

Joan Greenbaum, Editor
Academic Year 2016-17 No. 4

psc-cuny.org/retirees

**NEXT CHAPTER MEETING: MON.,
DEC. 5, 1 – 3 PM.**

**Defending Public Higher
Education: "Austerity Blues"**
**Speakers: Mike Fabricant and
Steve Brier**, authors of a book just
published from Johns Hopkins
University Press, *Austerity Blues,
Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher
Education*. They will examine how
austerity politics, disinvestment and
growing privatization threaten public
higher education and undercut its
mission to promote opportunity for
poor, working-class and minority
students in a democracy. At every
level of government, this topic has
particular urgency in the wake of the
November 8 election results.

The October *Clarion* has a two-page
article by Brier and Fabricant based
on the book ([tinyurl.com/public-
higher-ed](http://tinyurl.com/public-higher-ed)). *Austerity Blues* is
available from Johns Hopkins
University Press at a 30% discount

by calling 1-800-537-5487 and
indicating the code "HNAF."

1 – 3 PM, PSC Union Hall, 61
Broadway, 16th floor. Light
refreshments provided.

**ANNUAL WINTER LUNCHEON:
MONDAY, JAN. 9, 12:30 PM.
The Living New Deal**

**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**

**Still Working
for America**

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 the 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.

Make your reservations now! A reservation form accompanies the print edition of this newsletter. If you are receiving the newsletter digitally, you can go to the PSC Website @ tinyurl.com/RTwinterLuncheon17-pdf to download the invitation and reservation form.

STAND WITH CUNY STUDENTS!

Three Things We Can Do Now

PSC President Barbara Bowen sent a message on November 14 detailing “Three Things We Can Do Right Now” in the wake of the election. “The worst mistake we could make at this moment is to believe that we are powerless,” she said. “We are not powerless.” Please read her message if you haven’t already (@ tinyurl.com/PSCthreethings). Then, join the 1,000+ PSC members who have signed an open letter to CUNY students, **taking a public stand against all forms of bigotry and hatred** (@ tinyurl.com/PSCstand)

NOW MORE THAN EVER

*-Steve Leberstein, Retiree CCNY
Center for Worker Education*

It is not as if free speech at CUNY has never been under attack. Now in a solid attempt to further protect rights, the union’s Academic

Freedom Committee, together with a group of faculty members, have crafted a comprehensive resolution, “On the Freedom of Speech and Assembly for All Faculty, Staff and Students at the City University of New York.” The resolution affirms that the union stands by its “...unequivocal condemnation of all forms of systemic discrimination, including racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia...and call[s] on the CUNY administration, New York City and New York State to treat all accusations of discrimination and repression seriously and equally, and to affirm its support for freedom of speech and assembly for all faculty, staff and students.” (Full text @ <http://tinyurl.com/zlu9g4p>) This was adopted overwhelmingly by the union’s Delegate Assembly at its October meeting and is now the union’s policy.

The Academic Freedom Committee welcomes new members. For more information, contact Steve Leberstein, chair, at sleberstein@gmail.com

CLIMATE CRISIS FORUM: TAKING A BREATH



We have barely had a chance to catch our breath after the election before moving on to this December issue of *Turning the Page*. And speaking of breathing, just one of the issues we need to take up is the President-elect's choice of Myron Ebell to head the EPA transition team. Ebell, of the Competitive Business Institute, is, according to an article in *Vanity Fair*, "an oil industry mouthpiece." He has been outspoken about dismantling the EPA and makes vociferous claims (many TV appearances, etc.) that if there is, indeed, global warming caused by greenhouse gasses, it can be beneficial.

Naming Ebell to head the transition at the Environmental Protection Agency is an alarming step toward doubling down on the President-elect's campaign calls for taking the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Agreement. As well, it adds a ton of fuel (probably coal) to the fire of Trump's climate change denial. (He calls it a "hoax.") The PSC is on the job with an Environmental Justice Committee, formed in the last few years by active retirees, and now peopled by retirees and other concerned union members. Come to a forum on this topic organized, insightfully, before the election:

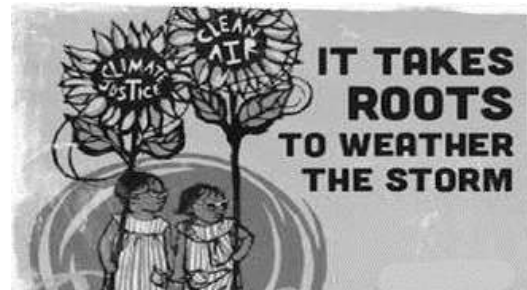
**ORGANIZING URGENCY:
The Climate Crisis & What Should
CUNY Do About it
Tues., Nov. 30, 6-8 PM, PSC Union
Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th Floor**

Bring family, friends and students to hear from community and CUNY

environmental justice activists and scholars. It is a chance to participate in shaping our shared role in addressing the climate crisis.

Speakers include: Daisy Chung, campaign director of the Climate Works For All project at the Alliance for A Greater New York (ALIGN); **Stephen Pekar**, Queens College geology professor and respected climatologist; and **Elizabeth Yeampierre**, a nationally recognized attorney, advocate and organizer for just, sustainable development and environmental justice.

Refreshments provided. Go to the PSC website @ tinyurl.com/PSCclimateForum to RSVP, download a flyer and find full information about speakers and program.



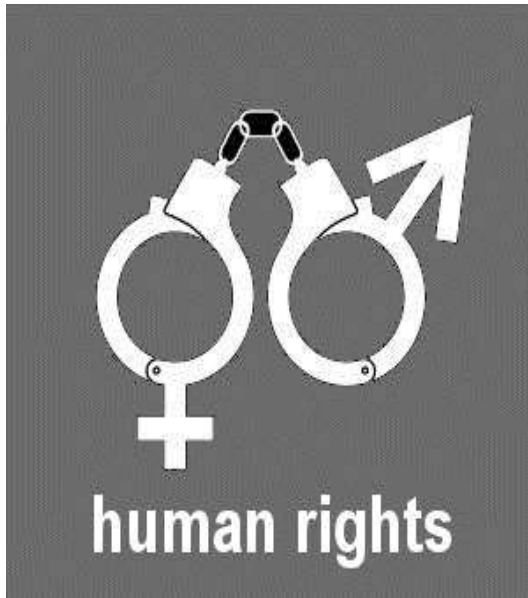
**FLORIDA RETIREES AND
SNOWBIRDS: SIGN UP FOR THE
ANNUAL LUNCHEON.**

And now for something completely different: 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

PRISONER'S RIGHTS: "We keep dogs in better cages"

November's Chapter Program

Fran Gateless-Shapiro, retiree, CCNY, SEEK program and now affiliated with Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement



On November 7, the Retirees Chapter of the PSC hosted a discussion about mass incarceration and the abusive use of solitary confinement in our prisons. Johnny Perez, who has been incarcerated and spent time in solitary confinement, spoke at the meeting. He is now working in a re-entry program with people recently released from prison. He described the torture of solitary confinement and informed us that many incarcerated people are sent there arbitrarily, often for very minor offenses and often for decades.

In NYS about 5,000 people are currently in solitary. He pointed out that we "keep our dogs in better cages" and that the humanity of

these individuals is not recognized. Corrections officers won't make eye contact. There is no human touch. Prisoners are fed through a slot in the cage door. Exercise is limited and done in another, slightly larger cage. There is no programming or therapy to help develop more positive behavior. The experience had terrible psychological effects on Perez. He became withdrawn and introverted. He contemplated suicide. He developed a long-term fear of small places, and he became very angry. Many people are released back into our communities with all this anger. However, Johnny Perez said that his growth and educational development was helped by the encouragement of professors who came to teach at the prison. He ended his talk with a powerful poem about his experience and his dreams of something better.

Jack Beck, who has been fighting for prisoners' rights for about 30 years, addressed the larger issue of mass incarceration, as well as the overuse of solitary confinement. Although crime rates have gone down, the number of people in our prisons has greatly increased. Reasons for this include onerous bail policies, intransigent politically appointed parole boards, and very long prison sentences. "When making decisions, parole boards only look at the original crime, not who the person is now," Beck said. Very long sentences, especially life without parole, say, in essence, "you can never change." They account for the large number of elderly people now in our prisons. Racism and "otherism" are also factors in the

disproportionately high percentage of people in prison and in solitary confinement.

Education is a critical issue. Only 60% of incarcerated persons have High School diplomas or equivalents. Few prisons have special education programs, and college education in prisons has been downgraded because of the elimination of Pell and TAP for prisoners. Education of corrections officers is also needed. They should be taught new tools to work with the people in prison, instead of only using punishment and solitary confinement. Beck says that there is an assumption that prisons are for punishment, but alternatives need to be examined. Even if some people may need to be separated from society, we “should not be throwing them away.”

Perez and Beck also spoke about the HALT bill, State legislation that the Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) is advocating for in Albany. HALT calls for guarantees of due process and transparency. It would also limit time in solitary to 15 days and outlaw use of solitary for youth, elderly prisoners or persons with mental or physical disabilities. Members of the audience were asked to tell their state legislators to sign on in support of the bill. The link for the CAIC website is @ <http://nycaic.org/>

A description of the bill can be found @ <http://nycaic.org/legislation/>



FAQ's FOR NEW RETIREES

Jared Herst, Coordinator PSC

Pension & Health Benefits

Tel: 212-354-1252

Email: jherst@pscmail.org

Many people ask me, "I just retired, what should I be concerned about now?" Here's a short list you should keep handy.

Q: How does the new contract affect me?

A: You can expect retroactive payments in January 2017, if you were working from April 2012 to the present. Your retirement/pension plans through TIAA and TRS will be positively affected as well. Stay tuned to hear more about that through the PSC and CUNY in the coming months.

Q: I recently went on Medicare and am worried about how this will work now that I am retired.

A: This is a great question. If you haven't done so already, you need to call Medicare and make sure Medicare is your designated primary major medical health insurance. How do you do this? Easy, call **1-800-MEDICARE**

(1-800-633-4227) or visit their website at medicare.gov/forms-help-and-resources/contact/contact-medicare.html.

Q: I am concerned about my retirement/pension payments starting on time. How do I check on this?

A: *Teachers' Retirement System (TRS):* It takes 3 to 6 months for your monthly pension payments to be finalized. Your monthly payments should start 4 to 6 weeks after you retire, but will be in the form of *advanced payments* ranging from 30% to 70% of what you will actually receive per month once your final monthly payments have been confirmed with the New York City Office of the Actuary. We suggest having other retirement savings (i.e. emergency funds) available for this time while you wait for your pension to be finalized. TRS will pay out an additional 5% interest per year for monies you didn't receive during this time. If you have not received a final benefits statement 6 months after your retirement date, contact my office at 212-354-1252 to have an inquiry submitted to TRS on your behalf.

Optional Retirement Program (*TIAA, Halliday, MetLife retiree*): Speak to your financial consultant and/or wealth management advisor at these financial institutions to learn more about your retirement income options and when to expect payouts from these plans.

BACK PAY DATES FOR ELIGIBLE RETIREES

If you were on active CUNY payroll (including on Travia leave) at any time between 4/20/12 and today, you are eligible for retroactive pay for the period you were on active payroll. The back pay will *probably* be issued on January 19 for senior colleges and January 27 for community college. Call your college's payroll office where the retroactive paychecks will be held for you.



MEMORY LANE: MEMORIES OF ELECTIONS PAST

-Peter Ranis, Retiree York & GC
I remember voting for Adlai Stevenson in 1956. As Governor of Illinois, back in the "red scare" days of the early 50s, he vetoed a public-sector loyalty oath. After being branded an "egghead," he responded, "eggheads unite, you have nothing to lose but your yokes." I also remember the photo released of the hole in the sole of one of his shoes that became a symbol of the "every man." What touched me was his concession speech to Ike in '52 when he quoted Lincoln and said "I am too old to cry, but it hurts too much to laugh."

-Joan Greenbaum, Retiree, LAGCC & GC
The first time I voted in a presidential

election was the Goldwater-Johnson craziness of 1964. While some of us were beginning to have serious doubts about the “advisors” in Vietnam, I like many of us, pulled the lever for LBJ, who won in a landslide, promising a Great Society program and some backing (limited as it was) for civil rights. Wikipedia now has this to say about Goldwater “[he] suffered from a lack of support from his own party and his deeply unpopular conservative political positions.” *That was a different time.*

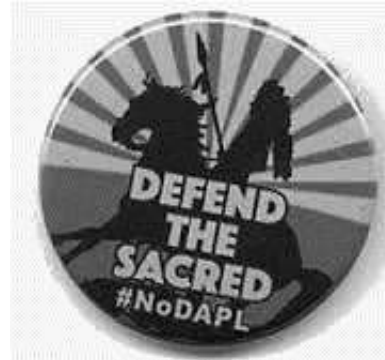
Danny Lynch, Retiree, LAGCC
In 1952, when I was six years old, my father, an Irishman from Co. Kerry, took me with him into the voting booth. I asked him why he voted for that guy. He said, “Because he promised to go to Korea.” I asked him why the other guy wouldn't go. He said he didn't know. Years later my mother, from Co. Tipperary, told me that John Kennedy was the first candidate she voted for who won. Our family was as shocked and delighted at JFK's victory, as we are now shocked and less than delighted at Trump's victory. That “the Americans” would elect one of us in 1960 meant we belonged, which we never really felt before.

-Marva Lilly, Retiree, John Jay
I have worked as a poll worker for the past four years, and I am concerned that there are other poll workers who do not exercise their right to vote. One of the reasons given is that they “do not like the candidates.” As a poll worker, I work straight through from 5 AM – 9 PM, and then tally the scans. There are the voters who only vote in

presidential elections and others who have not voted in 10 years, and still others who come in to vote but have not registered, believing because they are citizens they have a right to vote. I find it sad that people don't vote.

RETIREMENT REFLECTIONS **Climate Crisis: Scenes from Standing Rock**

-Nancy Romer, Retiree, Brooklyn



The following are excerpts from retiree Nancy Romer's blog about activities at Standing Rock, where indigenous tribes and supporters from across the country are trying to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline from going through their lands.

We arrived at the Standing Rock encampment late afternoon on Thursday as the sun was beginning to go down. Driving into the site was truly amazing: it is enormous! It is a village of about 500 (probably more) tents, vans, RVs, etc., some of them huge and housing dozens of people. Thousands of people have participated in the protest since it started in the spring.

The protesters are “water protectors” who are defending Mother Earth. Their slogan: “*Water is life.*” They are standing up to the fossil fuel industry for themselves and for the rest of the planet and have been

building this encampment for the last year. The encampment is a united front of all the indigenous tribes plus their allies to stop a proposed 1,200 mile pipeline that will carry fracked oil through indigenous lands, particularly under the Standing Rock Sioux reservation's section of the Missouri River and sacred burial grounds. The Sioux oppose the project. Attempts to build the pipeline continue despite the requirement of the tribe's approval, according to treaties with the U.S. government—an unfortunately old story of colonial oppression.



Entering the camp, we are warmly welcomed and joined a ceremonial fire circle. We learn from one of the leaders that the latest strategy is to 1) advance a lawsuit to stop the construction of a pipeline, 2) pressure President Obama to enforce his order to halt the construction of the pipeline, 3) stop the Army Corps of Engineers from giving an easement to Energy Transfer Partners Corporation allowing them to build the pipeline, and 4) build public awareness and pressure so that these other strategies work. Right now, the Army Corps of Engineers has agreed upon a 30-day "cooling off period," but Energy Transfer has announced that it is planning to complete the construction of the pipeline in the next two weeks.

The Federal government has ceded policing of the area to local militarized sheriffs who have often been brutal. There have been over 400 arrests since August. The sheriffs have been pepper-spraying and strong-arming protesters and, at one point, they were using attack dogs. Now, though, the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* has announced that, due to public pressure, they will stop sending sheriffs to the site.

It is a true privilege to have the time and resources to be here. But it is also a kind of salve for my soul, for me to support one of the most important struggles in the **climate fight** and **indigenous rights fight**, particularly after the crushing reality of a Trump presidency. For me personally, I could not have timed it better. I don't feel completely incapacitated. I see that the movement is strong.

If you want to begin to join in this struggle go to [Food and Water Watch's petition to President Obama](#). Don't mourn, organize.

EDITOR'S NOTE

As you have noticed *Turning the Page* is spreading its flyleaf to include articles by members like you. We have a brilliant new logo, by Bill Friedheim, our chapter chairperson and web maestro, and will continue to keep you up to date on what we, as the Retirees Chapter of our 27,000-strong union, are doing. If you are interested in writing for us, please email retirees@pscmail.org with "Newsletter" in the subject line. Short poems and brief reflections on the sometimes very busy lives we lead in retirement are welcome.