



**May 2016  
Academic Year**

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2015-2016**

**RETIREES  
NEWSLETTER**

**Professional Staff Congress**  
Joan Greenbaum, editor  
[psc-cuny.org/retirees](http://psc-cuny.org/retirees)

**MONTHLY CHAPTER MEETINGS:**

**MAY CHAPTER MEETING:**

**Undocumented Immigrants: Then and Now. Monday, May 2, 1 PM.**

Speakers: Libby Garland (KCC), *After They Closed the Gates, Jewish Illegal Immigration to the United States, 1921-1965*; Peter Kwong (Hunter), *Forbidden Workers: Illegal Chinese Immigrants and American Labor*.



There will also be a speaker from New York "Dreamers," the activist group advocating for tuition assistance for undocumented students.

As always, the Chapter meets from 1-3 PM in the PSC Union Hall, 61

Broadway, 16<sup>th</sup> floor. Light refreshments will be provided.

The Retirees Executive Committee meets at 10:30 AM in the PSC's Justice Room, 15<sup>th</sup> floor. Executive Committee meetings are open to all members.

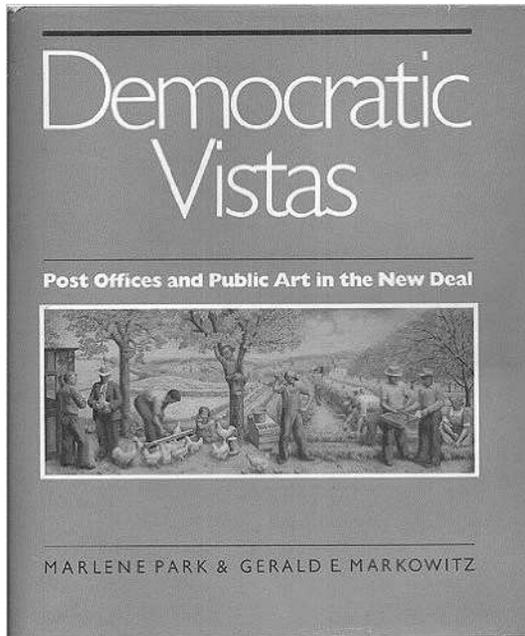
**ANNUAL JUNE CHAPTER LUNCHEON, MONDAY, JUNE 13, 12:30 PM.**

Speaker: Gerald Markowitz, Distinguished Professor, John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Topic: *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal*.

The U.S. Treasury Department commissioned artwork for 1,100 post offices between 1934 and 1943. The result was a rich legacy of art representing the lives of ordinary Americans: 1,400 murals commissioned for over 1,000 cities. Notable among these were thirteen murals, painted in 1937 for the Bronx Post Office by noted American artist Ben Shahn and his wife Bernarda, entitled "America at Work." The murals were under threat of destruction in 2013 as the U.S. Government prepared to close and sell the property. But intervention by

the NYC Landmarks Conservancy saved the murals.

Prof. Markowitz will tell the story of these murals and others as part of his narrative and slideshow in his talk at **John Jay, 12:30 PM, Monday, June 13 in the Faculty Dining Room.**



For those who receive the Newsletter by U.S. Mail, there is an accompanying reservation form. Those who receive the Newsletter by email can download the form at: [tinyurl.com/RTspringLuncheon](http://tinyurl.com/RTspringLuncheon).

To make your reservation, complete the form and send it with your check to the PSC (address is on the form).

#### **THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL EVENTS:**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 1-4 PM:  
RETIREES TAKE ON CITIFIELD**

**AND THE METS.** PSC Retirees take on Citifield and its wildly interesting food courts and quirky baseball, as the National League Champions face the Atlanta Braves. We are planning on buying a block of \$20 group tickets. With a group sale we get to see PSC-CUNY Retirees in lights on the jumbotron in center field!

If you didn't sign up for your ticket at the last Chapter meeting, please email [retirees@pscmail.org](mailto:retirees@pscmail.org) right away and note **METS** in the subject line of the email. We will meet at the Big Apple right down the steps from the #7 subway line (and near the left field parking lot) at **NOON**. (If you have already signed up, we have your email, so you will hear from us.)

**MONDAY, MAY 9, NOON: HELP THE CHAPTER PLAN PROGRAMS FOR THE 2016-17 ACADEMIC YEAR.** You are welcome to join the Chapter's program committee as we plan for the coming year (September '16 to June '17). We'll develop programs for the monthly chapter meetings and for our luncheons in January and June, as well as programs between chapter meetings (e.g. walking tours, biking, theater party, book groups, etc.). Want to get involved? Do you have ideas for programs? Then save this date: **Monday, May 9, 12 Noon at the PSC, 16<sup>th</sup> floor conference room.** (Because of a scheduling conflict, the date was moved up a week from the date announced in the April Newsletter.)

To join the program committee (and/or to send suggestions for programs), contact us at

[retirees@pscmail.org](mailto:retirees@pscmail.org) and write **PROGRAM** in the subject line.



**KEEPING CONNECTED: WHY RETIREES STAY ACTIVE.** Our Retiree Chapter chairperson, Bill Friedheim, recently calculated that if the 2,700 current retirees had worked an average of 30 years each, we would have engaged a collective 81,000 YEARS in CUNY. That's a lot of "sweat equity" in an institution that we devoted a majority of our working lives to, and not to be sneezed at. We developed friendships, committed ourselves to students, stayed in touch with colleagues, and, of course, developed ourselves as we developed a vital institution.

So what does staying active in retirement mean for those of us who engage a part of ourselves in activities associated with the PSC Retirees chapter of the union? For so many, it gives us a chance to stay

in touch with friends and colleagues through monthly meetings that, for example, cover current issues like voting rights, environmental challenges and immigrant rights, with historical perspectives that reflect on our own lived experience. Building on those connections, many are also continuing to build the power of the union through actions such as vetting legislative candidates, lobbying and helping those 'Retirees in Training'--the active members--secure a fair and equitable contact.

Previous issues of the Newsletter have given glimpses of how busy many of us are in pursuing the interests of a lifetime--art, music, theater, politics, skiing and biking--as some of those activities got short shrift when we were working full time. The union, as a base for maintaining connections and helping others, is a really solid container for

holding our interests, intellectual histories and political actions together.

This institution--our union--has been an integral part of engaging CUNY in keeping to its mission to "educate the whole people." Indeed, as CUNY grew larger during our working lifetimes we saw its bureaucracy explode, and sometimes watched as its policies got in the way of its initial principles. In our working lives we kept our principles in higher education alive in our practice of serving a wonderfully diverse population of students. We are still putting our principles into practice. The union is a place to do that. This issue of the Newsletter gives you an idea of some of the ways that active retirees have created to enjoy friendships and stay strong for the union. Join us in what dovetails with your own needs and interests, and help us create other activities that both help the union and keep our minds engaged. It is the time of life for "bread and roses."

Joan Greenbaum

### **APRIL'S CHAPTER MEETING: VOTING RIGHTS-THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY**

**The Continuing Struggle to Protect Voting Rights.** Long lines snaked their way to the polling booths in states such as Arizona and Wisconsin as a result of state laws and administrative actions limiting access to the ballot in the recent

primary elections. At the April Chapter meeting, Steve Carbo, a public policy lawyer specializing in the advocacy for expanding voting rights, reviewed past successes and recent setbacks in light of the Shelby decision of the Supreme Court in 2013.



Building upon the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitution, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibited discrimination against racial and language minorities in the election process and also outlawed literacy tests. This law, enacted during Lyndon Johnson's presidency, was continually renewed with bipartisan support under each succeeding president through George W. Bush. The Act required that prior approval by the Justice Department was necessary before any changes were made to the election laws in the many states and localities, including parts of New York City, which had a history of discrimination.

Writing for the 5-4-majority decision overturning the law, Chief Justice Roberts stated, "After nearly 50 years, things have changed dramatically," as the court struck down the governmental mechanism

for ensuring voting rights. Justice Ginsburg, summarizing the Congressional record, wrote in the dissent "It was the judgment of Congress that 40 years has not been a sufficient amount of time to eliminate the vestiges of discrimination..." Such restrictions as the need for proof of citizenship, photo IDs, the ending or curtailing of early voting, the elimination of polling places, as well as the elimination of same-day registration, all suppress the vote. Citizens who were convicted of felonies, but have served their time, are also being eliminated from the voting roles. The greatest impact has been on low-income earners, people of color, and college students. Since the 2010 midterm elections, 21 states have set up new barriers to voting.

Closing on a more positive note, Steve Carbo noted advances that are seen in the 15 states that allow same-day registration. Oregon and California will use government databases to automatically register voters. In Maryland voting rights were restored to those convicted of felonies.

As the Newsletter goes to "press," we are waiting to see what happens in the New York primary--as our state doesn't have automatic voter registration, doesn't allow same-day registration, and has combined many polling places. The struggle continues. [Editors Note: Actually, as reported by the *New York Times*

on April 20, there were "irregularities" on primary day as "125,000 Democratic voters in Brooklyn were dropped" from the election rolls.]

Joel Berger

### **NYSUT HONORS CECELIA**

**McCALL.** Cecelia McCall, Secretary of the PSC from 2000 to 2006 and now a leader of the Retiree Chapter, was honored April 8 at the Representative Assembly of the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) with the "Not for Ourselves Alone -- Sandy Feldman Outstanding Leadership Award."



From the NYSUT website: Cecelia McCall, Ph.D., has been involved in the PSC for 45 years and in progressive politics even longer. Since her retirement in 2007, she has been even more active than she was as an "active member." Throughout her long history of progressive union activism, McCall has exemplified the motto "Not for Ourselves Alone." Every part of her work, from her scholarship to her teaching, from her civil rights activism to her work as an officer of the PSC, and now her leadership in the Social Safety Net campaign, has been premised on the idea that we

do not and cannot exist "for ourselves alone." She has been a leader in several different organizations, inside and outside the academic workplace, all with a focus on expanding collective rights and opportunities.

You can watch a YouTube video of Cecelia at [psc-cuny.org/nysut-honors-cecelia-mccall-0](https://psc-cuny.org/nysut-honors-cecelia-mccall-0) .

### **CONTINUING LEARNING:**

#### **THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS READING GROUP.**



The Social Problems Book Group, named after the famed left-wing book group at City College in the 1930s, first met in December 2007, just prior to the onset of the 2008 Recession. The initial planning committee included retiree members Tucker Farley, Dave Kotelchuck, Steve Leberstein, Jim Perlstein and Peter Ranis. The group now has a full complement of 10 participants, which makes for lively round-table

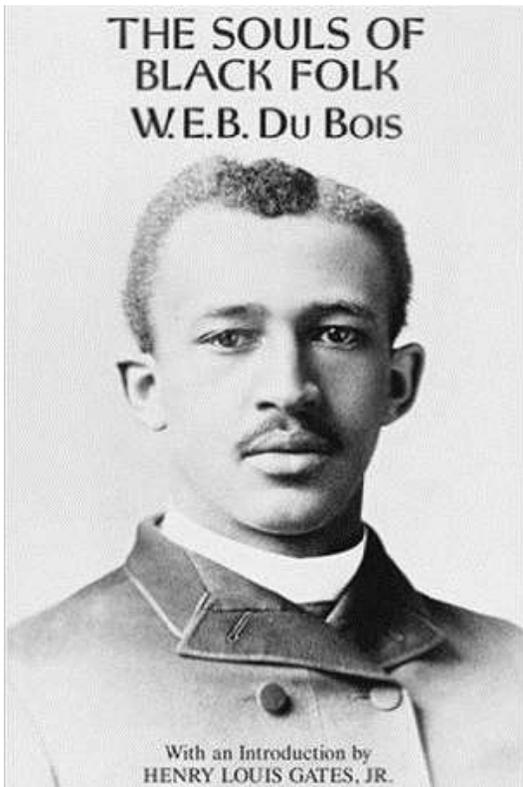
discussions.

Since our founding the group has read and discussed a wide range of books on economics, civil rights, climate change, Black history and labor history.

At our most recent meeting, we discussed the classic "The Souls of Black Folk" by W.E.B. DuBois, first published in 1903 and based on essays written after the infamous Plessey vs. Ferguson decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896. During this period, at the nadir of civil rights for African-Americans, DuBois, the first Black Ph.D. graduate of Harvard, sociologist, teacher, civil rights activist and later founder of the NAACP, boldly challenged the leadership of Booker T. Washington, who asked Black people to give up, temporarily, political power, insistence on civil rights and higher education in order to receive job training.

In our discussion we explored DuBois' concept of the "double consciousness" of Black Americans ("always looking at one's self through the eyes of others"). Much discussion focused on the history and failure of the Freedmen's Bureau and what might have happened if Congress had not let it die and had followed through on its promise of "40 acres and a mule." Would then have Black farmers been able to avoid the peonage and the return to virtual slavery which followed?

We discussed such prophetic lines, written a century ago, as: “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line – the relation of darker to the lighter races in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.” Then there is DuBois’ trenchant description of black folks living “under the Veil.” In his powerful prose, DuBois combined the personal with the broader political. In one chapter, the bitter poetry and pain in his language described the passing of his first-born: “Not dead, not dead, but escaped; not bond but free.”



DuBois died in Ghana in 1963, living there after renouncing his citizenship in disillusion, at the dawn of the great

renewal of civil rights struggles in the U.S., which he so helped inspire.  
Dave Kotelchuck

This year a new book group has been formed. If you are interested please write to [retirees@pscmail.org](mailto:retirees@pscmail.org) with **BOOK GROUP** in the subject line.

**WRITERS' CIRCLE.** Join the intimate world of the PSC Retirees writers group. Current participants have been writing about working at a hospice, exploring the world as a naturalist, writing haikus and creating a play where animals talk. Share your thoughts, reflections and imagination. This supportive group of CUNY peers is open to additional retirees. We offer great support at a great price: free! We meet once a month for two hours. The next meeting is May 17, 2-4 pm, at the PSC, 61 Broadway, 16<sup>th</sup> floor. Please email Connie Gemson at [chgemson@aol.com](mailto:chgemson@aol.com) for more information.

**ARCHITECTURE AND FOOD--THE ESSENTIALS OF A WALKING TOUR.** Two CUNY architects, Alan Feigenberg from City College and David Chapin of the Graduate Center, took a dozen of us on a walking tour of Harlem around City College last month. Alan and David co-teach a course at City on Architecture and Food that explores the ways that culture is represented in the built environment around us. And as we all know, food is an

essential component of all cultures. After wandering through different cafeterias at the College, and, for example, seeing the difference between the students' cafeteria and the Faculty *Dining Room*, we walked up Amsterdam noticing New York's amazing blend of restaurants and delis from cultures around the world. We also noticed the gentrification with its higher priced, glass fronted, restaurants as we meandered toward 144<sup>th</sup> Street in what is called Hamilton Heights.

To cap off our experience we collapsed and drank and ate at *Home Sweet Harlem* on Amsterdam between 135<sup>th</sup> and 136<sup>th</sup> Streets. The meal was fabulous (they have jazz on alternative Thursday nights), and the owner shared her experiences as an African American businesswoman starting a farm to table small restaurant and working with local groups. More walking tours of different areas are planned for the Fall with all ending, as this group decided, with a meal.

Joan Greenbaum

**KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH THE WORLD: THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE.** The union's International Committee (IC) was founded with Renate Bridenthal as chair and Tony O'Brien as secretary (both now retirees) back in 2000. We meet monthly, and recently we totted up and found we have met 150 times! Various resolutions, notably against the Iraq War and in support of striking teachers in Oaxaca,

Mexico, have started with the IC and found their way to approval by NYSUT and AFT conventions. Our brief is to inform the leadership and membership of international developments which affect higher education through forums and panels and a monthly bulletin distributed to delegates at the Delegate Assembly. International awareness of this sort often entails resolutions and actions of solidarity with teachers, students and unionists under attack in other countries, like Mexico, South Africa, Colombia, India and Honduras. We have formed durable networks in this way.

This year we have begun a successful transition from the old core of the International Committee, now mostly retired, to new members who are actively serving, many newly tenured or untenured. Our new members, who come from many countries, also continue the IC tradition of being about half adjunct faculty. Manny Ness, Political Science at Brooklyn College, is co-chairing with Renate this term and will take over the chair in the Fall. While we want to make sure the IC continues with new, young members, of course we welcome participation from our fellow retirees.

This need not mean coming to every meeting. In fact, we plan to have more regular communication with our Retirees Chapter, so that you may participate in our forums, petitions, resolutions, and actions of solidarity like the recent protest at the UN

against the assassination of the Honduran indigenous leader Berta Cáceres. The IC arranged for PSC endorsement of this stirring rally, where we met, among other unionists from Education International, the head of the Australian national faculty union (which has supported indigenous struggles there). Check the PSC website for the next meeting and contact Tony O'Brien at [ajobrien@bway.net](mailto:ajobrien@bway.net) for more information.

Tony O'Brien

### **CALL TO ACTION: THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET WORKING GROUP.**

Five years ago the PSC Retirees Chapter began a project to defend and improve the broad range of essential programs frequently called the Social Safety Net, including: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Pensions, Food Stamps, Unemployment Insurance, and Workers Compensation. These programs grew out of social movements that demanded economic and healthcare benefits to enable people to live decent and dignified lives in the midst of a world characterized by economic inequality and uncertainty.

The Social Safety Net (SSN) is essential for retirees, as well as benefiting people of all ages who are in need. Workers have earned, paid into, and supported these programs. Today these essential programs are the object of well-organized and well-

funded political attacks. Wealthy individuals, and organizations want to reduce, eliminate, or privatize them. And we are fighting back.



We are proud of the role organized labor and other organizations of the working class have played in advancing these benefits, which are matters of justice, not charity. The SSN Working Group has produced a booklet - **A Call To Action** - and distributed it widely to labor and community organizations. We have organized conferences and led workshops on the issue throughout NYC (including presentations at almost all PSC campuses) and NYS (aided by a Solidarity grant from NYSUT). The

Safety Net Working Group project has been endorsed and supported by the PSC Executive Council. We meet monthly to plan and develop our activities.

Join us. The more active participants we have, the more people we can reach, and the more power all of us will have in this struggle. In this presidential election year the platforms of the contending political parties present drastically different proposals for the safety net. It is our goal to continue to do research, write, and offer presentations and workshops to inform the public. We welcome retirees who want to use your academic, administrative and organizational skills to put this critical issue front and center. Please check the [psc-cuny.org/retirees](http://psc-cuny.org/retirees) website for the date and time of the next meeting.

John Hyland

### **OUR ENVIRONMENT- OURSELVES: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE WORKING GROUP.**

A small, but growing group of retirees and in-service members have become engaged with forming an Environmental Justice Working Group. The group initially came together for the NYC Climate Justice March in Fall 2014 where the PSC had one of the largest labor groups.

On April 13, Lara Skinner of Cornell's Worker Institute and Director of its Labor, Environment and Sustainable Development project, ran a workshop at the PSC

for the working group.



Participants worked to identify both the barriers and opportunities that labor's engagement with environmental justice presents for the labor movement and for meeting the climate crisis. Members split into smaller groups to briefly discuss strategies such as: CUNY being a resource for NYC and its communities; embracing more sustainable policies and continuing to develop interdepartmental curricula on environmental justice for students; and helping coordinate outreach to put all the various campus groups on environmental justice in touch with one another. In order to accomplish these activities, the PSC Environmental Justice Working Group has recently

developed a mission statement and will request that the PSC Executive Committee approve the group so that it can become an official and ongoing operating committee of the PSC.

The EJ Working Group meets monthly at the PSC and welcomes new members who want to contribute their interests and background to this labor-based essential environmental movement. Please check the PSC website: [psc-cuny.org](http://psc-cuny.org) for the date and time of the next meeting. Those who want more information should contact either John Hyland ([LagSoc@aol.com](mailto:LagSoc@aol.com)) or Jim Perlstein ([jperlstein@bassmeadow.com](mailto:jperlstein@bassmeadow.com)).

Eileen Moran

**PSC RETIREES THEATER PARTY:  
Tuesday, June 7 at 7 PM.**

**The Working Theater at Urban  
Stages, 259 W. 30<sup>th</sup> (7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Ave).**

Come see a new play called "The Block," which is based on two years of conversations and interviews with residents by actor/playwright Dan Hoyle in his South Bronx neighborhood. To find out how to order your \$20 ticket and for more information about the play, go to [psc-cuny.org/working-theater](http://psc-cuny.org/working-theater). It's time for bread and roses.

