

Joan Greenbaum, Editor
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psc-cuny.org/retirees

ANNUAL RETIREES WINTER LUNCHEON: MONDAY, JAN. 9, 12:30 PM.

Break bread with colleagues, renew old ties and enjoy a presentation on **THE LIVING NEW DEAL**

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS NOW! Go to the PSC Website at tinyurl.com/luncheon010917 to download the invitation/reservation form. Complete the form and mail it with your check to the PSC. Reservations must be received by Tuesday, January 3rd. (Or call the PSC at 212-354-1252 on January 3rd, ask for Sharon Tonge, and make your reservation and arrangements to pay if you miss the mailing deadline.)

Speakers: Gertrude Schaffner Goldberg and Sheila D. Collins, editors of *When Government Helped: Learning from the Successes and Failures of the New Deal*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

The Living New Deal is a national database of thousands of documents, photographs, and personal stories about public works made possible by the New Deal. Its goal is to promote and extend the legacy and policies of the New Deal. Preserving and expanding that legacy is now more important than ever. **It's a legacy that has much to teach about farsighted leadership and what can be achieved when the country rallies to serve needs of ordinary people in troubled times.** What is more, it provides a shining example of how positive government can invest in public works that serve the collective good. Yes, government can work for all the people by creating useful infrastructure, job for the unemployed, and things of beauty like public murals and elegant buildings.



Where: John Jay's New Building
Best entrance is 11th Ave. between 58th & 59th Streets but also accessible from 899 Tenth Ave. or 524 W. 59th Street.

FLORIDA RETIREES AND SNOWBIRDS: SIGN UP FOR THE ANNUAL LUNCHEON AT THE LAKESIDE TERRACE IN BOCA RATON.

The annual Florida Branch Benefits Seminar and Luncheon is set for **Monday, February 13** at the Lakeside Terrace in Boca Raton. The invitation and reservation form can be downloaded from the PSC website at tinyurl.com/FloridaRetirees021317



All retiree members are invited and indeed encouraged to attend these meetings and join committees to help shape union action in fighting for climate justice and keeping our Social Safety Net:

- Climate Justice Committee, Monday, January 9, 6 pm at the PSC office.
- Safety Net Working Group, Wednesday, January 11, 1 pm at the PSC office



Defending The Safety Net. Our February 6th chapter meeting will be devoted to this topic. In light of the ominous threats by the new congress to cut and/or privatize many features of Medicare, Social Security and Medicaid, the chapter is mobilizing visits to every congressperson in the NYC metro area. Join us at the February chapter meeting and a meeting of the Social Safety Net Working Group (January 11/see below) to help organize this mobilization.

RATIONING PUBLIC GOODS

*Joan Greenbaum
Retiree, LaGuardia CC & Graduate Center*

Another full house packed the PSC meeting hall on December 5th for the Retirees' Chapter meeting. Themes from the book, *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Higher Education*, were presented by its authors Mike Fabricant (PSC Treasurer and Professor, Hunter School of Social Work) and Steve Brier (Professor of Urban Education at the Graduate Center). Lively discussion followed as PSC retirees remembered their own lived history in this ongoing struggle.

Mike Fabricant talked about how higher education was shaped into an "engine of inequality", putting what we have experienced into a framework where we could see how unequal levels of funding for three-tiered higher education--elite research institutions, four year schools, and community colleges—took form in states, particularly the ways they played out in California and New York. Higher education, which was seen as a critical 'public good' with the creation of state land grant colleges in the 19th Century, has been increasingly pulled from the public sphere in this century. Students are made to pay more and more in tuition and fees and the mountain of debt they build, presses unequally on the shoulders of poorer students, immigrants and students of color.



Steve Brier, an historian, reminded us about how the 1976 NYC fiscal crisis was manufactured and used as the lever to pull down open admissions and free tuition that so many members had fought for along with students in the late 1960s and early 1970s. New York State has had a checkered history of linking support for public colleges together with funding for private colleges, a practice that still takes place with every budget in Albany. Brier, who has worked closely with creating programs at CUNY that help students explore creative uses of

technology, discussed the ways that pedagogy needs to be the first focus of teaching *before* any form of technology is applied. Unfortunately, higher education administrators see technology as the "magic bullet" for cutting labor costs. This administrative approach results in universities like CUNY buying millions of dollars of software to manage courses, students and teachers, rather than facilitating innovative teaching.

The discussion which followed, like many in our monthly meetings, was *not* your usual 'Q & A'. Many members had concrete memories of the times they experienced austerity gone amok, and the tragic effects on students. Among members participating in the discussion, Irwin Yellowitz reminded us that Cuomo, the father, cut funds for CUNY as a prelude to the ways that Cuomo, the son, has continued to do so. The authors reminded us that the PSC fight against Pathways and for a respectful contract are just two of the ways we continue 'fighting for the soul of higher education'.

Austerity Blues is available from John Hopkins University Press, 800-537-5487; 30% discount with code of HNAF.

OUR WELFARE

CUNY faculty, professional staff and retirees should have received a letter from the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund announcing a significant enhancement of benefits.

This became possible with an infusion of new money from the contract and the movement of adjunct healthcare out of the fund to the city plan

There are three areas of expanded benefits:

- Dental: Guardian DentalGuard Preferred Network
- Vision: PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund Davis Vision Premier Collection
- Hearing: HearUSA Network

A summary of benefit enhancements is available on the Welfare Fund's website at psccunywf.org/benefits-enhancements-2017.aspx.

From the Welfare Fund

*Patrick Smith
Communications Director/PSC
Welfare Fund - 212-354-5230
Ext. 318*

Q: I pay an extra charge for Medicare Part B, called the Income Related Modified Adjustment Amount (IRMAA), because my annual income is over a certain threshold *. Can I get reimbursed for it?

**Note: The income thresholds are \$85,000 for individuals and \$170,000 for joint filing.*

A: Yes, but unlike the standard Medicare Part B premium reimbursement, you must submit a claim form for each year that you paid an IRMAA charge. Claim forms can be downloaded from the PSC-

CUNY Welfare Fund website at psccunywf.org/. On the home page menu bar click on "Forms" and then scroll to the bottom of the "Forms" page. There you will find a link to download the "Medicare Part B IRMAA Surcharge Reimbursement" form for the given year.

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

*Arline Bronzaft
professor emerita, Lehman*



Have you noticed that you have been increasing the volume on your television set? Do you ask associates to repeat what they have just said? Do you have trouble carrying on a conversation in a noisy restaurant? A "Yes" response to one, and more likely to all of these questions, indicates that your hearing isn't as good as it once was. And that includes many of us, living and aging in an noisy urban environment. In a 2000 paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, Bat Chava and Y. Schur reported that after taking hearing

measurements of large samples of people over the age of sixty in New York City for a period of nineteen years, a higher percentage of these individuals did poorly on the hearing test administered with each passing year. It would be safe to assume that the number of older New Yorkers in 2017 with hearing loss is even higher than it was in 2000, especially in a city where noise complaints rank high on the 311 complaint line.

I know that many of you who responded to the questions above in the affirmative have not done anything yet to correct hearing loss, either because you believe that hearing loss comes with age and you have to deal with it, or because you are reluctant to get tested for hearing aids. This article is being written in part to urge those who have been reluctant to seek counseling about their hearing loss to do so quickly. I am familiar with the Center for Hearing and Communication in New York City and I know that CHC has much experience dealing with hearing loss amongst older people. Additionally many of the CUNY campuses have programs that offer free hearing tests.

There is also another reason for this article and that is to call attention to the fact that many older people are also complaining about loud restaurants in which they find it difficult to hold conversations. By the way, some younger people are also avoiding loud restaurants and have been using apps to measure the decibel levels of restaurants in order to urge friends to stay away from the

especially loud ones. I, for one, enjoy going out for a meal with friends and part of this joy of dining out is being able to converse at the table while eating. So, may I ask those who are reading this article to let their voices be heard should they find themselves in a restaurant with loud music. My research centers on the effects of loud sounds and noise on mental and physical health and I am working with a group of people who are trying to “lower the decibel level” in restaurants.



Hearing loss may impede our ability to interact with others which can result in isolation and loneliness. Hearing helps us to connect to the world around us and we need to stay tuned to this world as we age. And look for the letter from the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund which announces our new much enhanced hearing benefits including discounts on a wide range of hearing aids.

NYSUT Prepares Comprehensive Retirement Guide

*Irwin Yellowitz
Retiree, CCNY*

NYSUT has prepared a comprehensive guide to retirement issues, *Your Blueprint to a Successful Retirement*, that should be of value to all PSC retirees. It is

available on the NYSUT website at nysut.org/members/retirees/retirement-guide. Topics include pensions, health insurance benefits, NYSUT member benefits, social security, relocation considerations, financial planning, estate planning and long term care, when you lose a loved one, and a directory of resources, contact information and websites for addressing health issues and quality of life concerns in retirement.

The guide was prepared initially by the NYSUT Retiree Advisory Committee, a group which meets regularly and advises NYSUT about the needs and concerns of retirees. The final version that came from the Committee was then vetted thoroughly by NYSUT staff so that the material is as accurate as possible. It is published only on the website because the material is subject to change, and the online format will allow that to be done most easily.

RETIREMENT REFLECTIONS

BLANK CHECK

*Constance H. Gemson
Retiree, adjunct, LAGCC*

Filling in the space with twenty-six symbols to choose, special attention is needed to complete the lines.

The check is bewildering and blank.

As a child writing was the tool.
Technology did not reign.
A pink eraser removed errors,
scribbles and scrawls:

rewrite, repeat, rewrite.

Letters are ordered into their places:
a bright parade.

She wrote a name shaping the
unruly into discipline,
signed the back of the library card.
Captivity lived with jungle stories:
brave lions and fearless tigers.

The library was better than the candy
store

With the tempting awning of striped
simplicity.

Candy dissolves. Books last.

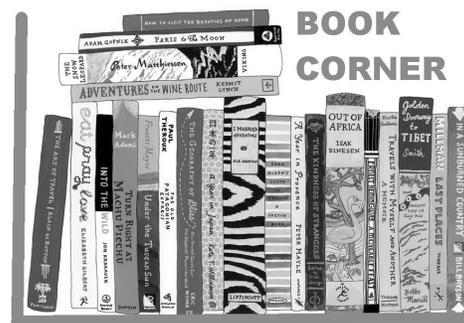
The daughter keeps her early books
now.

She cherishes her mother's
notations in the margins.

Decades later, her mother's
transformation begins.

Books are too long with tales too
confusing to follow:
unfamiliar heroes with blurred plots.

*This poem tells a story of a mother
with dementia and may be familiar to
many of our members.*



Church Ladies: Untold Stories of Harlem Women in the Powell Era

*Martia Goodson
Retiree, Baruch*

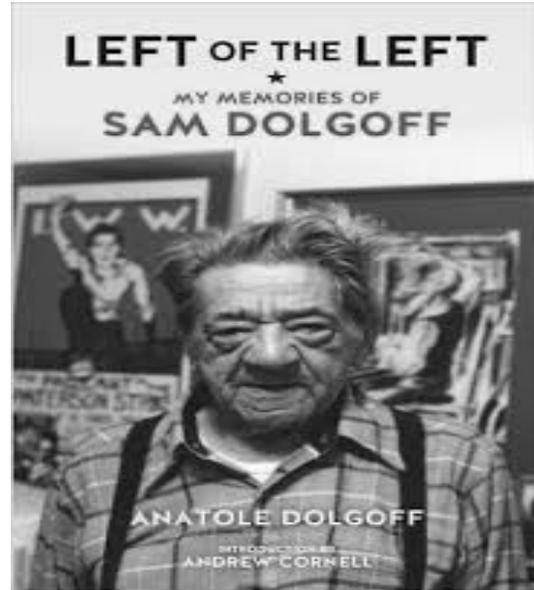
Since retiring from Baruch College in 2007 (Black and Hispanic Studies), I've spent my time doing the writing I was unable to do while teaching. Thus, I am happy to announce the publication of *CHURCH LADIES: Untold Stories of Harlem Women in the Powell Era* (AuthorHouse).

More than simply ushers and Sunday School teachers, the women of Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church were influential leaders in the congregations of Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Senior and Junior. *Church Ladies* explores these women's lives at the church and their roles in a Northern civil rights movement that took them and their pastor, the fiery Powell Junior, from protests for jobs on Harlem's 125th Street in the 1930s to demonstrations for justice in the halls of the United States Congress in the 1960s.

Testimony from over a dozen little-recognized women paints a vivid picture of that historic church and the struggles against Jim Crow in New York City and beyond. Their stories also shed light on Congressman Powell's social and legislative impact on the American nation during a time of strict racial segregation and unchecked racial violence. It was a time when the Church Ladies and all of black America whispered and shouted, "Give 'em hell, Adam!"

Church Ladies, Author House, 2016, is available from the publisher and on Amazon.

Left of the Left, My Memories of Sam Dolgoff by Anatole Dolgoff (AK Press/2016)



Anatole Dolgoff, a PSC retiree, has written a fascinating and loving chronicle of his father's life, Sam Dolgoff (1902 – 1990). A larger than life figure, Sam Dolgoff was a house painter, author, prominent anarchist, Wobbly (Industrial Workers of the World), labor organizer, mover, shaker and self-taught working class/public intellectual. The book is both a biography and a journey through the immigrant and working class neighborhoods of radical twentieth century New York. Sam Dolgoff was both witness of and participant in the intense struggles of the thirties and sixties, the response to the repression of the fifties and the intense and sometimes very noisy debates on the left between various shades of Marxists, socialists, communists and the different schools of anarchists. All in all, a fun and illuminating read. --BF



A few thoughts on the elections

Michael Frank

Retiree, LaGuardia Community College

There is no doubt that right-wing groups and individuals will be emboldened by the election results and feel they have license to harass and attack minorities. But was racism, xenophobia, misogyny, etc. the main driving force among the majority of Trump's supporters. There is reason to doubt this.

A news anchor on one of the networks made the following comment; "The media took what Trump said seriously, but did not take him seriously. His supporters took him seriously but did not take what he said seriously." I think this is insightful, and would explain why women would vote for him despite all the exposes of his sexism that the media thought would deep-six his campaign. In addition, we should note that Trump got a higher percentage of Black and Latino votes than Romney.

David Brooks, the conservative op-ed columnist for the New York Times, traveled throughout the Midwest and conducted interviews among people who said they were voting for Trump. Here is what he wrote.

" ... emotions like disgust don't do justice to the complexity of Donald Trump's supporters. The disgusted posture risks turning politics into a Manichean civil war between the alleged children of light and the alleged children of darkness -- between us enlightened, college-educated, tolerant people and the supposed primitive hoard driven by dark fears and prejudices. That crude and ignorant condescension is what feeds the Trump phenomenon in the first place."

" ... we simply don't yet know how much racism or misogyny motivated Trump voters. It is true that those voters are willing to tolerate a lot more bigotry in their candidate than I'd be willing to tolerate. But if you were stuck in a jobless town, watching your friends OD on opiates, scrambling every month to pay the electric bill, and then along came a guy who seemed to be able to fix your problems and hear your voice, maybe you would stomach some ugliness, too."

"Populism of the Trump/Le Pen/Brexit variety has always been a warning sign; a warning sign that there is some deeper dysfunction in our economic, social and cultural systems. If you want to take that warning sign and dismiss it as simple bigotry, you're never going to pause to understand what's going on and you will never know how to constructively respond."

No liberal has written anything close to this.

The fact that hundreds of thousands of people in the Midwest who voted

for Obama in the two previous elections switched to Trump also puts into question the simple bigotry explanation.



The comments of journalist Amy Chozick are also helpful in trying to understand the election results. " ... as the dust settled, Democrats recognized two central problems of Mrs. Clinton's flawed candidacy: Her decades in Washington and the paid speeches she delivered to financial institutions left her unable to tap into the anti-establishment and anti-Wall Street rage."

"And she ceded the white working-class voters who backed Mr. Clinton in 1992. Though she would never have won this demographic, her husband insisted that her campaign aides do more to try to cut into Mr. Trump's support with these voters. They declined, reasoning that she was better off targeting college-educated suburban voters by hitting Mr. Trump on his temperament."

We should also note that Trump won in states and counties where Sanders carried the primaries and that polls showed that he would beat Trump in the general election by a larger margin than Clinton. But left populism (Sanders) was defeated and then silenced itself to support the establishment candidate Clinton, leaving an open field for right populism (Trump). Nevertheless,

according to the most recent tally, Clinton still won the popular vote by almost three million, a much greater margin than Gore over Bush.

Considering all the above as well as the high rate of abstention (43%) and the absence of empirical data that would show just how important a role racism, xenophobia and misogyny played among Trump's supporters, I think it is a mistake to assume that the American public has moved to the right. And given the limited choices of the two party system, elections can only reflect mass consciousness in an imperfect and refracted way.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This year, probably more than ever, we need a lively and factual monthly Turning the Page, Retirees Newsletter. We will try to keep people updated on issues that effect us strongly such attacks on the Social Safety Net and the new President's picks for departments such as Education. We welcome your articles (brief please, no more than 400 words) on issues of interest to other retirees, as well as your Reflections on Retirement (transitions, changes and, as in this issue, caring for a parent). Please send suggestions and/or articles to: retirees@pscmail.org with Newsletter in the subject line.

Joan Greenbaum, editor, Turning the Page

CORRECTION: In the December issue, we misspelled the last name of Fran Geteles-Shapiro, who wrote an excellent summary of our November program on prisoner rights (a program that she was instrumental in arranging). Our apologies.

