

JUNE 2019



Academic Year 2018-9 No. 9

psc-cuny.org/retirees

**ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON
MONDAY, JUNE 10, 12:30-2:30 PM
CUNY GRADUATE CENTER
9th Floor (room 9204-7)**

THE GREEN NEW DEAL



Speaker: Michael Menser. Prof. Menser has taught at Brooklyn College for almost a quarter century and has served on the college's Sustainability Council and the Provost's Task Force on City-Based Sustainability Education. He is a member of the doctoral faculty in Earth and Environmental Sciences and Environmental Psychology at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Reservations closed. Please note that only the first 120 people who sent in a reservation and have received a confirmation can attend. Sorry indeed, but the space does not hold more. However, all can come to the Year Round-Up coffee hour (see below). ■

YEAR ROUND-UP

Graduate Center Room C 197

The **10:30 AM coffee hour**, which precedes the luncheon, is on the Concourse level at the Graduate Center. This is our yearly round-up of what we as a chapter have done and what we plan to do. Everyone: your ideas and presence are welcome. There will be coffee and bagels and Danish. This is a free event. All are welcome. No reservations needed. ■

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

WORKING THEATER

THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 7 PM

**A.R.T New York Mezzanine Theater
502 W. 53rd St @ 10th Ave.**

Join us once again as we fill a theater with PSC friends and family. This year we will see "Dropping Gumballs on Luke Wilson," a humorous and ultimately disturbing account of power in the workplace.

There are a few remaining tickets; to reserve a ticket email Steve Leberstein sleberstein@gmail.com. Tickets are **\$22 paid to Working Theater.** ■

**Have a great and healthy summer.
See you Monday, September 9
from 1-3 PM for our opening meeting
of the 2019-20 academic year.**

THE MONTH THAT WAS MAY CHAPTER MEETING Dimensions of Living a Good Older Life

On Monday, May 6 Kathryn Haslanger, chief executive officer of the Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (JASA), one of the largest agencies serving the aged in the New York metropolitan area, spoke to the Retirees Chapter about senior services and living choices. First, as background, Ms. Haslanger outlined three important dimensions of living a good older life:

1. Having a Purpose in Life;
2. Having a Sense of Well-Being; and
3. Being Connected.

The first of these comes from within through finding a good cause to volunteer for, a hobby, a healthy activity, a service to the community. The second, however, depends on the state of health and financial security and you and your spouse. Regarding financial security, society focuses on the individual, Ms. Haslanger said. If you're not secure, "you failed" – which is unfair and destructive social policy, she said. The failing, after all, may not be your own.

Haslanger then turned toward the question of when to leave independent living. This is a highly personal decision, she said, and there are no general guidelines as to when this is called for. But she noted that even when one can physically handle the tasks of daily life, it is important to assure that the older person is not living in social isolation (the third dimension above), and this occurs frequently. Isolation leads to loneliness and depression. A recent study found that severe cases of loneliness have harmful health effects equivalent to smoking 14 cigarettes per day. Some of the other issues to consider, according to Ms. Haslanger, are the steep cost of assisted-living care (roughly \$4,000 per month in the NYC area) and whether an assisted-living facility can take care of a person as they go through

later stages of aging, or whether they will have to leave and re-locate again.



The next speaker was Mr. Ron Bruno, director of the Morningside Gardens NORC in Manhattan. A NORC, a naturally occurring retirement community, is a neighborhood or area where over half of the households have residents 60 years of age or older. Bruno talked about his program, state and federal funding for NORCs, and the NORC movement in NY State.

The meeting closed with talks by Donna Costa, executive director of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund, and Patrick Smith, Fund communications director, about the enhanced Fund benefits for vision, hearing and dental services. Members seem very happy with these new services and usage has increased markedly. The PSC Welfare Fund, which is located right next to the PSC office, is a separate entity. If you have questions for them call 212-354-5363 ■

UNFINISHED BUSINESS DUES CHANGE TO BE VOTED ON

The Executive Committee of our chapter argued for a dues change, because full-time annual fees have not gone up in over 20 years. We also wanted to create a category so that part-time retirees could join with us.



As reported last month, in April the PSC Delegate Assembly (DA) passed a resolution agreeing to a modest increase for retiree full-time members from \$71 to \$85, and for the first time created a part-time dues option with an annual rate of \$40.

The April resolution was only the first step in a two-step process. The PSC Constitution requires that the proposal for the increases must next be approved by a two-thirds vote at a special meeting of the PSC DA – and that the entire PSC membership must be given at least 21 days of notice before that special DA. The PSC has set the special DA for Thursday, June 20, 7 PM, and has notified the entire membership.

All members are welcome to attend the special DA. If there is a quorum and the vote meets the two-thirds threshold, the dues increase would take effect in September.

We hope that you will agree that the modest dues increase—considerably lower than the rate of inflation over the past two decades—will be acceptable and that the outreach to retired adjuncts will be welcome. ■

TRS UPDATE: There are still retirees waiting for TRS to calculate their final monthly pension payouts based on retroactive back pay received after the last contract. Stretching back to 2017, CUNY Payroll had not provided TRS accurate data to make these calculations. There are still outstanding issues with CUNY Payroll (mostly dealing with adjuncts), but it appears that TRS now has accurate payroll information for most retirees who left CUNY as full-timers. The PSC, now in weekly contact with both CUNY and TRS, is pushing TRS hard to expedite and resolve the final monthly calculations for those full-timers. ■

AN INVESTMENT THAT PAYS FOR ITSELF CUNY's Mobility Rate Excels

- Raymond Hoobler, retiree,
City College and Grad Center

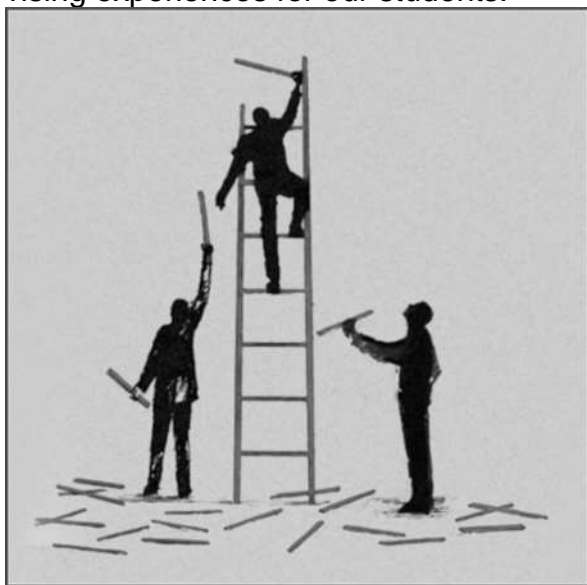
We all know that a good college education like the one that CUNY provides produces quality graduates prepared to critically think about and act on life's challenges. It is also a good, perhaps the best, way for children in a lower-income family to move up the income scale. And, of course, we've all heard that CUNY is one of the best systems in the country for making such a move possible. But what does this actually mean?

A study that addressed college student mobility rates is available online at www.opportunityinsights.org, along with the data for each of 2,200 colleges across the country. Using income tax data and Department of Education data, it was carried out by economists from Stanford, Brown, Berkeley and the US Treasury Department. They collected information about children born between 1980 and 1982, family earnings when the children were between 15 and 19, and finally earnings data for these children in 2014, typically some ten years after they had finished college.

The results: Of the 10 colleges with the best Mobility Rates in the country, five – half – are CUNY colleges: Baruch, City College, Lehman, John Jay and NY City College of Technology. One of them, Stony Brook, is a SUNY college and two others are also colleges in NY State: Pace and Vaughn College of Aeronautics. So eight out of the 10 colleges with the highest Mobility Rates are NY State Colleges.

The study statistically calculated the Mobility Rate (MR) for students at each college. This calculates the fraction of the students at the college whose families had incomes in the bottom 20% (< \$25,000) just before the students attended college and had their income in the top 20% in 2014 (>\$58,000), about 10 years after leaving college.

These college measurements were made in the previous decade before CUNY was hit by the dramatic falloff in state aid over the last 10 years. So one has to wonder if we can still perform like this. Clearly CUNY is an investment that pays for itself. The Governor and Legislature should be aware of the value of CUNY and of the difficulties we face in providing quality classroom and advising experiences for our students.



Estimating the financial gain to graduates of these Mobility Rates:

What does this mean for New York? Follow along with the calculations:

Multiplying a school's Mobility Rate by the number of students in the school gives a good idea of how many students coming from a family with an income in the bottom 20% will be earning more than 80% of others in this group about 10 years later.

Because CUNY has such a good Mobility Rate, in 2005 we had about 13,250 students whose earnings in 2014 showed they had moved from the bottom 20% to the top 20% by attending a CUNY school.

In 2014 the NY State tax rate for earnings above \$20,000 was 6.45%. Since the difference between family income and the student's earnings was about \$33,000, that means NY State received at least $(\$33,000 \times .0645) \times 13250 = \$28,202,625$ in additional taxes. The study also calculates the number of students whose family income was in the bottom 20% before they entered college with income in 2014 that was in the top 1% of their group, and so above \$177,000. About 275 of them came from CUNY. Doing the same calculation results in additional NY State tax receipts of at least an additional \$1,750,000. And these figures are for only one year! This also does not consider the effect on the other students at CUNY who only moved into the top 30% or 40%. **So because of CUNY's high MR, NY State gets an additional \$30,000,000 each year above and beyond the normal earnings value of attending college. ■**

CELEBRATING THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF OPEN ADMISSIONS AT CCNY

-Steve Leberstein, retiree, CCNY

For me, it was important to participate in the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the student occupation that opened CUNY's colleges to vastly underrepresented NYC high school graduates of color. It was militant students who were willing to take a stand by occupying the South Campus that opened those doors, just as militant students in Paris the year before had occupied their campuses demanding radical change.

At the anniversary celebration some of the leaders of the '69 strike were present, along with current students and supporters from both the community and from the faculty and staff. They spoke movingly of their experience which enriched the lives not only of those who would have been denied admission if not for the uprising, but also reminded me of my life as a member of the faculty and staff in my 26 years there. And they also spoke of the urgent need to continue that struggle today to reverse years of measures to close those doors both by policy changes and by chronic defunding of CUNY. The proportion of students of color at City is a fraction of what it was when I began there in 1978. It is time to work to re-open the doors of CUNY again to people of color.

Remarks at Anniversary

It was students at City College who waged the struggle to achieve some measure of justice and equity for Black and Puerto Rican youth eager to enter City and other colleges in the City University. The strike and occupation of the South Campus in April 1969, which spread to other CUNY campuses, led that summer to a new policy intended to open the doors to a much greater portion of Black and Puerto Rican NYC public high school graduates. For that breakthrough, we owe our thanks to the

courageous acts of those who led the strike and negotiations with University officials.

SAVING CUNY'S PAST
The Story of Open Admissions

A Public Program
Launching the
CUNY Digital History Archive

Hear from activists who have advocated for public higher education for all NYers. Participate in plans for collecting and organizing a public archive of our CUNY history. Sign up to join the archiving effort.
Tell your story, contribute documents, conduct interviews!

Wednesday, April 9, 2014
CUNY Graduate Center, Segal Theatre, 6:30 PM

1. The Fight for Open Admissions, 1969-1976
Former student and faculty activists who led the fight on CUNY campuses to open the University to all NYC high school graduates discuss this transformative historical moment.

2. Student Activism against Cutbacks, 1980s-present
Activists and organizers discuss campus-based movements across CUNY that resisted city and state cutbacks. Hear how self-archiving efforts can ensure a more egalitarian CUNY history.

Steve Brier (Graduate Center), moderator
Gerald Meyer (Phonix)
Pedro Pedraza (Ceniro, Hunter)
Charles Powell (CCNY, 1969)
David Henderson (SEER, CCNY, 1968-70)
Anthony Picciano (Lehman, 1968-75)

Cynthia Tobar (Hunter), moderator
Maureen Lane (Wellfare Rights Initiative)
Suzie Soloways (SLAM! Heritage Project)
Conor Tomás Reed (Mendigar Ewers, Occupy CUNY, FIVE U)
Alyssa Ocorio (Morales/Shakur Center, CCNY)
Nancy Romer (Brooklyn College)

Sponsored by American Social History Project/Center for Media and Learning
cunydha@gmail.com

2014 forum on open admissions

Beginning in the early 1950s, University officials were under pressure to expand educational opportunities as corporations needed growing numbers of trained workers. Plans were being explored to create a new tier of two-year colleges that could serve this function. They were to serve as training grounds for a growing economy, modeled on California's three-tier system of higher education. But by 1969, those remained just plans. Were it not for the acts of militant students, the University might have followed its plans to create training schools. Instead it created full-scale community colleges and expanded entry to its senior colleges, foremost among them City.

I remember so keenly the announcement of Open Admissions in 1970 when I was just finishing my dissertation at Wisconsin, and thinking that was the most democratic achievement for American higher education

since the Morrill Act in 1862. I wanted to be part of this change and moved to NYC without an offer of a job yet. I began teaching at Brooklyn College in 1972, to packed classrooms of curious, enthusiastic students. My career at City began in 1978 with the founding of the Center for Worker Education, which offered Bachelor degree programs to working adults, most of them people of color. They were the folks who couldn't get into a senior college before Open Admissions. They were eager and enthusiastic students after a hard day at work, especially so that their children could be encouraged to follow in their footsteps. It was the most wonderful privilege for me to teach them, and I owed that to the courageous students who made it happen. Without struggle, there can be no progress. ■

RETIREMENT REFLECTIONS SPECIAL FEATURE

The African Diaspora: Blacks in Mexico

-Sandra Watson, retiree
LaGuardia Community College

I live eight months out of the year as a retiree in Merida, Mexico. Most of my international travel has been to broaden my knowledge and understanding of the African Diaspora. I have found surprising information in my initial research on the subject in the country of my retirement.

It is generally known that the largest number of Africans brought to the new world were brutally enslaved in Brazil. That number has been approximated at 4 million people. The second largest number, approximately 400,000, who survived the horrific Middle Passage of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, were my ancestors brought to North America.

In spite of the groundbreaking and fascinat-

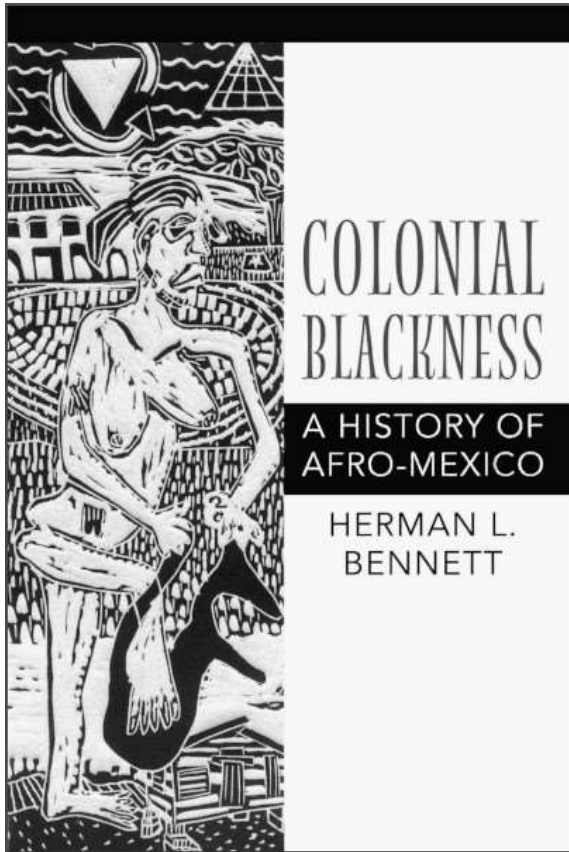
ing book that was made into a PBS video, *Black in Latin America*, by Harvard University historian, Dr. Henry Louis Gate, it is not as widely known that the third largest number of Africans in the new world were imported as slaves into Mexico. That number is estimated to be 250,000. Who are they today and where are their descendants?

I have been drawn to Mexico since my first visit in 1967 as a graduate student and fellow in the International Relations department at the Mexico City based, University of the Americas. As a recently retired dean, I am now one of an increasing number of Blacks flocking to cities throughout Mexico. Perhaps we are fleeing the racism, fascism and stress of living in Trumpian America.



I recently became interested again in the history of Blacks in Mexico in 2017, following my participation in the parade of souls. This is an important annual event in the Day of the Dead celebration. On my way to the cemetery, where ancestors are honored by thousands of Mayans, Mexican and Latin American tourists and residents of Merida, I saw a framed picture of what I perceived to be a portrait of my mother, Shirley Ann Parker White. Her serene face appeared to be encased in an elaborate gold frame on one of the family alters along the parade route. In a state of shock, I inquired who she was. I was told she was one of the revered tias (aunts) of the family. This incident took me on an exciting journey of dis-

covery. I wanted to find out why my dead “mother’s picture” was in a frame on a Mayan family’s alter in Merida, Mexico. Why was this woman, who was clearly of African descent, being honored by Mayans?



There have been three major historical periods when Blacks have contributed significantly to the diverse tapestry of Mexico. In my research, I fortunately found the relevant works of two CUNY professors, Dr. Colin Palmer, who wrote *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570 – 1650*, and Dr. Herman Bennett, who is the author of *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico*. They have both made important contributions to the understanding of the day-to-day lives, culture, psychology, religious practices, and labor of the first wave of Africans to arrive and live in Mexico. Africans were forcibly brought to Colonial New Spain (later Mexico) from such places as Senegal, Angola, Guinea Bissau, South Africa, the Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, and

other west and central African regions. They arrived during the colonial period of the 16th and 17th centuries.

Black towns were eventually created in the Costa Chica regions of Oaxaca and Vera Cruz, Guerrero, Guanajuato, and Tabasco. One of the most famous, San Lorenzo de Los Negros (now Yanga) in Vera Cruz, was founded as a kingdom in 1609 by the African freedom fighter Gaspar Yanga. He was one of the thousands of maroons who revolted from slavery to create Black towns in the Caribbean, Latin America, Central America, Mexico and the US.

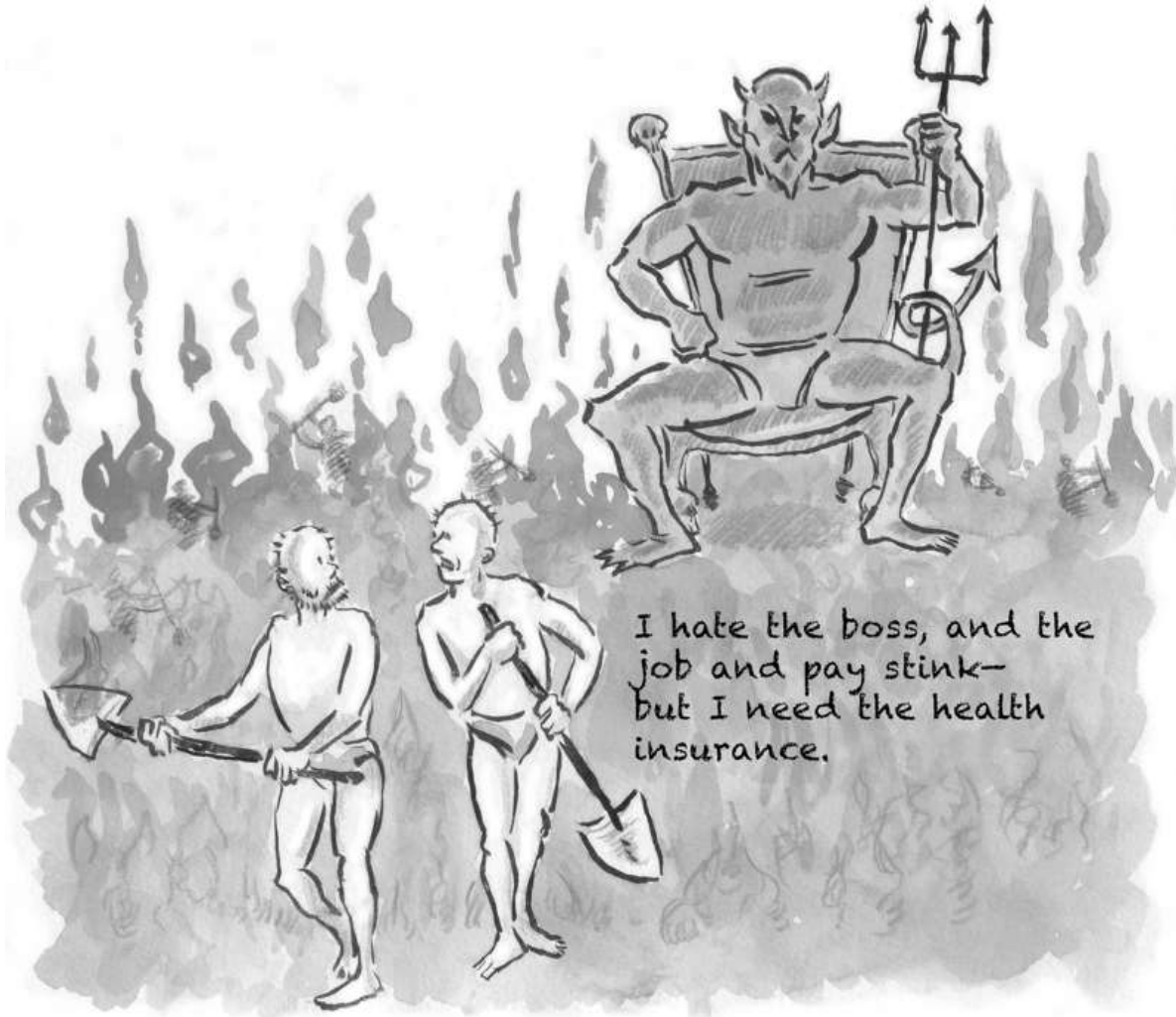
For the past 18 years members of Black towns of Mexico have met annually to discuss their aspirations, issues, special needs and concerns. A primary issue of the 2018 conference, held in Musquiz Coahuila right below the Texas border, is the inclusion of Africans and their descendants as an ethnic group in the upcoming 2020 census. As a recognized ethnic group they will have access to additional governmental monies for education and social services.

I am currently researching the second influx of people of African descent into Mexico. They came through what has been coined the Southern Underground Railroad in the 1800s. Between 5,000-10,000 men and women fled the slavery of the US into Mexico. The Mexican constitution had abolished the heinous institution in 1829. The Mexican government refused to return fugitive US slaves back into servitude. It was President Vincente Guerrero, a man of mixed African and European ancestry who successfully led the Mexican efforts to abolish slavery.

I arrived in Mexico in 2013, three days after celebrating more than 40 years of employment at LaGuardia Community College. This research will keep me busy for some time to come. ■

WHY BUSINESS DOESN'T WANT NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE

-Michael Frank, retiree LaGuardia Community College



Original illustration by Josh Brown

At first glance one would think that corporations would welcome and support a national health insurance plan that would relieve them of the costs of providing health insurance for their employees, enable them to better compete with foreign firms that are not burdened with these costs, and thus increase their profits. But the fact that no such support has been forthcoming compels us to look closer and see what the underlying reasons might be. Does business not know what is in its best interest?

It's true that national health insurance like

Medicare For All would result in an immediate reduction in company costs and a corresponding increase in profits. But does this hold for the longer term? Under the present system employees are dependent on their particular employer for health coverage. How often have we heard someone say that they don't like their job and that it doesn't pay enough but they stay on because they need the medical insurance? De-linking access to health care from employment and making it a universal right would reduce workers' dependency on their specific employer and increase their

ability to switch jobs for more satisfying work and better pay. This increased worker mobility would, in and of itself, result in an upward pressure on wages as employers would be forced to compete against each other in order to retain and attract workers. A reduction in workers' dependency and an increase in their mobility would thereby reduce the control that management can exercise in the workplace and shift the balance of power to the advantage of labor.

Moreover, business is generally opposed to any extension of rights. Once conceded and implemented, rights become taken-for-granted, popular and politically difficult to claw back. Think of how slowly and carefully the ongoing bipartisan agenda of "entitlement reform" (cuts to Social Security and Medicare) is being implemented. Collective rights run counter to individualized market dependency, and any right that is granted runs the risk of whetting the appetite for more rights. ■

RETIREE CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The following are some newly elected and some returning members of our chapter's Executive Committee. Several active members have revolved off the committee to make room for more recently retired members. Executive Committee meetings are open for all and are held at 10:30 AM on the same Mondays as the monthly chapter meetings.

Chairperson: Bill Friedheim

Vice Chairperson: Bob Nelson

Secretary: Marva Lilly

Officers at Large:

Mike Frank

Connie Gemson

Doris Hart
Larry Rushing

Delegates to Delegate Assembly:

Bob Cermele
Jackie DiSalvo
Glenn Kissack
Cecelia McCall
Eileen Moran
Bonnie Nelson

Alternate Delegates:

Anne Friedman
Mark Goldberg
Ray Hoobler
Dave Kotelchuck
Marcia Newfield

Welfare Fund Advisory Board:

Irwin Yellowitz

Serving as ex officio: Joan Greenbaum and Steve Leberstein are representatives to the PSC Executive Board; Jim Perlstein is Chairperson Emeritus and John Hyland is Vice Chair Emeritus. ■

TURNING THE PAGE COLLECTIVE



As you have noticed our chock-full newsletter has been expanding. We are interested in hearing from you—either in contributing articles and/or suggestions for reporting. Find us at: retirees@pscmail.org

Editorial Collective members:

Joan Greenbaum, editor; Bill Friedheim, layout & graphics; Mike Frank, Dave Ko-

telchuck; article selection. And now including original illustrations from Josh Brown, newly retired from the Graduate Center, American Social History Project. ■