

# “What Is Going On?...”

by the NY Coro Fellows Class of 2005-2006

## Reflections on the First 90 Days



NY Fellows interview Fareed Zakaria, Editor of Newsweek International

### “Why” Coro?

As a college senior I was faced with the intimidating process of determining my post-academic life. At the time, the Coro Fellowship seemed to offer a perfect combination of opportunities to develop my personal and academic interests in social justice and offering me highly diverse “real-world” experiences. To my satisfaction, the program has done just that. Not only do I get the opportunity to develop concrete professional skills and connections, I also get to reflect on my learning with a group of 11 motivating peers. This program is perfect for individuals who passionately strive to serve their communities and, in the process, are ready to challenge themselves and others. I will be finishing this program with a greater sense of how the world works and of my own abilities.

### What Coro Has Meant for Me

I have found the Fellows Program to be one of the most challenging, intellectually stimulating, and demanding experiences of my life. I love the ‘sink or swim’ notion that Coro immerses you in every day and every month, with the beginning and completion of every work cycle.

In my first job placement, I was given five weeks to become a functioning member of a political consulting firm. In this short time, I had to gain enough trust and confidence from my co-workers to be assigned meaningful projects. As a result, I’m learning to be nimble, versatile and more open to unknown possibilities.

Although the value of many of our experiences has to do with our own initiative and willingness to take risks, it is also about the way our group comes together to debate, reflect, and push each other to new levels of understanding. There’s a lot of trust within the group; a lot of “taking the plunge” together.

I’m seeing that Coro not only teaches me to understand established structures for what they are and what they do, but also forces me to take one step further and see where and how I can shift these structures to better serve their purposes.

Furthermore, I’m finding that Coro places an important emphasis on the connections that exist between people and aspires to teach us how to use those connections to strengthen our communities.

### On Being One of Twelve

In my opinion, the best part of the Coro experience is being one of a group of twelve highly motivated, intelligent individuals. This is something unique.

*“Throughout life I will meet interesting people, but nothing compares to the relationships that I am developing with my fellow Fellows.”*

Imagine spending nine months of your life with eleven people as motivated as yourself. They can help you grow in ways you never contemplated.

Learning how to lead – and to follow – other leaders may be the most important lesson I can get from Coro.



### NY Coro Fellows Class of 2005-2006

#### Back row (L to R):

Margo Hoppin,  
Edward Smith,  
Karina Totah,  
Elizabeth Wilkins,  
Sarah Chang,  
Villamor Asuncion,  
Katya Levitan-Reiner,  
Graham Lake.

#### Front row (L to R):

Spencer Cronk,  
Kathleen Quirk,  
Bradley Moore,  
Lynda Turet.



# On the Campaign Trail

Two Fellows reflect on their campaign placements this fall

## From Fernando Ferrer's Campaign ...

Working on Fernando Ferrer's campaign for Mayor of New York City, we orchestrated rallies and "retail walks" - where Freddy would promenade down a commercial strip shaking hands - that turned out the type of enthusiastic crowd that almost made you question the polls.

One event in particular stays with me: a fellow campaign staffer and I were given 36 hours to organize a rally at City College for Fernando Ferrer and Howard Dean, with the instruction that the event would be cancelled if we couldn't secure a crowd of at least 200. For a pair of fresh college graduates, this is no easy task. We reached out to politically active campus organizations, handed out thousands of fliers, and hyped the event until our voices were hoarse. To the students' credit, they responded; over 300 enthusiastic students came out to support Freddy.

## From Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Campaign ...

Working out of Mike Bloomberg's campaign field office in Forest Hills, Queens, our function was to deploy our portion of the 600 paid canvassers brought on board for the last days of the campaign to knock on doors, asking folks to vote for the mayor's reelection. The first item on my to-do list each day required wading through the hundreds of walk sheets (lists of people who voted in the last election, whose doors we wanted to knock on) and "cutting turf," or dividing the sheets into manageable portions for a pair of canvassers to cover in a four hour shift. I was then in charge of deploying the canvassers, a task which proved much more difficult than I had imagined. Between working with stress-inclined colleagues and learning to exert authority when necessary, I learned an awful lot about people management through this campaign.



Fellows interview former NYC Mayor Ed Koch (above) and Def Jam Records founder Russell Simmons (bottom).



Fellows with U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton during their political campaign placements.

# On Interviews

We have had the opportunity to sit down for an hour or more with some of the most interesting leaders in the City. We have learned what these leaders do and how they do it, what they care about, and what they see for the future of New York.

I have found interviewing to be an invaluable tool in my personal mission to explore New York City. In terms of learning what the City's political and business cultures are actually like, nothing beats having a frank and confidential conversation with the woman or man behind its key agencies.

In one interview with an organization that focuses on urban economic development, I realized that I want to work in that very field. The realization came when I had the opportunity to participate in that particular conversation; equally important, however, is that I am beginning to understand the "lay of the land" in city government (and soon, business!) with enough confidence to identify the pieces I am most interested in. Through my own and my fellow Fellows' work placements, through our conversations, putting the pieces together, and through the multiple other interviews we have done, we are learning a lot about this city and are able to experiment with our own individual involvement in it.

## For more information contact:

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