lehman Leadership Award from President Fernández during the symposium on “The Role of Women in World Peace” that took place at the College in May 2004 and was cosponsored with the International Health Awareness Network (IHAN). Lehman and IHAN also held a reception at the U.N. to honor Mrs. Ebadi. Nobel Peace Prize winner and anti-landmine activist Jody Williams (below) delivers the annual Lehman Lecture in March 2006, speaking on “Sustainable Development, Human Security, and Peace.”

Above: High-ranking officials of the U.N. have continued to visit the campus to take part in academic events focused on world issues. Speaking at the May 2004 symposium were Olara Otunnu (top), U.N. Undersecretary General and Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Anwarul Karim Chowdhury (below), U.N. Undersecretary General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States. Ambassador Otunnu returned to speak at Lehman’s 2005 Convocation, where he received an honorary degree. Ambassador Chowdhury joined with Lehman as one of the cosponsors for a major international conference on “Building a Just and Sustainable Peace,” held in Hiroshima, Japan, in August 2006.

Above: Leading a walk in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park at the beginning of the 2006 conference (top) are, in the front from left, U.N. Under Secretary General Anwarul K. Chowdhury and Nobel Laureates Shirin Ebadi and Jody Williams. Conference participants (below) hold a Closing Peace Ribbon ceremony in front of the A-Dome, a structure that partially survived the atomic bomb. The conference drew scholars, students, and activists from around the world.

With its concert hall, theatres, art gallery, and world-class APEX, Lehman College is a regional center for the visual and performing arts, sports and recreation, technology and communications, and offers programs in close to 100 fields of the arts, sciences, and professional studies.

Coming from more than 90 countries around the world, Lehman students reflect the richly diverse population of New York City and especially of the Borough of the Bronx, a traditional area of settlement for new American immigrants. Committed to meeting the educational needs of its urban population, Lehman enrolls 11,000 undergraduate and graduate students. In association with the New York Botanical Garden, Lehman is the site of the CUNY doctoral program in plant sciences.



On the Back Cover: The Lehman campus in the twenty-first century would still be recognizable to the U.N. delegates and staff who met here in 1946. In the background is the Music Building (known then as Student Hall).

Principal photography: Courtesy of United Nations.  
Page 13: Courtesy of The Riverdale Press. Additional photography: Jason Green: Pages 14, 15, 16, and Back Cover; Judy Rand: Page 16 (right column); Marge Rice: Page 15 (upper right); and Phyllis Yip: page 12.

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# Today

Students and Faculty from Around the World  
Bring an International Spirit  
To Lehman College

