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Academic Year 2013-2014

Retirees Newsletter

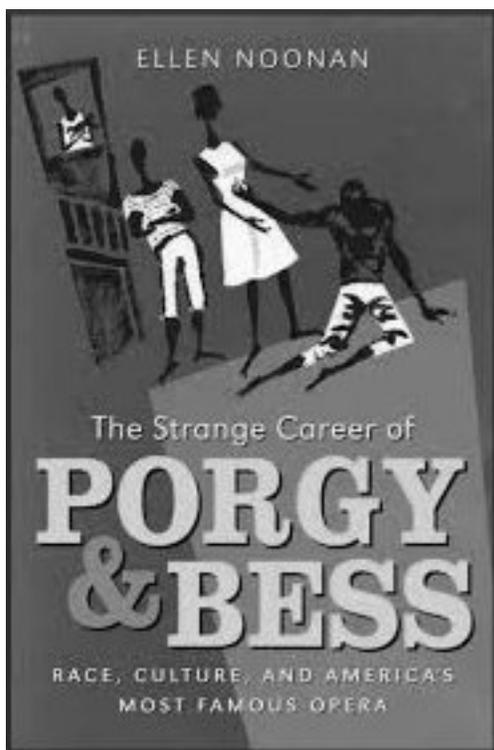
Professional Staff Congress

Jack Judd, Editor

psc-cuny.org/retirees

I. THE FEBRUARY MONTHLY

MEETING: Monday, February 3, 1-3 PM, PSC Union Hall, 16th floor, 61 Broadway.



Ellen Noonan (American Social History Project/CUNY Graduate Center), the author of *The Strange Career of Porgy and Bess: Race, Culture and America's Most Famous Opera*, will speak. Noonan will provide us with a fascinating look at

the opera's long history of invention and reinvention as a barometer of twentieth-century American expectations about race, culture, and the struggle for equality.

The Executive Committee will meet Monday, February 3, at 10:30 AM at the PSC offices, 15th floor. Those interested are welcome to attend.

II. WINTER LUNCHEON

On the lovely afternoon of January 13, eighty-three retirees gathered at John Jay College for the Retiree Chapter's twenty-first annual winter luncheon.

Representing the PSC leadership were Vice- President Steve London and PSC Secretary Arthurine DeSola. London thanked the members of the Retirees Chapter for their efforts on behalf of the PSC, the University and the students. He noted that our members continue to lead in contributions to COPE, the union's political action committee. This year we have contributed over \$16,000.

The guest speaker at the luncheon was Professor Clarence Taylor (Baruch College). He spoke on the

subject of his recent publication, *Reds at the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights and The New York City Teachers Union*.

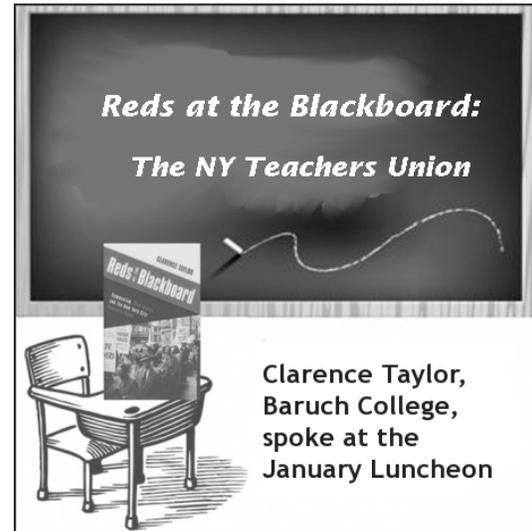
A book review written by Joel Berger, vice-chairman of the chapter, follows.

Reds at the Blackboard: The Legacy of the Teachers Union

There was a time, in the NYC school system, when mention of the Teachers Union could provoke passionate debate among school faculty. Many veteran teachers, during the 1950s and early 1960s, vividly recalled the Teachers Union, its campaign to improve teachers' working conditions and salaries, and its desire to achieve universal social justice. They also knew that the Teachers Union was banned from any presence in the school system.

The history of the Teachers Union and the dynamics of the times in which it functioned were brought to life by Baruch College Professor Clarence Taylor, the featured speaker at the Retiree Chapter's twenty-first annual winter luncheon. His book, *Reds at the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights, and The New York City Teachers Union*, highlights issues which remain contentious today. The Teachers Union, writes Professor Taylor, "adopted a brand of unionism whose objectives did not limit its activities to the traditional goals of service unionism—increasing salaries and improving working conditions. Its type of unionism embraced the struggle for racial equality, child

welfare, the advancement of the trade union movement, academic freedom, and better relationships with parents and communities. But the union's association with the Communist Party was problematic."



The book traces the inception of the Teachers Union, with a charter from the AFT in 1916, to its dissolution in 1964. Professor Taylor's book, "does not shy away from the connection that the Teachers Union had with the Communist Party. In fact, that relationship was an important part of the union's history." Because of this communist influence, many members of the Teachers Union resigned, and formed the Teachers Guild in 1935. By 1941 the AFT revoked the Teachers Union's charter, and awarded it to the Teachers Guild. The Teachers Union then affiliated with the CIO, but was ousted by the national body in 1950. Exploiting this expulsion, and riding the wave of anti-communist fervor of the times, the New York City Board of Education terminated all contact and relationships with the Teachers Union.

The Board of Education then actively pursued teachers who were, or had been, members of the Teachers Union. Professor Taylor graphically conveys the devastating upheaval in the lives of ordinary classroom teachers as they were called and questioned by Board committees. By 1956, with 1,100 Teachers Union members having been questioned, 139 teachers had been forced to resign, 71 retired, and 7 were suspended. Professor Taylor writes, "The New York City Schools had become a cold war battleground, where informers and witnesses were used against teachers. However, no evidence was uncovered that the teachers who were victims of this domestic spying were guilty of incompetence or indoctrinating children."

Yet, as Professor Taylor describes, in its last 14 years, the Teachers Union made significant contributions as it promoted civil rights by fighting for the elimination of racist textbooks and the integration of the schools. With collective bargaining a reality for the City's school teachers, the Teachers Union campaigned for recognition. But its physical absence from the schools for a decade worked against gathering further support. The newly created UFT won the election in December, 1961, and the Teachers Union voted to dissolve on January 1, 1964.

Professor Taylor concludes by writing, "An important lesson learned from the Teachers Union is that teachers cannot stand isolated in the fight to save public education." He

continues by stating, "The TU created a form of unionism that worked to advance equality in schools and in the larger society. The union's vision embraced the possibility of creating a city and nation where all vestiges of social and economic injustice could be eliminated through a wider struggle, one that involved teachers, parents, and the communities they served."

III. STATUS OF NYC'S FIVE PUBLIC PENSION FUNDS – FY 2013



Each year, former Retiree Chapter Chairman, Lawrence Kaplan, along with Warren Lewis, president of the Municipal Employees Association, issue a joint report on the five NYC Public Pension Funds. A link to the statistical report is followed by their analysis.

[Pension Fund Statistics—FY2013](http://bit.ly/1fWTTqY)
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Analysis:

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013 (FY '13), New York City's five public pension funds paid \$12.3 billion in benefits to 292,955 retirees and beneficiaries, an increase of

\$0.5 billion over the amount paid in FY '12. See Table 1.

The value of the funds' net assets increased from \$111.3 billion for FY'12 to \$124.8 billion in FY '13, an increase of \$13.5 billion or 12.2 %. This compares to the increase in assets from \$111.0 billion in FY'11 to \$111.3 in FY'12 (+0.3%).

The revenues of all five pension funds increased in FY'13 to \$25.7 billion from \$12.1 billion for FY '12, due mainly to the increase in investment income.

Active contributing members in the five funds totaled 371,921 for FY'13, an increase of 12,778 active members from the 359,143 in FY '12.

We conclude once again that the City's pension systems are fully funded and remain in sound financial condition.