

MAY 2018



Joan Greenbaum, Editor
Academic Year 2017-8 No. 7

psc-cuny.org/retirees

MONDAY, MAY 7, 1-3 PM. PUBLIC-SECTOR WORKERS RISING

At our May chapter meeting we'll look at the recent flurry of labor grassroots militancy and organizing in the public sector, particularly in education and healthcare.

Speakers:

Sharon Persinger is PSC Treasurer and a native of West Virginia. Sharon will elaborate on an [article](#) she wrote for *Clarion* on the West Virginia teachers' strike. Victory in West Virginia helped spark teacher uprisings in other right-to-work states, particularly Oklahoma, Kentucky and Arizona.

Sean Petty is a registered nurse, a member of the board of directors of the New York State Nurses Association and a frequent contributor to *Jacobin* on issues of labor and healthcare.

Discussion will follow. As usual, light refreshments will be provided. ■

UPCOMING CALENDAR: PLAN AHEAD

Sunday, May 6 Working Theater

Monday, May 7 Chapter Meeting

Monday, May 14 Program Planning

Monday, May 14 Environmental Justice

Wednesday, May 16 PSC @ Mets

Monday, June 11 Retiree Luncheon
(Registration form: page 10)

**IMPORTANT MEDICARE INFO:
PAGE NINE**

LUNCHEON, MONDAY, JUNE 11 12:30 PM

Room 750 (7th floor)

Baruch College Library Building

151 East 25th St.



The Political Uses of Cinema: Film scholar **Jonathan Buchsbaum**, professor of media studies at Queens College and the Graduate Center and author of numerous books on cinema, will explore the political dimension of film from the 1930s to the present. Using video clips, his presentation will focus on particular moments in the political uses of cinema: state-sponsored documentary films in the '30s; the cinema-verité of the '60s; and in the contemporary period, Michael Moore's work.

Professor Buchsbaum has curated the PSC's film series – Labor Goes to the Movies – since its inception.

The venue has changed for this year's June luncheon. We'll be breaking bread at a more convenient location, **Baruch College**, providing a buffet with a more varied and excellent menu—and at lower cost.

There will be an **11 AM coffee hour** preceding the luncheon. The coffee hour is our yearly round up of what we as a chapter have done and what we plan to do. All are welcome.

For a reservation form, see page 10 of this newsletter. Or you can download the form on the web (psc-cuny.org/retire-luncheon) where there is more info (a more detailed menu plus directions to Baruch). Space is limited. If you decide to reserve after May 30, call the PSC (212-354-1252) and ask Sharon Tonge if seats are still available. ■

WORKING THEATER - SUNDAY, MAY 6. The chapter's annual theater-going event to a Working Theater production will be **Sunday, May 6, 3 PM** at 239 West 30th St. (between 7th and 8th Ave.)

ALTERNATING CURRENTS, a play by Adam Kraar, directed by Kareem Fahmy. Commissioned as part of Working Theater's Five Boroughs/One City Initiative. When two newly married electricians move to Electchester everything seems perfect: spacious apartment, low rent, friendly neighbors, and an incredibly close-knit community. But as they settle in, they discover how much they may need to give up in order to really belong. The play is both a love story about a couple trying to find home and community and an exploration of the dreams, hopes and realities of the labor movement today vs. when Electchester was

founded by Harry Van Arsdale, Jr. in the late 1940s. It is a terrific jumping off point for a discussion about increasing diversity in the labor movement and in our communities, and about union building in general.

Tickets are \$22. Suggested meeting time is 2:30 PM. If you want to attend, email Marcia Newfield at mnewfield@pscmail.org

PLANNING RETIREE PROGRAMS FOR 2018-19 ACADEMIC YEAR.

Our program committee will meet at 10:30 AM, Monday, May 14 at the PSC office (61 Broadway, 15th floor) to begin planning programs for the next academic year. All members are welcome. If you have suggestions for programs and/or wish to attend, email us at retirees@pscmail.org with the subject head "program." ■

NY METS – WED., MAY 16 @ 1 PM



The NY Mets are the only thing "hot" this cold April. Unexpectedly, the Mets are off to their hottest start in years, burning up the NL East. Hopefully, the Mets do not cool off when the weather turns warm (or by the time you receive this newsletter) because on Wednesday, May 16th, retirees are gathering at Citi Field for their annual baseball outing. The Mets will play a 1PM inter-league game vs the Toronto Blue

Jays.

Tickets are \$25 per person. If you plan to attend, email us at retirees@pscmail.org with the subject head "NY Mets"

Marva Lilly, retiree John Jay, is coordinating the retirees baseball outing and paying for tickets. If you make an email commitment to come, you must reimburse her. Bring a check or cash to the May 7 chapter meeting—or if you cannot come that day, send a check to Retirees, c/o Professional Staff Congress, 61 Broadway—15th floor, NY, NY 10006. Make checks out to Marva Lilly. ■

THE MONTH THAT WAS RAVI RAGBIR AND AMY GOTTLIEB SPOKE AT APRIL CHAPTER MEETING

John Hyland, Retiree LaGuardia CC



The program of the PSC Retiree Chapter meeting on April 2 focused on the issue of immigration, especially the organized struggle to resist deportation. Our guest speakers were Amy Gottlieb, an immigration lawyer and associate director for the northeast region of the American Friends Service Committee, and her husband, Ravi Ragbir, executive director of the New Sanctuary Coalition (operating out of Judson Memorial Church).

Ravi's own conflict with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) has become a

"cause celebre," and illustrates the situation of many immigrants under the current federal regime.

[An article the May 2017 *Turning the Page* focused on this particular case:

"Ravi came to the United States from Trinidad and Tobago twenty-six years ago. He applied for and was granted green card status. A decade later he was working as a loan processor for a mortgage lender and, there, his life took a very wrong turn. Charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud in 2001, Ravi maintained that he performed as instructed by the bank for which he worked. His bosses accepted a plea bargain. Ravi, on the other hand, proclaimed his innocence, contested the charge, lost and served jail time. Upon release, a judge ordered deportation."

The May 2017 article explained that Ravi then contested his deportation and that he and his lawyers "took advantage of a new policy of prosecutorial discretion by the Obama administration" which gave "ICE deportation officers leeway to differentiate between violent criminals and low level offenders." While Ravi and his legal team contested his original conviction, ICE, invoking "prosecutorial discretion" allowed him to remain free on the condition that he report to ICE for periodic check-ins. ICE at those check-ins always had the option of detaining and deporting him.]

Amy and Ravi began their presentation with a video clip of an immigration rights rally in NYC on February 10, 2018 in support of Ravi at which Steve Sacco, a Legal Aid lawyer, spoke forcefully about ICE and its activities. Sacco called ICE's efforts to deport immigrants "violence" and called for its abolition—not its repeal, not its defunding, not its reform—but its abolition.

Amy and Ravi described their own lives in terms of terror—surveillance and constant threat of deportation of Ravi. Ever since his release from incarceration more than a

decade ago, he has been an activist and organizer for immigration rights, eventually becoming executive director of the New Sanctuary Coalition.

On January 11, 2018, Ravi, accompanied by his lawyers, wife, several clergy and some elected officials (with another 1,000 supporters outside) reported to ICE headquarters at Federal Plaza for a check-in. ICE officials told him they were detaining him pending deportation. Ravi collapsed. He was put into an ambulance with his wife. The ambulance proceeded to a downtown hospital, where Amy was asked to step out. The ambulance then, without Amy, whisked him to another hospital, then to Newark Airport. He was put on a flight to Miami, where he was detained in violation of a court order mandating that he not be taken outside the NYC metro area.

Amy did not know where he was. Once it was known he was in Miami, his lawyers intervened. Under court order, ICE transferred Ravi back to the NYC area, where he was detained in the Orange County jail. Shortly thereafter, a judge ordered him released.

A defense committee, a "loving community of family and friends"—as Amy put it, and a legal team based at NYU Law School have had their back. The Washington law firm, Arnold and Porter, joined his pro bono legal team, filing another suit in federal court accusing ICE of targeting immigrant rights leaders. The judge in the case stayed Ravi's deportation. Meanwhile, the case contesting Ravi's original conviction, led by the NYU team, is being heard in federal court in Newark.

May 11 is a "check-in day" for Ravi when he has to report in with a suitcase unless he receives another "judicial stay." Keeping up the momentum of resistance is very important. The judge has received thousands of letters of support, and many

clergy, elected officials and allies have been present at court proceedings.



Amy and Ravi see this whole process in the context of the violence of Trump's campaign and administration. While they told their personal story—and the stories of others, much of the combined talk focused on this larger context.

They noted that there is fear of ICE "going rogue" in the immigrant community. ICE claims that it has "plenary power," operating outside the boundaries of the Constitution and bypassing the jurisdiction of judges.

ICE is one of three federal agencies under Homeland Security that search for, pursue, and generally make life as difficult as possible for immigrants. They keep going further and further—now they are taking people away at traffic and family courts. Immigrants have been leaving the USA for Canada, but Canada is sending many back to the USA. The Trump administration is reversing Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for many who fled natural disasters and civil wars (especially in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Haiti and Honduras). Some have been here for many years and now are deported on short notice. There is great fear and isolation among immigrants. The picture is bleak and depressing.

However, Ravi reminded us of hopeful signs when people come together for mutual support and as communities of non-violent resistance. One aspect of the support campaign is the Accompaniment Project of the New Sanctuary Coalition in

which volunteers accompany immigrants to the ICE offices or the courts.

Immigration law is very complex, and the rules and procedures are “like quicksand,” frequently shifting. For that reason, training is very important. There are many ways to help and participate in the Sanctuary movement. The Coalition is already working with Hostos C.C.

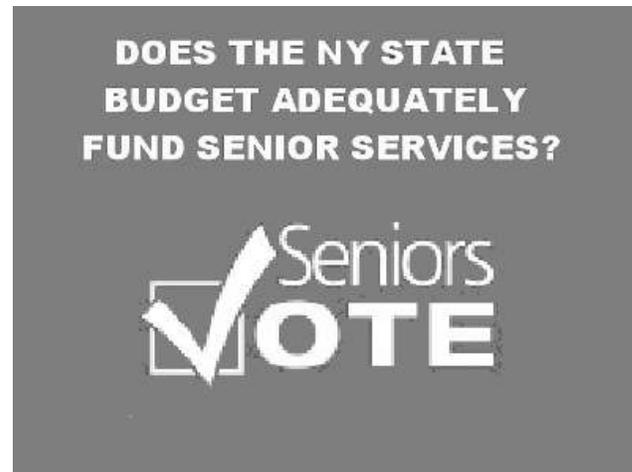
The usual lively discussion followed the presentation. Some of the topics addressed were:

- The experience of one of our members who volunteers and has immersed himself in the sanctuary community. Training is every Tuesday evening at 6 PM at Judson Memorial, 239 Thompson St. in the Village (check the Sanctuary website).
- Mass incarceration of immigrants and the private prison complex.
- A Riverside Church (upper West Side) program called Sojourners and the assertion of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island that all of its churches are sanctuaries.
- Lizette Colon (Hostos) spoke of her ongoing experience supporting a student whose husband was detained by ICE. The hat was passed and over three hundred dollars were raised to help with bail.
- The negative effects of recent judicial appointments on the immigrant plight
- Election work: Some Democrats have been better on this issue. Others have played a more problematic role (Bill Clinton and Barack Obama have deeply checkered records). Republicans have been almost completely a disaster.

Overall the meeting enlivened us and gave us ways to participate in supporting our immigrant sisters and brothers. ■

UPDATE: SENIORS AND THE NYS BUDGET: “YES, BUT...”

Jim Perlsten, Retiree BMCC



Getting to a budget in NYS involves a proposal from the Governor, a proposal from the Assembly, and a proposal from the Senate, culminating in “sausage making” by the proverbial 3 men in a room.

As we reported last month, the Governor’s proposal trumpeted its concern for senior citizens but fell short in providing the dollars that would make that concern manifest. Given inflation and the rapidly growing number of New Yorkers over 65, the Governor’s budget amounted to a reduction in funding for senior services.

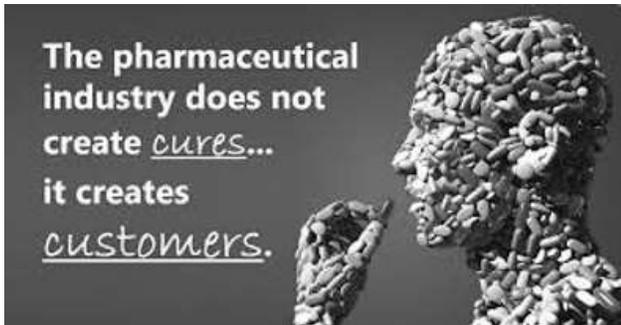
The budget finally adopted by the Assembly and Senate, and agreed to by Governor Cuomo, restores some cuts and adds some funds for certain vital services, but perpetuates a decline in per capita support for seniors overall. It falls far short of the needs of NY’s elderly.

It could have been worse. But that’s a tired mantra that adds little to the quality of life. NYS is not broke. Cutting taxes and then cutting public goods ought not be the formula for political success. The road to hell is mostly paved with bad intentions. ■

NEWS AND NOTES

BIG PHARMA AND AMERICAN WORKERS

John Hyland, Retiree LaGuardia CC



Pharmaceutical corporations have been reaping extraordinary profits and American workers have found themselves individually and collectively struggling to keep their heads above water in meeting their prescription drug needs.

Labor unions are responding. There is growing interest in public collective actions to bring this issue to the wider community. Some union welfare funds are threatened by the drive for profits and are preparing to fight back. The PSC is in a good position now, but the trends are not in our favor—the system is organized in favor of the maximization of profits for corporations.

Led by union retiree organizations, there is increasing exploration of a campaign to bring this issue - which affects everyone - to all working people, not just those in unions. There is a growing sense that workers, not just those unionized, are being squeezed by Big Pharma (the huge pharmaceutical corporations). But there are resources to help working people to understand the dynamics of the prescription drug industry. At a recent meeting of the Statewide Senior Action Council (SSAC—with which the PSC Retirees Chapter partners) PharmacyCheckers.org provided us with important data on pharmaceutical pricing and the effects of lobbying by the big pharmaceutical companies.

Presently there are various bills in

Congress (from Senators Sanders, McCain, and Ellison) that move toward negotiations of prices and the ability to buy important drugs from outside the USA. Big Pharma has been winning but working people and their organizations are preparing to fight back. Stay tuned for next steps. ■

CONNECTING THE DOTS: CLIMATE CHANGE, MASS MIGRATION AND "AMERICA FIRST"

John Hyland, Retiree LaGuardia CC

A recent interview of author Todd Miller by Jacob Resneck triggered a line of thinking for me that relates various major conflicts and the way they are connected. Miller has written two books: *Border Patrol Nation* (2014) and *Storming the Wall: Climate Change, Migration, and Homeland Security* (2017). The conversation addressed the way the disasters of Climate Change (heat waves, freezing temperatures, floods, super storms, wildfires) have already moved waves of migrants across borders fleeing the ensuing destruction of their living conditions. The growing migration (with more likely to come) in turn has generated fear and trembling among U.S. political-economic elites and concern among other Americans. It has fed "the bordering of America" frenzy. Trump's America First ideology centers around anti-migrant policies, which connect with the tendency to solve problems militarily and with the private prison corporations who are very willing to "house" (detain) the migrants who make it beyond the walls.

Miller uses government documents to reveal the thinking of the National Security establishment. For example, he quotes a 2003 Pentagon-commissioned report which, responding to a worst-case climate scenario, projected that "Borders will be strengthened around the country to hold back unwanted, starving immigrants from

the Caribbean (an especially severe problem), Mexico, and South America." One former national security advisor warned that a scenario in which average temperatures increased by just 2.6 degrees Celsius by 2040 would cause "border problems" that would overwhelm U.S. capabilities "beyond the possibility of control, except by drastic methods and perhaps not even then." Assessments of national security threats involving climate change refer to it as a "threat multiplier."



Beginning even before climate change was declared a national security threat (2010), the U.S. Border Patrol has gone from approximately 4000 agents in the early 1990s to 20,000 in 2017. Annual budgets for Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agencies combined have gone from \$1.5 billion to \$20 billion. A 2014 Department of Homeland Security document states that the U.S. will have to prepare for mass migrations due to ecological upheavals.

These developments support Naomi Klein's analyses in her book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007). Klein makes the case that "for over four decades corporate interests have systematically exploited these various

forms of crisis [economic meltdowns, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and wars] to ram through policies that enrich a small elite by lifting regulations, cutting social spending, and forcing large-scale privatization of the public sphere." Everything, including disasters, is an opportunity for major profit-taking. But this is nothing new—It is the core logic of the political-economic system.

The present political regime uses the fears generated by these crises to promote a narrow and often racist nationalism of "America First," protected by an ever developing military and an ever growing military budget. The U.S. is not alone in moving in this direction—one hears echoes of it in Europe and other parts of the world. Thus we move from gated communities to walled nations.

However there is a counter narrative in studies showing how people in such situations have become more cooperative and generous in responding to crises and disasters, without the violence projected by "elite panic" scenarios. Rebecca Solnit, in her book *Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise In Disaster* (2010), lays out such a position with accounts of communal responses to specific disasters. Making history, but not in circumstances of our own choosing, humans have capacities to transform dominating social structures and processes and to build more just societies and a sustainable planet. We start and continue by connecting the dots, understanding the interrelated character of these crises, and acting in the way of universal solidarity. ■



DANCING WITH THE DEVIL? CIA PROGRAM AT BARUCH

Jackie DiSalvo, Retiree Baruch

Faculty and staff at Baruch have been organizing to cancel the College's agreement to host a CIA program making Baruch one of the agency's four "signature schools." Some faculty have objected to the program for a number of reasons, including the ways that it might endanger some of Baruch's many foreign students when they return to their home countries. Baruch faculty only found out about the program when the CIA issued a press release announcing it as a *fait accompli*.

In the press release, CIA Director Mike Pompeo stated that "As part of CIA's recruitment strategy, select universities are chosen," which "will host a broad range of recruitment activities to build sustainable relationships with university staff and personnel." The other colleges selected were Florida International University, the University of Illinois and the University of New Mexico, which, interestingly, eliminated the program after one year in response to protest by faculty and students, particularly those related to Latin America.

Pompeo, citing the College's reputation for academic excellence, explained that the choice of Baruch was "Because of our global charter, we need talent from all cultures and backgrounds to accomplish our mission," and noted that "The College's more than 18,000 students have been repeatedly named one of the most ethnically diverse student bodies in the United States." The CIA also stated that "The campus is within easy reach of Wall Street, Midtown, and the global

headquarters of major companies and non-profit and cultural organizations, giving students unparalleled internship, career, and networking opportunities."

The president of Baruch College, Mitchel B. Wallerstein, PhD, is quoted affirming the CIA position:

Baruch College has one of the nation's most diverse student bodies, with individuals representing more than 160 countries, who speak 129 different languages in their homes. . . . We have strong . . . programs in virtually every area of relevance to a large, governmental organization with international scope . . . including all of the business professions, public policy, and international affairs. I am certain that in the years to come, the CIA-Baruch Signature School Program will provide our students with numerous, exciting career options both in the US and abroad.

In speaking to the Student Senate, Baruch anthropology professor Glenn Peterson expressed consternation at some of the CIA's activities calling attention to notorious examples of torture at so called "black sites" abroad. He pointed out that the research of faculty traveling abroad may be compromised because some other countries might be distrustful of a potential connection to the CIA. Petersen also told a story that exemplified the danger posed to students by background checks done by U.S. intelligence agencies. One of his students learned that the reason she was denied a job as a translator with the FBI was because they knew that she had prayed with other Muslim students.

On March 13, the *New York Times* editorial board described Trump's choice of Gina Haspel to head the Agency as "having a torturer leading the CIA." It is reported that Haspel played a role in destroying tapes containing evidence of torture.

The Baruch PSC chapter has called for a Teach-in on April 24th to start the conversation about the CIA's history of infiltrating university campuses. At the teach-in they will also discuss the risks that association with the Agency may create for international research, teaching, and travel, as well as the difficulties working with the agency might present for students down the road. ■

MEDICARE PART B REIMBURSEMENTS FOR 2017

Medicare Part B reimbursements for 2017 were scheduled to be **sent out by the City of New York Health Benefits Program on April 20, 2018**. Once you retire and have made an initial application, you do not need to reapply each year; payment of the reimbursement is automatic.

However, starting with 2017, those retirees who paid a monthly Medicare Part B premium during 2017 that was greater than \$109 but less than \$134 (the maximum amount) will eventually be reimbursed the differential amount, if they request it. The annual differential amount could be between \$12 and \$300, depending on your monthly premium payment. To request the differential amount, retirees will have to submit a form and documentation to the NYC Health Benefits Program. A letter with **a copy of the form and an explanation of what to do is scheduled to be mailed out May 1, 2018**. The Health Benefits Program expects to process over 120,000 of these forms manually, so they do not expect to pay the differential amount before March 2019. Retirees who will apply for a 2017 IRMAA reimbursement should not apply for

the differential; it will be issued to you automatically.

Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) Reimbursement for 2017: Higher income CUNY retirees who paid IRMAA in addition to the standard monthly premium for Medicare Part B coverage are entitled to an IRMAA reimbursement (which is not paid until nearly a year after the applicable year). To claim an IRMAA reimbursement, you must submit an application form plus documentation each year. The 2017 IRMAA reimbursement request form and instructions are available on the NYC Health Benefits Program website, www1.nyc.gov/site/olr/health/retiree/health-retiree-medb-irmaa.page and on the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund website, on the Forms page, pscunywf.org/forms.aspx. The 2017 IRMAA reimbursement will be issued in October 2018. Reminder: *IRMAA reimbursement requesters are not affected by the new differential payment described above.* ■

EDITOR'S NOTE: Why we are not stapled. The newsletter is inserted by machine into envelopes for 2,847 retiree members. The machine has difficulty inserting stapled material, meaning that the job would have to be done by hand, adding many hours of additional labor for an already overstretched PSC staff. Here's a compromise to keep both PSC staff and staple-deprived readers happy: Upon receipt, staple your newsletter when you remove it from the envelope.

Don't you want to write, draw, cut and paste with us? This year we welcomed a bumper crop of new retirees and expect to do so again in the Fall. We invite you to send your articles, photographs, cartoons, emails and other contributions to *Turning the Page*. ■

**RETIRES CHAPTER
Professional Staff**

Congress

cordially invites you
to attend its
twenty-fifth annual
June luncheon

Monday, June 11, 2018

11:00 AM

Coffee Hour

12:30 PM Luncheon

Room 750 (7th floor)
Baruch College Library Building
151 East 25th St

Speaker: Jonathan Buchsbaum
The Political Uses of Film

Menu

Buffet Luncheon

Assorted Salads

Choice of:

- ◆Chicken Franchise
- ◆Tuscan Chicken
- ◆Seared Filet Mignon
- ◆Parmesan & Artichoke Crusted Salmon
- ◆Mahi Mahi in Mango Sauce
- ◆Vegetable Lasagna

Served with Vegetables

Dessert

Beverages

RESERVATION FORM

Space is limited. Reserve early.

I/We plan to attend. Enclosed is my res-
ervation for _____ luncheon(s)
at \$24.00 each.

My choice of main course is (Check
(one for each person who will attend):

- _____ Chicken Franchise
- _____ Filet Mignon
- _____ Vegetable Lasagna
- _____ Tuscan Chicken
- _____ Crusted Salmon
- _____ Mahi Mahit

Name(s) _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Please send your reservation form with
a check payable to:

Professional Staff Congress
By

June 4, 2018

Retirees Chapter
Professional Staff Congress
61 Broadway, 15th floor
New York, NY 10006