



**April 2016
Academic Year**

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RETIREES NEWSLETTER

Professional Staff Congress

Joan Greenbaum, editor

psc-cuny.org/retirees

CHAPTER MEETING, MONDAY APRIL 4, 1-3 PM. VOTING

RIGHTS: Speaker: Steve Carbo, an attorney with a long history of work with grassroots voting rights groups; formerly with the Center for Popular Democracy; past Director of the Democracy Program at Demos. In this eventful and too often ugly election season, Carbo will assess the general landscape of voting rights -- the movement to restrict them and the fight back to restore and expand them. Look forward to a rich and meaningful discussion.

As always, the Chapter meets at 61 Broadway, 16th floor, in the PSC Union Hall, from 1-3 PM. Light refreshments will be provided.

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

CHAPTER ELECTION: Our Retirees Chapter has an election this year for chapter officers: Chapter Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Officers at Large (4), Delegates to the DA (6), Alternates to the DA (5), and a representative to the Welfare Fund

Advisory Board. The term of office is three years. Ballots will be mailed to your home on April 1. If you do not receive a ballot by April 8, call the PSC at 212-354-1252. Please vote and mail in your ballot using the postage-paid envelope. Completed ballots must be received by April 28, with votes counted on April 29.



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, *Forbidden Workers: Illegal Chinese Immigrants and American Labor*.

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

ANNUAL JUNE CHAPTER LUNCHEON, MONDAY, JUNE 13.

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 slides in his talk at **John Jay, 12:30 PM, Monday, June 13**. To make your reservation, download a form (and then submit with your check) at: tinyurl.com/RTspringLuncheon

There will be a coffee hour and review of the chapter's year prior to the luncheon at 10:30 AM.



Part of a Shahn mural as it was restored at the Bronx Post Office

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES:

MONDAY, APRIL 4, 3-5 PM. A new **BOOK GROUP** welcomes interested members to its roundtable discussion of Ginger Adam's *Firefight-The Century-Long Battle to Integrate NY's Bravest*. The group will also talk about future readings. Union Hall, 16th floor.

TUESDAY APRIL 12, 2-4 PM. The **WRITERS' GROUP** meets to share their ongoing work. If interested in joining this ongoing group, please contact Connie Gemson: chgemson@aol.com. PSC, 15th floor.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 6-8 PM. The **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE WORKING GROUP** meets to continue its discussion of CUNY and environmental justice issues in New

York City. Newcomers welcome.
PSC, 15th floor.

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 1 PM. NY
METS GAME.**



At this (hopefully sunny) day game, the PSC Retirees take on Citi Field and its wildly interesting food courts and outstanding baseball, as the National League Champions take on the Atlanta Braves. We plan to meet at the main gate and buy a block of under \$20 tickets. Let us know if you are joining us, and stay tuned for more information: retirees@pscmail.org. Please write METS in the subject line of the email.

HELP THE CHAPTER PLAN PROGRAMS FOR THE 2016-17 ACADEMIC CALENDAR 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 16, 12 Noon at the PSC.**

Contact us at retirees@pscmail.org. To join the program committee and/or send program suggestions and write PROGRAM in the subject line.

THE MONTH THAT WAS:

The acclaimed film "**She's Beautiful When She's Angry**" was screened at the March 7 Retirees Chapter meeting to a packed and energized audience. Mary Dore, the filmmaker, fresh from an international tour, led the discussion. The film is currently available through the website shesbeautifulwhenshesangry.com and will be available on Netflix in a few months. Here's a wrap up of this amazing piece of living history:

Joel Berger writes:

The words, "No victories are permanent" resonated with chapter members as they viewed the documentary film *She's Beautiful*

When She's Angry at the March meeting. Many in the audience lived the history depicted in the film created by Mary Dore. Covering the years between 1966 and 1971, Dore presents 38 women—some very well known; others just "women in the trenches," telling their stories and highlighting their fight for equal rights. They fought job discrimination, they fought the war in Vietnam, they fought for civil rights; and in the process they found their voice as women. Working against the cultural norms of the times, they struggled to change the paradigm of the way men and women interact.

New views of women's sexuality led to personal liberation as described by several of the women in the film. The social revolution took place when abortion was illegal, men dominated the workplace, and many thought a woman's place was in the home. Changes were achieved, advances were made—more than 50 years ago. Yet, today, an assault on the right of women to have access to abortion services sweeps across many states—just one example proving that "No victories are permanent."

Renate Bridenthal writes: Mary Dore's wonderful documentary, "She's Beautiful When She's Angry," shown at our last Retirees Chapter meeting, evoked in me the memory of how much I owe some of the best years of my life to the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s. A New York Radical Feminist

consciousness-raising group shed light on behaviors, my own as well as those of others, that I had not understood before. The new awareness empowered me to engage with like-minded women in breaking down walls of discrimination in the places of my work: Brooklyn College and the American Historical Association.



1971 article featuring Renate Bridenthal from the Brooklyn College student paper.

At Brooklyn College, aflame with rage and hope, I stuffed a leaflet into female faculty mailboxes, calling for a meeting. About a hundred women appeared at that first gathering that we came to call the Brooklyn College Women's Organization. Out of the BCWO emerged task forces to create a Women's Studies Program, a Women's Center, and day care for faculty and students who needed it. All those efforts succeeded and persist thanks to the energy and dedication of dozens of women

to be “man” enough to survive. She’d be a kind of freak.

I sensed that between all these millstones I would continue to be ground. That was the apprehension that lay behind my typing the neuter “R” on the dissertation coversheet.

Do you recognize the state of mind I’ve exhumed from this incident? The memory is so antique I barely recognize it myself. Or, to be precise, what seems ancient is the *covert*ness of the feelings that had to find such an oblique representation. What a burden and draining of psychic energy it all was! And so, what a huge relief when, a few years later, the women’s movement came along to make social, public struggle out of what had been secret individual anguish.

Ann Davison writes:

Watching *She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry* (just in time for International Women’s Day) was exhilarating. It was a timely reminder of how disruptive the Women’s Liberation Movement was, and how profoundly our lives were affected by it.

Mary Dore tells this story with archival footage--evoking the young activists’ passion, idealism, energy and wonder at the newfound power of sisterhood--and contemporary interviews with many of the same women who reflect with humor, perspective and pride on who they were and what they did.

BOOKS BY RETIREE CHAPTER MEMBERS

Recently, two of our active retiree members launched new books. Here’s the scoop:



Dave Kotelchuck (left) being attacked by a white supremacist at 1962 civil rights demonstration in Nashville. SNCC’s John Lewis is in foreground (right).

David Kotelchuck, *Abe and Julia, Honor and Survival During Hoover’s Reign*, 2016, Blue Thread, an imprint of Jewish Currents.

Dave Kotelchuck reveals his parents, Abe and Julia, “as persons of great moral courage” through extensive research, using 2,200 pages of their FBI files, as well as interviews and news articles. Abe and Julia were pursued as Communist Party activists by Hoover’s FBI reaching deeply into their work and family lives. Kotelchuck documents the two decades of hounding with page-turning interest and solid research. Resource documents as supplements are available at: www.davidkotelchuck.net

Kotelchuck is professor emeritus of Occupational and Environmental Health at Hunter College School of Health Science.

David Laibman. *Passion and Patience: Society, History and Revolutionary Vision*, International Publishers. Paperback.

According to the publisher: The chapters in this book are built up mainly from the "Editorial Perspectives" essays written by Laibman for the Marxist journal *Science & Society*, over the past 20 years, with some material that first appeared elsewhere. They cover, among other issues, the foundations of historical materialist theory; labor; symbols, language and human nature; political economy; the theory of socialism and communism; culture, and ideology. The book can be used as a systematic introduction to Marxist theory, but readers can also sample the essays at random.

Try it, you might like it, and suggest it for reading groups or friends who are teaching.

Rabbi Michael Lerner, Editor of *Tikkun*, has this to say about Laibman's book: "Passion and Patience is Marxism at its most compelling, and those of us who don't fully buy the theory can nevertheless develop a sharper understanding of our world by reading this book and sharing it with others."

Laibman is professor emeritus of Economics at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center.



Those PSC retirees who have moved to Florida, or who spend part of the year there, can join New York State United Teachers Retiree Council 43, the unit for Florida. Membership in NYSUT RC 43 does not affect your membership in the PSC Retirees Chapter. It will provide another opportunity to meet retirees from New York, to join with NYSUT retirees in social events, and to add your voice to the efforts of NYSUT Retiree Council 43 to influence political developments in Florida. There are no additional dues for joining NYSUT RC 43, and it has subgroups throughout Florida. If you would like to learn more about NYSUT RC 43, please contact Maxine Knisley, Membership Chair for NYSUT Retiree Council 43, at 772-321-4974 (cell phone), or mknisley774@gmail.com.

IN MEMORIAM

Ezra Seltzer died on February 28, 2016. As a longtime colleague and friend, I would like to mark his passing by looking back over his career in the PSC.

Ezra was involved with the leadership of faculty and staff in CUNY since the 1960s. He was part of the Legislative Conference, one of the predecessor organizations of the PSC. After the merger of the Legislative Conference and the United Federation of College Teachers in 1972 to create the PSC, Ezra worked closely with Harold Wilson, the leader of the College Laboratory Technician Chapter. In the 1980s, when Harold Wilson retired, Ezra was elected chair of the CLT Chapter, and he led the Chapter for over a decade. On retiring, Ezra became active in the leadership of the Retirees Chapter. So we have an unbroken period of service and leadership covering over 50 years.

Ezra was a major spokesman for improving the status and promotional opportunities of CLTs. He consistently asserted their professionalism. Ezra believed that the PSC was a successful union because it represented all faculty and academic staff in CUNY in equal measure. Thus he expected all members and leaders of PSC to support the rights and needs of

CLTs, and, reciprocally, CLTs were to be strong advocates of the agenda of other faculty and staff. Many unions have been weakened by an inability to reconcile the interests of their various subgroups. From the 1960s until today, Ezra argued for a union built on the unity of all its members, and his influence within the PSC was based not only on advocacy, but on action year after year in support of this principle.

The first lesson any leader should learn is that no one is indispensable. The CLT Chapter had strong leadership after Ezra left as chair, and those who succeeded him followed his insistence on a unified PSC that represented everyone within it in the best possible way. Thus Ezra has left a mark on the CLT Chapter and the PSC that endures beyond his own tenure. This surely is the mark of success.

By Irwin Yellowitz

Interested in writing for this Newsletter, joining a possible Newsletter collective and/or naming this so far nameless repository of our Retiree actions and memories? Contact retirees@pscmail.org and write NEWSLETTER in the subject line.