

MAY 2019



Academic Year 2018-9 No. 8

psc-cuny.org/retirees

MONDAY, MAY 6: GOOD AND WELFARE

The focus of speakers at the meeting is the Good and Welfare of our chapter members on issues ranging from health care to Welfare Fund benefits to community resources for retirees.

SPEAKERS:

Kathryn Haslanger, chief executive officer of the Jewish Association Serving the Aging (JASA), is a prolific author on the subject of health care and aging. She will provide us a comprehensive overview of health care choices, delivery and planning for seniors in NYC.

Ron Bruno, who for sixteen years has been executive director of Morningside Gardens NORC (a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community), will talk about the NORC movement, resources, activities and outreach.

Donna Costa (executive director) and **Sandra Zaconeta** (retirement benefits

counselor) will update members on PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund benefits.

Discussion will follow. As usual, light refreshments provided. **PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th Floor, 1-3 PM.** ■

TRANSITIONS. Following the meeting, a new PSC Retirees group called **Transitions** will be meeting. If you are concerned about health care options or alternatives for family members or friends, this group is intended to provide peer support and find ways to gather additional information. **Transitions will meet on May 6th from 3-5 PM in the Conference room on the 16th floor.** For more information contact Connie Gemson, retiree from LaGuardia Community College, at chgemson@gmail.com. ■



MONDAY, MAY 13: PLANNING NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAMS

It is time to plan PSC chapter meetings for the next academic year. Please join us: **2-3:30 at the PSC, 15th floor,** and/or send suggestions for speakers and topics to retirees@psccmail.org □

ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON MONDAY, JUNE 10 at 12:30 PM: THE GREEN NEW DEAL, CUNY GRADUATE CENTER

Speaker: Michael Menser. Prof. Menser has taught at Brooklyn College for almost a quarter century and has served on the college's Sustainability Council and the Provost's Task Force on City-Based

Sustainability Education. He is a member of the doctoral faculty in Earth and Environmental Sciences and Environmental Psychology at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Recently he has become immersed in the **Green New Deal**, a set of proposed economic stimuli and blueprints that brings a new urgency and political activism to the impending climate crisis and economic inequality. He'll discuss the Green New Deal, defining its broad national outlines and its particular implications for New York.

YEAR ROUND-UP

There will be a **10:30 AM coffee hour** preceding the luncheon. The coffee hour (in room C197) is our yearly round up of what we as a chapter have done and what we plan to do. All are welcome. The coffee hour is a free event.

Reservations for the luncheon are **\$26 per person**.

FOR A RESERVATION FORM, go to the last page of this newsletter or online at <https://tinyurl.com/GreenJune10>. Space is limited. The room holds only 112 people. **Reserve now**, as we will have to close reservations once we reach that total.

(Note that the coffee hour at 10:30 AM is in room C197 on the concourse level. The luncheon at 12:30 PM is on the 9th floor in room 9204-7.) . ■

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Sorry, the Brooklyn Heights Walking Tour on May 5th is full.

To let us know if you would like to see this tour scheduled again and/or suggest other walking tours, email retirees@pscmail.org with "tours" in the subject line. ■

THURSDAY, JUNE 6 @ NOON MEET THE METS (again)

We are planning on good weather and a winning team for this outing against the San Francisco Giants. To reserve your seat, write a check for \$30 (yes a bit more than last year) to Marva Lilly and send it to the PSC, 61 Broadway, NY, NY 10006, attention Retirees. The deadline to reserve your ticket is May 22, so hurry. ■



**THURSDAY
JUNE 13
THEATER
PARTY**

Join us once again to fill a theater with PSC friends and family. This year we will see "Dropping Gumballs on Luke Wilson," a humorous and ultimately disturbing account of power in the workplace.

**A.R.T New York Mezzanine Theater
502 W. 53rd St @ 10th Ave. 7 PM.**

To reserve a ticket, write a check for **\$22 to Working Theater**, and send it to the PSC, 61 Broadway, NY, NY 10006, attention Retirees. ■

DUES INCREASE? Close readers of Turning the Page know that Retiree dues have not changed in over two decades. Over the winter we ran a survey about dues. 83% of those who responded indicated that they would favor a modest dues increase and, significantly, the overwhelming majority agreed that there should be a separate and lower dues category for part-timers.

On April 18th the PSC Delegate Assembly (DA) passed a proposal agreeing to a

modest increase for full-time retiree members from \$71 to \$85, and for the first time created a part-time dues option with an annual rate of \$40.

This is only the first step. The PSC Constitution requires that proposals for dues increases must then be approved by a two-thirds vote at a special meeting of the PSC DA – and that the entire PSC membership must be given at least 21 days of notice before the special DA. The PSC will send that notice shortly.

If passed by a special DA, the dues increase (much less than the rate of inflation since 1999) would take effect in September. ■

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

TRS UPDATE: Scores of more recent retirees are still waiting for TRS to calculate their final monthly pension payouts based on retroactive back pay received after the last contract. The problem centered on CUNY Payroll, which had not provided TRS accurate data to make these calculations. Now the problem seems to have shifted to TRS.

On Tuesday, April 16, Margret Egan, the acting vice chancellor for human resources, wrote Chapter Chair Bill Friedheim that:

We have provided them [TRS] with everything they need. They still have some additional questions on certain adjuncts which we are working through. In the meantime, we are strongly pressing them [TRS] to load what they have. We have escalated and will continue to press....

As many of us have experienced, TRS can be an impenetrable bureaucracy. But the PSC, with a sense of urgency, has

communicated to TRS – and will continue to communicate – the need to make these pensions whole. Stay tuned. ■

NEWS OF NOTE



-Irwin Yellowitz, retiree City College

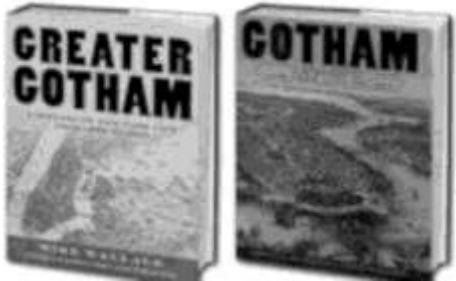
In the announcement of his talk, Mike Wallace wrote that he would summarize his lengthy book, *Greater Gotham, A History of New York City from 1898 to 1919*, Oxford University Press, in 30 minutes. In fact, he did it in 26 minutes before a standing room only audience at the PSC Union Hall.

Wallace handed out a copy of his large and weighty volume for people to look at with the warning that they handle it carefully since dropping it on a hand or foot could be dangerous.

Mike Wallace, a distinguished professor at John Jay College and the CUNY Graduate Center, then turned serious as he began the discussion of his book.

The early years of the Twentieth Century were a period of tremendous growth in New York City, punctuated by a boom and bust cycle with significant negatives for much of the population. The years 1898-1907 were marked by rapid expansion. New capital flowed in, as business leaders followed in the footsteps of J. Pierpont Morgan and John D. Rockefeller. Although these two mega capitalists heartily disliked each other, they agreed on important fundamentals: growth of the economy was

necessary to fend off radicalism, and competition was a destructive force; so mergers, trusts and other forms of corporate control should be stressed.



Even though the boom years ended in the recession of 1907, with another recession in 1913, the growth in New York City, though less intensive, did continue. The economic stimulus of World War I for the United States impacted New York City in a major way, and it led to increased economic activity through the years of neutrality to 1917, and then in the war years of 1917 and 1918. Overall it was a remarkable period of growth.

The changes impacted many areas of life. There was a rapid expansion into the previously rural areas of Brooklyn and the Bronx; the construction of railroad tunnels (today deteriorating and in need of replacement) to link the newly built Penn Station and freight yards in Manhattan to the rest of the country; development of new and larger piers to accommodate bigger ships and more of them; the movement of department stores to Fifth Avenue, with a larger and more diverse selection of goods; the increased circulation of a large number of newspapers, and the location of the home offices of national magazines in Manhattan; rapid expansion of theaters in and around Longacre Square, which was renamed Times Square after the *New York Times* moved to the area; and the merger of three private libraries into the New York Public Library, newly housed in an iconic building on Fifth Avenue, and able to serve

a much larger public, as well as the business community.

Yet this growth did not reach most of the residents of Gotham. Many were left behind because long standing divisions continued to push most of the population to the margins of society. Mike Wallace laid out four major factors that worked against much of the population.

Class distinctions were evident in the tremendous chasm between rich and poor. The nascent garment unions, the Socialist Party and a remarkably active group of social progressive reformers worked to alleviate the worst evils of poverty, but with mixed success.

Ethnicity was a major factor in the life of a city that was home to an enormous number of new – and old – immigrants. The newcomers were despised by many in the Anglo-Protestant upper class, but were welcomed by business owners anxious for cheap labor. There was much discussion of the need to Americanize the new immigrants, and to end the virtually unrestricted entry into the United States. This came to fruition in the immigration restriction laws of the 1920s.

Race continued to be a divisive force as the Black population was discriminated against in all areas of life, including housing and employment. This continued the reality of the 19th Century. Immigrants were no more acceptant of Black Americans than the native born. The development of Harlem as a Black community began in this period, and continued into the 1920s, over the objections of its white residents.

Gender discrimination had restricted the employment opportunities for women to a few traditional professions such as nursing and teaching. This began to change with the increasing employment of women in

clerical and sales positions – at lower wages than men. The women’s suffrage movement was active in these years, and was successful in gaining full voting rights in 1920. Margaret Sanger tried to make birth control information available, but fierce opposition frustrated most of her efforts. Clearly there was much more to be done if the growth of New York City was to reach the majority of its residents.

Mike Wallace accepted a good number of questions following his talk. It was a fascinating afternoon as we enjoyed the work of an outstanding historian.

WHITHER ORGANIZED LABOR?



-Dave Kotelchuck, retiree Hunter College

The June 10th luncheon will feature Michael Menser, of the Earth & Environmental Science Department at the CUNY Graduate Center, speaking about the Green New Deal. We have all heard something about it, but what does it include and what role are labor unions playing?

The bill was introduced in U.S. House as **Resolution 109ih**. The bill “recogniz[es] the

duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal.” It documents the urgency of such legislation by citing the October 2018 UN “Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 oC” by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the November 2018 Fourth National Climate Assessment. That report found that:

1. Human activity is the dominant cause of observed climate change over the past century;
2. A changing climate is causing sea levels to rise and an increase in wildfires, severe storms, droughts, and other extreme weather events that threaten human life, healthy communities, and critical infrastructure;
3. Global warming at or above 2 degrees Celsius beyond pre-industrialized levels will cause, among other disasters – mass migration from the regions most affected by climate change and wildfires that, by 2050, will annually burn at least twice as much forest area in the western United States than was typically burned by wildfires in the years preceding 2019; and a loss of more than 99 percent of all coral reefs on Earth.
4. Global temperatures must be kept below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrialized levels to avoid the most severe impacts of a changing climate, which will require global reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from human sources.

For full text of the house bill go to: <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hres109/BILLS-116hres109ih.pdf>

In response to the proposal for a Green New Deal (GND) put forth jointly by Rep. **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** and Senator

Edward Markey, a statement of support was issued by 646 organizations nationally. The organizations represented a rainbow of groups, including local and national environmental groups, church groups, homeowners groups, civil rights groups, medical and health professional organizations, senior groups, and political organizations, among others. In **New York State alone**, **74** different groups signed the letter of support. Some of these, for example are:

The Riverside Church; Bronx Climate Justice North; Brooklyn Bridge CSA; Catskill Mountainkeepers; Climate Justice Committee of CNY Solidarity Coalition; Coalition Against the Rockaway Pipeline; Community Free Democrats; Concerned Health Professionals of New York; Environmental Justice Task Force of the WNY Peace Center; Greater New York Labor Religion Coalition; Green Party of Nassau County; Green Sanctuary Committee, Community Church of NY; Harlem Climate Caucus; Hudson Valley Energy; Iroquois Studies Association; Long Island Progressive Coalition; Metro NY Catholic Climate Movement; Nassau Hiking & Outdoor Club; New Paltz Climate Action Coalition; New York Climate Action Group; New York Progressive Action Network; New York's Second District Democrats; NW Bronx Indivisible; NY Buddhist Climate Action Network; NY4WHALES; NYC DSA Ecosocialist; NYC Friends of Clearwater; NYC Grassroots Alliance; NYC H2O; NYPIRG; PAUSE - People of Albany United for Safe Energy; Peace Action New York State; Peoples Climate Movement – NY; Physicians for Social Responsibility New York; Progressive Action of Lower Manhattan; Renewable Energy Long Island (reLI); New York; Slow Food North Shore; Stop NY Fracked Gas Pipeline; Sullivan Area Citizens for Responsible Energy Development (SACRED); Syracuse Cultural Workers; Syracuse Peace Council;; The Reconstructionist Synagogue of the North Shore; West 80s Neighborhood Association; Williamsburg Climate Action Network; 350 Brooklyn;350NYC.

What a wonderful, broad-based array of groups all across the state. But, PSC members, do you notice any groups missing? Not one of these groups is a labor union or labor local. One is a labor related group: the Greater New York Labor Religion Coalition. The national

organization US Labor Against the War, active in NY, signed. Nationally, of the 646 organizations supporters, only one is a local union (CWA Local 1081). No national unions signed on. Several labor-based coalitions did.

Were U.S. unions asked to join this coalition or were they not asked? We don't know. But with the impacts of climate change ever more apparent, we as labor unions need to put our weight into this struggle. Retirees who are concerned about climate change can join our chapter's Environmental Justice Committee. If interested, please contact committee co-chairperson Eileen Moran at eileenmoran7@gmail.com ■



-Michael Frank, retiree LaGuardia

The New York Health Act, a single-payer health coverage plan for New York State, would cover every resident of the state regardless of immigration status, and eliminate the role of insurance companies. One would expect opposition to the NYHA not only from insurance companies, but from the business community in general as any extension of rights reduces our dependency on the market and runs directly counter to the neoliberal agenda.

But one would not expect opposition from labor! Historically, labor has pushed for universal health care as part of a social democratic vision of society and settled for coverage limited to union members only when it was not able to win this. Yet the Municipal Labor Committee, which includes

representatives from NYC unions, recently issued a statement opposing the bill, despite the willingness of the bill's sponsors, Assemblyman Gottfried and Senator Rivera, to modify the proposed legislation to address objections that the MLC had raised.

Given this, one can only draw the conclusion that behind the ostensible objections lays a deeper concern. A state-wide Medicare For All type program would take health care out of the hands of unions and eliminate a benefit that workers now derive from union membership. The health care benefit of union membership has become even more salient as the wage increases negotiated by union leaders barely keep up with inflation. Officials fear that removing this benefit from their purview and generalizing health care as a right for the population as whole would erode the legitimacy of unions as organizations and of the existing leaderships. In the words of one official, "It would be worse than Janus!"

But sacrificing class interests for organizational and leadership interests is a suicidal course. Labor will only survive if it wins the support of broad layers of the population by becoming champions of their interests. The New York Health Act needs labor as a strong advocate to counter the forces that are arrayed against it. ■

SPECIAL FEATURE
A LIFE IN A DAY OF AN ADJUNCT
-Carly Smith, adjunct at Baruch
VP for PSC Part-timers

When my alarm goes off every morning, I think about the day ahead sharply aware that I'm one of the lucky ones. For the past ten years, I've managed to secure a steady gig teaching three sections of a course on a single CUNY campus. Because I teach a

required class and don't have to worry about enrollment problems resulting in a last-minute cancellation, I now enjoy a three-year appointment. And because I happened to fall in love with and marry an academic advisor at a private college, I've been able to afford to keep teaching. I even have access to a cubicle and a computer in my department.

Adjunct Alarm Clock

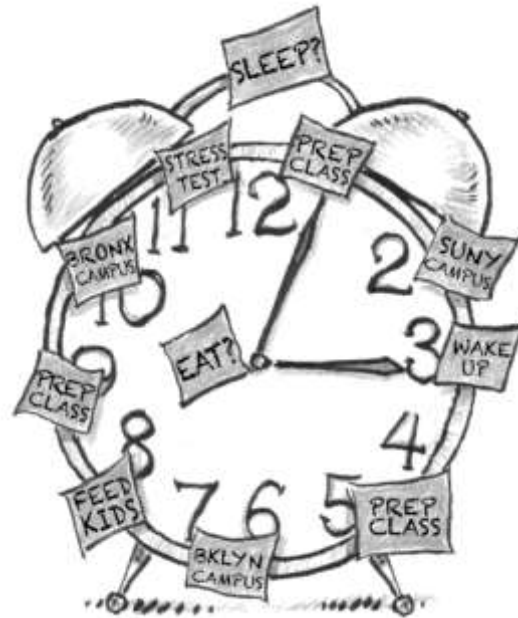


image by Josh Brown

But my current, fortunate situation is far from the norm. When I started out, single and trying to scrape by on my adjunct salary, my day looked much different. I was living near Columbia University. I'd wake up at 5 AM and go to the Upper East Side to walk dogs before commuting to Brooklyn College to teach two courses in a classroom filled with roaches and broken furniture, then back to the Upper East Side to teach another course at Marymount Manhattan College, which paid even worse. At Brooklyn College, I had no access to any department office space and was denied permission to use the photocopier, so I arrived early each day and paid out-of-pocket to prepare for class at a nearby copy

shop. Somehow, for a period, I accepted these conditions as inevitable. Then one day I woke up. I was walking a pack of dogs on the Upper East Side when I turned a corner and ran into two of my students from Brooklyn College, who were on their way to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for a class assignment. They looked a little confused and complimented me on “my” dogs, maybe trying to ease the awkwardness. Or maybe they thought I made enough to afford Park Avenue rent in an apartment large enough to accommodate several Labradors. I didn’t have any shame in dog-walking. It was an honest living and paid better than teaching. I found it difficult to look my students in the eyes in that moment because reality sank in: I wasn’t worth anything to CUNY. And CUNY didn’t think it was worth it to invest in these students.

The stories of day-to-day adjunct hardships are sobering, gut-wrenching, infuriating, and all too familiar at this point:

There’s a PhD who, in order to support a child in a modest studio in Crown Heights, needs to teach six classes at CUNY, SUNY, and Rutgers, driving between Staten Island, Westchester, and Newark.

An adjunct colleague facing eviction who, on last year’s 7K lobby day in Albany, flatly told a state legislator, “If you don’t fund CUNY, I’ll have to get the money back from the State in the form of Welfare. I need to go on food stamps.”

And we’ve all been reeling at the story of our union sister Thea Hunter, an adjunct at City College who was in effect murdered by poverty and a lack of job security and adequate healthcare.

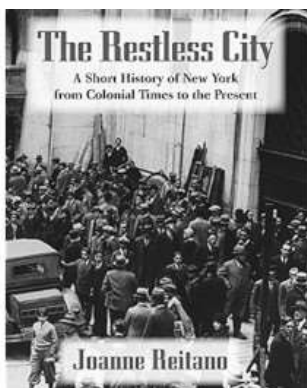
Many well-meaning full-timers voice sympathy about the “plight of the adjuncts,” often referencing their own stint as an

adjunct decades ago. As genuine as these statements of solidarity and impulses to empathize may be, the bottom line is, we need money, not pity. We must acknowledge the fact that the stories we hear about adjunct poverty don’t reflect a mere passing phase in one’s life or career; for many adjuncts, *this is it*. We’re in a terrible and cruel new era in which the majority of college faculty at CUNY and beyond are contingent. The neoliberal university has intentionally created an academic underclass to subsidize state funding and the labor of our full-time brothers and sisters, whose ranks continue to diminish. Adjuncts exist to be worked – sometimes literally to death – until we are no longer useful.

But this system is fundamentally unstable and unsustainable. Contingent faculty and graduate students are unionizing across the nation. We adjuncts at CUNY are uniquely empowered in this moment because we already have a union to represent us. Now more than ever, our union must take on the crisis of underfunding by harnessing the growing power of our rank and file part-timer labor force. We must build our part-timer membership and organize to win 7K and real job security. Only then will every one of us be able to sleep soundly at night knowing that one CUNY worker’s basic material security is not coming at the expense of a fellow worker’s life.

Carly Smith is an adjunct lecturer of Communication Studies at Baruch College and PSC’s Vice President for Part-Time Personnel. ■

BOOKS OF NOTE



Those of us who remain curious about the history of New York State and New York City might be of interested in:

New York State, Peoples, Places and Priorities: A Concise History with Sources (NY: Routledge, 2016) and *The Restless City, A Short History of New York City from Colonial Times to the Present, Third Edition with Sources* (NY: Routledge, 2018) by Joanne Reitano, professor emerita, history, LaGuardia Community College.

If you would like to review one of these books in a future issue, please write to us at retirees@pscmail.org with “book” in the subject line. ■

BROOKLYN LIFELONG LEARNING



Linda Silverman, a volunteer from Brooklyn Lifelong Learning asks: What do CUNY retirees do after working full-time? She suggests a range of activities that we can enjoy at Brooklyn College with low-cost, non-credit intellectually stimulating courses. BLL members pay a yearly administrative fee of \$94 to participate in unlimited classes, lectures, films, and workshops. They go on trips and museum visits, and have use of the library and access to campus activities, including concerts. Email bll.brooklyn.cuny.edu or call 718-951-5647 for information on joining and/or teaching.

And those who might like to teach a course or arrange an event can volunteer at BLL. As Liilia Melani, retiree, Brooklyn College English Department says: “...the classes are exciting and energizing for both students and instructor.”

TURNING THE PAGE COLLECTIVE

As you have noticed our chock-full newsletter has been expanding. We are interested in hearing from you—either in contributing articles and/or suggestions for reporting. Find us at: retirees@pscmail.org

Editorial Collective members:

Joan Greenbaum, editor; Bill Friedheim, layout; Mike Frank, Dave Kotelchuck; article selection. And now including original illustration from Josh Brown, newly retired from the Graduate Center, American Social History Project. ■

**SPRING LUNCHEON, MONDAY, JUNE 10 @ 12:30 PM
CUNY GRADUATE CENTER / ROOM 9204-7
365 FIFTH AVE. @ 34th ST.**

Coffee Hour @ 10:30 AM/Room C197

Speaker: Michael Menser on the Green New Deal

MENU: Choose one entrée per person

- ◆ **Grilled Sirloin Steak, Crispy Mushrooms, Roasted Shallots**
- ◆ **Roasted Salmon, Braised Fennel, Orange, Dill**
- ◆ **Sautéed Chicken Breast, Ponzu, Winter Radish**
- ◆ **Grilled Tofu, Crispy Mushrooms, Roasted Shallots**

All choices come with:

Rolls & Artisan Breads

Quinoa, Green Beans, Toasted Pistachios, Parsley

Grilled Green and White Asparagus, Lemon Zest, Olive Oil

Savoy Spinach Salad, Grape Tomatoes, Cucumber Shredded Carrot,
Balsamic Vinaigrette

Assorted Miniature Tarts, Assorted Beverages (*Soda & Water*),
Coffee (*Regular & Decaf*), Tea, Condiments

\$26 per person. To make a reservation, please complete and mail a check payable to **Professional Staff Congress**. Mail to PSC-CUNY, 61 Broadway, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10006. ATT: Retiree Luncheon.

Name(s) _____ Number of places: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/ZIP _____

Entrée choice (s): [] Beef [] Chicken [] Salmon [] Vegetarian

If you eat kosher food, email us at retirees@pscmail.org to make arrangements.