



August 2013    Issue 1  
Academic Year 2013-2014

# Retirees Newsletter

Professional Staff Congress  
Jack Judd, Editor

## I. SEPTEMBER CHAPTER MEETING.

Our first monthly meeting will be on Monday, September 9, at 1 PM, in the PSC Union Hall, 16<sup>th</sup> floor, 61 Broadway. PSC President Barbara Bowen will report on “The State of the Union.” PSC Vice President Steve London will speak on “City Elections: What’s at Stake,” a timely topic with primary elections being held the next day. There will be lots of discussion. Light refreshments will be served.

**Welcoming New Retirees.** Preceding the chapter meeting, from 12-1 PM, a light lunch will be served for faculty and professional staff who joined the retiree ranks during the past year. They have all been sent letters of invitation. Veteran retirees are invited to join us to help welcome our newly retired colleagues. **If you wish to join our new retirees for lunch at noon, you must RSVP** to Kim Lashley at the PSC office by phone (212-354-1252) or email (klashley@pscmail.org) by Wednesday, September 4.

## II. TAKE THE SURVEY TO HELP US BETTER SHAPE OUR

## CHAPTER MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS.



The survey is intended to help identify both what brings folks to our chapter meetings and programs as well as what keeps them away. It will help the chapter's Executive Committee plan chapter activities that can engage an ever widening circle of our members. We urge chapter members who live in the greater NYC metro area to take a few minutes to complete the survey online at [psc-cuny.org/form/retiree-chapter-survey](http://psc-cuny.org/form/retiree-chapter-survey). (If you would rather complete the survey in print and mail it back, you can download the survey at [tinyurl.com/PSCretireeSurvey](http://tinyurl.com/PSCretireeSurvey).)

## III. NEW CHAPTER OFFICERS

*In April, elections were held for chapter officers for 2013-16. Even though this was an uncontested election, 1,125 chapter members voted. We had a much higher rate of participation than any other chapter, including those with contested elections. The elected officers are:*

**Chair**, William Friedheim; **Vice Chair**, Joel Berger; **Secretary**, Jean Weisman; **Officers-At-Large**, Patricia Bramwell, Francine Brewer, Judith Bronfman, Jacob Judd; **Delegates to the DA**, Joan Greenbaum, John Hyland, David Kotelchuck, Stephen Leberstein, Cecelia McCall, Jim Perlstein; **Alternates to the DA**, Miriam Balmuth, Jackie DiSalvo, Ezra Seltzer, Santiago Villafane, Robert Wurman; **PSC/CUNY Welfare Advisory Council**, Irwin Yellowitz.

#### **IV. 2013-14 CHAPTER MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS**

##### **Monday, September 9.**

12-1 PM: Luncheon for new retirees. 186 faculty and professional staff retired over the past year. All have been invited to a luncheon preceding our first chapter meeting.

1-3 PM: First monthly meeting. It will begin with the traditional "State of the Union Address" by PSC President Barbara Bowen. She will be followed by PSC Vice President Steve London whose topic is: "City

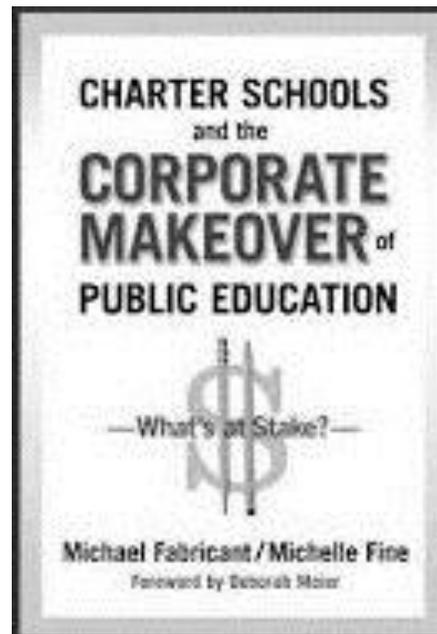
Elections: What's at Stake." This is very timely with primary elections being held the next day.

##### **Monday, October 7.**

Austerity Education. An analysis of how austerity politics is shaping and compromising public K-16 education. Speaker: PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant, co-author with Michelle Fine of *Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Education: What's at Stake?*

##### **Monday, November 4.**

Our Benefits Package – and How We Defend It. Speakers: PSC Welfare Fund Executive Director Larry Morgan on our Welfare Fund Benefits. Tentatively, other speakers on Municipal Labor Coalition discussions on NYC health benefits now and in the future.



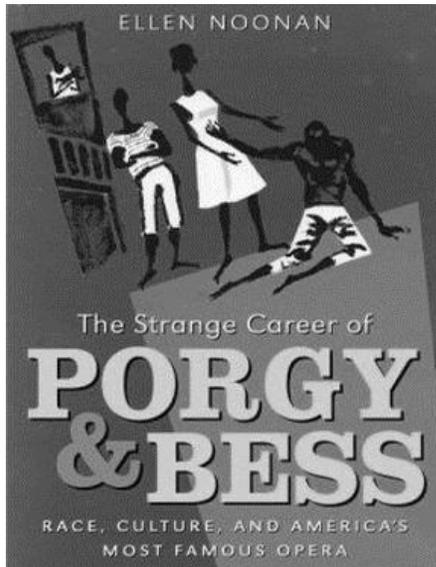
**Monday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>.**

The Political Outlook: 2013 – 14. A summing-up of the November council and mayoral election results, and analysis of the issues in the 2014 congressional elections. Speakers: Ed Ott (Murphy Center) and others.

**January Luncheon. Date TBA.**

The New York City Teachers Union. Speaker: Clarence Taylor's (Baruch College) discussion will be based on his recently published book, *Reds at the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights, and the New York City Teachers Union* (Columbia University Press).

**Monday, February 2.**



Speaker: Ellen Noonan (American Social History Project/CUNY Grad Center), author of *The Strange Career of Porgy and Bess: Race, Culture and America's Most Famous Opera*. (University of North Carolina Press)

**Monday, March 3.**

Pensions: Why They Need to be Defended and Expanded for All Working People. Speakers: Guest TBA and PSC Coordinator of Pensions and Benefits Jared Herst. We expect to have representatives from TRS and TIAA available for small group consultations at the end of the meeting.

**Monday, April 7.**

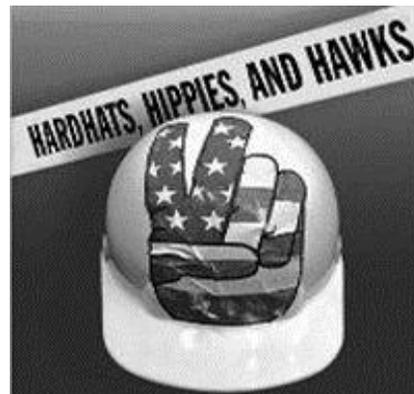
New Energy in the Labor Movement. Speaker: Ruth Milkman (Murphy Center).

**Monday, May 5.**

Subject and Speakers: TBA.

**June Luncheon. Date: TBA**

Speaker: Penny Lewis (Murphy Center), author of *Hardhats, Hippies and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Cornell University Press). Contrary to the conventional narrative of the anti-war movement, Lewis argues that opposition to the Vietnam War cut across class lines and actually was strongest among workers.



## V. ENDORSEMENTS FOR NYC ELECTIONS 2013

The PSC has endorsed Bill de Blasio for Mayor, Letitia James for Public Advocate, and Scott Stringer for Comptroller. Forty-two city council candidates have also received the union's support. To learn more about these campaigns, including how to volunteer, visit [psc-cuny.org/endorsements2013](http://psc-cuny.org/endorsements2013)

## VI. DESPITE SOME HISTORIC ADVANCES, STRUGGLES FOR EQUALITY CONTINUE

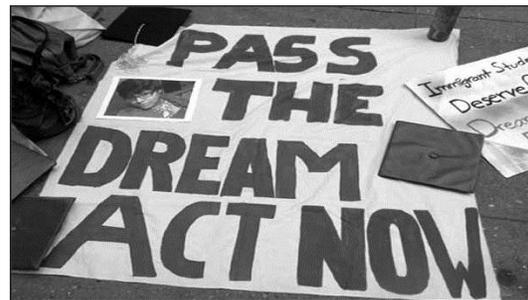
*Both the May chapter meeting (immigrant rights) and June luncheon (women's rights) dealt with struggles for equality. Vice Chairman, Joel Berger, provides a summary below of both events.*

### May Meeting

The struggle of today's undocumented students to achieve financial aid eligibility and a path to citizenship mirrors the struggle of Louisa May Alcott and Margaret Fuller, who fought to achieve dignity and respect for women in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. These themes were explored at the final two chapter meetings of the academic year.

Addressing the prospects for enactment of a "Dream Act" in the New York State Legislature at the May chapter meeting, Kate Pfordresher, PSC director of research and public policy, outlined provisions which the PSC and the AFL-CIO support both at the national and state levels.

The New York State Dream Act is a bill that would allow undocumented immigrant youth access to state financial aid. Earlier efforts in New York State were successful in allowing undocumented students at CUNY and SUNY to pay in-state tuition rates. However, such students are not eligible to receive state financial aid from programs such as the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).

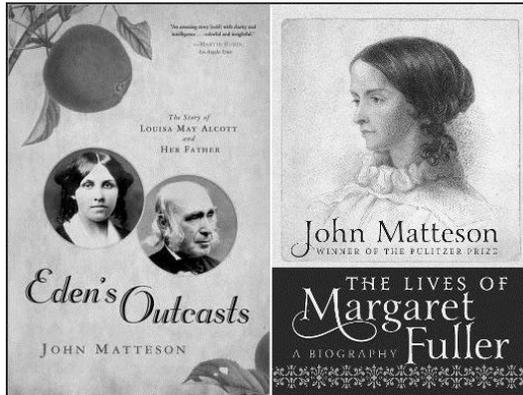


The PSC, along with student groups, has been lobbying members of the State Assembly and State Senate, urging them to support the New York State Dream Act. The Bill passed the Assembly this spring, but the leadership coalition in the Senate did not bring the bill to the floor. Ms. Pfordresher urged continued concerted efforts on the part of the PSC membership to make the dreams of these students a reality.

### June Luncheon

Seventy years after the death of Margaret Fuller, the first step toward equality for women became a reality when women received the right to vote via the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. How Margaret Fuller and Louisa May Alcott helped to transform American womanhood was conveyed to the chapter at its June luncheon meeting in a scintillating, informative style by Distinguished Professor and Pulitzer

Prize winner John Matteson of John Jay College.



Providing historical perspective, Professor Matteson described the beginnings of the struggle for feminist empowerment. He showed how Bronson Alcott (Louisa's father), Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Margaret Fuller were connected. They believed that by expanding women's rights, society would benefit. Fuller's essays on women's rights advanced the cause, as did the non-fiction work of Louisa May Alcott.

Fuller, born in 1810, was 22 years older than Alcott. Margaret lived only 40 years, dying in a shipwreck off Fire Island in 1850. She had taught in Bronson Alcott's school, and became an intimate friend of Emerson.

Louisa was also influenced by Emerson and the transcendentalists. Professor Matteson's well-constructed narrative showed how these two women, though different in age and temperament, provided the impetus for societal change.

## VII. A NOTE TO IRMAA PARTICIPANTS

NYC's Office of Labor Relations just posted the forms to be filed for 2012 reimbursements.

For the four-page packet of material containing instructions and forms for filing, go to:

[tinyurl.com/IRMAArefund](http://tinyurl.com/IRMAArefund).

Reimbursement checks will be sent in March 2014.

A word of caution: Send your required forms back to the Office of Labor Relations by registered mail.

## VIII. A MAIL ALERT: MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENTS

For those who are enrolled in a City health plan and are Medicare eligible, the 2012 standard Medicare Part-B reimbursements have been mailed. Recipients should receive checks this month.

## IX. Reminder – NYC Dependency Audit

If you have a spouse or other dependent covered by your NYC Health Insurance and you are less than 80 years old, you should have received a request from the City to verify the eligibility of your dependent. You must submit copies of required materials by October 4, 2013. If you did not receive a request, contact the NYC Employee Benefits Program at 212-306-7200.

## **X. ANNUAL CHAPTER REPORT; 2012-13**

*At the business meeting before the June 2013 annual luncheon, Jim Perlstein, outgoing chair, presented the following report on the retirees chapter for the academic year 2012-2013.*

### **Membership**

Chapter membership as of March 2013 stood at 2,651, an increase of 7 from the previous spring, but a decline of 35 compared to Fall 2012. We have had some success in increasing participation of HEOs, CLTs and retirees from the Educational Opportunity Centers.

### **Executive Committee**

The chapter continues to be led by a diverse, hardworking and collegial EC whose membership has been enriched by four newcomers elected in the Spring 2013 chapter election. The work of the Executive Committee defines what is meant by collective leadership.

### **Chapter Meetings**

Monthly chapter meetings take place at the PSC from October through May. Attendance varies from approximately 30 to 50. The chapter has instituted a regular practice of holding a September meeting for new members. The January and June meetings are luncheons that typically combine a cultural/topical presentation with a service award.

Regular meeting programs combine information on member benefits and retirement issues with presentations regarding social, economic or political issues of current concern. While generally well received, the

EC has come to recognize that program might be more coherent and effective if it followed from a strategic plan for the work of the chapter in the year ahead.

### **Communications**

The chapter produces a monthly



*The retirees' page on the PSC website.*

newsletter that keeps the entire membership apprised of general union concerns and those specifically related to retirees. It reports on chapter meetings, the union calendar and political issues. We are currently shepherding a transition, insofar as possible, from regular to electronic mailings.

We have a web page on the PSC website that is under constant development and expansion and is updated almost daily.

We make increasing use of email communication with members.

### **Member Involvement in Union Work**

Manifesting retiree engagement with the larger concerns of the PSC, retiree Executive Committee members chaired or served as active members of the Legislative, Solidarity, Academic Freedom, and Peace & Justice Committees. An Exec Committee member serves on

the PSC Communications Committee and is the PSC Webmaster, and other members serve on the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund and its Advisory Board. Members of the chapter are also active on the International Committee. The chapter is thus well integrated into the work of the union.

### **Member Outreach Initiative**

We have done preliminary work correlating chapter members' addresses by zip code in hopes that neighborhood aggregations may find it easier to engage with the work of the union where they live and thus become more active union members.

### **Political Action**

In the fundraising campaign for VOTE-COPE, the chapter raised over \$13,000 from its members. Chapter members worked actively in lobbying efforts on behalf of the PSC, NYSUT, public higher education and public education generally in Albany, at City Hall and in the five boroughs. Retirees comprised significant contingents at rallies and demonstrations in support of PSC issues. And members participated in electoral work, joining in out-of-state GOTV efforts and out-of-state phone banking for the 2012 election. Members active with the Legislation Committee of the union are currently engaged with efforts to build support for labor issues in the upcoming municipal elections.

### **Cultural Activities**

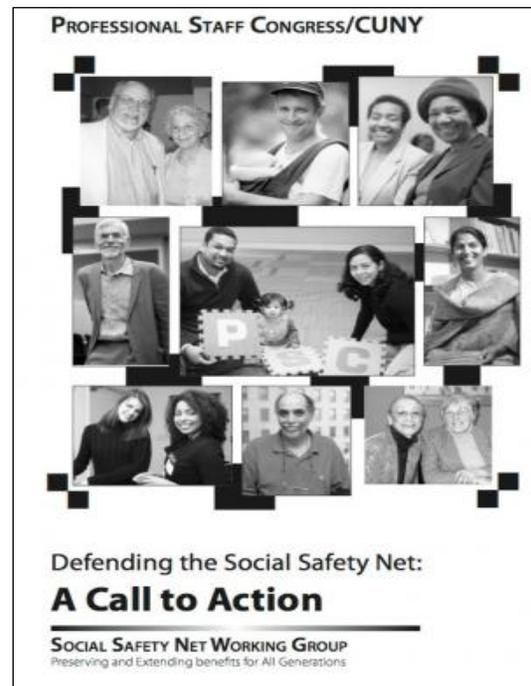
The chapter sponsors a Social Problems Book Group which has met monthly for nearly four years and the chapter has continued, although without similar success, to encourage members to form other

book groups around areas of interest to the prospective participants. The chapter once again organized a theater party, open to all PSC members and guests, attending performances of the Working Theater.

### **Affiliations and Alliances**

Members of the chapter Executive Committee maintained an active role in NYSUT retiree affairs, served as delegates and Executive Board members of the New York City Alliance for Retired Americans (NYCARA), chaired and served as delegates to the Council of Municipal Retiree Organizations (COMRO), joined the steering committees of the No Bad Grand Bargain Coalition and the Caring Across Generations Campaign, worked with Rekindling Reform and participated in the NYS Senior Action Council.

### **Social Safety Net Working Group**



*Cover of the booklet produced by the Social Safety Net Working Group.*

The defense and expansion of the Social Safety Net, that is, pensions, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and related government programs that protect the vulnerable and the young, continues to be the central project of the chapter. To date we have distributed over 5,000 copies our booklet and are currently working closely with NYSUT to develop a training program to broaden safety net defense activism across the state. We have effectively partnered with the No Bad Grand Bargain Coalition, which is leading lobbying efforts in the metro area to strengthen the resistance of New York's congressional delegation to federal, state and local cuts in social welfare programs. The Working Group organized a successful citywide forum this spring on the implication of the budget sequester for safety net programs.

### **Florida Chapter**

As a result of new local leadership and active engagement by the PSC and the retiree chapter, our Florida members are getting better organized, beginning to consider broadening their range of the activity to include local political work on retiree issues and establishing connections with UFT retirees in Florida.

### **Ongoing Issues**

- We have close to 2,700 members but attendance at monthly meeting hovers below 50 and retirees we might call activists number in the 20s. While this may be par for the course and better than participation in many union retiree organizations,

there is clearly room for improvement.

- The chapter continues to struggle with the need to expand, expedite and simplify communications with a dispersed membership.
- We would benefit greatly from greater participation of retirees of color.