

# NYNP

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## EDUCATION

### The Center for NYC Affairs Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy

The Center for New York City Affairs may be best known for its regular series of public programs on tantalizing topics ranging from "Media and the Mayor: Michael Bloomberg's Transformation" to "The Obama Agenda: Overcoming Poverty in New York and the Nation". However, these high profile, frequently standing room only forums are often merely the tip of the Center's research iceberg in areas such as children and families, public education and immigration.

First created in 1964, The Center served as the birthplace for Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy in which it is now housed. Andrew White joined The Center as Director in 1998 with a mandate to revive its public programs and map out a strategy of applied policy research. "I actually built it on the model of *Child Welfare Watch* (CWW)," says White.

CWW, which White had launched while with *City Limits* and the Center for an Urban Future (CUF), offers in-depth analysis of New York City's child welfare system. CWW grew out of investigative reporting done at *City Limits* in the 1995 on the demise of the Child Welfare Administration under Mayor Giuliani. When young Elisa Izquierdo died under tragic circumstances soon after, White suddenly found himself in an unusual position. "We were able to help steer coverage in the papers," he explained. "That showed us that you could actually help influence conventional wisdom with some really good reporting and research."

Now published jointly by The Center and CUF, each semi-annual issue of CWW focuses on specific issues or policy areas. The most recent issue published in March, for example, focuses on "Hard Choices: Caring for the Children of Mentally Ill Parents".

CWW has served as a core element in what is now one of The Center's three major research areas -- families and children. Another research focus is improving public education policies and programs that affect young people on the margins of the school system. "We define that by the roughly 50% of kids who are on track for not finishing high school," says White. Last year, an investigation which began by looking at the child welfare issue of "educational neglect" evolved into a major report on chronic absenteeism in the public schools. "More than 90,000 elementary school students missed more than a month of school," says White. "That report drew a lot of attention. It shows that a small research outfit can take City data, look at them in a different way, raise some issues of concern and elicit a meaningful response from government."

The third area of research is on issues impacting immigrant communities. The Center's *Feet in 2 Worlds* project explores the role of ethnic journalism and trains reporters from the ethnic press to do public radio and increase awareness of their issues. "It is based on public radio and the web," says White. "It is actually a national project. We do radio pieces for stations all across the country and for nationally syndicated programs like *Latinos USA*, *Marketplace* and *Studio360*."

The Center has evolved into a full-blown research institute. "We have six full-time staff plus the production team that works on *Feet in 2 Worlds*, students, and freelancers," says White. "So, although we are still a fairly small operation, we increasingly have the capacity to work on several projects at once."

At the same time, it is still very much a part of Milano. "I teach a handful of courses and am pretty involved in curriculum issues here," says White. "We are developing a whole program around politics and advocacy and have just created a core course called *Making a Difference: Perspectives on Social Change* that all students at Milano now take in their first term."

For more information about The Center for New York City Affairs visit <http://www.newschooledu.milano.nycaffairs>.



Andrew White