

SEPTEMBER 2017



Joan Greenbaum, Editor

Academic Year 2017-18 No. 1

psc-cuny.org/retirees

OPENING CHAPTER MEETING – SEPTEMBER 11. The Retirees Chapter will begin a new academic year at 1 PM on September 11 in the PSC Union Hall, 16th floor, 61 Broadway. The theme is “**The State of the Union(s).**”

The PSC faces a momentous year, defending the union in anticipation of an impending anti-labor Supreme Court decision and negotiating a new contract.



As she has for the past 17 years, PSC President **Barbara Bowen** will address our

opening meeting on “The State of the Union.” **Stephanie Luce**, professor at the Graduate Center and the Murphy Institute, will join her, speaking on the state of the American union movement. Join us for discussion, light refreshments and the opportunity to renew ties with new, and not so new, retiree colleagues.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NYC Labor Day Parade and March.

Saturday, September 9. Meet the PSC at 12:15 PM so that we can march together. Assembly Location: West 47th St. between 5th Ave. & 6th Ave. We step off at 1:15 PM.

Phone Banking for the NYC Primary.

This fall we'll elect city officials including the entire City Council, Mayor, Comptroller and Public Advocate.

The PSC has endorsed candidates in 7 key open Council races, which may be decided in the September 12th Primary. Can you help us call PSC members—active and retired—in these districts in the next two weeks to get out the vote?

Sign up to phone bank at the PSC from 6-9 PM on Wed., Sept. 6 and/or Thurs., Sept. 7. Or phone bank on Mon., Sept. 11, after our first chapter meeting. We'll begin calling at 3 PM and continue until 9 PM.

Or you can make calls from home with the on-line "virtual phone-bank." Email Tiffany Brown (Tbrown@pscmail.org) to sign up.

A Walking Tour of Lower Manhattan led by Steve Levine, City College Center for Worker Education

Monday, September 18, 2017

The tour will begin in Bowling Green, the oldest public park in the city. We will meet at 2 PM at the southern end of the park, on

the benches closest to the Museum of the American Indian. The nearest subway stations are the Bowling Green station of the #4 and #5 lines and the South Ferry stop of the # 1 train. You can bring a bag lunch to eat while we listen to a description of the history associated with the area. We will then visit landmarks of New York City history, from the colonial era to the twentieth century. The stops will include Castle Clinton in Battery Park, Fraunces Tavern, Federal Hall and the NYSE on Wall Street, Trinity Church, St. Paul's Chapel and the Woolworth Building on Broadway, Newspaper Row and City Hall Park. The tour should take three hours, including stops for coffee and rest rooms along the way.

Please RSVP to Steve Leberstein at sleberstein@gmail.com.

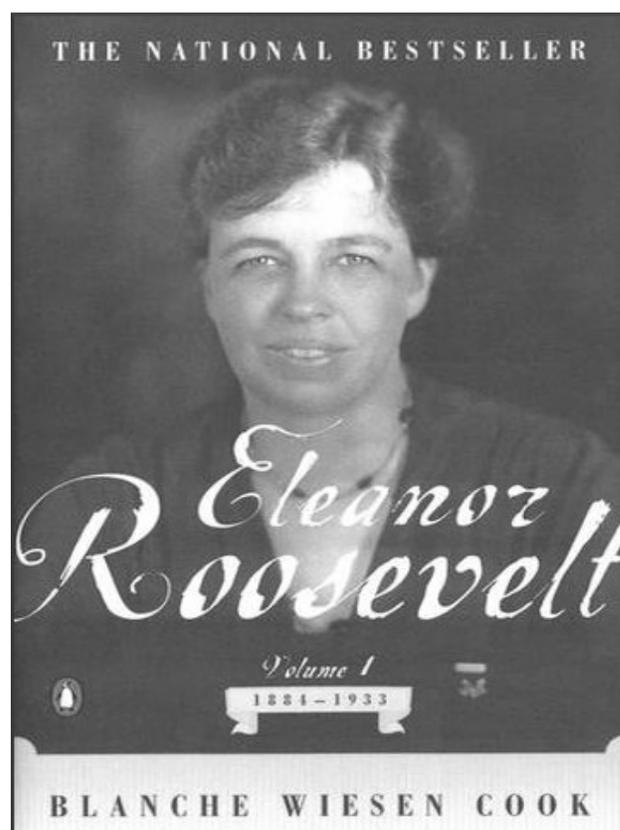
FALL PROGRAMS. We have a rich variety of programs planned (Chapter meetings are the first Monday of the month):

- **Monday, September 11** – The State of the Union(s). See above.
- **Monday, October 2** – Election and Ballot Issues. The upcoming NYC City election, the 2018 state and midterm elections and the 2017 ballot initiative calling for a New York state constitutional convention. Barry Kaufman, President of the NY State Alliance for Retired Americans, will explain why the labor movement is mobilizing for a “no” vote on the constitutional convention.
- **Monday, November 6** – The End of Open Admissions at CUNY and its Effects on Black and Latino students. Speakers: Stephen Steinberg, Distinguished Professor at Queens College; Ricardo Gabriel, Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology at the

Graduate Center (Student mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s leading to open admissions and its roll back in the 1990s); and Maureen Pierce-Anyon, Minority Counselor at Queens College, author of a recent study on Black students at Queens College from the 1960s to the present.

- **Monday, December 4** – Just Deserts: Food politics and Environmental Justice (speakers to be announced).

LAST SEMESTER; JUNE 2017 LUCHEON



Blanche Wiesen Cooke, author of the award-winning three volume biography of Eleanor Roosevelt, engaged more than 100 members in a discussion of Roosevelt's legacy.

CURRENT EVENTS



End of the Line for Repeal and Replace?

Dave Kotelchuck, Retiree, Hunter

On Friday morning, July 28, at 1:30 AM the Republican effort to “repeal and replace” the Affordable Care Act (ACA) came to an inglorious end—or did it? Certainly the GOP’s putative legislative onslaught came to a halt, but there is every reason to believe that Republican leaders will try again—as they have with Social Security on and off since 1936.

For the past seven years as lawmakers have been trying to repeal ACA, they never came up with a clear alternative plan that could command either public support or majority Congressional support. Only this year, when they took over the White House and thereby full control of the federal government, have they engaged in serious planning for a new bill. Their goals:

- Cut ACA taxes and add no new ones;
- Cap federal Medicaid spending to make up for the loss of these taxes;
- Halt state Medicaid expansion, and
- Eliminate the individual mandate to purchase health insurance.

Their results: bills to cut \$700 billion from Medicaid and cause the loss of health insurance coverage for anywhere from 16 to 32 million persons. As many have noted, the various versions of their bills cut off health insurance to millions of Americans in order to eliminate ACA taxes for the rich! Not a winning combination. And they have not eliminated the individual mandate. Nevertheless, despite public support for these bills running below 20 percent, anywhere from 40 to 50 Republican Senators shamelessly voted for versions of the bills even though many privately said to reporters the bills were unfair and unworkable. In so doing they abandoned their party’s campaign slogan: America First!

One important thing Americans have learned from this health care fiasco: Medicaid is not exclusively a “poor people’s program.” In fact according to the *NY Times* (8/19/17, p.B1) a majority of Americans need Medicaid to pay for part or all of their nursing-home or home care costs as they age. As of July 2014, Medicaid programs covered over 70 million persons, both through delivery of health care services to persons of all ages and funding of nursing-home and home care, according to government figures. (By the way, in contrast to U.S. policy that the elderly must pay down their savings before becoming eligible for Medicaid, in Great Britain nursing home and home care are fully paid for all elderly by the National Health Service—with no means tests.)

Despite its legislative defeats, will the GOP persevere in trying to shut down Obamacare? It is hard to underestimate Congressional Republicans’ ideological

aversion to a major government role in health care (although any market-based health-care system—ACA or other—must be regulated, whether by federal or state governments). Also the GOP has promised repeal of ACA for seven years, a political liability if it fails to produce.



At this time, some Republicans, such as Senate Majority Leader McConnell, appear open to negotiating ACA changes with the Democrats, but others are already plotting new versions of the repeal and replace bills which failed this past session. We must be on guard for both approaches so that ACA is not repealed and changes to ACA do not cut its heart out or sneak in poison-pill provisions. And finally we must also be on guard that even without ACA repeal Trump does not simply cut the federal portion of the Medicaid budget so that the ACA will collapse financially.

NYS Single-Payer: Getting Close

Jim Perlstein, Retiree, BMCC

Our (thus far) successful fight to prevent the gutting of the ACA has invigorated the long-standing campaign to pass single-payer health care legislation, especially here in New York State. Single-payer legislation has the backing of the PSC, NYSUT and the state AFL-CIO.

The New York Health Act (Gottfried-Rivera, A.4738, S.4840), the local take on a single payer plan, has passed overwhelmingly in the Assembly for the third year in a row and now has 31 co-sponsors in the Senate. If brought to the Senate floor for a vote it would likely pass and go to Cuomo for signing into law.

But that's not a simple task. The majority party picks the chairs of legislative committees, and the chairs can prevent bills from coming up for a committee vote and thus reaching the Senate floor. The Health, Finance and Rules Committees are key to the bill's passage. The chairs are Republican legislators hostile to single payer. The Democrats *could* hold the Senate majority, but Democrat Felder and the members of the Independent Democratic Caucus (IDC), for a variety of reasons, refuse to caucus with their Democratic colleagues and they thus deny them majority status. And then there's Cuomo, who connives at denying his own party Senate control, and whose position on single-payer remains unclear.

Nevertheless, momentum is on the side of single-payer legislation. A statewide grassroots campaign is well under way. It's called Campaign for NY Health. Comprising a broad coalition of unions, advocacy groups, community and faith-based organizations, the Campaign held a downstate strategy session on Saturday, August 12 at AFSCME DC 1707. Attending for the PSC were Len Rodberg, John Hyland and Jim Perlstein.

For detailed information on the NY Health Act, for FAQs, and the Campaign for NY Health go to: nyhcampaign.org/about

WHY I AM VOTING AGAINST THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION ON THE NOVEMBER BALLOT

Francine Brewer, Retiree, LaGuardia CC

The Constitutional Convention is similar to a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.” On Election Day, November 7, 2017, a referendum for a state constitutional convention will be on the ballot. The chance to reform state government sounds like a great idea. But for union members and the public it would be a disaster.

Here’s why:

There is a good chance that reform will never happen. If the referendum passes, the delegates to the Convention will be political appointees or current elected officials. Three delegates from each state Senate district and 15 at-large delegates would be elected in November 2018. Delegates can be members of the Legislature, other elected officials and political party leaders. What are the chances that the delegates will propose reforms that could affect them adversely? Slim to none.

The risks posed by having a Constitutional Convention are substantial. Every right, law, policy, program and protection could be compromised or eliminated. For example, the right (a) for a free public education, (b) to be a member of a union, (c) to bargain collectively, as well as protections for pension benefits could all be changed or terminated. The “Forever Wild” law that protects the Adirondack and Catskill parks could be changed to allow development of those valued areas. The “Blaine Amendment” which states that State funds cannot be used for religious schools

was proposed in 1967 but didn’t pass. It could be included if voters approve a Convention. The list goes on.

Don’t forget the billionaires from New York or elsewhere who would be emboldened to try to influence the Convention using their unlimited funds and public relations firms to persuade people to eliminate the rights they don’t want us to have.

I hope you will join me in opposing the referendum for a Constitutional Convention on Election Day, November 7, 2017.

WHY I AM STICKING TO THE UNION



Janus vs. AFSCME, a case designed to strip unions of their members, their treasuries and their power, is working its way through the courts. It is expected to come before the Supreme Court this fall. The Janus case and the Gorsuch appointment are the culmination of a decades-long attack on unions and workers' rights.

With unions under attack, we thought that a

series of stories by members would help remind us why we are here and why we're sticking to the union. Here are several and we look forward to hearing your story for this feature in our coming Issues.



Joan Greenbaum, Retiree, LaGuardia CC

Back in the 1980s, my Computer Information Systems department at LaGuardia Community College was in the process of hiring a new man. He did not have a PhD, nor did he have books and articles as I did. They offered him a significant amount over what I was earning. They said that he had a family to support. At the time I was a single mother of three and the only woman in the department.

I called the union and they reminded the LaGuardia administration of the *Melani* decision, requiring equal pay for equal work. Bingo, I was offered what he was earning. Following that I got active with the union and by the early 1990s we (John Hyland, Mike Frank, and others) recognized that we needed a more local activist union presence on the ground at LaGuardia and we won an election on campus. Some of the issues that I got involved in were the condition of the buildings and the effect on our working conditions--Health and Safety 101. I'm sticking to the union, past, present and future.

Steve Leberstein, Retiree, CCNY

Shortly after the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center, the 50 or so of us who worked at the City College Center for Worker Education confronted a critical problem beyond the gargantuan tragedy that struck just about 8 blocks south. Like BMCC almost next door, our immediate problem was evacuation and accounting for everyone who was there at that time. Then it was trying to find those among our 1,000 students whom we knew worked at the WTC, mainly at Windows on The Word restaurant.

The next day, however, the problem was how to continue classes when we couldn't gain access to the building housing the Center at 99 Hudson Street. In fact, the entire area below Canal Street was cordoned off except to police, fire and rescue workers and others who could prove their residency or other compelling reason to be there. Many of our students were public sector workers who worked nearby and were temporarily displaced by the tragedy.

Within about a week we were told that the CUNY Chancellor, Goldstein, had personally reconnoitered the area and then instructed the college administration to re-open the Center right away. Without consulting any of those who taught and worked at the Center, the administration dutifully conveyed the order to reopen classes there which had been temporarily re-located to the City College campus.

The college provost quickly organized a delegation, including me as the Center's Executive Director, to travel down to inspect the premises. This entailed getting through

the police cordon. Our students, faculty and staff wouldn't have a city car with official plates, and nearby subway stations were closed. How would they, and we, get there? When we did get there, we saw the debris and dust from the destroyed buildings all over the deserted street, and found the premises dirty, possibly contaminated, and telephones and internet service out of service. We objected, on the grounds that travel there would be a problem, and especially that the premises might very well be a health hazard.

Our concerns fell on the boss's deaf ears, so we turned to the union. And the union had our collective back. The Safety & Health committee co-chair, Joan Greenbaum listened to our concerns and then notified the University that the Center could not re-open until (1) the Center's premises had been inspected by trained occupational health personnel at the New York Committee of Occupational Health and Safety (NYCOSH), (2) the premises had been cleaned and de-contaminated, and (3) the area below Canal Street had been re-opened to the public. Under pressure from the union, the college capitulated.



It was hard enough trying to cope with a tragedy of that magnitude, but without the support of the union we and our students would have been left on the proverbial limb to fend for ourselves. The union had our back, and now I am determined to stick to the union for all those who followed me working at City College and the University.

**Marie Jean Lederman, Retiree,
Baruch & LaGuardia**

In 1968-69 I was an assistant professor at the University Center-SEEK, an experimental program housed in the Hotel Alamac on West 72nd Street. (This is ancient history and a story unto itself.) The following year, 1969, I was appointed assistant professor of English at Baruch College. I was hired by both the SEEK and English Department chairs, but housed in the English Department. Addison Gayle (from CCNY) and I were hired and housed on another floor, for "you SEEK people," as the then assistant chair of English described us. Anticipating the start of Open Admissions was fraught, to say the least. I remember sitting next to a senior professor in my department at a faculty meeting who rose to quote from the Jensen Report, which held that there are genetic differences between Negro and White children which account for differences in intelligence. There was a lot of publicity at the time, and the report subsequently vanished into well deserved oblivion.

When the time came for my tenure decision I was denied tenure. The chair of my department gave me no advice, so I went to the union. I was advised about the procedure and sent a written statement explaining my publications (a lot but mostly dealing with teaching writing to nontraditional students) to all the members of the college's P&B Committee. I made a presentation, answered questions and was granted tenure. The following year the same group made me an associate professor.

During my career at CUNY, I spent six years directing the Freshman Skills Assessment Program and the Instructional Resource Center at the Board and two years as an administrator at LaGuardia Community College before I returned to

Baruch. In the intervening years the journals in which I had published became academically "acceptable." Without the help of the union I would not have had the opportunity of contributing to CUNY—and the enormous pleasure of working with unforgettable students and colleagues.



Reflections on Retirement

Tibbi Duboys, Retiree Brooklyn College

I entered Brooklyn College at age seventeen as an undergraduate, and seven years after graduation returned as a member of the faculty.

While I was at Brooklyn College my Department became the School of Education and I became head of the program in Childhood Education. I also served on the Personnel and Budget Committee for a number of years and was elected Chapter Chair of the PSC.

As one of many who were active in our union, I took great pride in the advances we brought about. Our work as a faculty has been made increasingly difficult over the decades by the imposition of tuition fees and the diminution of State support of CUNY. In Education, we experienced increasing intrusion into our professional judgment masquerading as ways to improve Teacher Education by regulatory agencies such as the Board of Regents and national organizations such as NCATE. That took a lot of the joy out of the career. Maybe it was time to think about retiring. As a single parent, I'd never been able to think about a sabbatical until the PSC

bargained for 80% of salary. And so, after more than 40 years on the faculty, I was able finally to take one and get a glimpse of what retirement might bring. The sabbatical enabled me to work quietly and enjoy life without meetings, class preparation, grading papers and the student counseling that had been such a large part of my administrative work.

A great worry for someone who has spent a lifetime of reading and activism is what might be done with the sudden presence of unstructured time. I am now able to read with impunity. While much of what I read has to do with the work I've done in Holocaust research, I'm also able to read (or reread) some of my favorite novelists since retiring in 2010.

I find the icy winds of the Hudson River intolerable, so Gil Klajman, my partner who retired from teaching at Montclair State University, and I began spending the winter months in south Florida. We have an apartment in Hollywood, which enables us to enjoy concerts and the ballet in both Miami and Fort Lauderdale. We take a course at FIU titled "All Politics All the Time," and especially in these anguishing times, there's no shortage of material. We also volunteer at an art cinema in Ft. Lauderdale and in Hollywood, and see some great (and not-so-great) foreign and independent films. I have conducted panels when Holocaust films have been shown.

I lecture on the Holocaust at the Hollywood Cultural and Community Center and in a community in Boca Raton. In the coming year, I look forward to the invitation to lecture in a church as well.

We spend much of the summer in Paris. From here we've gone to, among other places, the Czech Republic, Hungary,

Poland and the England. In some places we have friends, and in others we are solely tourists. Because Starbucks, MacDonalds and The Gap are everywhere, we look for those things that are specifically and culturally unique. They are getting harder and harder to find.



We're struck by the attitudes of people with respect to recent events in our country. Although much of Europe is moving politically to the right, many people find it hard to believe we have the elected officials we do. They're horrified by the events they read about, but don't know, as we do, the horror of waking in the morning with the question, "Now what did he do while I was sleeping?"

Before this past school year ended in June, I began to discuss projected research at the unusual public school in which I had placed student teachers. Once called "an alternative school," it is an ethnically diverse community with a highly democratic governance structure. Many decisions incorporate a role for teachers, pupils, parents, and administrators. The administrators and teachers with whom I have met are eager to participate. I plan to examine why teachers choose to work in the collaborative ways they do, and the more complex issue of what happened to

the students who had the benefit of this form of public education.

Waiting in the wings is the draft of a book about children's literature of the Holocaust sitting in my soul for a number of years.

Left to ponder . . . where to make the time to write it? But there is joy in the freedom to choose what I do.

HELP WANTED: ADVOCATE FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM

(Fellow retiree, Anne Friedman, a long-term activist and leader in both the AAUP and PSC, has brought to our attention a part time consultant/contract position as NYS AAUP Executive Director. The position might be a good fit for an activist member seeking to supplement his/her income.)

The PSC has participated for many decades as an affiliate in the work of American Association of University Professors (AAUP). We send 15 delegates to the organization's national meeting and we have members who have served in AAUP elected positions. The NYS Conference of the AAUP seeks an Executive Director (ED) to fill a part-time consultant/contract position. Volunteer faculty leaders run the NYS Conference. There is no centralized office for the ED, nor are office expenses reimbursed. Approved travel expenses are reimbursable.

Primary duties include:

- maintain NYSC AAUP administrative services, records, and data bases/website;
- monitor information relevant to the work of the AAUP, the NYSC AAUP, and its members;
- engage in contact with politicians /staff

members and notify State Conference officers, councils, committee chairs, chapters and members as needed;

- represent the NYSC AAUP, along with the President and/or other officers, at events and build ties with other organizations and unions;
- maintain regular and on-going communications with AAUP National, the Collective Bargaining Congress (CBC), the Assembly of State Conferences (ASC), and chapters in NYS;
- assist the Vice President and the Chair of the Committee on Chapters, Members & Dues with chapter and membership development;
- work closely with officers and the Executive Council;
- provide support for standing committees and councils as well as special committees and task forces; organize and oversee the NYSC AAUP spring and fall meetings.

For information about submitting an application go to the NYSAAUP website at www.nysaaup.org. If you have any questions contact Acting President Jeffrey Baker at jbaker@nysaaup.org and write "ED Job Application" in the subject line.



As usual, retirees responded generously to an appeal last spring to contribute to PSC Vote Cope, the union's political arm. We raised \$16,345. As we said last May:

"The anti-union, pro-austerity forces we are up against are powerful. We cannot thrive in Albany or Washington on just the merits of our university and the truth of our arguments. We need to increase our power. That takes money—and lots of it."

That said, look for more appeals for VOTE COPE later this fall.

MEMBERSHIP. Membership in the chapter surged to 2,848, an increase of 133 members for the year 2016-17. The previous year the chapter grew by 36 members. This year's bump in membership is largely due to more aggressive and consistent outreach to pre-retirees.

Help us grow our membership in 2017-18 by (1) paying your dues (you should have received an invoice for this year's dues) and (2) encouraging any new retirees you know to join.

Reminder:

Have you mailed your check for 2017-18 retiree dues?



END OF YEAR REPORT. The retiree chapter's end of year report is available online at psc-cuny.org/RetireeReport2017

CONGRATULATIONS! Our newsletter got this "shout out" from the NYSUT journalism contest (NYSUT is our state affiliate encompassing hundreds of locals):

Retirees Chapter/Professional Staff Congress Publication:

"THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PSC RETIREE CHAPTER"

General Excellence Award of Distinction

Editor: Joan Greenbaum