

OCTOBER 2018



Joan Greenbaum, Editor
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psc-cuny.org/retirees

MONDAY, OCT. 1, 1 – 3 PM

REIMAGINING LABOR AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

Post-Janus, our chapter meeting will explore labor's relationship to electoral politics in the age of Trump. What is labor's historical and contemporary relationship to the Democratic Party? What are the realities on the ground in the 2018 election season? What were historical alternatives and what are future possibilities?

Speakers:

Judy Sheridan Gonzalez is president of the New York State Nurses Association and a registered nurse at the Montefiore Hospital Center. **Steve London**, Brooklyn College and the Murphy Institute, is a past first vice president of the PSC, for many years heading the union's legislative operation. **Michael Kinnucan**, Democratic Socialists of America, has worked as a member of both the NYC and national DSAs Electoral Working Groups, and

served as deputy campaign manager for Julia Salazar's successful state senate primary campaign in North Brooklyn.

To frame the presentations, **Penny Lewis**, Murphy Institute and PSC vice president for senior colleges, will provide us with a brief historical overview of labor's relationship to electoral politics.



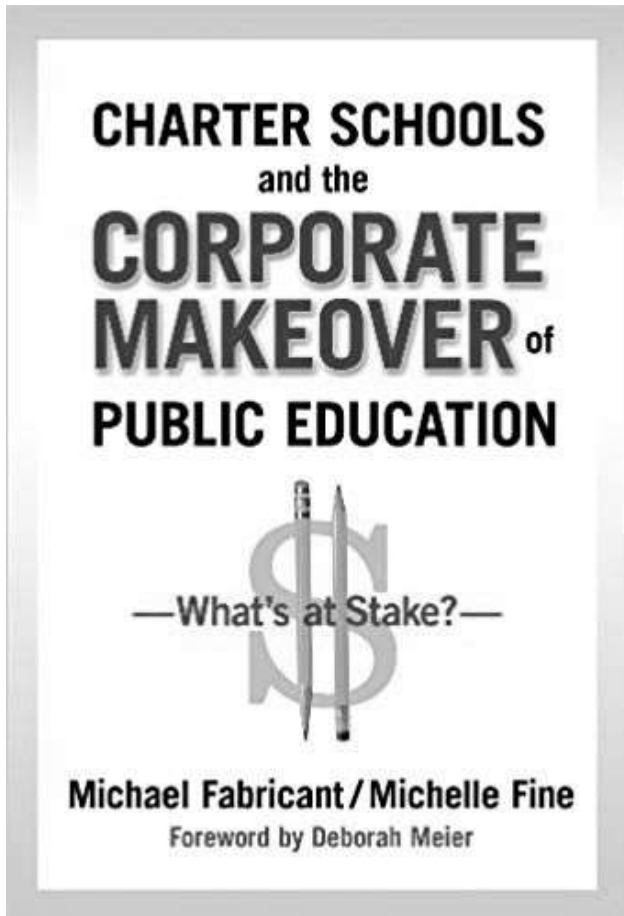
Discussion will follow. As usual, light refreshments will be provided. **PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th Floor, 1 - 3 PM**

MONDAY, NOV. 5, 1 – 3 PM

NEO-LIBERALISM AND K-16 EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF TRUMP.

Neo-liberalism is a much bandied about term. We've asked our speakers to define it with precision and put K-16 education in the context of neo-liberalism, past, present and prospective. Whither is neo-liberalism headed in the age of Trump? How do we build resistance and alternatives?

Mike Fabricant and **Michelle Fine**, who have collaborated on two relevant books, will explore the subject. Mike is a



professor at the Hunter College School of Social Work and past first vice president of the PSC. Michelle is a member of the doctoral faculty and distinguished professor at the CUNY Graduate Center. □

THE MONTH THAT WAS THE STATE OF THE UNIONS

-- Irwin Yellowitz, retiree City College

The room was full at the first PSC Retirees Chapter meeting for the 2018-2019 year. Our three speakers covered distinct aspects of the state of the union movement at the present time, and of course, members asked many questions and contributed to a very lively afternoon.

PSC First Vice President **Andrea Vasquez** spoke about conditions in the PSC; **Stephanie Luce**, a professor at the CUNY

Graduate Center and the Murphy Institute, discussed larger issues within the labor movement in the United States; and **Sara Hughes**, a former organizer for the PSC, and now an organizer for the National Education Association, explored the teachers' strikes that have taken place this year, mostly in red states.

Andrea Vasquez focused on the recent Janus decision by which the United States Supreme Court ended the agency fee for public employees. Thus unions must continue to serve all persons in a bargaining unit, but no longer can collect fees from nonmembers to cover the cost of representing them.

She stressed that the PSC had anticipated this decision, and for several years it has been conducting an intensive campaign to have members recommit to the union. It also has reached out forcefully to new hires. The result of this campaign: so far, so good. At the moment, 95% of the full-time faculty and staff are members of the PSC, as are 62% of adjunct faculty. About two thirds of full-time personnel have signed recommitment cards. Only eight persons have ended their membership since the Janus ruling. The PSC has participated in orientation sessions for new hires at CUNY campuses, and almost everyone who attended signed union cards.

Andrea made clear that the PSC is not complacent; it will continue to urge everyone in the bargaining unit to join the union. Janus has made organizing a necessity. The PSC recognizes this reality, and it will continue the recommitment and new member campaign indefinitely.

Stephanie Luce acknowledged that organized labor in the United States has faced tough times for some years. The attack comes from emboldened employers, and from governments in red states, plus the Trump Administration at the federal level. Yet there are some positive signs.

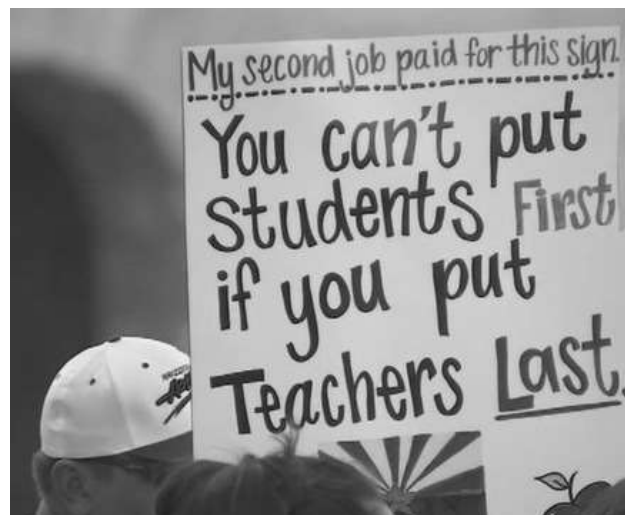
In the last few years, the fall in union membership has levelled off. Missouri voters, in a referendum, overturned a right-to-work law that had been passed by the legislature. The public's approval of unions stands at 62%, a significant increase from the 50% approval rate in 2008. Those approving of unions believe they should not only bargain wages and benefits, but protect the dignity of workers on the job. Almost 50% of nonunion workers would join a union if given the opportunity. This has risen from 30%. These are significant positive factors, but it is too early to tell if this is a blip or a trend.

Luce emphasized that many workers, including union members, voted for Donald Trump in 2016. They liked his willingness to increase tariffs and attack NAFTA and the Pacific Trade Partnership as means to save jobs. The Democrats must win back these voters by recognizing that some changes in trade policy are necessary, but also by proposing other programs to save and enhance jobs, such as government investment and an increase in the minimum wage. The labor movement must stress solidarity, and reach out to the whole working class if it is to build a better future.

Sara Hughes spoke about the West Virginia and Oklahoma teachers' strikes. Since she worked for the National Education Association (NEA) during the Oklahoma strike, she emphasized that event. However, there were parallels between the two: rank-and-file teachers played key roles in both strikes, and both sets of demands stressed improvement in the funding of public education. This latter issue brought widespread support from parents and the larger community, and added immeasurably to the pressure on state legislators.

She then discussed the Oklahoma strike in some detail. Rank-and-file teachers pressured the NEA leaders to move up a projected statewide strike. The threat of a

strike led the legislature to increase teachers' salaries, but the strike took place anyway because the legislators did not increase funding for education, and the taxes to pay for the improved salaries were regressive. Sara stressed that there is plenty of money in energy rich Oklahoma, but politicians refuse to tax the oil and gas companies. Despite widespread support for the strike from the community, as well as from within the ranks of the teachers, the NEA leaders ultimately called off the strike because they feared it was becoming less effective over time. There were real gains in salaries for teachers, but education remains underfunded, and the tax structure remains regressive. The NEA will now campaign to elect more supportive legislators.



Sara stressed that the impact of the teachers' strikes, which also included events in Kentucky, Colorado and Arizona, has been considerable. Teacher strikes continue, most recently in Washington State, with a projected strike looming in Los Angeles. The strikes also created a greater militancy within the NEA nationwide. They heightened criticism of neoliberalism. Finally, the strikes enhanced support among all teachers for unions as a positive force (83% in a recent poll) as well as among nonunion teachers (75% in a recent poll). Thus the impact of the teachers' strikes of 2018 continues to play out. □

(actually international) battle and that a victory for one local helps every other local.

SPEAKING OF JOINING UNIONS

Did you remember to send in your annual retiree dues? Is the form with the envelope still somewhere in your house? Hopefully you will find it soon and send in your still modest annual dues of \$71 (which hasn't been raised in two decades). Since we are no longer on payroll, the dues cannot be deducted from your nonexistent paycheck. Please **call the PSC at 212-354-1252 if you misplaced your dues envelope** and ask for a Retiree Dues Form. If you know people who have recently retired please ask them to call, as we do not get up-to-date lists of recent retirees.

ON BEING A DELEGATE TO THE AFT CONVENTION

--Glenn Kissack, retiree
Hunter College schools

I was one of two PSC retirees who attended the biannual AFT convention this summer, with some 2,400 delegates from around the country. These are some of the things that our small delegation, led by President Bowen, accomplished:

• **The convention voted unanimously that the AFT “supports PSC’s campaign for \$7K** and all other AFT locals’ campaigns for fair adjunct pay, and that the AFT leadership will call on AFT members to support the PSC in actions, demonstrations and advocacy for \$7K, because a victory on \$7K at CUNY would be a victory for every teacher, professor, education worker and student in the country.”

The PSC brought the resolution to the convention and while there were some negotiations over language, the final result is strong support for the PSC’s \$7K campaign and a clear recognition that the fight for adjunct pay equity is a national

\$7K

for
ADJUNCTS

• The PSC (along with the Chicago Teachers Union and United Teachers Los Angeles) brought a resolution entitled “On AFT Demands for Political Endorsements” that called on the AFT to support the following demands nationally:

1. Single-payer healthcare/Medicare for All;
2. Free college for all;
3. Universal full-day and cost-free child care;
4. Double the per-pupil expenditures for low-income K-12 districts; and
5. Tax the rich to fully fund the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and Title I.

In my view (and here I speak for myself and not necessarily the PSC delegation), the main leaders of the AFT would not support this resolution as written because they didn't want the AFT to have to mainly support progressive candidates who would embrace the above five demands. The leadership would like to continue supporting centrist Democrats, as they did with their endorsement of Hillary Clinton for president over Bernie Sanders. Clinton's program

contained none of these demands.

The resolution was finally adopted when the word “demands” was changed to “aspirations” and the resolves were changed to “call on endorsed candidates to support these priorities.” In short, candidates who don’t embrace all, or even any, of the progressive reform demands can still be endorsed by the AFT or its locals.

• **The PSC brought two other resolutions, both of which were adopted by convention committees and will go to the AFT Executive Board for adoption.**

The first, passed by our PSC Delegate Assembly and entitled “**Ensuring That Students Make An Informed Decisions Regarding Military Service and ROTC,**” mandates that the AFT call on “school districts, colleges and universities to offer their students diverse views about military service and the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, balancing arguments for military service and ROTC training with the arguments of critics of military service, including its health risks.”

The resolution received warm support from teacher delegates from other cities, including the mother of a female soldier who said she wished her daughter had heard more about the dangers of military service before she enlisted. One of the speakers in favor of the resolution was PSC delegate Ben Chitty, who served two tours of duty in Vietnam while in the Navy. Our committee had about 200 delegates and our resolution passed by a ratio of 2 to 1.

A second PSC resolution, “Against America’s Forever Wars,” passed unanimously in committee. It resolves not only that the AFT condemns the seemingly endless succession of U.S. military invasions and occupations, but that the “AFT will support anti-war groups in exposing and by opposing the policy behind these endless wars, through curricula, teach-ins, articles, conferences, protests,

rallies, sit-ins and other forms of action.”

Finally, I attended an evening meeting of AROS, the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, which includes the AFT, NEA and SEIU as “partners,” but seems to be led by the more progressive locals, particularly CTU, UTLA, and PSC, and focuses on allying with parent and community groups in a campaign for racial and economic justice. AROS demands billions more for schools in black and brown communities, an end to high-stakes testing, an end to charter school expansion and other policies that discriminate against students of color. This is an exciting development. □

OUR CLIMATE—OURSELVES

PEOPLE’S CLIMATE MOVEMENT—RISE FOR CLIMATE, JOBS AND JUSTICE

--Eileen Moran, retiree Queens College
Co-chair of PSC Environmental Justice
Working Group



On September 8 after months of organizing and movement building, the People’s Climate Movement brought tens of thousands of people across the country into the streets, town halls, and community forums in advance of the Global Summit on Climate Action convened September 12-14 in San Francisco. Joined by partners around the world, PCM demanded bold

action on climate, jobs, and justice. PCM works to strengthen the foundation of the climate movement; engage existing and new climate activists; educate stakeholders, and fortify the issues of climate, jobs, and justice in the public discourse.

On Thursday, September 6, PCM-NY held a kickoff event to press Mayor de Blasio and Governor Cuomo to walk the walk, not just talk, about climate action. Three thousand people came together in Battery Park with young people and the most vulnerable communities leading a march up Greenwich Street and then back down Broadway to Zuccotti Park. A broad coalition of environmental, faith, and community groups, as well as unions enthusiastically chanted their demands. The PSC was very well represented within the labor contingent along with District Council 37, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and NYS Nurses Association.

On Saturday, September 8, over 50 labor groups and the Labor Councils of San Francisco, Alameda, and Contra Costa counties joined over 30,000 Rise Activists in San Francisco. Nevertheless, organized labor's engagement is far below what it could or should be given the consequences of climate change already being experienced and the Trump administration's failure to protect the environment by diluting or eliminating regulations for clean air and water and abandonment of the Paris Climate Agreement. **TO CHANGE EVERYTHING, WE NEED EVERYONE.** (<https://peoplesclimate.org/platform>) □

PSC ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MEETING Monday, October 15, 6 PM PSC Office, 61 Broadway, 15th floor. All are welcome.

Plastics, Ever With Us

--Selected from *National Geographic*, special issue on plastics, 6/20/18

Did you know: That plastic bags, straws, bottles, etc. tossed into gutters eventually wind up in the sea?



That 85 percent of all the trash collected from beaches, waterways and oceans is plastic debris?

That plastic has been found in 60% of all seabirds and in 100% of sea turtles species that mistake plastic for food?

That 700 species of marine life have eaten or become entangled in plastic?

That humans eat half of these species, but it is not yet known if nanoplastics pass from the tissues of fish to humans?

Celebrating a birthday or an anniversary this year? The balloons that escape into the firmament may well end up in what are fast

becoming “the great ocean garbage patches.” From 8 to 9 million tons of plastic enter the oceans every year.

If the trend continues, within a short period of time, there could be one pound of plastic in the oceans for every three pounds of fish? In the same way that fossil fuels transformed our lives, so too have plastics. This by-product of petroleum has grown in tandem with the fossil fuel industry. Just as we realized, perhaps too late, the damage to the planet from fossil fuel emissions, so too, we may have discovered too late the dark side of plastic. It is not disposable and is ever with us. Scientists estimate that it takes at least 450 years for plastic to biodegrade. Waste management systems have not been able to keep abreast of production. Starbucks will eliminate straws from their shops by 2020. And the European Commission recently announced a measure to clean Europe’s waterways of disposable plastic by banning, where possible, single-use plastic products such as straws, cotton swabs and disposable cutlery. We won’t hold our collective breath until such a measure is introduced here in the U.S.; nevertheless, here’s what you can do at a minimum:

Become plastic conscious. Use as little as possible. Recycle, recycle, recycle.

Carry a reusable water bottle and reusable bags when shopping.

Don’t use straws or other plastic disposable items at home and make your favorite fast-food place plastic conscious. □

How I Came to Support the New York Health Act

--Leonard Rodberg, retiree Queens College

[Editor’s note: Turning the Page has been covering the specifics of the political struggle for the New York Health Act, and

many members have lobbied for it. We thought it was time to ask one of the long time researchers and activists on the single payer front to write about it from personal experience.]

I’ve been working for universal, single-payer health care for more than two decades. Let me tell you why: In the 1960s, I was working (as a nuclear physicist) on arms control and disarmament in the Kennedy and Johnson administration. I learned there how dependent our economy was on military spending. We needed a different way of organizing our economy.



In 1974, I learned that Rep. Ron Dellums, the Congressman from Berkeley-Oakland, was willing to introduce legislation to create a national health service if someone would help him write it. I thought “That’s what we need in one sector, an economy oriented toward meeting people’s needs.” So, together with people who knew a lot more about health care than I did, I wrote The U.S. Health Service Act, which would create a community-based national health service. At that time, Ted Kennedy’s Health Security Act, which would create National Health Insurance, was actively being debated. We supporters of the Health Service Act made them look moderate!

Today, we would call National Health Insurance “Medicare for All.” I went on to become a founder of Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP), the principal advocate for the past three decades for a single-payer, Medicare for All

program (many of us non-physicians are members as well).

One other experience I had buttressed my belief that we need single payer publicly-funded health care: My wife was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 1994. Blue Cross refused to pay for the treatment recommended by her doctor—it was too “experimental.” Only after the City Comptroller intervened with the president of Blue Cross (my brother-in-law the Comptroller’s deputy) did they provide the necessary coverage. Health care decisions should not be made that way.

I am now research director of our NYMetro Chapter of PNHP and have, most recently, been working **with Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, lead sponsor of the New York Health Act (NYHA)**, in revising, analyzing, and advocating for this universal single-payer solution for New York State.

The case for NYHA is straightforward: Our current employment-based system is too costly, too complex, too filled with holes, to meet the health care needs of the people of this nation. Every other advanced country has solved the problem: Using government to regulate and, in many cases, fund the provision of health care, they provide care for everyone at one-half what we spend. The success of our Medicare program and our rapidly-expanding Medicaid program—both cover all “medically necessary” procedures and don’t second-guess doctors’ recommendations—shows that we know how to do it, too. It’s now time to expand that principle to the whole population.

That’s what NYHA does for New Yorkers, and it can do it successfully. A study by Prof. Gerald Friedman three years ago showed it was financially feasible for New York State to undertake such a program. And a recent study by the RAND Corporation, funded by the NYS Health Foundation, has likewise **found that we**

can cover everyone, eliminate deductibles and copays, and spend no more than we are spending now.

And our union would benefit too. No longer would continuously rising health costs force us to give up pay increases to keep our health benefits. The State Assembly has overwhelmingly passed NYHA for the past four years. All Democratic State Senators but one (Simcha Felder) are cosponsors of the legislation. We should continue building support as powerful interests emerge to oppose it in the coming months. □

CUNY DIGITAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

-Bill Friedheim, retiree BMCC

Three years ago, at our October 2, 2015 chapter meeting, Stephen Brier, professor in the Ph.D. Program in Urban Education at the CUNY Graduate Center, and Andrea Ades Vásquez, at the time, associate director of the American Social History Project at the CUNY Graduate Center, told us about an exciting new project to build an online archive of the history of the City University and its championing of public higher education.

Since then, Vásquez has become the PSC’s new first vice president, but not before she helped to launch the CUNY Digital History Archive.



The CUNY Digital History Archive (CDHA) is an open, digital public archive and portal that gives the CUNY community and the

broader public online access to a range of materials related to the history of the City University of New York (CUNY). Archives and CUNY libraries contribute significant historical collections and CDHA also accepts materials from individuals whose lives, in diverse ways, have shaped, and been shaped, by CUNY. Faculty, staff, students, archivists, librarians, retirees, and alumni have contributed to the University's democratic mission, and CDHA reflects those efforts. Conducted under the auspices of the American Social History Project/Center for Media and Learning at the CUNY Graduate Center, in October 2017 CDHA received the Archival Achievement Award from the Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York, Inc.

Several retirees, most recently Dave Kotelchuck (on the creation of the Center for Occupational and Environmental Health at Hunter College), have contributed material and/or oral histories. At the CDHA, you can also hear the voices and find archival material provided by retirees Joan Greenbaum and John Hyland from LAGCC, Bill Friedheim and Jim Perlstein, from BMCC and Irwin Yellowitz from CCNY. You'll find still more familiar faces at featured exhibits about feminist trailblazers at Brooklyn College, the struggle for open admissions, the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, and the history of the PSC.

This is an archive created from the bottom up. In that light, PSC retirees are a rich repository of CUNY history. Members should consider contributing materials. You can find out how to do so and check out the site at <http://cdha.cuny.edu/>. □

ON DIPPING INTO THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

--Joan Greenbaum, retiree LaGCC

Where to start? The CUNY Digital History Archive makes our history rich and

personally powerful. It can also be overpowering, as you may find many people and programs you remember and want to immerse yourself in. For me, the starting problem was solved with a visit to the **Center for Occupational and Environmental Health** at Hunter College, co-founded by Dave Kotelchuck in 1990.

<http://cdha.cuny.edu/collections/show/262>

The Center became a leader in training Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) workers throughout the metropolitan area and beyond. Working closely with community and union groups about their needs, the Center trained workers in lead poisoning, asthma triggers, pest control and a host of other environmental hazards that affect working conditions.



For the first decade of this century, I was privileged to work with Dave as co-chair of the **PSC Environmental Health and Safety Watchdogs**. Dave was an award winning scientist in the EHS field, so one of my first stops in the archive was to a recorded oral history of the Center that featured Dave along with Amy Manovitz, Dan Kass and Andrew Burgie.

<http://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/7642>

Listening to them was a stark reminder that many things we almost take for granted

were contested terrain for several decades. Particularly today as the Federal government has cut Occupational Health and Safety to the bone (largely by not funding workplace inspections and allowing industry owners to have free reign), it is especially useful to hear and visualize what this band of pioneers did at CUNY with waves far beyond our university. Take a listen, as they say. □

Editor's Note: Please write and tell us what you like (or don't) and perhaps what you would like to write about retirees@pscmail.org.

ELECTION NOTICE: There is a vacancy for **Alternate Delegate** to the PSC Delegate Assembly.

Nominations for the position will take place at our October 1st chapter meeting. The rules established by the PSC Elections committee stipulate that:

If uncontested, the election shall take place at the same chapter meeting. **If contested**, the election shall be conducted with secret ballots mailed to home addresses, returned to and counted by PSC central office staff, under the supervision of the Elections Committee.

The term for this position ends in May 2019.