

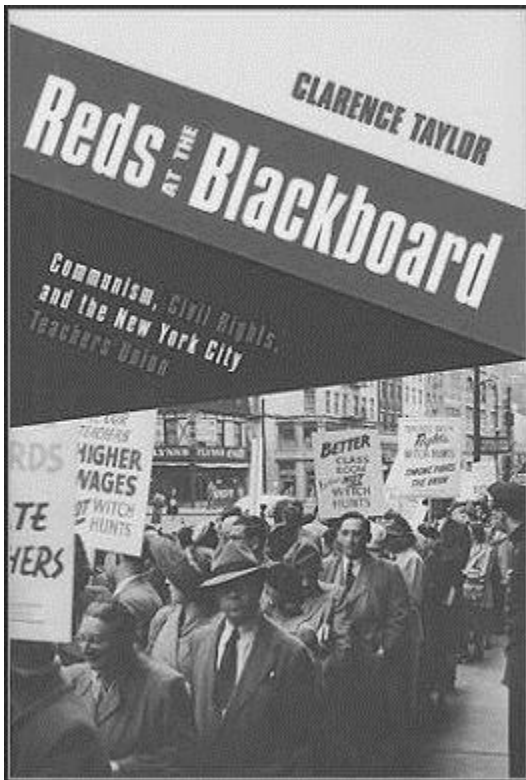


December 2013 Issue 5
Academic Year 2013-2014

Retirees Newsletter

Professional Staff Congress
Jack Judd, Editor psc-cuny.org/retirees

I. LAST CHANCE TO RSVP FOR THE JANUARY LUNCHEON



It is not too late to make a reservation for the January 13 luncheon to be held at John Jay College. The guest speaker is Professor Clarence Taylor, author of *Reds at the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights, and the New York City Teachers Union*.

The NYC Teacher's Union was the first local chartered by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in NYC, long before the United Federation of Teachers – and therein lies an interesting story.

Professor Taylor's presentation will include a screening of a short clip from a documentary on the Teachers Union, titled *Dreamers and Fighters*. Copies of his book will be available for purchase at the discount price of \$26. A reservation form can be downloaded from the [PSC website](http://psc-cuny.org/retirees) (or accompanies the mailing of this newsletter).

II. OUR CHAPTER AND PSC/CUNY COPE

Congratulations on setting the standard for participation in this union's political activities. As of December 10, 281 members of the chapter had donated \$13,635 to PSC/CUNY COPE, the PSC's political action committee. And checks are still arriving at the PSC! By continuing our dynamic response to the call for contributions to PSC/CUNY COPE we're increasing the union's political influence and

standing up for ourselves and our in-service colleagues.

Our voluntary contributions to PSC/CUNY COPE are helping to elect candidates who are pro-CUNY and pro-labor and supporting advocacy on a broad range of progressive issues, including protection of the social safety net. If you haven't given yet, please consider mailing a contribution along with the form on the last page of this newsletter. Make checks payable to PSC/CUNY COPE.

We have spent a lifetime fighting for social and political gains. We must help pass them on to the next generation. Go to www.psc-cuny.org/cope to learn more about PSC/CUNY COPE and what it does for you.



III. POST ELECTION ANALYSIS: THE POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES AS BILL DE BLASIO BECOMES MAYOR

The following, a summary of the remarks made by Ed Ott at the November meeting, was prepared by Joel Berger, vice-chairman of the Retirees Chapter.

As the union celebrated the mayoral victory of Bill de Blasio, elected with PSC support, Ed Ott, the former executive director of the Municipal Labor Council and now lecturer at the Murphy Institute cautioned, "We've been around too long to think that one election changes everything overnight." "But the possibilities are great," he said.

Assessing conditions in CUNY over the years from the mid-1970s onward, Ott observed, "we have been on a systematic program that fragmented this University, changed its relationship to the working and middle classes of this city, altered how the University was viewed—from an asset to a liability."

He described concerted efforts to defund CUNY, and warned that we cannot turn this trend around instantly, for many other people also have suffered under the last two mayors and have their own legitimate demands. "Hopefully, the mayor will be on our side, and will join the fight to turn around some of the terrible policies that were implemented."

Positive pressure on de Blasio must continue so that he knows what the PSC's goals are, especially since all municipal contracts have expired, and there will be a new round of collective bargaining.

Ott raised questions in terms of municipal union solidarity in bargaining for common goals, and noted that some unions will be tempted to go it alone to achieve quick settlements or special

considerations. The combined union focus should be the revenue currently available for raises or retroactive payments. "There is money available, but not enough," he said. "So the unions must stress progress going forward."

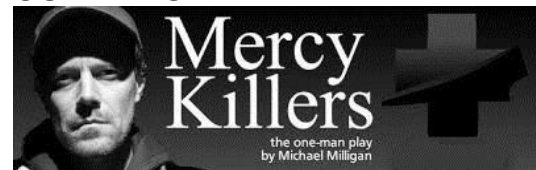
De Blasio wants to fund a universal pre-K system by raising taxes on wealthy earners. In view of the resistance to raising taxes, the PSC must engage in "a massive education job" and propose programs that solve problems, according to Ott. "The budget process does not solve problems," he said. A healthy economy with vital public and private sectors can solve problems. But we need an equitable budget to promote such a healthy economy. The PSC must work toward restoring fairness in the budget process, with the Mayor leading the way. The City needs to regain home rule in terms of taxation. Until that happens, it will take legislation in Albany to approve a tax increase on high earners.

As the battle is fought in Albany, the unions might consider opposing Governor Cuomo for reelection if he follows a conservative philosophy. Ott believes that, "we [union members] can't be the only people with decent wages, health benefits, and pensions. We cannot continue to allow this society to ask the poor [with substandard wages] to carry 10 percent of the population... on its back." If such inequality is allowed to continue, what eventually happens is an isolation of public sector workers from all workers, creating a climate which allows the punitive laws

passed in Michigan and in Wisconsin.

Ott concluded by stating, "This is a political moment, not a budget moment. This is the moment to lead a new movement—to extend right thinking—to extend the politics that allowed this victory to happen. We guessed right, we have a peculiar responsibility to play it out."

IV. RESERVE YOUR TICKETS FOR OUR ANNUAL THEATER PARTY.



Our annual theater party is on Sunday, February 2. Jointly sponsored by the Retirees Chapter and the Women's Committee, tickets for this event are only \$20. Together we'll attend a performance of Working Theater's presentation of Michael Milligan's *Mercy Killers* at Stella Adler Studio's Theater 2B, 31 West 27th Street. You can purchase tickets by sending a check payable to Working Theater (\$20 per seat) along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to Marcia Newfield at the Professional Staff Congress, 61 Broadway, 15th floor, New York, NY 10006. Read more about the play at bit.ly/1bY1Hoh.

V. DO YOU NEED TO REREGISTER FOR THE NYS STAR PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION?

New State law requires all homeowners (including cooperative apartment and condo owners) receiving a **Basic STAR** exemption to reregister with the Tax Department in order to receive STAR exemption school tax relief in 2014 and

subsequent years. Senior citizens receiving **Enhanced STAR** are not affected by the new registration requirement. But, according to the NYS Dept. of Taxation and Finance, seniors must, “take steps to ensure that they continue receiving Enhanced STAR.”

The following information comes from the NYS Dept. of Taxation and Finance website (tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star13/senior_citizens.htm)

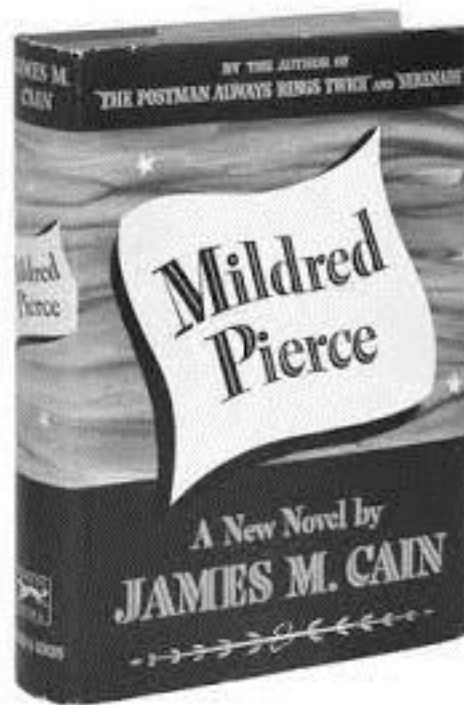
- Seniors receiving Enhanced STAR who reside outside of New York City must continue to: (1) apply annually, or (2) participate in the Income Verification Program.
- Seniors receiving Enhanced STAR who reside in New York City will be contacted by the New York City Department of Finance when they need to renew.
- If you are receiving Basic STAR but will be eligible for Enhanced STAR in 2014, you should: (1) apply for Enhanced STAR with your assessor, and (2) register for Basic STAR with the Tax Department (to ensure you keep the Basic STAR if the assessor determines you're ineligible for the Enhanced STAR).

If you have questions call the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance at (518) 457-2036. The helpline is open Monday-Friday 8:30 AM – 8:00 PM and Saturday 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM.

VI. LABOR GOES TO THE MOVIES PRESENTS *MILDRED PIERCE*—SAT., JAN. 25

The theme of this year’s Labor Goes to the Movies series is “work.” In January, we explore the theme with a screening of *Mildred Pierce* (USA, Haynes, 2011).

This Emmy-award-winning HBO series is not a remake of the 1945 Joan Crawford vehicle, but a faithful, leisurely adaptation of the original 1941 James M. Cain novel. (Cain was also author of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Double Indemnity*.)



In depression era California, Mildred has thrown her husband out and must support herself and her daughters. Beginning with a home-based business baking pies and then taking a job as waitress in a busy diner, Mildred displays a talent for business. She loves her daughter Veda obsessively, without comprehending Veda’s desire to efface the source of the family wealth and join the feckless upper class. Their relationship becomes a cauldron of ambition, social climbing, and love.

Todd Haynes pays careful attention to the green and gold of the California landscape and every detail of the houses, cars and costumes of the period as he creates “a nightmare as American as Mom and apple pie.” (J. Hoberman)

Doors open at noon on Saturday, January 25 in the PSC-CUNY Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th floor. Light food and drink provided.

VII. MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM WORK TO RETIREMENT: TELL US YOUR STORY

Retirees: Was your transition to retirement smooth? Bumpy? Somewhere in-between?

Tell us your story. Go on the PSC website to psc-cuny.org/RetirementStories. Click “add new comment,” which you will find below the explanatory text on this web page. Then, in a few

paragraphs, post a brief account of your transition. Convey any insights which you think colleagues still working might find useful when they decide to retire.

Our expectation is that while readers will find common themes in our transition narratives, they will also find a plenty of diversity—and lots of interesting questions and issues raised by our accounts.

You can either post anonymously or, if you feel comfortable doing so, provide your name at the bottom of your brief retirement narrative.

VIII. For topic suggestions for inclusion in future newsletters, please contact Jacob Judd, editor at: JJUDD18@OPTONLINE.NET.

Below is a coupon for those wishing to make a PSC/CUNY Cope contribution (see page 1).

Please tear off and return with your contribution to PSC/CUNY COPE, 61 Broadway, 15 th Floor, NY, NY 10006.	
PSC/CUNY COPE	
Yes, I want to help build the political influence of the PSC, NYSUT and AFT.	
I will contribute: \$35 _____ \$60 _____ \$100 _____ \$150 _____ Other _____	
Name: _____	Check #: _____
Thank you for your contribution to PSC/CUNY COPE.	