

Joan Greenbaum, Editor
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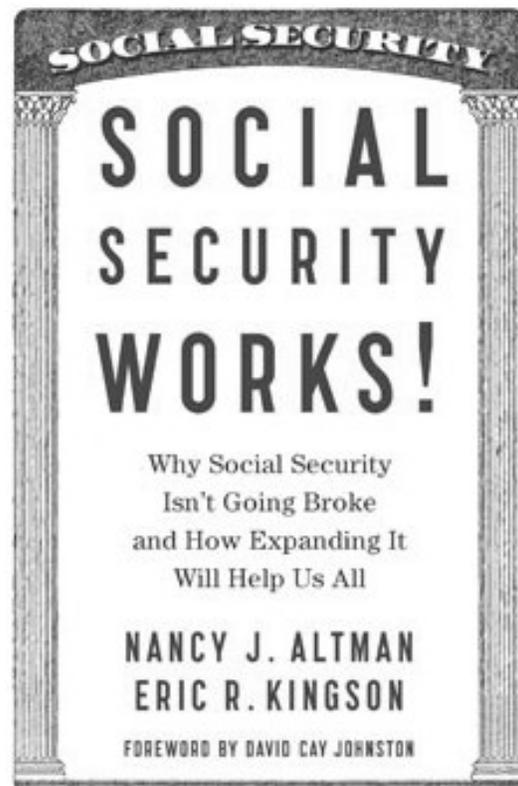
psc-cuny.org/retirees

CHAPTER MEETING, FEB. 6, 12:30 PM. Half Hour Earlier Than Usual:

With threats of cutbacks and privatization, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other safety net programs are under the gun. With a heightened sense of urgency, the February chapter meeting will focus on the defense and expansion of these programs.

Eric Kingson, one of the preeminent scholars of Social Security and an activist for its defense and expansion (and that of other safety net programs) will speak. Kingson, professor of social work at Syracuse University, was a founding co-director of Social Security Works (www.socialsecurity-works.org), and co-chairs the Strengthen Social Security Campaign (www.strengthensocialsecurity.org), a coalition of over 300 national and

state organizations. Together with Nancy Altman, he has written an excellent overview, defense and blueprint for the expansion of Social Security, entitled *Social Security Works—Why Social Security Isn't Going Broke and How Expanding It Will Help Us All!* He has served on two presidential commissions as a policy advisor on issues of aging.



The second half of the meeting will focus on plans to advocate for the defense and expansion of the safety net, organizing visits to the district offices of Congresspersons in the NYC Metropolitan Area (see Social Safety Net article below).

Note that the chapter **will meet half an hour earlier than usual at 12:30**

pm in the PSC Union Hall, 16th floor, 61 Broadway. Light refreshments provided.

RETIREES DUE RETROACTIVE

PAY: If you were on CUNY payroll anytime from 4/20/12 to the present, you will receive retroactive pay. Your retroactive paycheck will be sent on either 1/19/2017 (senior colleges) or 1/27/2017 (community colleges) to the college where you worked. Contact the college HR Office as soon as possible to find out where you should pick up your check or if alternative arrangements are available.

If you are retired but still working in a part-time position at CUNY, you will receive separate checks. You will receive one check for your back pay as a retiree (available at the college where you worked) on the above payment dates. Your check for your retro pay as a part-timer will either be direct deposited or be available at the college where you are working now on the above dates.

UPCOMING: MARCH 6th CHAPTER MEETING: WOMEN'S WORDS -- SOLIDARITY IN STRUGGLE

Last March, the PSC held an amazing literary event at Cooper Union: CUNY Writers Against Austerity. We are lucky to have the following award winning authors who read at that event, come and engage us with their poetry, writing and stories of teaching and learning:

Meena Alexander is a distinguished professor of English at Hunter College and the Graduate Center. Meena has published six volumes of poetry including *Birthplace with Buried Stones* (2013), *Quickly Changing River* (2008), *Illiterate Heart* (2002), winner of the PEN Open Book Award, and *Raw Silk* (2004). Her memoir, *Fault Lines* (1993, expanded edition 2003), was picked by Publishers Weekly as one of the Best Books of the Year. Her work has been translated into several languages and honored by multiple awards from foundations, arts councils and learned societies.

Page Delano is an associate professor at BMCC where she has taught since 2004. Before that time, she was an academic advisor in the Honors College at Hunter College, and taught widely throughout CUNY, as well as at Barnard College. Her collection of poems, *No One with a Past Is Safe*, was published by Word Press in 2002. Her academic writing focuses on women and war, with an emphasis on American women during World War II.



Kimiko Hahn is a distinguished professor in the MFA Program in Creative Writing and Literary Translation at Queens College. Hahn is the author of three chapbooks and nine collections of poetry, including *Brain Fever* and *Toxic Flora*. Both of these are triggered by rarified fields of science in much the same manner that her previous works were triggered by Asian American identity, women's issues, necrophilia, entomology, premature burial, black lung disease, and on. Hahn, whose honors include multiple awards and fellowships, was elected president of the Poetry Society of America in 2016.

Joanna Sit has been a Medgar Evers College faculty member since 1992 and has received two PSC/CUNY Grants over the last five years. She is the author of *My Last Century* and *In Thailand with the Apostles*. Her upcoming books, expected in 2017, are *Track Works*, a poetry collection, and *The Reincarnation of Red: An Oral History of Chinese Immigrants and Cantonese Opera in the 1960s*.

Michelle Valladares is director of the MFA Program in Creative Writing at CCNY, where she teaches poetry and creative writing. A poet and film producer, she is the author of *Nortada*, *The North Wind* (Global City Press). Her poems have been published in *The Literary Review*, *Upstreet Journal* and in the anthologies, *Language for a New Century: Contemporary Poetry from the Middle East, Asia & Beyond*, (Norton) and *The HarperCollins Book of English Poetry* by

Indians. Her poem "Papers and Pearls," published in *Clockhouse*, was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She has completed a new chapbook with poet Sam Greenhoe: *Sonnets and Ghazals* (Naive Press).

THE LIVING NEW DEAL—STILL WORKING FOR AMERICA

-Joan Greenbaum, Retiree
LaGuardia CC & Graduate Center



One hundred PSC retirees packed into the John Jay College Dining Room on a blustery cold day for the January luncheon to hear Sheila Collins and Trudy (Gertrude) Goldberg talk about the ways that New Deal projects are still alive here in New York. Their presentation provided the launch of a series of talks and a map showing the 107 Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects built in New York City from 1933-1939. New Deal projects such as Orchard and Jacob Riis beaches, the Whitestone and Triborough Bridges, swimming pools, the Williamsburg Houses, and Brooklyn College, among many

others, dot our landscape today. They are a tribute to the jobs created by the New Deal. Their solid construction and interesting architecture continue to serve the public. These public works appear in our city landscape so extensively that many members commented on the memorable ways that the projects remain as useful landmarks in their lives.

In a March 1933 speech, FDR said that "putting people to work" was his first priority. And indeed it stayed so as he and his administration created the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corp) which focused on employing youth in conservation projects such as planting trees and preserving parks—programs that are very much in need today as conservation was the forerunner of contemporary environmental concerns.

The WPA added to its massive building programs by including grants for artists, musicians, writers and theaters. Its focus on the economic and cultural values of democratizing art is represented in many cherished murals still standing throughout the city. WPA murals like the one in New York's Bronx County Court House portray daily life, rather than the "great man theory of history." While private companies were involved in hiring and employing workers in some building programs, the projects were decided on by local and state government agencies to further the public good—a concept that seems to be lost in today's emphasis on "infrastructure" building, which could remain within private hands. Schools, hospitals

and very importantly sewers were built, among other things, to enhance public health.

Among all of the public goods initiated under the New Deal, Social Security was a major achievement for economic security—and one which the PSC Retirees are keenly involved in helping to fight for. PSC retirees are mobilizing to keep and enhance the varied programs under Social Security's umbrella (see article in this issue: SAFETY NET CONGRESSIONAL VISITS).



Sheila Collins and Gertrude Goldberg gave an extensively well-researched, engaging and visually enhanced presentation which sparked memories and imagination. More information can be found on the *Living New Deal* website at <https://livingnewdeal.org/>. The duo also edited *When Government Helped, Learning from the Successes and Failures of the New Deal* (Oxford Press, 2013).

If you could not attend the January luncheon, you missed a three course

meal, a wine bar and good conversation, in addition to the rousing presentation on the Living New Deal. So please note June 5 on your calendar and look for information about the annual spring luncheon.

Finally, a big thanks to Marva Lilly, a John Jay retiree, for coordinating the many details of the event with the college's catering and events services.

**SOCIAL SAFETY NET:
ORGANIZING VISITS TO NY AREA
CONGRESSPEOPLE**

In the wake of the recent Electoral College victory by Donald Trump, the PSC Social Safety Net Group has launched an ambitious program to visit senators and congresspersons representing the New York Metropolitan area, and advocate for preserving and strengthening the Social Safety Net (SSN). Given the large number of one-percenters whom Trump has selected for his cabinet, and the retrograde positions of Republicans and some Democrats on Capitol Hill, progressives expect a new full-scale wave of attacks on federal SSN programs. We must fight back against these attacks or else many of the progressive gains made over recent decades will be lost. In the words of Frederick Douglass, "Without struggle there is no progress."

A large, lively group of volunteers met at the union office on Wednesday afternoon, January 11 to set priorities for the visits, select which among the many federal SSN

programs we want to focus on and make sure we have a coordinated message.



First we took the names of the congresspersons represented by the volunteers in the room, established coordinators for each congressional district and established committees in these districts when possible. Where such committees were established, meetings will be set up with the representatives or their staff at dates after the February 6 Retirees Chapter meeting. The dates and locations of these meetings will be announced at the chapter meeting. We hope that other members will be able to join us on some of these visits. There were some districts which were not represented by volunteers at the January 11 meeting, so the group will actively seek members from those districts to join us. Clearly, many more volunteers are needed.

The group made a policy decision to focus on Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Since the Republican-led Congress is likely to focus first on repealing the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), the group decided that in our presentations to senators and congresspersons we focus on the grave damage to Medicaid that would result if the ACA were repealed. Indeed, most of the 20 million persons who have newly been able to secure health insurance under the Act have been able to do so because Medicaid was expanded under the Act.

Many of those attending the meeting asked to have a basic script around which to plan their presentations, and also a background paper on the record of each representative we visit. These are being prepared for the February 6 chapter meeting. The dates, times and locations of our first visits will be announced then, and volunteers for these visits will be recruited. This month begins a new, dangerous political era for our country. It is time for us to mobilize.

RSVP FOR GLOBAL RESISTANCE IN THE NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY

March 3, 6-9 PM

March 4, 9 AM - 7:30 PM

PSC Union Hall

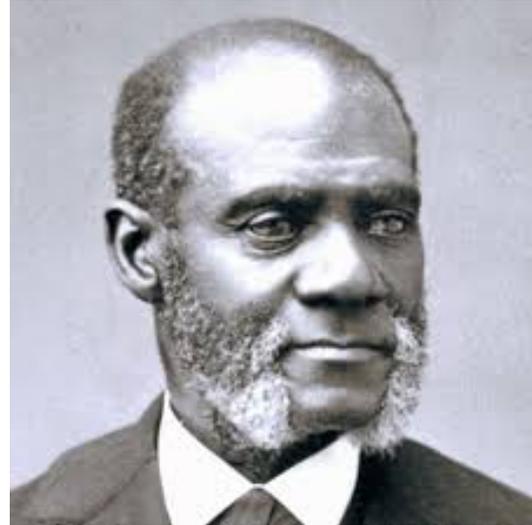
61 Broadway, 16th Floor

Space is limited. RSVP required.

Refreshments and lunch provided.

Register at:

psc-cuny.org/GlobalResist2017



Henry Highland Garnet

*“Let Your Motto be **RESISTANCE!**
RESISTANCE! RESISTANCE!” —
Ex slave and leading abolitionist,
Henry Highland Garnet, 1843*

As the PSC builds resistance at CUNY to the university of the Trump era, we organize under the motto of the anti-slavery militant Henry Highland Garnet – resistance, resistance, resistance! This union conference aims to build international teacher solidarity.

Speakers from teacher struggles in South Africa, India, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Turkey will join their stories to ours and work with us on common problems and radical possibilities.

How can we resist adjunctification, privatization, the explosion of student debt, “austerity blues,” race and gender oppression, police repression, the growing drum beat of war and militarization?

What is the future of the university systems of the capitalist world?

Where do we find in our resistance an alternative vision? What international role can academic unions like the PSC play?

“El maestro, luchando, también está educando” (Mexico). “If you know, teach; if you don’t know, learn” (Cuba). A union conference to teach and learn from one another, united in our diversity, across all kinds of borders: how to fight, how to organize, how to dream, how to win!

Retirees at the Heart of the Organizing

The International Committee (IC) of the PSC has taken the lead organizing the conference. Its mandate is internal union education about the international dimension of academic labor, plus practical international solidarity—an idea once strong in the labor movement when it had more left leadership, and brought back to life in the PSC by the establishment of the IC in 2000.

Over the years, retirees have played a crucial role in the IC -- Renate Bridenthal (who chaired the committee from 2000 to 2016), Electa Arenal, Jackie Di Salvo, Fran Geteles, the late John Mineka, Marcia Newfield, Tony O’Brien (the committee’s secretary), Peter Ranis, Shirley Rausher and Carol Smith, among others.

Currently, the IC represents a wide spectrum of PSC activists from grad students, adjuncts and junior faculty to senior faculty and retirees. More and more, younger members carry on the work. One is a political

sociologist from Afghanistan, another a media studies specialist from Indonesia, another a literary historian from India. Five are adjuncts, two of them PhD adjuncts still carrying on research in the “precariat,” which is now the standard description of academic labor. The new IC chair is the Brooklyn College political scientist Immanuel Ness, whose field research in India and South Africa is reflected in his latest book *Southern Insurgency: The Coming of the Global Working Class*, and whose contacts and comrades there are extending the networks the IC has already built in Canada and Latin America (especially Mexico).

Register for March 3-4 at:
psc-cuny.org/GlobalResist2017.

--Tony O’Brien, Secretary, PSC
International Committee ■

IMMIGRATION ACCOMPANIMENT PROJECT

Carol Smith, Retiree, CCNY,
SEEK Program



Over the past several years, I have volunteered to accompany undocumented immigrants to their deportation hearings at 26 Federal Plaza. This project is sponsored by the Judson Memorial Church and the

New Sanctuary of New York City, which works in coalition with major immigrant rights organizations to reform immigration enforcement practices. As we enter the Trump era, these organizations will play an ever more important role in resisting Trump's deportation policies.

Volunteers for the Immigration Accompaniment Project provide moral support to undocumented immigrants in deportation proceedings. The volunteers accompany the immigrants to their court hearings with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In the past, immigration officers have been less likely to recommend immediate deportation when immigrants are accompanied by groups of volunteers.

Volunteers are not required to know Spanish, nor have any religious affiliation. The staff of the Accompaniment Project will provide training for new volunteers and assist in the accompaniment. It is a perfect opportunity for retirees who can occasionally volunteer a few hours in the morning to accompany an immigrant to a court appointment.

For more information, email immigration.accompaniment@gmail.com and/or phone 646-450-2770.

THE SEARCH FOR LONG TERM CARE AND MEDICAID PART 2: "SPOUSAL REFUSAL"

*Dave Kotelchuck, Retiree,
Hunter College School of
Health Sciences*



In Part 1 of this series, we discussed the need to “spend down” your assets in order to qualify for long-term nursing home care under Medicaid. We noted that one way for individuals or couples to spend down is to transfer the bulk of your assets to your children or other trusted relatives or friends. But the problem is that this must be done *at least five years in advance* of seeking Medicaid eligibility. If you alone or you and your spouse are in relatively good health, this may work for you.

But for married couples, what if one of you suddenly becomes disabled, and urgently needs to seek long-term nursing home care? You can't wait for years to qualify, and meanwhile you must spend down your joint personal assets to pay your spouse's nursing home bills, which typically run thousands of dollars per month. In (only) three states -- NY, Florida and Connecticut -- there is a short-term remedy to get your spouse on to Medicaid. The

remedy is a provision called “Spousal Refusal”. (Remember, while Medicaid is paid for largely through federal funding, it is administered by the individual states, whose rules can vary.)

Under Spousal Refusal, the non-nursing-home spouse can refuse to pay the medical and long-term-care bills for his or her spouse. The rationale: The spouse who is not in need of nursing home care has shared in accumulating the couple’s retirement savings and will need money to live on in her or his retirement. So in NY and Florida, where many CUNY retirees live, legislatures have enacted a spousal refusal provision under Medicaid. According to a representative of the NYSUT Legal Services Plan at a recent retirees conference, with a current standardized Power of Attorney (POA) a NYS spouse can get their partner on to Medicaid in only a month or two. Retirees in other than these three states may have other financial protections; consult elder law attorneys there.

To join the NYSUT Legal Services Plan and/or to get further information about Plan attorneys in NY and other states, PSC members should go to memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101 Monday-Friday 9 AM – 5 PM.

FAQ's FOR RETIREES

Jared Herst, Coordinator PSC Pension & Health Benefits
Tel: [212-354-1252](tel:212-354-1252)
Email: jherst@pscmail.org

We've asked Jared Herst and Patrick Smith, Communications Director for the Welfare Fund, to alternate doing "FAQs for Retirees." Patrick will do this feature next month.



Q: When should I expect my 2016 basic Medicare Part B reimbursements?

A: If you are in TRS, you should expect to receive **electronically** your 2016 basic Medicare Part B reimbursements by June 2017. If you are in TIAA, the New York City Office of Labor Relations' (OLR) Health Benefits program has said that these reimbursements should be sent by **mail** this June as well.

Q: When should I apply for my Income Related Monthly Adjusted Amount (IRMAA) Medicare Part B premium reimbursements?

A: The 2016 IRMAA application has not yet been published by the NYC Health Benefits Program. This is usually published later in the spring and can be found at <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/olr/health/retiree/health-retiree-medb-irmaa.page> under the heading

"IRMAA Medicare Part B Reimbursement."

*Remember: Retiree members eligible for IRMAA reimbursements must apply every year for them. Typically, after a retired member applies for an IRMAA reimbursement, she/he will not receive this reimbursement until two (2) years after a designated year. An example is if you apply for IRMAA reimbursements for the calendar year of 2016. The application will not be on the city's website until 2017 and you will not receive your reimbursement until 2018.

Editor's Note

Bill Friedheim and Dave Kotelchuck edited this issue of *Turning the Page*. Our regular editor, Joan Greenbaum, is currently recovering from successful back surgery. We wish her a speedy recovery so that she can resume, with her usual gusto, *Turning the Page* next month. Contributions to TTP are always welcome; send to retirees@pscmail.org.