

NYC CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD

THE PUBLIC SERVICE PUZZLER

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FARENHEIT 68



Summer has arrived in New York! And sure: there's always something going on in the city, but can anything beat swapping shoes for sandals, throwing down the towel, and settling into a cozy beach read on one of our beautiful NYC beaches? Answer: *yes*. Because half the books you find are FILLED with unethical behavior.

I'd heard a thing or two, of course, but I'd never fully realized until now just how flagrant a disregard these "writers" and their "characters" have for Chapter 68 of the New York City Charter! I mean, sure, on the one hand: complex and imperfect characters navigating fictional worlds full of challenges revealing, tempering,

or shifting their basic nature might make for a vaguely interesting *Hero's Journey*, but it doesn't make for good ethics instruction! (*Hero with a Thousand Ethics Violations*, anyone?) Half these "flawed" characters couldn't cut it for one day as a City employee, what with our ethics laws and those high standards of conduct to which we hold ourselves.

I mean look at this:

The Great Gatsby: I'm glad everyone is having fun at the parties, but this "Jay" guy out in "West Egg" seems to have put half the folks around him on the take: bribes, quid-pro-quos, prohibited gifts, tips – the whole she-bang! This fellow could never make it in New York. 0/5 stars. (I would rather read a DMV pamphlet with Jay's gal Daisy than pick up this book again.)

Pride and Prejudice – Darcy was right. Aside from the lack of propriety shown by Elizabeth's mother, her three younger sisters, even – on occasion – her *father*, that Bennet family has no respect for confidential information: I swear, the town of Hertfordshire has a better idea as to the movements of the English regiments than Napoleon does! And don't trust that family with any personal details! From the first moment I saw those characters, their selfish disdain for the privacy and information of others made me realize that this was the last family in the world I could ever be prevailed upon to be entertained by, let alone imagine as public servants. 1/5 stars. (Wickham seems nice.)

Julius Caesar – Read a play, they said! A classic! And sure: plays generally have a sort of light, speedy breeziness well-suited to a day on the sands. Not this one. I'd heard those Shakespeare folks were good, or course, but I guess I heard wrong; this whole play is about some terrible dictator who misused government resources to an *enormous* scale – oh, *I'm sorry Julius* that you don't have the resources to cross the Rubicon and assume the godhead of the Roman state using your *own* resources, so just steal a few legions from the supply room, why don't you? Hey, nobody will notice if you totally fail to separate your private interests from public resources! *Sheesh!* Thankfully, Brutus and Cassius are able to disgorge any ill-gotten gains from this flagrant and near-perpetual misuse of government resources – a enforcement penalty COIB also gained in November 2010! So, I guess a happy ending to an otherwise sordid tale. 2/5 stars. (Ending seems to be setting up an underwhelming sequel.)

To win this month's Public Service Puzzler, simply send in the title of a piece of art – book, movie, painting, whatever – that, while very creatively valuable, features characters or themes that are comedically out of step with the obligations all City employees have under Chapter 68! Don't take it *too* seriously, and we'll highlight the funniest answer received at Contest@coib.nyc.gov in the next issue of the *Public Service Puzzler!*

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LAST MONTH'S BIG WINNER: KIMFA CARRINGTON!



Congratulations to last month's winner: Kimfa Carrington, who reminded us that our AI overlords will have to get a little bit better at understanding the Conflicts of Interest Law if they want to replace us hardworking City employees anytime soon! Let's get to know her!

What is your City title at the Department of Transportation?

I support the Investigating and Legal teams in our office. I have also conducted disciplinary investigations myself. Our office enforces the agency's code of conduct.

See, that's so interesting to me: I always try to remind people when we do ethics trainings the Conflicts of Interest Law is only the first step in terms of our obligations to the public and each other, and while no agency policy can be less strict than Chapter 68, agencies certainly have the right to develop stricter and more comprehensive standards. And, of course, we have to comply with both sets of rules, as City employees. How long have you been at DOT?

Seven years!

And on your free time?

I love cooking Trinidadian food. Which is a delicious mix of Indo-African and Chinese influences.

Sounds pretty good to me! Just a reminder: Chapter 68 prevents public servants from accepting gifts even when they come to the office — but there's no rule against bringing food in for your fellow coworkers! Got a memorable celebrity encounter?

The legendary reggae band Steel Pulse. I met them three times. The lead singer actually noticed that we knew every song. My friends and I got to hang out with the band backstage.

I'm going to be honest: that's pretty cool. Any other fun facts you'd like to share?

I'm from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and I love disco roller skating.

I'm not sure I have the coordination for disco roller skating, but that sounds like a good time! OK, last question: what's your favorite part about public service, of being a City employee?

You meet a lot of unique characters. The City's workforce is beautifully diverse.

Ha! It certainly is. Thanks for submitting to — and winning! — the Public Service Puzzler, Kimfa! And to the reader who wants to see their face featured as a Puzzler winner: hop back to the first page and find us a unique character of your own! Until then, thank you to Kimfa Carrington for playing, and to all of you for reading the *Public Service Puzzler!*



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