

# Clarion

NEWSPAPER OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS / CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



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## TENURE Survival tips

New and veteran faculty discuss how to navigate tenure process.

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Photos: (right) Pat Amow, (below) Del Ankers

## TAKING A STAND FOR CUNY BUDGET BATTLE

A coalition of academics and college students from CUNY and SUNY marched on the State Capitol in Albany March 15, as lawmakers weighed whether to enact deep cuts in funding to higher education while cutting taxes for the wealthy. PSC

members return to Albany March 23 to engage in a direct action protest for educational and economic justice. "This is a defining moment," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "We are taking a stand for an alternative." PAGES 3, 4 & 12

### TAX POLICY

## Newsflash: the rich don't leave

"If you raise taxes on rich people, they'll leave." It's an idea that's been repeated again and again – but the sound bite is not supported by the data.

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### LIFE/WORK

## Our shared humanity

Hunter's Marnia Lazreg reflects on her youth in colonial Algeria, today's Middle East protests, the value of literature and the temptation to torture.

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### APRIL 4

## Dr. King and union rights

Martin Luther King, Jr., believed 'all labor has dignity.' He was killed in Memphis on April 4, 1968, while supporting striking sanitation workers.

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### WISCONSIN

## Inside the uprising

Teaching assistants played a key role in historic labor protests against Republican attacks on state workers' collective bargaining rights.

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# The truth about health and safety

By **BEN CHITTY**  
Queens College

On March 4, longtime PSC activist Ben Chitty was given the NY State United Teachers "Unsung Hero" award for grassroots organizing on health and safety. His work with others at Queens College has affected a range of issues, including prevention of workplace violence (see the February Clarion). The article below is adapted from his acceptance speech.

I'd like to thank NYSUT for this honor. I'd also like to thank my own union, the PSC, which has supported my cross-union organizing project with words of encouragement, hours of work, and especially money for pizza – without which no organizing project has any hope of success.

And I want to thank my wife, who has put up with my crusades and crankiness for too many decades, and who must wonder why a guy who hangs out with custodians, laborers, and plumbers can't be a little better at vacuuming, taking out the garbage, or at least trying to fix the kitchen faucet which has been leaking for at least one of those too-many decades.

## POWER IN NUMBERS

My wife is a labor historian, so it was no accident that one day I went to Human Resources and asked – just out of curiosity – how many unions represent the employees at Queens College? They wouldn't tell me – maybe they didn't actually know, maybe they just thought it was none of my business. I work in the library, so naturally I took that as a research challenge. If you count the different locals of AFSCME District Council 37, the total

## Nuts & bolts of making change

is 19, 20, or 21, depending on which positions are vacant at any moment. Some unions represent only one college employee. My union, the teachers' union, has over 1,500 members at the college, mostly full- and part-time instructional staff.

### HAZARDS OF TRUTH

Once I knew which unions represented my coworkers, I invited their stewards to a meeting. Getting them all to respond was harder than it sounds, but we started meeting five years ago last month, and now meet every month. The business agent for the Teamsters gave us a name, the Queens College Unions Joint Committee for Quality of Work Life. Our first campaign was to get an eruption of mold inside a bathroom wall properly contained, properly cleaned up, and properly removed.

Most of the committee's work is about safety and health. Now, everyone agrees that workers have a right to a safe and healthy workplace. It's even in my union's collective bargaining agreement. And there are laws, and regulations, and standards, and recommended protocols and procedures – all designed to make sure that our workplaces stay safe and healthy.

And everyone knows they don't. Why is that?

In general, it seems to me, college and university administrators just don't want to know about hazards to health and safety. Fixing them might cost money, which seems a little short these days. It can take time and attention which could be better spent – though truth to tell, I sometimes wonder what these folks

do, aside from going to meetings. There is also the question of liability: if management knows about a hazard, and someone gets hurt, the institution, and for us, the state or local government, and ultimately the taxpayer, can be held liable for the damage. But mainly, I think, it's a way to duck responsibility.

There is a lot of responsibility to go around. The City University has been systematically underfunded by the state and city for more than three decades, which has ramifications for safety and health. The administrators appointed by successive governors and mayors do not succeed by fostering great institutions of higher learning; they succeed – which means they keep their jobs – by cutting costs. One way is to cut maintenance, to disinvest in infrastructure. Physical plant management, like so many other aspects of educational

### Cross-union organizing can get results.

management, becomes what you might call "management by crisis." You wait for the drain to stop up, or the compressor to fail, or the wall to fall down, before you even begin to think about repairing or replacing it. You can save lots of money that way for quite some time.

### COMMON CAUSE

You can mask the problems for a while by just not telling anyone. Most of the people who frequent Queens College are students, on campus only a few hours a week. Most of the employees teach, and come to campus mainly to meet with students in classes or conferences. But when you get together



El-Wise Noisette

Longtime PSC activist Ben Chitty.

with the folks who spend 35, 40, or 50 hours a week on campus, who have to keep the place open and clean, who have to fix whatever breaks, you find out what the problems are, and why they haven't been fixed. And just by letting your coworkers know about the problems, you can get the administration to fix them. Well, sometimes anyway – sometimes you have to call in the law. Cross-union communication makes this all possible.

But something else happens. Queens College is a big place – 77 acres, 28 buildings plus a parking garage, and a great view of the Manhattan skyline. It's also a bureaucracy, with many shops, offices, divisions, departments. You can work there for decades and never meet anyone outside your shop or office. Our joint committee crosses these barriers, and by making common cause with one another, we create a sense of community that is too often missing from our workplaces, too often crushed by the press of work, sometimes suppressed by an administrative establishment that is way too busy making sure that politicians can claim to support educa-

tion while cutting taxes, to worry overmuch about any quality of work life, which is not really their main concern anyway.

So thanks to the other members of my own union, particularly Jonathan Buchsbaum and Diane Menna, who were key in getting this initiative off the ground. And thanks to the other members of the Queens College Unions Joint Committee on Quality of Work Life, and the shops and crews they bring to the table: AFSCME District Council 37, Teamsters Local 237, Plumbers Local 1, Painters Local 1969, Steamfitters Local 638, New York City Council of Carpenters, Electrical Workers Local 3, Stationary Engineers Local 30, New York Nurses Association. They represent the breadth and depth of the labor movement as it can be, as it must be, if our institutions are to serve our communities, if our communities are to prosper, if our children are to have a future which is better than our past and present.

### ORGANIZATION

Public higher education, public education in general, has been cut, and cut, and cut again in New York. And if you think it can't get worse, look to Wisconsin, where politicians are planning to feed children to the rich. Well, maybe not exactly in those words – maybe they just want to tax our future to promote and protect hereditary plutocracy. They call teachers lazy, greedy, and arrogant – I guess they got a glimpse of their own reflection in some kind of trick mirror.

I don't know how we make this a better world. I do know that organizing at the workplace makes our lives a little better, our workplaces a little healthier and safer, and us a little stronger, as a union and as a community. Plus we really get to practice what the Wobblies once preached: "An injury to one is an injury to all."

## PSC backs Bronx apartment building workers



Dave Sanders

CCNY Professor of Architecture Alan Feigenberg (right) and SEIU-32BJ Vice President Kyle Bragg (left) stand together at a March 3 Bronx apartment workers rally. The 3,000 apartment workers and the Bronx Realty Advisory Board reached an agreement March 15 that increases wages while preserving health care and pension benefits.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Labor and elections

● Francis Fox Piven is right – and Jay Arena is wrong when he suggests that labor run candidates against the Democrats (Letters, February Clarion). Unless, of course, he means running in the Democratic primaries as members of the Democratic Party.

Look at history. Billionaire David Koch ran as a Libertarian – a waste of time and money. But since he founded, financed, and directed his tremendously successful Tea Party as a wing of the Republican Party, he has been able to bash unions and other mainstream causes, effectively persuading middle-class people to make war upon the middle class

– a familiar enough phenomenon. As the Russian proverb says, "The ax handle, too, is made out of wood."

As a separate party, Koch's Tea Party would have been useless, but as an arm of one of the two major parties, it has become extraordinarily influential.

Rather than sap the Democratic Party by running candidates against it, we should perhaps challenge Democrats in primaries, and then support Democratic candidates with our money and our votes, encouraging them to speak out on issues that matter to us.

K. J. Walters  
Lehman College



# High-stakes budget fight

By PETER HOGNESS

On March 15, hundreds of academics and college students converged on the State Capitol to press for a restoration of public funding for higher education. As *Clarion* went to press the state budget had not yet been adopted, and PSC activists prepared to engage in a direct action protest in Albany on March 23.

"We call on our members and other New Yorkers to join us in a peaceful, non-violent action, during which some of us are prepared to risk arrest to prevent the passage of a budget that starves the ordinary people of New York in order to protect the wealthy," said a PSC Executive Council resolution on the March 23 demonstration.

## 'A DEFINING MOMENT'

"This is a defining moment in national and New York economic policy," Barbara Bowen, the union's president, wrote in a message to members. "The governor's budget slashes funds for schools, colleges, CUNY, health care and many other public services, yet includes a tax break for the highest earners." While the Assembly's budget proposal would restore some CUNY funding, Bowen noted, it would leave in place a 10% cut to CUNY senior colleges, and would only partially continue the modest income tax surcharge on the highest-paid people in New York (see sidebar).

"Without a fundamental shift in direction, the budget passed in Albany will force economic austerity on working people in order to concentrate even more wealth among the rich," Bowen said. "We are tak-

## Cut CUNY to help out millionaires?



Joel Kuszai, vice-chair of the PSC chapter at Queensborough Community College, with student activists in Albany on March 15.

ing a stand for an alternative," she told *Clarion*.

As *Clarion* went to press, several community groups were pledging their support. (See [psc-cuny.org](http://psc-cuny.org) for updates and more info.)

The direct-action protest was one part of a broad effort by the PSC to bring grassroots pressure to bear on this year's State budget decisions. The union's campaign has included thousands of member e-mails and phone calls, a TV ad campaign, lobbying trips to the capital, testimony at legislative hearings, meetings in legislators' local offices and more.

## Proposed CUNY, SUNY reductions of over \$200 mil.

The rally and lobby day at the Capitol on March 15, dubbed Student-Faculty Higher Education Action Day, drew nearly 500 hundred people. It was a coalition effort by the PSC, the student government associations of both CUNY and SUNY, United University Professions (SUNY's union of faculty and professional staff), New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), and New York State United Teachers (NYSUT).

## PAYING BACK

"I was first in my family to go to college, and I saw what CUNY could do with underprivileged families," said Sharif Elhakem, a Lehman

alumnus who now works at Lehman as a senior CLT. "And that is why I'm here – I want to give a little back."

"I received help in the form of financial aid. It enabled me to get a career," explained Elhakem, who also teaches chemistry as an adjunct faculty member. "I am here to fight for all the students who are in the situation that I was in 15 years ago."

Gov. Cuomo's proposed budget, if enacted, would cut funding for CUNY senior colleges by \$95.1 million and for CUNY community colleges by \$17.5 million. SUNY would be cut by another \$100 million, and support for community college statewide would be reduced by the equivalent of \$226 per full-time student over the

academic year. CUNY and SUNY have faced three years of deep cuts in state support, leading to larger classes and reduced course offerings, at a time when enrollments are rising to record levels. Many students have had their aid cut by Gov. Cuomo's rule changes for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).

"It's time for students to get involved with the decisions getting made," said Domingo Estevez, a BMCC student who got on the bus to Albany on March 15. "I put 'Actions, Not Words,' on my Facebook page – in Latin, 'Acta Non Verba.'"

In mid-March, more than 3,100 PSC members sent messages to Cuomo and their State representatives, urging restoration of funding for CUNY and renewal of the current surcharge on top incomes.

## TV & RADIO BLITZ

TV and radio ads took the same pro-CUNY message to broadcast and cable channels in New York City and Albany in the last two weeks of March. In New York City, the PSC's ad ran on WABC, WNBC, WCBS, CNN, NY1, MSNBC and other stations. (See the video at [psc-cuny.org](http://psc-cuny.org).) It was a popular perspective: in a February Siena poll, 56% of respondents were opposed to reducing CUNY and SUNY funding.

Detailed budget testimony was another part of the PSC's push for fair funding. President Bowen spoke at a joint hearing of the State Senate's Finance Committee and the Assembly's Ways and Means Committee on February 10, and members who work at community colleges testified at a City Council hearing on March 18. (Testimony is online at [psc-cuny.org](http://psc-cuny.org).)

PSC activists also traveled to Albany to meet with legislators on March 7-8 and 21-22. "We pointed out that to strengthen the economy, it's necessary to invest in higher education," said Joel Berger, a member of the Retirees Chapter. "During the Depression, Brooklyn and Queens Colleges were created. So even in those hard times, they made the right decisions."

Coalitions like New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness and Strong Economy for All have brought unions and community groups together against Cuomo's cuts. On March 9, SEIU 1199 President George Gresham told reporters that letting the income tax surcharge expire would be a choice to let the wealthy "prosper on the backs of our children, on the backs of working people." The alternative, he said, is "to make sure the wealthy pay their fair share."

## DIRECT ACTION

As the April 1 deadline for a new State budget drew closer, it was unclear which choice New York's Legislature would make. "That's why I signed up for the direct-action protest," said Lorraine Cohen, professor of sociology at LaGuardia and chair of its PSC chapter. "The stakes are so high for all of us. We need to focus attention on the issues and push Cuomo and the legislature to do the right thing. Democracy means they are supposed to represent the interests of the majority, not the top 1%. That's what we want – democracy."

# Super-rich have the tax cut itch

The sharpest fight in this year's budget battle is over whether to renew the income tax surcharge on the highest-paid New Yorkers.

Taxing the rich is overwhelmingly popular with voters. A February Siena poll found that renewing the current surcharge was favored by a 2-to-1 margin, 65% to 33%, and other polls have found similar results. But the measure faces an uphill battle in Albany.

## \$4.5B LOSS

Enacted in 2009, the surcharge will expire at the end of 2011 unless action is taken to extend it. Latest figures from the State Division of the Budget estimate that it brings in about \$4.5 billion per year. With the State facing a \$10 billion budget gap, giving up the surcharge will mean deeper cuts in public services – in order to give a tax break to the highest-paid 3% in the state.

The surcharge applies to taxable income above \$200,000 for individuals and above \$300,000 for married couples. It adds an additional 1% to the tax rate, and another 1.12% for taxable incomes above \$500,000.

While these higher rates affect about 3% of New York taxpayers, not all of their income is affected. The surcharge is paid only above the threshold – for example, a married couple with taxable income of \$320,000 would pay the additional 1% on only \$20,000. And the thresholds are set in terms of taxable income – in other words, after subtracting all personal exemptions, deductions and adjustments.

Taxpayers affected by New York's surcharge "just received a four percentage point decrease in their federal income taxes for 2011 and 2012, thanks to the extension of the Bush tax cuts," the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) points out. Supporters of the surcharge question whether the

richest New Yorkers need to get a State tax break, too – especially when such deep cuts in public services are under consideration.

Other progressive revenue measures proposed this year include a "bonus recapture tax," proposed by FPI and the Center for Working Families (CWF), which note that the current high bonuses and profits on Wall Street were made possible by a taxpayer bailout of historic size. The bonus recapture tax would provide between \$9.5 and \$14 billion in revenue, making most of this year's budget cuts unnecessary.

## TAX LAW FLAWS

The *New York Times* and others have called for a review of New York's web of business tax breaks. "Why, for example, do sellers of precious metal bullion and coins get a tax break that costs the

state \$185 million in 2010?" asked a *Times* editorial. "Doing away with about 5% of these deals would bring in nearly \$1.5 billion."

But even though total compensation at Wall Street firms is up 6%, Albany has little appetite for taxes that would be paid by the rich. Despite strong public support for the current surcharge, Gov. Cuomo and the State Senate are opposed to renewing it, and the Assembly has proposed scaling it back so that a higher rate applies only to taxable income above \$1 million. It's a change that would bring in about 70% of the revenue that the current surcharge provides.

## A break from NY on top of Bush cuts?

After two decades of tax cuts favoring the wealthy, it's no surprise that New York has been running out of money to fund basic public services. But it's a sign of wealthy New Yorkers' outsized political influence (see p.4) that the biggest revenue fight in Albany this year is simply whether to keep today's tax rates in place.

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## CALENDAR

**THURSDAY, MARCH 24 / 9:00 am – 6:30 pm:** The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire and its Legacy: A day of reflection, panels and debate to mark the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Fire. CUNY Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Avenue. Free registration and information at [trianglefireconference.org](http://trianglefireconference.org).

**FRIDAY, MARCH 25 / 11:00 am – 1:30 pm:** Commemoration of the Centennial of the Triangle Fire at the former home of the Triangle Waist Company. Corner of Washington Place & Greene Street (one block east of Washington Square Park.) For more information, see [rememberthetrianglefire.org](http://rememberthetrianglefire.org).

**FRIDAY, APRIL 1 / 4:00 pm:** The Committee for Part-Time Instructional Staff First Fridays. Open discussion about issues affecting adjuncts, graduate employees, CLIP and other Continuing Education teachers. PSC, 61 Broadway, 16 Fl.

**MONDAY APRIL 4 / 6:00 pm:** Brooklyn mass meeting of the NYC Living Wage Campaign. Part of a nationwide day of events commemorating the 43rd anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was defending the rights of striking Memphis sanitation workers when he was killed (see p.11). Bethel Baptist Church, 265 Bergen St. btw Nevins & 3rd Ave. 4,5, D, N, R to Atlantic-Pacific. Visit [livingwagencny.org](http://livingwagencny.org).

**THURSDAY APRIL 7 / Noon:** Academic Freedom Committee meeting. Join the discussion. PSC, 61 Broadway, 15 Fl.



Conflict on the street in “Caché.”

**FRIDAY APRIL 8 / 6:00 pm:** Labor Goes to the Movies. In *Caché*, Michael Haneke (Best Director, Cannes Film Festival) excavates the “hidden” sin buried in a successful television director’s past in this film about the denial and guilt mixed into the foundations of Western prosperity. PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16 Fl.

**THURSDAY APRIL 14 / 5:00 pm:** Defend CUNY! Environmental Health & Safety Watchdog Committee meeting. PSC, 61 Broadway, 15 Fl.

## More events online

Visit [psc-cuny.org/calendar](http://psc-cuny.org/calendar) for our new interactive calendar, including a complete list of chapter meetings, upcoming events, and social happenings.

# Who is the Committee to Save New York?

By KEVIN CONNOR

Months before Andrew Cuomo proposed his 2011 budget – or was even elected New York State’s governor – a small group of New York power brokers began organizing a business coalition that would support Cuomo’s efforts to balance the state’s budget through spending cuts that target public service and public workers. The group was organized at the urging of Cuomo after a series of meetings with corporate leaders in the spring and summer of 2010.

The “Committee to Save New York,” as the organization came to be known, has since assembled a \$10 million war chest to fund a television ad campaign, canvassing, and other organizing efforts in support of Cuomo’s austerity budget and its tax cuts for the rich. Its core founders represent some of New York’s wealthiest and most powerful residents: bank CEOs, billionaire real estate developers, media moguls and hedge fund managers.

### CULTURE OF SECRECY

In its short history, the Committee to Save New York has gained a reputation for secrecy. It declined to disclose the names of all of its board members until January 16, after the lack of a list began to draw unfavorable press attention. Though organized specifically to work for passage of Cuomo’s budget proposals, it avoided registering as a lobbyist until late January, a delay that was criticized by good-government groups.

The Committee still refuses to disclose most of its donors. “We don’t have to report it, so why tell you?” board member Steven Spinola told *The New York Times*.

Spinola is president of the Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY), which played a central role in founding the Committee. Real estate developer and former REBNY chair Larry Silverstein offered an illuminating take on what REBNY is and what it stands for in a 1986 profile in the *Times*: “Our membership list and the Forbes 400 wealthiest individuals in the United States have an enormous commonality.... By virtue of our holdings, the board has the most intense interest in the well-being of the city – we recognize that our fortunes are inexorably tied to the fortunes of the city.”

### CORPORATE INTERESTS

The Committee to Save New York is just the latest expression of REBNY’s “intense interest” in New York’s economic health, and its apparent belief that the interests of billionaire real estate developers and the public interest are neatly aligned. Silverstein himself has donated to the Committee, and REB-

## Billionaires enter tax debate

NY president Spinola, chair Mary Ann Tighe, and executive committee member Rob Speyer all sit on the Committee’s board. Speyer is Co-CEO of Tishman Speyer, the giant real estate firm that is Cuomo’s top campaign donor and the top donor to the Committee, to which it gave \$1 million. Tishman Speyer formed the investment team that bought Stuyvesant Town for \$5.4 billion, drew sharp criticism from tenants for poor stewardship of the property, and then defaulted on its loans in early 2010.



Steven Spinola, President of REBNY

Another key group in the Committee is the Partnership for New York City, which describes itself as “a select group of 200 CEOs from New York City’s top corporate, investment and entrepreneurial firms.” Partnership CEO Kathryn Wylde, a Committee to Save New York board member, is frequently credited as one of the movers and shakers who organized the Committee at Cuomo’s behest.

The word “partnership” somewhat obscures just who is joining hands in collaboration: bank CEOs such as JP Morgan Chase’s Jamie Dimon and Goldman Sachs’s CEO Lloyd Blankfein, private equity and hedge fund managers such as Henry Kravis and John Paulson, News Corporation CEO Rupert Murdoch, American Express CEO Kenneth Chenault, and other members of New York City’s monied elite. Founded by David Rockefeller in 1979, the Partnership for New York City’s board is largely drawn from Wall Street and is packed with

billionaires, including 11 members from Forbes’ 400 Richest Americans list for 2010. Despite cultivating an image as a sort of good-government group, the Partnership has been a reliable guardian of corporate interests, on issues from paid sick leave for workers to tax cuts for the rich.

### UNION PRESSURE

Also credited in founding the Committee to Save New York are the Business Council of New York State and its CEO, Ken Adams. The Business Council brings together business interests from both New York City and upstate. Governor Cuomo has since nominated Adams as CEO of the Empire State Development Corp., the state’s economic development arm, further illustrating the close ties between the governor and the Committee. The Business Council’s acting head, Heather Briccetti, has since replaced Adams on the Committee’s board.

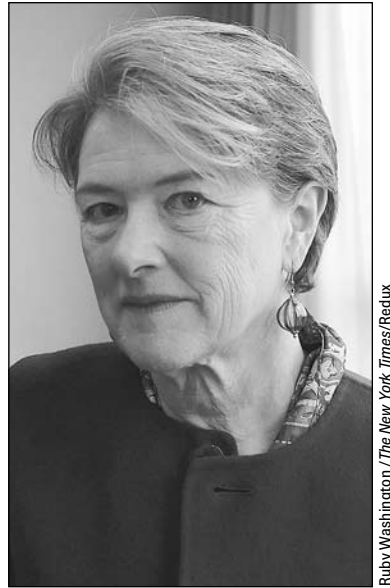
One early member of the Committee’s board, Citigroup Chairman Richard Parsons, resigned in the wake of union pressure. *The New York Times* reported that at least one public-employee union had informed Parsons that if he remained on the board, unions would mount a publicity campaign contrasting the billions Citigroup received in bailout money with Cuomo’s proposed cuts in services and worker benefits, a scenario the *Times* described as “a public relations nightmare.”

Most of the Committee’s other board members represent Chambers of Commerce from around New York State. The group’s honorary chair is Felix Rohatyn, the Lazard Frères investment banker known for managing the imposition of austerity in New York City’s 1975 fiscal crisis. Other board members include Carl McCall, the former New York State comptroller who has a long history in the financial industry, and Gary LaBarbera, president of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York.

### OUT OF TOUCH

LaBarbera’s decision to join the board was considered a coup for Cuomo, providing a fig leaf of backing from beyond the state’s business community and sparking some tensions with other unions.

The Committee to Save New York tries to project a “big tent” image, with photos of construction workers in its promotional materials, and a TV ad that features average New Yorkers advocating for tax cuts. But if the Committee is a tent, its center poles are REBNY, the Partnership for New York City,



Kathryn Wylde, Partnership for NYC

and, to a lesser extent, the Business Council, which appear to provide the bulk of the group’s funding and organizational support.

The money moving the Committee’s message is drawn from the bank accounts of people like donor Stephen Ross, who is number 101 on Forbes’s Richest Americans list, CEO of the real estate firm the Related Companies, and also a major (\$35,000) donor to the Cuomo campaign. The backers of the Committee to Save New York are not generally people who take

the subway to work, attend CUNY, use Medicaid or send their kids to public schools – so it is not surprising that they would back an agenda of slashing public services to pay for tax cuts for New York’s wealthiest.

### BUYING FAVOR

Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, who has moved to strip public employees of collective bargaining rights, recently received a great deal of media attention for taking a call from a Buffalo blogger posing as right-wing billionaire David Koch. Koch had given \$43,000 to Walker’s campaign, and the *Washington Post*’s Ezra Klein wrote that the call showed “the access and power that major corporations and wealthy contributors will have in a Walker administration.” But Koch gave even more money to Cuomo than he gave to Walker – \$50,000, plus another \$37,000 that Cuomo received from Koch’s wife, Julia.

No state governor seeking budget cuts, including Walker, enjoys the level of public support from billionaires that Cuomo is getting from the Committee to Save New York. The Committee may evaporate in the wake of this year’s budget battle, but the political alliance it represents will have profound consequences for New Yorkers in the years ahead.

*Kevin Connor is co-director of the Public Accountability Initiative, a non-profit, non-partisan research organization on corporate and government accountability, and co-founder of LittleSis.org, an “involuntary Facebook of powerful people” edited by a community of volunteers. He is lead author of a detailed study, “The Committee to Scam NY” (see [tinyurl.com/NYscam](http://tinyurl.com/NYscam)).*



## Budget battle looms large

# Campus contract meetings

By JOHN TARLETON

The PSC leadership is meeting with local chapters across CUNY throughout the semester to discuss the status of contract negotiations and how the outcome of current budget battles in Albany and at City Hall could affect the union's ability to win a fair settlement. Up-

coming meetings: March 24 – BCC; March 29 – Hostos; March 30 – Queens; March 31 – Brooklyn; April 4 – Retirees; April 5 – John Jay; April 7 – Hunter Campus Schools; April 12 – City College; April 13 – Graduate Center; April 14 – Manhattan Education; April 27 – Medgar Evers. For more information, see [psc-cuny.org/calendar](http://psc-cuny.org/calendar).



**Research ready** – Ajamu Sankofa (above left) of the Murphy Center makes a point during the March 9 HEO contract meeting at the Graduate Center while Jill Humphries (right) looks on. Humphries said she would like to see the PSC do more quantitative and qualitative research into issues that affect members including the bullying of HEOs. "We need a better understanding of what HEOs are experiencing so the union can take more effective action to help them," Humphries said.

Dave Sanders



Pat Arnov

**Benefits** – Richard Yuster (above), a professor of electrical and computer technology, urged the union to use its new website [psc-cuny.org](http://psc-cuny.org) to disseminate more information about member benefits. The benefits PSC members receive – from health care and pension benefits to professional development grants to disability and death benefits – are negotiated during bargaining as part of members' compensation.



Dave Sanders

**Getting students involved** – Theresa Murphy (left), an adjunct lecturer in African American Studies at Lehman, and (above) Geniece Pacifici-Elejalde, an HEO from City College, speak at recent contract meetings. "We should be talking about how to get students involved. They are a part of this too," Murphy said of the union's efforts to mobilize opposition to proposed state and city budget cuts.

Dave Sanders



Pat Arnov

**The money is there** – After attending the March 2 campus contract meeting at QCC, CLIP instructor Anthony Prado (above) told *Clarion* he was inspired to do something he had never done before: write letters to his elected representatives urging support for CUNY. "There's more than enough money out there," Prado said. "The problem is that the State government is afraid to tax the rich."



Pat Arnov

**QCC on the move** – Wilvena Gordon, a lecturer in the Basic Educational Skills Department at QCC, makes a point during the March 2 contract meeting. According to QCC Chapter Chair Judith Barbanel, the large turnout from QCC at the PSC's Lobby Day in Albany was sparked by the discussion at their chapter meeting which encouraged faculty and student participation. "Defending CUNY during this budget crisis has brought the college community together and has given students the opportunity to experience the democratic process firsthand," she said.



Dave Sanders

**Lehman** – Manfred Philipp (above), professor of biochemistry at Lehman, speaks during the March 7 contract meeting at the school. Philipp, a former chair of the University Faculty Senate, is the PSC grievance officer at Lehman.





At City Hall Park on Feb. 26, thousands of New Yorkers supported Wisconsin labor and union rights for all.

# NYC solidarity with WI

By PETER HOGNESS

At a Manhattan rally in solidarity with Wisconsin workers, Cary Lane stood on top of a fence in City Hall Park. Surrounded by several thousand union members, he held up a sign with foot-high letters: "CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?!"

"Re-establishing respect for educators and other civil servants is a national priority and it's why I'm here," said Lane, who teaches basic skills at Queensborough Community College. "This is a larger fight about what the priorities of our country should be. The assault on our budgets and ability to collectively negotiate has crossed the line – and as you can see, we're pushing back."

Other signs said "Cut Bonuses, Not Teachers," "We Are All Wisconsin," and "If You Like Weekends, Thank a Union."

The February 26 rally was the largest of many New York actions in support of Wisconsin unions in their battle to defend their rights. The Reuters wire-service report on the protest featured Queensborough's PSC chapter chair, Judith Barbanell. "We all support the people in Wisconsin and all over the country where labor is being threatened," Barbanell told Reuters. "The real agenda of the [Wisconsin] governor and many others is just to destroy unions."

## FIFTY STATES

Dozens of unions and community groups turned out for the demonstration, part of a "50-State Mobilization for the American Dream." The nationwide protest was initiated by MoveOn.org, and supported by a range of groups: Jobs With Justice, Citizen Action, SEIU, Working Families Party, National People's Action and a dozen more.

## "We are all Wisconsin"

A high point was the speech by Jim Perlstein, chair of the PSC Retirees Chapter. "You have got it wrong" about budget deficits, Perlstein told the crowd, with a straight face and his tongue in his cheek. "It's not trillions for misbegotten wars. It's not tax cuts for business. It's not subsidies for real estate speculators....No, I'm the 75-year-old son-of-a-bitch responsible for all your problems," Perlstein declared, as the crowd roared with laughter. "Get the likes of me under control, and we'll have heaven on earth!"

He concluded on a more serious note, which drew sustained applause: "We need the public sector. We need the labor movement. We need them in Wisconsin, we need them in New York, [and] we're ready to fight for them."

Just a few days after Gov. Walker's introduced his anti-union bill, the PSC Delegate Assembly passed a resolution supporting Wisconsin labor's fight against it. On CUNY campuses, union activists distributed hundreds of stickers that read, "We Are All Wisconsin," and found ways to spread the word. The PSC chapter at Bronx Community College, for example, sparked interest and discussion with lunchtime tabling, showing videos of the Wisconsin struggle and distributing an informational leaflet.

Four days before the rally at City Hall, a crowd of more than 500 people demonstrated outside Fox News's Midtown headquarters, in support of Wisconsin unions and condemning the network's anti-union bias.

"Public-sector workers are not the enemy," declared Hector Figueroa, secretary-treasurer of SEIU 32BJ, which represents 120,000 property

service workers across the Northeast. Instead, Figueroa said, "we need to use this opportunity to organize" to improve health care and benefits for all.

Many participants linked the struggle in the Midwest with popular uprisings in the Middle East, saying they were inspired by the "people power" mobilized against Walker's anti-union measure. "We're all standing in Tahrir Square in some sense," said Hanna Lessinger, an adjunct at John Jay College.

Wisconsin unionists "have done what we should have done years ago," added Lessinger's friend Nadine Fishelson, a public school teacher in Brooklyn. "If we don't do something now, this is going to happen to us here in New York."

## TOGETHER

The theme of a common struggle ran throughout New York support actions for Wisconsin's embattled unions. On February 24, several locals of the biggest union of New York City employees, AFSCME District Council 37, rallied at City Hall against service and benefit cuts proposed by Mayor Bloomberg – and in support of the Wisconsin labor movement. Speakers noted that like Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, Gov. Cuomo is seeking both tax cuts for the corporate elite and cuts in public services used by the working class.

A second "American Dream" rally, organized March 15 in Union Square, voiced support for economic justice from coast to coast. "We demand an end to the attacks on workers' rights. We demand needed public investment," said the protest's organizers, mainly non-labor groups. "In New York State, that means keeping the tax on millionaires that Cuomo refuses to renew," they declared.

# A new move

By JOHN TARLETON

MADISON, Wisconsin – When Governor Scott Walker submitted a bill to the Wisconsin State Legislature on February 11, he said it was a "budget repair bill," urgently needed to close a midyear budget deficit. The bill also stripped almost all collective bargaining rights from 175,000 public workers, but Walker insisted his only concern was balancing the budget. He thought his bill would be approved within a week.

Instead, Walker's attack on labor ignited a protest movement that has rocked the Badger State and electrified union supporters across the country. After a month of sharp and growing conflict, Walker finally won passage of an anti-union bill – separate from any budget measure. But he also provoked the largest demonstration in Wisconsin history, at which well over 100,000 people vowed to force him from office in order to win back their stolen rights.

## ADJUNCTS' ROLE

The Teaching Assistants' Association (TAA) at the University of Wisconsin (UW) played a central role from the beginning of what became the largest, most dynamic action by the labor movement in several decades. The 2,800-member TAA, the oldest graduate employee union in the nation, organized the first protest march against Walker's bill on Monday, February 14 – a demonstration they had originally planned as a protest against budget cuts.

Details of Walker's anti-union proposal were first reported February 10, the evening before the bill was introduced. "There was dis-

## Wisconsin upsurge

belief at first," TAA Co-President Kevin Gibbons told *Clarion*. "It was so draconian and extreme." In short order, TAA retooled its protest plans.

On February 14, more than a thousand people delivered valentines to Gov. Walker's office, urging him not to "break our hearts" with union-busting and cutbacks. According to the *Wisconsin State Journal*, "People in the typically quiet, business-like Capitol looked on nervously at the group as they jammed the corridor leading to Walker's office, pouring valentines on the desk of Walker's office guard, their chants echoing off the building's stately walls."

The next day 10,000 people rallied outside the State Capitol and several thousand more took the raucous protest inside and set up a protest encampment. By now, the UW students had been joined by workers from all walks of life, as well as 800 area high school students who walked out of class to join the demonstrations.

The crowds continued to swell when the Madison schools closed for three days due to massive teacher "sick-outs." In many cases, the striking teachers were joined at the protests by students and their parents.

According to Elizabeth Wrigley-Field of the TAA, the teachers' boldness changed the tenor of the movement. "It became more than a big rally," Wrigley-Field said. "It became a labor action." The occupation of the Capitol had a similarly electric effect: this was not just a larger-than-usual rally after which everyone would go home.

# A rally in the snow on Lake

Several New York unions sent activists to Wisconsin to help unions there cope with the sudden strain on their resources. Teamsters Local 237, Transport Workers Local 100 and CSEA all sent delegations.

"It's an important issue and a legitimate cause," Local 237's Pete Gutierrez told the *Daily News*. Wisconsin's Gov. Walker "has awakened a sleeping giant," Gutierrez declared.

PSC President Barbara Bowen was asked by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) to go to Wisconsin for a week to team up with the head of Wisconsin AFT in their organizing efforts. "Don't underestimate what our solidarity means to people in Wisconsin," Bowen said after her return. The eventual outcome in Wisconsin, she noted, will have a big effect on whether New York unions face

the same intensity of attack.

Bowen traveled 800 miles across the state with AFT Wisconsin President Bryan Kennedy (a former adjunct), speaking to union members in northern and rural Wisconsin towns.

In a blog post on the PSC website, she described one such event:

## New Yorkers help out in the Badger State.

"Last night more than 300 people stood calmly in the falling snow for an evening rally and vigil in the little town of Superior, built by long-shoremen on the banks of Lake Superior," Bowen wrote. "A teacher talked about her Republican friends who had come to her house to apologize for voting for Scott Walker. The whole group presented a box of homemade food to the wife of one of the fourteen Democratic State Senators who have fled the state to



# ovement in labor

## e vs. union-busting

The Wisconsin Constitution guarantees public access to the Capitol as part of the right “to petition the government, or any department thereof.” The protesters initially remained in the building overnight during round-the-clock hearings on the legislation, conducted by Democratic members of the State Assembly that lasted for over a week. Thousands of ordinary Wisconsinites used their two-minute time allotment to describe the impact of Walker’s bill – not only its union-busting, but also budgetary provisions such as the evisceration of BadgerCare, Wisconsin’s health-care program for children and low-income people.

### ‘NEED A TASK?’

“It was one of the most moving things I’ve ever witnessed,” Wrigley-Field said. “So many people were talking about how their lives would be ruined if this bill passed.”

On February 17, fourteen Democratic members of the Wisconsin Senate fled across the state line to Illinois, denying Republicans the quorum needed to call the Senate into session for budgetary measures. Two days later, an estimated crowd of 68,000 descended on Madison, along with the national media.

Inside the ornate Capitol building, a small, self-organizing city flourished. The TAA took on a coordinating role in the occupation, with an ad hoc headquarters in a third-floor legislative conference room. “One person staffed the door while reading Luther’s sermons for her dissertation, and another wore a piece of masking tape with the simple message, ‘Need a task?’” recalled PSC

President Barbara Bowen, who went to Wisconsin and stayed for a week at the AFT’s request (see below).

Volunteers distributed donated food that poured into the building and set up a first aid station, a children’s space, an information booth, a library, a lost-and-found, and a charging station for laptops and cell phones. A visitor could leave her bag lying on the floor and come back to find it in the same place hours later.

Visitors walking down a long corridor toward the center of the Capitol building were greeted with an array of homemade signs (“In Wisconsin, We Drink Beer Not Tea”; “You can’t scare me, I work with high school students”; “Screw Us and We Multiply”) and then the growing roar from the center of the building. At the epicenter, the crowd swung between singing “Solidarity Forever” and chanting slogans like “Whose house? Our house!” and “This is what democracy looks like!”

When the singing and chanting subsided, ordinary citizens took turns speaking at an open mic on the ground floor of the 203-foot-high rotunda.

### UNITY

“We’ve got anarchists and cops, socialists and small business owners, Green Party members and steelworkers, teachers and students and drop-outs all working together,” Jordan Peterson, a state-worker-turned-protest-organizer explained to *Clarion*. “There is something very special happening in this building.”

Quiet time started by 10 pm, and the rhythmic pounding of the drum circle in the center of the rotunda would give way to quiet jam sessions in corner alcoves. Children in pajamas raced around the circular balcony overlooking the rotunda, while their parents chatted with friends at the end of a long day. Gradually, people would fall asleep on the sleeping bags and thin foam mattresses they rolled out on marble floors.

“I never thought it would happen in my lifetime,” said Elizabeth Milovets, a senior at a local high school who camped out overnight at the Capitol with a group of her teenage friends. “We’re living history, not just listening to it.”

Milovets told *Clarion* she joined the protest to support her teachers, and out of concern that Gov. Walker would raise University of Wisconsin tuition by as much as 26%.

While the protest at the State Capitol was suffused with a spirit of solidarity and a keen awareness of the Right’s attack on the middle and working classes, the demands of most protesters were moderate and pragmatic. They understood unions make their members’ lives better and workers who want a union should

not be denied the right to organize. For many, the anger over Walker’s power play was fueled foremost by a sense of betrayal. He had violated their Midwestern sense of fairness.

“I naively assumed that while I was earning a living and raising my kids, democracy would continue and everything would be fine. I was wrong,” said Maggie Wolfe, a teacher’s aide and mother of three who was sitting on a foam mattress with a sign propped in front of her that read: “Freedom is when the people speak. Democracy is when the government listens.”

The fight for democracy was a theme that ran throughout the protest movement, especially the idea that there is more to democracy than voting on Election Day. It also means taking action to hold elected officials accountable, demonstrators said – as illustrated by the fact that Walker never mentioned gutting collective bargaining during last fall’s campaign.

On February 21, the 47,000-member South Central Federation of Labor in Madison unanimously endorsed consideration of a general strike, something no US city has seen since 1946. It noted that each union local had to make its own strike decision, but called for educating members on the “organization and function of a Wisconsin general strike.”

**Workers  
vow to win  
back their  
rights.**

On Saturday, February 26, a crowd of close to 100,000 people marched on the State Capitol, undeterred by a steady snowfall and temperatures in the teens. Walker had sought to limit opposition and pit public workers against each other by exempting police and firefighter unions from his bill. Instead, off-duty police and firefighters joined the throngs at the Capitol.

“We’re going to be next,” Adam Wunsch, a firefighter intern from Fitchburg, Wisconsin, told *Clarion*.

“A lot of police officers tend to be conservative. But they know the difference between right and wrong,” said Jim Palmer, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, which represents 11,000 municipal police officers from over 380 locals in Wisconsin. “We’re not going to take a short-term exemption and sell out so many devoted public servants.”

### CONCESSIONS

The leadership of Wisconsin’s main public-sector unions agreed to Gov. Walker’s demands to have state workers pay 12.6% of their health insurance benefits and fork over 5.8% of their pay toward their pension (a 7% to 20% pay cut, depending on a worker’s income). The decision was designed to sharpen the focus on collective bargaining, and gain support from those Wisconsin residents who accepted Walker’s assertion that “we’re broke,” but were uncomfortable with taking away long-established rights.

Walker, however, refused to take “yes” for an answer. He continued to insist on adoption of his entire anti-union package – and his stand-

ing in state opinion polls, already damaged, slid sharply.

“We’re willing to give in on the money, but we want to have a voice in our classrooms because what happens to us affects our kids,” said Kimberly Myers, a 13-year teacher from Colfax, Wisconsin, who came to Madison for the march on February 26.

Private-sector unionists also came out to show their support.

Walker “wants to get rid of all unions,” said a member of the Milwaukee-based Steamfitters Local 601. “Break one union, break them all,” another steamfitter agreed.

### JUST SAY NO

Over the following week, Walker used Capitol police to slowly squeeze the occupation of the Capitol building to an end. But it was a long, drawn-out process, as police who were not directly under Walker’s control declined to take part. Some off-duty cops, in fact, helped prolong the occupation by joining it, sleeping overnight on the marble floors.

After weeks of growing conflict, with Walker’s poll numbers sinking like a stone, Republican lawmakers decided they had to bring the month-long standoff to an end. While rumors about negotiations circulated in the press, GOP state senators launched a surprise attack. In a late-night maneuver on March 9, they forced through the anti-union measures in a separate bill, dropping all the fiscal provisions that had triggered stricter quorum requirements.

Democrats charged that the sudden move violated Wisconsin’s open meetings law, and vowed to challenge it in court. As the after-hours legislative drama unfolded, an angry crowd outside the Capitol grew to 7,000, while thousands more inside briefly reoccupied the building.

By passing the “budget repair bill” minus the budget repair, union supporters said Republicans had made clear what the fight was really about: an effort to bust unions and grab political power.

On Saturday, March 12, the labor movement responded with the largest demonstration in Wisconsin history. Well over 100,000 angry people vowed to win their rights back by forcing Walker and his Republican majority out of office through a recall drive.

### RECALL

Eight Republican state senators are targets of the recall effort. Others – and Gov. Walker – will not be vulnerable until they have completed the first year of their current term in office. But early indications are that all of them should be worried.

To force a recall election, organizers must secure signatures equal to 25% of the total votes cast in the last election for governor within 60 days. That’s a tall order – but after two weeks of petitioning, recall activist say they’ve already collected 45% of the number they need.

While chants of “General strike!” rang out on the night of March 9, that has not emerged as the movement’s

Continued on page 9

## ke Superior

prevent a vote, sympathetic with her need for support, as a retired teacher whose husband has had his paycheck embargoed.”

### VOTE TO ORGANIZE

Bowen said she was glad to also have “the honor of welcoming the newest local into the AFT: the faculty at University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.” The same day as the rally in Superior, they had voted by a wide margin to organize with the AFT. “The support only grew as Governor Walker’s assault intensified,” she reported.

Excitement about the next rally in Madison ran high in these small northern towns, several hours’ drive from the state capital, Bowen said: “I think people’s sense of the possibilities of political protest have been expanded and transformed by what they have seen here.” – PH



Inside the Wisconsin State Capitol on February 18.

M.P. King/Wisconsin State Journal



## Life/Work

# From Algeria to Austen

By JOHN TARLETON

**Marnia Lazreg**

Licence ès Lettres: University of Algiers  
MA: New York University  
PhD: New York University

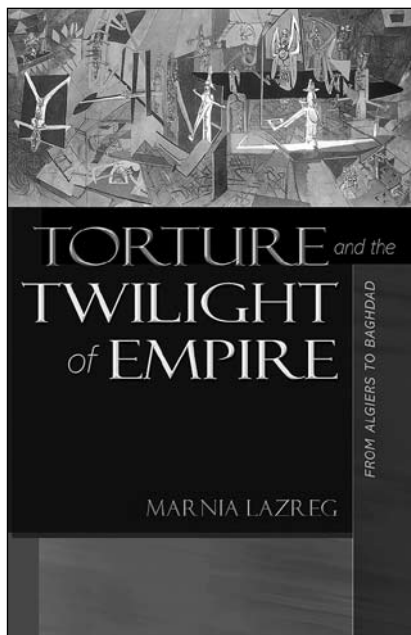
A professor of sociology at Hunter College, Marnia Lazreg is a self-described “incurable theorist” who relies heavily on field work and archival research. Her research interests include gender and development, non-European societies and their relationship to colonialism, torture and identity, Islam and politics, existentialism, and postmodernist theory.

**I loved school so much I cried**

I was a studious girl who always had her nose stuck in her books. For me, my role model was the professor of anything, history, English, you name it. I liked being in the classroom situation. I liked learning. I liked doing my homework. At the end of the school year, I would cry because I wasn't going to be in school for three months.

**Colonization**

Growing up in Algeria, the French presence was so massive, the buildings were built the French way, the economic system was in the hands of the French, the legal system was French, the army was French, the



Recent books by Marnia Lazreg, professor of sociology at Hunter College.

police were French. You just felt it would never change.

During the war, they subjected the whole country to a surveillance grid. On my block, we knew an old man who reported to the Army anyone who was absent for more than a day or any new people who came in. It was like 1984.

**A change in the atmosphere**

Something shook the spirit, if you

will.... There was an incredible feeling of elation from 1954 to 1962, during the war for independence. And of course it was mixed with fear and uncertainty, but there was that elation.

In the euphoria that set in after independence, we had this incredible awakening. You woke up and you said, ‘Ha, it’s going to be different.’ It’s similar to what’s happening today in Egypt and Libya

where people wake up one day and say ‘enough is enough.’

**On today’s Middle East protesters**

People want a better life. They want transparent elections so that the same person will not be in power for 30 or 40 years, which makes you feel you’re in a kind of jail, rather than in a country where you count and your opinions matter.

The satellite dish and the Internet now extend to the furthest reaches of the Arab world. Poor people in every building pool their resources to get a dish and they see people around the world have better lives. It has become evident to young people that the tired discourse of national interest responded to nothing tangible in their lives, corresponded to nothing they aspired to. They want change, and this is it.

In Egypt now, Mubarak has been toppled, but the very military that shared the spoils of power with him for over 30 years is still in place. I would think the future is still up for grabs.

**Why I study torture**

It makes me look into what constitutes a human being and how we protect that core of humanity that is in each of us. A democratic country is always in danger of reverting

to torture because it is a source of absolutely boundless power.

**My most recent books**

*Torture and the Twilight of Empire: From Algiers to Baghdad* (2007), and *Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women* (2009).

**Works in progress**

I am working on a book to be published in 2012 about the French philosopher Michel Foucault and the conundrum of culture – i.e., why he was unable to make sense of non-Western cultures like Iran and China. After that, I am working on a book on Islamic law.

**Recent reads**

*A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, *Ninety-Three* by Victor Hugo, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain.

**Why I return to literary classics**

I do academic work during the day. I want to do something different at night. The classics try to reach for something universal while they are addressing something local. They connect with something that transcends boundaries.

**Why CUNY matters**

It’s important to allow talented people who cannot pay \$40,000 per year to acquire a college education. A college education develops one’s capacity for critical thinking, for not taking things at face value, for asking questions. This should be available to as large a population as possible.

# Solidarity summer school for union women

By BEATRIZ GIL

I come from a family of self-made women and men. My mother’s roots are in the countryside of northern Mexico while my father comes from the gritty streets of Mexico City. His last job in Mexico City as a taxi driver and the series of jobs he took in the US – working the lettuce and poinsettia fields, washing dishes, assembling golf clubs and fixing cars – taught me that all work is valuable even if it is not well-paid.

**WORKING WOMEN**

Today, I work as a special projects coordinator at CUNY’s Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies, where I assist in developing new academic programs and partnerships for working adult students. Because of my experiences growing up, I bring immigrant issues to the forefront of the work we do. I participated in the United Farm Workers boycott campaign against strawberry growers as a college activist – but working at CUNY is the first time I have been a member of a union. So when I was offered the chance to attend

## Rutgers University, July 17-22

the 35th Annual Northeast Regional Summer School for Union Women last July, I jumped at the opportunity.

The summer school brought together over 100 rank-and-file women workers, union officers and staff to strengthen their knowledge of the labor movement and develop the skills to become more active and influential in their unions. Women make up approximately 45% of the unionized work force, but men still dominate the upper ranks of union leadership.

During our five days together on the Penn State campus, we heard from guest speakers and were given the chance to participate in workshops on collective bargaining, coalition building, public speaking, increasing rank-and-file participation, news writing, interviewing for radio, use of social media, labor law and the impact of the economic crisis on women.

In the collective bargaining workshop, I experienced what it’s like for union representatives and

management to sit face-to-face – it’s a high-stakes situation. You have to know what your bottom line is and what you are willing to negotiate on. As part of the workshop, we divided into management and union teams, each taking our role very seriously in a mock collective bargaining session. I now have a deeper appreciation for each of the stipulations in our contract, such as having a right to union representation in disciplinary proceedings and investigations.

In the Radio Waves media workshop, we took turns interviewing each other. In the process, we learned basic production skills as well as how a good interview can use storytelling as a powerful tool that makes people feel connected.

**GENERATIONAL DIVERSITY**

We also explored how women can form cross-generational alliances to challenge the deeply hierarchical workings of unions. A presentation on generational diversity

in the workplace highlighted the challenges unions face in staying relevant to younger workers, but unfortunately it focused on generational experiences more common to the white middle class than those of working-class people of color. Nonetheless, this got me thinking about how several generations striving together in the workplace can be a powerful force for change.

**LABOR LEGACY**

I met veteran labor activists like Ida Torres, President of Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) Local 3 here in New York, and Lois Gray, a long-time faculty member at Cornell University. I was inspired by their fierceness and lifelong passion and commitment to empowering women in leadership and education. With fewer younger workers having experience with unions, forging these cross-generational ties can help cultivate future women leaders.

Passing on the legacy of the struggle of women workers is a core mission of the Summer School for Union Women. Labor History Night featured stories of famous women like Sojourner Truth,

Mother Jones, Dolores Huerta, as well as the not-so-famous, who have overcome great challenges both at home and in the workplace and who have labored to make our society a better place.

When I was asked to present a story about a woman who had fought for worker rights, I told the story of my mother and countless women like her who care for the elderly, yet don’t have a union contract to rely on and must bear exploitative working conditions if they want to hold on to their jobs. Retelling my mother’s story helped me realize what may have been the most important lesson of that week: solidarity means solidarity with all workers, regardless of their skill, trade, where they are in the world, what documents they carry or what language they speak.

This year’s Northeast Regional Summer School for Union Women will be held at Rutgers University from July 17-22 (see [tinyurl.com/UnionWomen2](http://tinyurl.com/UnionWomen2) and [tinyurl.com/UnionWomen1](http://tinyurl.com/UnionWomen1)). Several women from the PSC attend the school each summer. For more information, contact Debra Bergen at [dbergen@pscmail.org](mailto:dbergen@pscmail.org).



# Junior faculty learn how to survive and thrive at CUNY

By JOHN TARLETON

“What makes for a really good mentor?”

“How are book chapters valued as opposed to peer-reviewed articles?”

“Why do some people get non-reappointed before their tenure clock is up?”

These were just a few of the questions posed at the PSC’s annual Junior Faculty Development Day on March 12.

## BE PRO-ACTIVE

Held at the PSC Union Hall, the event drew more than 75 junior faculty from across the CUNY system. They listened to, and participated in, panel discussions in which tenured colleagues shared information on the ins and outs of the tenure process, how to assert one’s rights under the contract, and ways to obtain more funding and support for their research.

Panelists emphasized that expectations and practices vary across colleges and departments, and can also change over time – and that junior faculty have to be pro-active in shaping their careers.

“Your first job is to be a good ethnographer of your own institution and understand how it works and how you fit in,” said Glenn Petersen, chair of the sociology and anthropology department at Baruch. “There’s no ‘one-size-fits-all.’ You have to be engaged.”

Junior faculty receive one-year appointments until a decision is made by the end of their seventh year on whether to grant tenure. All decisions on their employment must be based on the written record in their personal file. The panelists encouraged everyone present to be thorough in documenting their work. Attendees were also reminded that they have a right to see everything that goes into their file and to attach their own written comments.

## EVALUATIONS

“Create a paper trail,” said Julie George, an associate professor of political science at Queens College. George also emphasized the importance of cultivating a research niche and a network of academics at other colleges who will be willing to provide external letters of support when one comes up for tenure.

“I’ve heard it before, but it was good to hear it again,” Andra Ghent, a third-year assistant professor at Baruch’s Zicklin School of Business, said about the reminders to build a paper trail. The discussion led her to put a couple of things on her to-do list, she said.

Many junior faculty say they face rising research expectations while also carrying heavy teaching loads

## Veteran colleagues share tenure tips



Anne Marie Leveille, an assistant professor of nursing at Medgar Evers, asks a question during the PSC’s annual Junior Faculty Development Day on March 12.

and expectations to serve on a variety of departmental and college committees. In the contract agreement reached in 2006, the PSC doubled junior faculty reassigned time for scholarly work from 12 to 24 hours, expanding a right the union first won in 2002. However, many participants were unaware that they could advocate with their department chair for how they would like to take this time.

“This is the first time I’ve heard [about this],” said one junior faculty member, who described how their department initially gave incoming junior faculty a lighter teaching load of two courses per semester without explaining that there were other options.

Bob Cermele, professor of mathematics at City Tech and the college’s PSC chapter chair, urged attendees to put their research plan on pa-

per and present it to their department chairs. “Writing is a powerful thing,” he said.

“Reassigned time is not there to help a college balance its books.

## Creating a paper trail thwarts abuses.

It’s not there to make your chair’s life easier,” added Associate Professor of Sociology Timothy Shortell, the contract enforcement officer at Brooklyn College. “It’s there to enhance your scholarly production.”

Saavik Ford, assistant professor of astronomy at BMCC, urged junior faculty who are struggling with a large teaching load to carve out one day a week for their research. “Teaching can consume all your time if you let it,” she warned.

In the panel discussion on research, junior faculty were encouraged to make the most of every resource at their disposal – from becoming familiar with one’s col-

lege grants office, to working in collaboration with other institutions to seeking grant money to facilitate undergraduate research, to reaching out to the college’s communications department to get one’s accomplishments highlighted on the college website.

## ‘GET THEM EXCITED’

“Know of the administrators at your college and what proposals will get them excited and willing to help you,” advised Sarah Durand, associate professor of biology at LaGuardia.

Payal Doctor, a first year assistant professor of philosophy at LaGuardia, said she found the day’s discussions informative and helpful. “It’s really refreshing,” she added, “to know there’s somebody sticking up for us, that there’s a bigger unit and it’s not just everyone for themselves.”

## Wisconsin uprising

Continued from page 7

focus. Some, like TAA activist Peter Rickman, question whether “it’s the best use of our resources, the best use of the sympathy...among the public at large.” Others say it’s a longer range option.

Unions face a heavy burden simply dealing with the immediate consequences of Walker’s anti-union law. “All of our contract that we have worked for over decades is null and void,” said the TAA’s Gibbons. “This bill is a nightmare.”

## UNION DUES

Walker’s law bans public employers from accepting union members’ requests to have dues deducted from their paychecks, an attempt to cripple unions financially. “The employer can take deductions for the United Way...but they are prohibited from collecting union dues,” notes a police union, the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Association. Dues checkoff was a central issue in the Memphis sanitation workers’ strike during which Dr. Martin Luther King lost his life (see p.11).

The TAA plans to canvass members seeking authorization for monthly electronic transfers from their bank, and will organize union-building parties at which they hope to sign up many people at once.

Like other public unions, the TAA now faces annual certification elections, forcing it to put resources into a permanent organizing drive.

But in the fight to overturn these restrictions, Gibbons says the TAA also has new sources of strength. “A lot more people are now aware of what a union is capable of,” he told *Clarion*.

General meetings now attract hundreds of participants, Gibbons said, and dozens of people are participating in each of the union’s committees. This provides a window of strength, in which the TAA can tap the energy of their new movement, before the long-term drag of Walker’s restrictions is in full effect.

“If there’s a time we can push through this,” Gibbons said, “now is the time.”

Union members across the state appear determined to win their rights back, and early signs suggest that labor’s new momentum could alter Wisconsin politics in ways that Walker never had in mind.

A popular chant on March 12 caught Wisconsin unionists’ current mood:

“Scott, you may not remember me, but I can recall you!”

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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

# Why we defend Triborough

By **RICHARD CASAGRANDE**  
New York State United Teachers General Counsel  
& **DEBORAH MILHAM**  
New York State United Teachers Senior Counsel

If you are a public employee in New York, you might have read that something called the Triborough Amendment has to be repealed because it gives you and your union too much power. Don't believe it. The truth is that Triborough, a part of New York State labor law, has leveled the bargaining playing field and stops public employers from slashing your salary and benefits – including crucial health care benefits – while your union is negotiating for a new contract. New York's Constitution provides that human labor is not a commodity and that working people have the right to join unions and collectively bargain. For the public sector, bargaining rights are defined by the 1967 Taylor Law (Civil Service Law Article 14). Under the Taylor Law, unions are prohibited from striking, the traditional weapon of last resort used by labor to pressure management. Management, in turn, is prohibited

from reducing or eliminating contract rights or benefits while the parties negotiate for a successor agreement. To shift the current balance in management's favor would encourage employers to delay or avoid bargaining in order to make unilateral changes to contracts. In its 1972 Triborough Bridge & Tunnel Authority decision, the Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) interpreted the Taylor Law to prohibit employers from changing terms and conditions of employment while a successor agreement was being negotiated. This principle became known as the Triborough Doctrine. **PROTECTIONS** The doctrine, however, did not protect all contract provisions, only those dealing with mandatory subjects of bargaining, such as salary and hours. Movement within salary schedules and implementation of increments were excluded. Further, when a contract expired, public employers were free to alter contract provisions on permissive subjects of bargaining, such as retiree benefits, class size and staffing levels, among others. Binding arbitration provisions also lapsed when the contract expired. This meant that once the contract expired, the union was still powerless to strike, but the employer could diminish or discontinue important contract benefits at will. To address this imbalance, the legislature in 1982 enacted the Triborough Amendment, which had strong support from labor and management. The governor's office, in fact, issued a supporting memo, noting the amendment would guarantee that labor and management came to the table as equals. The amendment expanded the Triborough Doctrine by making it an improper practice for an employer "to refuse to continue all the terms of an expired agreement until a new agreement is negotiated," unless the union violated the no-strike provision. This meant that all provisions of the contract, except those specifically intended by the parties to sunset on a certain date, would continue until a successor agreement was negotiated – unless, of course, the union engaged in a strike. Before Triborough, the number of public sector labor strikes in New York peaked

at 28 annually. In the years following the amendment, no more than four strikes have taken place in any given year, and there have been many years with no strikes at all. Further, Triborough ended the practice of overreaching by public employers who, without the amendment, could and would threaten unions and working women and men with loss of crucial contract benefits in order to get negotiating concessions.

**NO TO REPEAL** Repeal of the Triborough Amendment would have a chilling effect on public sector labor relations. Public employers would regain the power to eliminate or diminish important contract provisions while negotiating a new contract. They would have an incentive to delay negotiations past the contract's expiration date so they could alter your contract unilaterally. This kind of unilateral power could have a devastating effect on New York's public sector labor relations and on your contract rights – rights that we have fought for. New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) will oppose any Triborough repeal.

*A full version of this article was published in the February 18 issue of NYSUT United.*

POEMS

by Maria Terrone

## Unmentionable

Buried  
at the bottom of my lingerie drawer,  
an antique, skin-toned wisp of silk  
trimmed with lace and snapping shut  
in complicated ways.

A frayed label says  
Triangle Shirtwaist Company.

I cannot remember when or how  
it came to be here.

I cannot see this confection without  
seeing smoke, locked doors and fiery dives  
through cruel, unmothering space.

Whose hands cut the silk,  
sewed stitches so fine?  
Did she hang by a thread for days  
to die, or survive,  
a wild-eyed girl-child?

This garment I'll never wear  
sears me, sighing  
from its perfumed vault.

## from The Passage

*(From an undated photograph  
of New York City subway construction workers)*

### 3. Four Men Under a River

They've arrived. Survived  
the Atlantic, that oily black cur growling  
day and night like the ship's engine  
at their ears. Survived the deepest  
deck heaving human muck, the awful  
undertow of yearning that pulled  
them clear across the sea. They've arrived,  
landing in this cave below a river, on the jagged  
shores of an underworld reserved for men  
like them. The work boots of the man up front  
tilt oddly, as if struggling for a toehold,  
high laces like rope ladders climbing the darkness.  
Entering the airlock to descend  
the caisson, did they know that hunger  
would return to consume them?  
That with every breath,  
they would once more feel the crashing  
ocean in their heads?  
They've arrived, shoulders sloped  
as if the men themselves were ballast –  
a gritty mass laid down at the foundation  
of what will surely rise.

## The Glass Factory

*"Morals in the glass factories are proverbially bad."  
– An inspector's comment, caption to a 1908 Lewis Hines photo*

Even a decent girl can hide nothing here.  
I see the boys and even the old ones  
stare at my smock, then my eyes, as if they can see  
clean through. It's mighty dangerous, too.

If a body's not careful, you can get scraped  
by sand, burned, or cut real bad.  
Between the boys and the heat  
and the broken glass, I tried to carry myself

as if I was a babe wrapped tight  
in one of the thick quilts ma makes.  
They still stared – maybe even more –  
and I got tired trying to hold back.

The words they say to me! Even with the furnace  
roaring, they whisper against my ear 'til  
I feel something taking shape inside me,  
first soft as taffy, then sparkling like the glass beast

I saw a man make once, blowing through his lips.  
I want to keep their words like the preserves  
that will fill these jars so I can take them out  
next year when I turn 14, and I'm feeling old.

[March 25, 2011, is the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, in which 146 women workers were killed. For information on events remembering the disaster and the movements it inspired, see page 9.]

*"The Passage" first appeared in Southern Poetry Review and appears in full in The Bodies We Were Loaned (The Word Works). "The Glass Factory" appeared in VIA. Terrone's most recent book is American Gothic, Take 2 (Finishing Line Press). She is currently at Queens College and has been at CUNY since 1990.*



'ALL LABOR HAS DIGNITY'

# Martin Luther King and union rights

By MICHAEL HONEY

On April 4, 1968, an assassin robbed us of one of the greatest prophetic voices of the 20th century. Although many people know that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., died in Memphis, many don't know what he was doing there. They don't know that he died in a struggle for the right of public workers to have a union.

Throughout his life, King stood up for union rights. His teachings about the rights of labor can serve us well in our own trying times, when those rights are under fresh assault.

One of King's phrases that we rarely hear is this: "All labor has dignity." King spoke these words to a mass meeting of over 10,000 people in Memphis on March 18, 1968, in the midst of a strike of 1,300 black sanitation workers. Some 40% of these workers were so poor they received welfare benefits even though they worked 60-hour weeks. Speaking of both sanitation workers in Memphis and the working poor across the country, King said, "You are reminding, not only Memphis, but you are reminding the nation that it is a crime for people to live in this rich nation and receive starvation wages."

But the strike was not just about pay. "Let it be known everywhere," King declared, "that along with wages and all of the other securities that you are struggling for, you are also struggling for the right to organize and be recognized." The key issues for the Memphis strikers were their demands that the City of Memphis grant collective bargaining rights and the collection of union dues – the very two items that Gov. Scott Walker targeted in Wisconsin. Like city officials in Memphis, Walker knows that if you can say no to bargaining rights and dues collection, you can kill the union.

## RACE & RIGHTS

The Memphis sanitation workers' strike was part of the black freedom struggle. Jerry Wurf, national president of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), to which the sanitation workers' Local 1733 belonged, defined Memphis as "a race conflict and a rights conflict" as well as a union conflict. But white municipal workers had also suffered from local government's hostility to unions. While many of the city's white craft workers got paid at union scale, they had no contract. And when white firefighters, teachers and police officers tried to organize unions, the city fired and blacklisted them; city officials did not want organized workers exercising any independence or raising the costs of their labor.

Opposition to public-employee unionism was a strong tradition in Memphis. Sounding like Fox News today, City Councilmember Gwen Awsumb warned in 1968 that the "ultimate destruction of the country could come through the municipal unions."

Memphis Mayor Henry Loeb III came from a family of anti-union employers. Like Gov. Walker and other Republicans today, he held that public employees should not have the right to collectively bargain over their conditions of work, and said he would never sign a union contract. Like Walker, Loeb wanted to cut public jobs to help end an operating deficit: he wanted sanitation workers to do more work for less pay. If they didn't like it, they could quit.



It is a little remembered fact that Martin Luther King was protesting for worker rights in Memphis at the time of his assassination on April 4, 1968. Pictured above: Memphis sanitation workers on strike in the 1968 strike supported by Rev. King.

The AFSCME union insisted that workers had a moral and constitutional right to act *together* – to bargain collectively, not just individually. Field organizer P.J. Ciampa, sent in to help, reminded strikers of their rights under both the Thirteenth and First Amendments. "I don't know of any law in Tennessee that says you have to subject yourself to indentured servitude," Ciampa told striking sanitation workers. "As a free American citizen you are expressing yourself by saying: 'I am not working for those stinking wages and conditions.'"

King, who was no stranger to confronting unjust laws and court injunctions, fully supported sanitation workers' right to collective action. "We can get more organized together than we can apart," King said in his March 18 speech. "And this is the way we gain power.... What is power? Walter Reuther said once that 'power is the ability of a labor union like UAW to make the most powerful corporation in the world – General Motors – say yes when it wants to say no.' And I want you to stick it out so that you will be able to make Mayor Loeb and others say yes, even when they want to say no."

King's support for the sanitation workers reflected his long-held concern for economic justice. With some 25 million unemployed and many more underemployed, with 50 million without health insurance and 44 million living in poverty, King's prophetic words in Memphis ring true today: "Do you know that most of the poor people in our country are working every day? And they are making wages so low that they cannot begin to function in the mainstream of the economic life of our nation."

## ECONOMIC EQUALITY

The second phase of the civil rights movement, King said, would have to be the struggle for "economic equality." To that end, he came to Memphis as part of his Poor People's Campaign. He sought to organize a mass movement to demand that

Congress shift its priorities from funding military buildup and war to funding jobs, housing, health care, and education. The richest country in the history of the world, he said, could afford to eliminate poverty. What it lacked was the will to do it.

## MORAL VISION

In that regard, King reminded strikers and their supporters in Memphis of the story of Dives in the Bible, who went to hell because he passed by the suffering Lazarus every day without ever paying attention to his brother's plight. "And I come by here to say that...if America does not use her vast resources of wealth to end poverty and make it possible for all God's children to have the basic necessities of life, she, too, will go to hell." Today our government and media seem incapable of grasping King's moral vision – but King emphasized throughout his life that human rights include labor rights.

Republicans today have targeted the very union King helped to build in Memphis. Founded in Wisconsin, AFSCME flowered after King died in the successful fight for union rights in Memphis in 1968. AFSCME became one of the largest unions in the country, with King regarded as an honorary member and practically a founder of the union.

Racial justice is at issue in today's attacks on public worker unions. Thanks to the destruction of manufacturing jobs and unions, the one toehold many black and minority workers (and especially women among them) still have in the economy is in unionized public employment. Now, the Republicans want to take that away.

The GOP not only wants to eliminate public employee unions but also to pass "right to work" (for less) laws that take away the requirement that workers in unionized jobs pay union dues or their equivalent. Just as it has done throughout the South, this type of law would undermine unions

by starving them of funds, while, in King's words, providing "no rights and no work."

In King's framework, killing public employee unions today would be immoral as well as foolish. He said the three evils facing humankind are war, racism and economic injustice. The purpose of a union is to overcome the latter evil, and without them, unions wages and living conditions will go down for a significant number of workers, especially women and workers of color.

## UNION POWER

King always saw unionization as a moral as well as a political question. As he told organizers at the Highlander Folk School, "I never intend to adjust myself to the tragic inequalities of an economic system which takes necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes."

King's rhetoric spotlights the central question in today's budget battles: Who should pay? Today's public employees have won better wages and conditions than those faced by Memphis sanitation workers 43 years ago. But they still live fairly modest lives – and it was not teachers, firefighters or sanitation workers who caused our nation's economic and fiscal collapse. Why, then, should they be asked to pay for its cost, instead of the private-sector profiteers who created a gambling casino on Wall Street and left the public to pay the bill? Is that economic justice?

King believed that power concedes nothing without a struggle, and for that reason he long supported union organizing. Indeed, he went beyond that to support other forms of direct action that may be increasingly appropriate today as Republicans try to break the last hold of public employees on a living wage.

In Memphis, King called for a general strike in support of the sanitation workers' demands. "You may have to escalate the struggle a bit," he told his audience. "If they keep refusing, and they will not recognize the union, and will not agree for the check-off for the collection of dues, I tell you what you ought to do, and you are together here enough to do it: in a few days you ought to get together and just have a *general work stoppage* in the city of Memphis."

## FIGHTING ON

King's audience responded with thunderous applause and cheers, because they knew that African Americans did so much of the city's work. If teachers, sanitation workers, students, and workers across the board went on strike they could definitely shut the city down.

King said, "All labor has dignity." There is no more important time than the present for us to remember his words and to follow King's lead in fighting for union rights as human rights. In the wake of the anti-union assault and pro-union protests in Wisconsin and other Midwestern states, let us reflect on where King would have stood in that fight were he alive today.

My bet is that he would be in the streets, fighting for the rights of workers.

*Michael Honey, Haley Professor of Humanities at the University of Washington, Tacoma, is editor of All Labor Has Dignity (Beacon Press, 2011), a collection of King's speeches on labor, and author of Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign (W.W. Norton, 2007).*

# 'A race conflict and a rights conflict.'





## A (telephone) call to mobilize

CUNY and other public services are under fierce attack as politicians plan for deep reductions in funding – while cutting taxes for New York's richest 3%.

Now is the time to speak out for the other 97%. The deadline for a new State budget is April 1, and your action today can make a difference.

Pick up the phone and ask your State Senator and Assemblymember to oppose more reductions in CUNY fund-

ing. Urge them to renew the current income tax surcharge on taxable income above \$200,000. (See p.3.) Tell them it's wrong to make CUNY pay for tax cuts for the rich.

Don't know the name or phone number of your legislators? You can find them online, at [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org). To find your representatives, enter your address in the top field, and then choose "Current Officials" on the next page.

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# Are rich people leaving NY?

By SUNSHINE LUDDER & CHLOE TRIBICH

Supporters of tax cuts for the rich never get tired of repeating the same claim: *If you tax rich people, they will leave.*

Governor Cuomo has said it. Mayor Bloomberg has said it. The Partnership for New York City, a group of 200 CEOs, has said it. But despite how often this line is repeated, there's no evidence for the claim that wealthy populations are moving in response to tax rates – and quite a bit of evidence points in the opposite direction.

### THE FACTS

"Taxes Not Seen as Making the Rich Flee New York," concluded a 2009 analysis in *The New York Times* that looked at the data behind the claims. The *Wall Street Journal's* Wealth Report reached the same conclusion in February 2011: "New York's Vanishing Millionaires – and Other Myths" was how the *Journal* summed it up.

Even E.J. McMahon of the right-wing Manhattan Institute concedes the point. "I kind of clench my teeth every time [then-Gov.] Paterson says people will leave," he told the *Times* in 2009. "It is the selling point. It's also a dumb point," McMahon said. "Nobody says your wealthy enclaves will shrink dramatically."

Here's some of what recent studies have found:

- From 2003-2005, New York imposed a temporary tax hike on its highest-income residents. During the years that surcharge was in place the state saw a 30% growth in high-income tax returns.

- New York consistently ranks high in its percentage of high net-worth households: currently New York is 12th among the 50 states. Significantly, four of the states that outrank New York have top income tax rates that are as high or higher.

- The current income tax surcharge on the highest-paid people in New York was adopted in 2009. In the year after these high-end tax

## Evidence points the other way



A higher rate for the highest paid? A March 15 rally in Union Square.

rates went into effect, the number of high-net-worth households in the state grew by more than 10%.

- California voters raised the tax rate on millionaire earners to 10.3% – higher than New York's current top rate. The outcome there? California's millionaire households increased by nearly 38% over the three years after the voter-approved tax hike took effect in 2005 – while the total number of taxpayers rose only 4.2%.

- A similar trend – disproportionate growth of high-income households – also followed when California temporarily raised high-end income taxes in the 1990s. The California Budget Project calls the idea that rich people have left the state due to taxes "one of the oft-

cited urban legends in California politics."

When the number of high-income households in a state increases, it can be hard to distinguish how much this stems from incomes rising in the upper brackets, and how much it stems from people moving from one state to another. Still, it's striking that none of these studies found evidence for predictions that the rich will flee from higher taxes.

### PRINCETON STUDY

Following the passage of a "half-millionaire" tax in New Jersey (at the same income level and rate as New York's current surcharge), Princeton University researchers conducted a detailed analysis of individual New

Jersey tax data before and after the tax change, which took effect as of January 1, 2004. The bottom line? New Jersey's tax increase has raised close to \$1 billion a year – and led fewer than 1% of affected households to consider a move out of state.

The authors of the Princeton study noted the difficulty of pinning down the motivating factors for migration patterns. But here's what they did determine: people moving out of New Jersey are more likely to be on the lower end of the income scale, and move to places with lower housing costs.

### SKEPTICISM

Similarly, a 2007 study by the New York City comptroller looked at population data for a recent period when New York City temporarily increased income taxes on top earners (also 2003-2005). According to *The New York Times*, the City's study found that "households with incomes of \$250,000 and higher were the least likely to leave."

It's possible that some wealthy people may consider moving out of state when their taxes rise, but studies have yet to demonstrate any statistically significant evidence for the idea. Rush Limbaugh loudly declared his departure after New York's current surcharge was approved, but he's likely outnumbered by others who move into New York for a job opportunity, or to be near family, or to take advantage of the concentration of business and cultural amenities supported here.

The *Wall Street Journal's* Wealth Report pressed the head of the Partnership for New York City for hard data to back up the Partnership's claims for rich people leaving New York due to tax rates. "It's a very difficult thing to measure" she said, and added, "We get a lot of it anecdotally. Our evidence is from conversations with lots of high earners."

The lack of sound data methods aside, there's reason for skepticism

when anti-tax advocates base their claims on individual examples. The Partnership consistently advocates against taxes for high-income earners (see p.4), so it's reasonable to think that its anecdotal sample is not random.

David Thompson of Phoenix Affluent Market, a firm that provides state rankings of high-net-worth households, commented on the fact that some of the top-ranked states have high income tax rates on the wealthy. "Most high-net-worth households don't base their living decision on tax rates, but on things like quality of life, access to good education, infrastructure and culture," he told the *Journal's* Wealth Report.

New York, particularly Manhattan, has a special advantage of attracting and retaining wealthy residents: its cultural and business amenities and infrastructure. The fact that the vast majority of the state's income is generated in New York City suggests that even relatively high State and City taxes – not to mention the cost of real estate and private school tuition – don't scare off high earners.

Meanwhile, everyday New Yorkers face limited job prospects and declining state services. As BMCC student Jenny Perdomo told *Clarion* during the fight over last year's State budget, "I think the people who are actually moving out of the city are not the rich. They're the hardworking people, like my sister, who just recently moved to North Carolina."

If the surcharge on New York's highest incomes is allowed to expire, public services will deteriorate – and regular New Yorkers will suffer. We should make sure that budget decisions are based on facts, not myths – no matter how often those myths are repeated.

*Sunshine Ludder & Chloe Tribich are Senior Policy Organizers with the Center for Working Families ([www.cwfny.org](http://www.cwfny.org)).*

**Wall Street Journal concludes that it's a myth.**