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Joan Greenbaum, Editor  
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[psc-cuny.org/retirees](http://psc-cuny.org/retirees)

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#### CHAPTER MEETING

MONDAY, APRIL 2, 1-3 PM

Immigration and the Sanctuary Movement,  
with

Ravi Ragbir, Executive Director of the New  
Sanctuary Coalition

Amy Gottlieb, Deputy Director, American  
Friends Service Committee, Northeast Region

Ravi Ragbir and his wife Amy Gottlieb, an immigration lawyer, have been prominently featured in the news in local and national media ever since January 11 when ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), in violation of a court order, sought to deport Ravi. He has since been freed from detention, but still faces the possibility of deportation.

Despite having an ICE target on his back, Ravi has been a tireless advocate, counselor, strategist and activist for immigrants facing detention and deportation.

As he fights his own deportation, there has been tremendous outpouring of support for Ravi and the New Sanctuary Coalition from the immigrant communities he serves, from faith-based groups, from labor and from elected officials—city councilpersons, state legislators, NY congressional representatives and Mayor Bill de Blasio.

**PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th floor.**  
Light refreshments as usual.



[*Turning the Page* has covered Ravi Ragbir and the New Sanctuary Coalition in three previous issues: May 2017, February 2018 and March 2018. Back issues are available on the PSC website at [psc-cuny.org/retirees-chapter-newsletters](http://psc-cuny.org/retirees-chapter-newsletters).] ■

#### THE MONTH THAT WAS

Leith Mullings on Racism, Resistance and  
Activist Scholarship in Dangerous Times

*Joan Greenbaum, retiree LaGuardia*

Our March 5<sup>th</sup> Retirees Chapter meeting saw another packed house turn out for newly retired Leith Mullings' presentation on "Racism, Resistance and Activist Scholarship in Dangerous Times." Leith's ongoing research project involves a network of scholars in seven countries who are analyzing and engaging in activist scholarship around issues of racism faced by people of African descent and indigenous people. Her work primarily

focuses on the Black Lives Matter movement in the U.S.

Leith Mullings is very much an activist scholar, as her talk illustrated. Like many retirees at the PSC, she remains committed to issues of social justice. She is a distinguished professor emerita of anthropology at the Graduate Center, has written numerous articles and books, and was a past president of the American Anthropological Association. Her current project started in Bolivia where activists and researchers formed an Observatory Against Racism to address the racist violence following the first election of Evo Morales. The network of anti-racist observatories expanded to seven countries—Bolivia, Brazil, Columbia, the Mapuche Indians of Chile, Guatemala, Mexico and the United States. In each country a team of researchers and activists worked together to analyze new forms of racism and social movements to address them.

Leith has been a participant researcher with Black Lives Matter (BLM) groups around the country. She has interviewed many of the younger activists about how they understand the movement and what they would like to learn from the research. The movement emerged in 2013 after an all-white jury refused to convict Trayvon Martin's killer, the white vigilante George Zimmerman. A hashtag with the words Black Lives Matter quickly gathered steam. In 2014 demonstrations spread around the world, when police officer Darren Wilson was not indicted for the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson. Many people think that BLM is primarily an organization that stages demonstrations. However, Leith's work shows a wide variety of strategies that this grassroots organization uses to combat racism, including direct action, electoral actions, educational activities, policy initiatives, and many other activities. For example, here in New York, they staged an action that involved swiping people into the

subway and educating them about what the rise in fare means to poor people. They explained the ways in which young people of color are drawn into the prison-industrial complex when they cannot pay the fine for jumping turnstiles. The action was built around the fact that while it is illegal to sell a 'swipe,' it is not illegal to just give one away! The Movement for Black Lives' wide-ranging program to improve the lives of Americans is presented in "A Vision for Black Lives" (<https://policy.m4bl.org/>).



In the process of her work, Leith found that BLM participants were eager to learn about past struggles and other movements. One young person told her, "I would like the research to provide us with learning moments." Leith argued that cover words like "diversity" and "multiculturalism" have shifted the focus away from directly addressing racism and racist actions. She criticized the notion of "identity politics" and the tendency to discuss "class" and "race" as binary and oppositional, rather than as intertwined concepts. As an example of the consequences of this approach she offered the conflation of the white working class with the working class.

As many countries lean toward the right and openly advocate racist policies, and as U.S. corporations move into other countries to build private prisons, the seven-nation activist research project is critical in helping to exchange information between and among activists and researchers. ■

## PSC WAS IN THE HOUSE

*Cecelia McCall, retiree Baruch*

The state house, that is. The State Legislature convenes in January for approximately six months each spring to introduce and debate legislation and to enact the state budget, submitted by the Governor early in January. Throughout January and February, the Senate and Assembly conduct a series of joint hearings at which they listen to requests for additional revenue from agencies of State government overseeing the environment, health, transportation, education and higher education. [See President Bowen's testimony on the PSC website.] If there is tax revenue above what was originally anticipated, each house of the Legislature then has latitude to appropriate funds beyond those in the Governor's Executive Budget proposal to augment, as they see fit, various agencies' budgets. Senate and Assembly leaders meet and deliberate throughout March to negotiate appropriations, so that the revised budget, with their imprint, can be signed into law by the Governor by April 1, when the State's fiscal year begins.

A frenzy of lobbying to influence the legislators' decisions ensues throughout the month of March. CUNY, a public institution, is funded by the State, City and student tuition. Since the fiscal crisis of the mid-seventies, when free tuition was ended, the State's contribution to the CUNY budget has shrunk while student tuition has grown to account for a disproportionate share of CUNY's budget. As a State agency, CUNY must vie with other units for supplemental funds. Along with NYSUT (New York State United Teachers), the PSC lobbies for funding to support the University. NYSUT must represent all of its members, and most of them work at public schools throughout the State. But the PSC's chief responsibility is to advocate for CUNY and higher education. One of the union's main goals

has been to block tuition increases by demanding that the State assume its full fiscal responsibility to CUNY.



Cover of PSC's CUNY budget book

This year has been no different from any other, when the PSC has been a constant presence in Albany. Here are the lobbying highlights: Higher Education Lobby Day, February 28, when hundreds of motivated students accompanied by thirty-five union members (faculty, staff, adjuncts, retirees) fanned out throughout the maze-like state office building (circa Nelson Rockefeller) and the ornate Capitol of gilded ceilings and mosaic tiled floors (circa late 19<sup>th</sup> century) to tell of their personal experiences and to advocate for additional revenue so that CUNY may fulfill its promise "to educate the children of the whole people." The following week, on March 5 and 6, armed with the booklet, *CUNY Changes Lives*, our members again walked the halls and talked with legislators to present the PSC's case for CUNY. The PSC pressed for more full-time faculty and advisors, 7K per course for

adjuncts, a \$253 increase per FTE for community colleges, and funding to reduce the TAP gap (TAP revenue lost because State law requires CUNY to waive part of low-income students' tuition, instead of covering their tuition with TAP aid). We also lobbied for money to provide TAP to part-time students and support for special programs such as SEEK and College Discovery. Legislators were also urged to finally pass the NY Dream Act.

I have been a PSC lobbyist for eighteen years. Some years have been more arduous than ever. Some years the legislators have been less receptive than others. Most years we have received less than we requested. But this year, I am optimistic that they heard us.

The struggle for CUNY is year in and year out. The PSC welcomes you to join the Legislation Committee to advocate for our students and CUNY, and augment our presence in the Albany. Lobbying is an interesting and an all-expense paid way to see the Capitol—and our donated COPE funds in action. It is a rewarding way for retirees to make a contribution to the work of the PSC. And it is not too late to be a part of this year's effort. Check your calendar and join us on these dates: April 11, phone banking from your home for PSC endorsed candidates – Harvey Epstein (AD 74 Manhattan), Ari Espinal (AD 39 Queens) and Shelley Mayer (SD 37 Westchester); April 21, a workshop at the union to learn the mechanics of grassroots electoral campaigns; and April 24, a \$7K advocacy day in Albany to support the demand for 7K per course. At any time, you can lobby your own state representatives by phone or online to press for taxes such as the millionaires' tax and the stock transfer tax to make Wall St. pay its fair share.

If you are able to participate, call or email Tiffany Brown ([tbrown@pscmail.org](mailto:tbrown@pscmail.org)) or Kate Pfordresher ([kpfordresher@pscmail.org](mailto:kpfordresher@pscmail.org)) - 212 354 1252. □

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### PSC Proactive In Face Of Janus Case

On Monday, February 26, in a case with immense consequences for the PSC and other public-sector unions, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Janus v. AFSCME*.



Later this spring, a split court, voting along ideological lines, will probably side with Janus, overturning a unanimous 1977 Supreme Court decision, *Abood v. the Detroit Board of Education*. *Abood* mandated that individuals pay an agency fee if they chose not to join a union that collectively bargained on their behalf. A reversal of *Abood* would mean that members of a bargaining unit could choose to freeload, receiving collectively bargained salaries and benefits without paying an "agency fee" to cover their share of expenses for union representation (e.g. staff, rent, research, negotiating, legal and arbitration costs).



In a 3/1/18 news analysis headlined “The Supreme Court’s Power Play Against Labor,” Linda Greenhouse, who covers the courts for the *NY Times*, observed that justices Samuel Alito and Anthony Kennedy oozed with contempt for unions as they cross examined during the oral arguments the lead lawyer for AFSCME. They “permitted their intense dislike of organized labor to strip them of judicious inhibition and drive them to act as advocates and even something very close to bullies.”

The PSC is not sitting passively, waiting for the other shoe to drop once the Court renders a decision. The union moved proactively over the past year, signing up “agency fee” payers as union members and getting thousands more who were already members to sign new union cards reaffirming their commitment.

As reported in last month’s *Turning the Page*, the week the Court heard oral arguments, the PSC planned an organizing blitz mobilizing “activists to mount an intensive campaign to collect even more signed membership cards at every CUNY workplace.”

Many retirees participated in that blitz, returning to their former colleges to join in-service activists. During that period, more than 1,300 CUNY faculty and professional staff signed new membership cards.

Those cards—more will be signed between now and June—are a vote of confidence in the PSC. They will greatly strengthen the

union as it embarks on a new round of collective bargaining.

Whatever the Janus decision, the PSC will remain a vital force at CUNY. Stay tuned. ■

## WEST VIRGINIA TEACHERS RISE UP

*Jackie DiSalvo, retiree Baruch*

Educators across the world from Argentina, Kenya, Canada and Great Britain to the U.S. rose up this March in strikes against cuts to public education and attacks on their standard of living. Recognizing the importance of those struggles to ours at CUNY, the PSC sent statements of solidarity to the 30,000 college faculty on strike in Great Britain, writing, “may all academic workers continue to challenge the neoliberal university, which is a site of struggle and in which our thought and action may count in all workers’ struggles across the world,” and to the victorious West Virginia teachers, proclaiming, “Let your action be a model for the unified struggle we must undertake to protect and strengthen the union movement in the face of current attacks on us all.”

Those West Virginia trade unionists themselves recognized the wider significance of their victory, chanting, as they filled the halls of the Capitol in Charleston, “Who made history? We made history!” And indeed they had. Following the success of their nine-day action, teachers in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona, and New Jersey are talking about organizing walkouts and strikes to push their demands.

The PSC statement pointed out that they had “set an example for public-sector workers facing a similar onslaught across the country.” Trade unionists, including the PSC, must now ponder the lessons to be learned from them about how to win—lessons about scrappy activism, rank-and-file initiatives, unity, imagination and alliances. Here are some of the issues that



we as a union can draw from the West Virginia teachers:

They stood up against pressures to submit to the austerity being imposed under neoliberalism everywhere.

While welcoming the support of their unions, forced by the prohibition on collective bargaining, they embraced a strategy of organizing from below and kept the initiative always in the hands of the members.

Rejecting the politics of fear, and passive reliance on politicians, they carried out an illegal wildcat strike, risking major penalties, but despite a ban, like our Taylor Law, by waging a fierce, unyielding fight, they got away with it.

Uncompromisingly, they refused to return to work for the crumbs first offered, holding out to win the entire 5% pay raise they had demanded and the formation of a commission to address the rising cost of their health insurance.

They unified themselves throughout the state, and endorsed the extension of their gains to all public sector workers.



Demanding increased funding for the schools, they earned the support of parents and students, some of whom rallied on their behalf.

Expressing a determination to extend their struggle in a national endeavor to preserve and revitalize the labor movement, they secured donations from other trade unionists, such as PSC members, including thousands of slices of pizza!

And importantly, the teachers showed that by demonstrating their own commitment to solidarity, they earned the support of others. Now, looking ahead to future alliances, they strenuously rejected attempts to fund their raises by cutting Medicaid and other programs for the poor.

As we in the PSC take up our campaigns—against Janus and for a just contract, a living wage for adjuncts and adequate funding for education—we are reminded of our solidarity message to the teachers, which said, “like hundreds of thousands of other teachers and union members across the country and the world, the members of the PSC have been inspired by your action.” ■

## AGE FRIENDLY NEW YORK

Jim Perlstein, Retiree *BMCC*

Gov. Cuomo proclaimed NYS to be the country’s first “age friendly” state, based on criteria established by the World Health Organization and the AARP. But there is no funding in the Governor’s budget to support this initiative. And his budget flat-lines funding for existing senior services which—given inflation and the growing population of New Yorkers over age 65—means a cut in real dollars.

His budget *mandates* some enhanced services for older people, while raising eligibility thresholds. Absent additional funds, service-providers will have to cut staff wages or reduce staff hours to meet these mandates, setting up an irreconcilable contradiction.



Meanwhile, in the name of efficiency, the Governor again floats the idea of merging health and aging services. He proposes a Long Term Care Advisory Committee that will be overseen by the Commissioner of Health and the Acting Commissioner of Aging to identify gaps in services. We must ensure that consumers and consumer advocates are named to the committee along with other stakeholders. Aging is not exclusively or even primarily a health problem and advocates for elderly groups have long resisted conflating the two because senior issues tend to get buried and/or reduced.

So once again we will have to lobby the legislature to restore de-facto cuts and will be encouraged to treat maintaining the status quo as a victory.

For details on the NYS budget for elderly services and a critique, go to NY Senior Action Council at:

<http://www.nysenior.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/18-19-proposed-NYS-Office-for-the-Aging-Budget-chart.pdf>

<http://www.nysenior.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Proposed-2018-19-State-Budget-Impact-on-Older-Residents.pdf>

<http://www.nysenior.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/State-2018-2019-Budget-Talking-Points.pdf>



## HERE IS TO YOUR HEALTH: The Power of Small Kindnesses

Constance H. Gemson, Retiree LaGuardia

My husband Tim recently had extended stays in an emergency room and a geriatric center for rehabilitation care. I was with him. He had an unexpected horrific pain in his leg. This situation led to complications, which took time and persistence to resolve.

An emergency room offers the illusion of never ending, as it is the time of waiting, waiting. Like all potential patients, we were anxiously hoping for the elusive bed. The helpful clerk could not produce a miracle, but he arranged for me to meet the social worker. Her workplace was a collection of strangers with diverse and mysterious situations.

The social worker saw me promptly. She could not wave a magic wand for a cure. She listened to my concerns with avid attention. She offered me bottled water, to ease the tension of this endless stay.

Finally, a bed was available. Later that week my friends and family were eager to visit and provide comfort. We needed an additional chair and the certified nurse's assistant quickly brought one to the room. He washed it as diligently as any suburban teenager might take care of a first new car.

At the rehabilitation center, a recreation staff member noted my husband's glasses were dirty and carefully cleaned them. A former financial professional was retooling her life and planning a new career to provide care to the vulnerable and frail. She supplied my husband with a sandwich he requested. She smiled at him and said, "Enjoy the food. It was made with love."

All these small incidents were not small. These actions were markers on the road to

his healing. These brief encounters were illuminating and striking in contrast to daily patient life. Health care team members entered and exited in a complex drama. Their set schedules, rather than personal patient needs, determine care.

Health care is more than the latest scientific breakthrough, more than the famous doctor with celebrated success. Medicine is not only the magic yet elusive cure, so distant as we wait for hope. Health care is more than a spreadsheet with data and statistics. It includes the simple yet vital connection between the worker and patient. ■

## AND IN OTHER NEWS

### NO TO TEACHERS WITH GUNS



The following is a Letter to the Editor of the *New York Times* from member Tibby Dubois, which the *NY Times* published on February 24. Tibby Dubois is a professor emerita of education from Brooklyn College where she was PSC chapter chair. Here, we reprint the letter:

#### To the Editor:

Re [“Trump Suggests Armed Teachers Get ‘Bit of Bonus’”](#) (front page, Feb. 23):

President Trump urges that teachers be armed with weapons in school settings. I am outraged by the suggestion, and the cavalier, contemptuous disrespect for some of the most noble professional citizens in our society.

Teachers are required to have graduate degrees in most states; they go through rigorous programs in philosophy of education, psychology and the content of a variety of academic disciplines. There is no place in the teacher education curriculum for Marksmanship 101.

This suggestion shows ignorance of educators and of public education. American teachers do sacred work, are underpaid and are under frequent political attack.

Envisioning teachers as an armed militia, as a corps of guards with military discipline ready to do effective battle, is not reassuring. It is a fantasy masquerading as a solution. ■

### A MAN, A PLAN, I CAN'T, YOU CAN

*Dave Kotelchuck, retiree Hunter*

President Trump's proposed new federal budget calls for a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure building plan. But he wants to put up only \$200 billion in federal funds, without particularly specifying what it should be spent for – letting states and cities decide what they need and then raising the added \$1 trillion from local resources.

Since the new GOP tax plan, passed in December, sharply cuts exemptions for state and local taxes, cities and states (like New York) may be forced to cut their taxes to offset federal income tax increases for their residents. So forget about cities and states raising additional tax revenues to support needed infrastructure improvements. (A NY-NJ rail tunnel under the Hudson anyone?)



That's OK, Trumpians reply. Seek out private funds from banks, large corporations, hedge and mutual funds. This would, of course, result in new bridge and highway tolls and maybe increased charges for water treatment. (Several Latin American countries tried this in the '70s and it was a disaster!). But it would also result in new commercial names for our highways, bridges, tunnels, etc. just like we now have for sport stadiums. That's great! Think of the possibilities:

Coca Cola Causeway

Pampers Parkway

Bain Bridge

Walmart Waste Treatment Plant

Tater Tots Tunnel

Other suggestions, readers? Remember, for good ones you get nothing from TTP except publication (anonymously if you choose), but you might win a major corporate reward from the company you cite. Who knows? ■

## BEWARE-MEDICARE SCAM



**NYSARA.** *The Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) is the retiree advocacy arm of the AFL-CIO. As a PSC dues paying retiree, you are automatically a member of both the national and state branch of the ARA. Retirees who live in NY State are members of NYSARA.*

*Every Monday, NYSARA produces an email alert full of information and advocacy relevant to seniors. You can sign up to receive the Monday Alert by going to*

<https://nystate.retiredamericans.org/contact-us/email-sign-up/>.

*From time to time, we will reproduce items from the Monday Alert. What follows is an item from the March 12 Alert warning seniors about a Medicare scam.*

*Here's what you need to know to protect yourself, family and friends.*

Starting 4/1/18 Medicare will start a yearlong project to replace all current Medicare cards for beneficiaries to convert to alphanumeric ID numbers. Currently the ID number is your social security number. This is starting to hit the media. Scammers are opportunistic. First of all the new Medicare card will come to you in the mail. You don't need to request it or do anything. It will show up.

**What's The Scam?** Somebody [pretending to be] from "MEDICARE" will call to tell you that you are getting a new Medicare card. But until it comes you will need a temporary card. The fee for the card is between \$5 and \$50. They want personal information, bank account or credit card so they can process your temporary card.

**Things to Remember:** Medicare will never call you unless you ask them to. Medicare does all communications by mail unless you ask them to call. Ditto for anybody saying they "work with Medicare to make sure you get everything you are entitled to."



**How to Protect Yourself from This One:**

First of all spread the word. Feel free to share these notes. Use your answering machine to screen calls or just don't even answer a number you don't recognize. If it has happened to you or your friends or loved ones and personal info had been given out (happens considerably more often than you think, so don't feel bad or stupid), take action immediately to protect yourself against identity theft. ■

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE WORKING GROUP**

*Retirees are particularly active and in a leadership role on this committee. Here is an update.*



About 50 people attended a training sponsored by Climate Works for All and the PSC Environmental Justice Working Group held at the PSC last month. The training focused on passing a strong retrofitting bill to improve NYC air quality and reduce fossil fuel consumption. Those present met in small groups and planned to visit their city council members to support a strong retrofitting mandate. Members are also trying to reach out to the union

representatives on the Teachers Retirement System board to discuss divesting. The working group is developing educational materials about divestment, as fossil fuels are increasingly viewed as risky investments. Our next meeting is April 16 at the PSC. At the meeting, Tom Angotti will discuss the contradictions surrounding waterfront development if we take global warming into account. ■

**MAY CHAPTER MEETING****MAY 7****“Health Care and Aging”****JUNE LUNCHEON****SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 11****“Propaganda and Film”**

**with Jonathan Buchsbaum**  
at Baruch College