



**March 2016  
Academic Year**

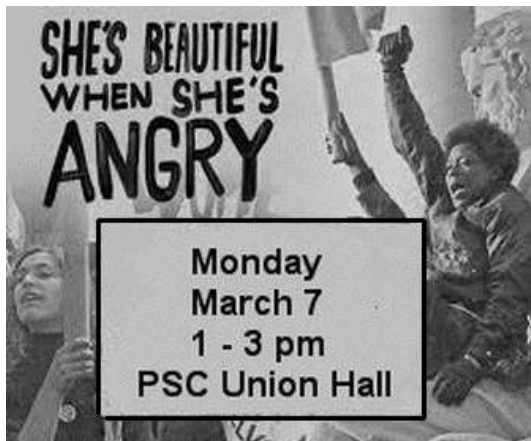
**Issue 5  
2015-2016**

**RETIREES  
NEWSLETTER**

**Professional Staff Congress**  
Joan Greenbaum, editor  
[psc-cuny.org/retirees](http://psc-cuny.org/retirees)

**CHAPTER MEETING, MONDAY, MARCH 7, 1 -3 PM.** Filmmaker **Mary Dore** will show the much acclaimed "**She's Beautiful when She's Angry.**" The film chronicles the events, the movers and the shakers of the feminist movement from 1966 to 1971.

After the showing, Mary Dore will lead a discussion, which given the subject matter of the film and the shared history of many in the audience, should be particularly lively.



Spread the word. The film presentation and discussion are **open to all PSC members**, not just the Retirees Chapter.

Light refreshments will be provided as usual. Please come early to grab cookies and fruit and a good seat for this 89-minute film.

As always, the Chapter meets at **61 Broadway, 16th floor, in the PSC Union Hall**, from 1-3 PM. **The Retirees Executive Committee** meets at 10 AM in the PSC's Justice Room, 15th floor. Executive Committee meetings are open to all members.

Here are some blurbs from film reviews:

*Dore's film should be seen. Take your daughters. And your sons.* Boston Globe.

*A superbly researched and edited documentary about the women's movement in the 1960s.* Philadelphia Inquirer.

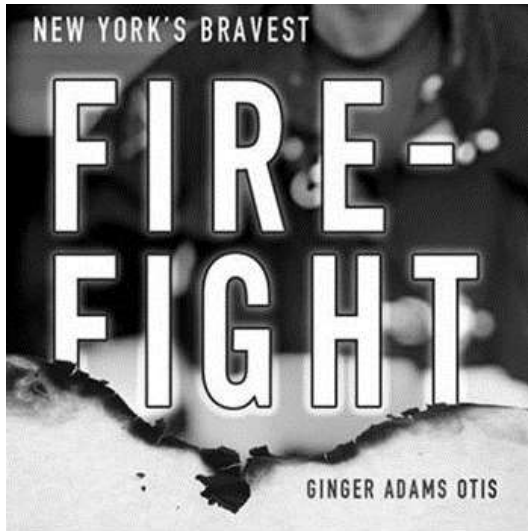
*Ms. Dore's work is not only a tribute to past bravery and determination, but also a warning and urgent rallying cry to the next wave.* Toronto Globe and Mail.

To find out more see this link:  
[shesbeautifulwhenshesangry.com/](http://shesbeautifulwhenshesangry.com/)

## THE MONTH THAT WAS

### FIREFIGHT--A STRUGGLE AGAINST TRADITION

Summary of Retirees Chapter Meeting Feb 1



"Tradition." The opening number from *Fiddler on the Roof* or a wrongly used justification to thwart attempts to diversify the ranks of the firefighters of New York City?

At the February chapter meeting Ginger Adams Otis, author of *Firefight: The Century-Long Battle to Integrate NYC's Bravest*, and firefighters John Coombs and Paul Washington described how "tradition" played a role in composition of the Fire Department. As a newspaper reporter for the New York *Daily News*, Otis found that in a city that lists 25% of its population as African-American, the NYC Fire Department of 11,000 firefighters had only 300 black members. After covering a press conference called

by the Vulcan Society, a well-established group of African American firefighters, she delved deeper into the story and followed the federal lawsuit that determined there was intentional discrimination by the Bloomberg Administration and the Fire Department. She explored the standardized testing and the physical testing that served as barriers to hiring

Weaving historical events together with personal experiences of members of the Vulcan Society, Otis's book provides an insight into a struggle against city bureaucracy. Two of the men who fought the battle provided riveting testimony. Paul Washington, a leader of the decades-long Vulcan struggle, noted improvement since the lawsuit.

"From 2013 'till now, they've hired as many black firefighters as they did in the previous 30 years," he said. Washington decried past practices such as the "terrible job" of recruitment in black neighborhoods, fraudulent use of 5-point test credits by whites living outside the city, and the standardized tests used to determine firefighting ability. There was "no correlation between the test and ability on the job," he said. "Every firefighter on the job knew that." After a complaint to EEOC, the Justice Department investigated and a lawsuit ensued resulting in a new test. The case was also fought in the media through newspapers and TV. Now, Washington cautions, "we've got to keep this fight going,

because if we stop, it will go back to how it used to be."

Reflecting upon their success and the challenges ahead, John Coombs, a 17-year veteran of the FDNY, recalled that from his first days at the '41', he heard that "tradition" dictated the way things were done. "We have a history of—I'm always skeptical—because that tradition once had my ancestors in chains," he said. John said he heard the "call" and wanted change. Three commissioners resisted, costing the city both time and money. Coombs concluded by saying that all aspects of the job—personnel, training, recruitment and diversity—must be examined. "We have to understand how these things should work, and attack people on their lack of accountability," he said.

-Joel Berger

### **FLORIDA RETIREES LUNCHEON.**

On Monday, February 8, approximately seventy Florida retirees (and a few snowbirds) gathered for the annual Florida Branch Benefits Seminar and Luncheon at the Lakeside Terrace in Boca Raton.

The event, marked by good food and lively conversation, provided important updates about benefits as well as reports on the state of the union and the university. Just as important, colleagues got to renew old acquaintances and make new connections.

Paul Levitz (Florida Branch Chair), Joan Fleishman (Branch Treasurer) and their Florida team organized the event with lots of logistical support from Jared Herst, PSC coordinator of pension & health benefits, and Donna Costa, associate director of the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund.

Both Herst and Costa spoke to key benefit issues and recruited vendors (CVS Caremark, TIAA-CREF, Guardian Dental and others) to provide benefits materials and answer queries.



Two officers of the larger retirees chapter, Bill Friedheim (Chapter Chair) and John Hyland (Co-chair of the Safety Net Working Group), spoke about the importance in this election year of organizing political support for a university and union movement under siege. They also discussed the need for advocacy to safeguard and enhance the safety net vital to us as retirees—Social Security, Medicare and health benefits, pensions and the Welfare

Fund.

Luncheon organizers have not missed a beat, already booking Lakeside Terrace in Boca Raton for next year's luncheon – Monday, February 13, 2017. Mark your calendars.



**NEW BOOK GROUP forming:**

**March 7, 3:30-5:00 PM.** Right after the chapter meeting five people plus those of you interested will be meeting to discuss what the new reading group will be doing. One or two members of the existing Social Issues Reading Group will join to talk about their process. The new group plans to discuss *Firefight*, by Ginger Adams Otis (see above). Stay in the Union Hall (16th floor) after the Chapter meeting and join in.

**CLIMATE JUSTICE meeting:**

**March 16, 2 PM.** The newly formed Environmental Justice Working Group of the PSC will meet on March 16 at the PSC office. The working group, with a healthy dose of Retirees, has prepared a resolution for consideration by the PSC to begin divesting TRS pension funds of fossil fuels, particularly coal, and other large polluters. The resolution asks TIAA-CREF to provide as least one fossil free stock option similar to its social choice fund. The meeting is open to new members who are interested in working on issues of the climate and New York City, particularly its impact on CUNY.

**PUSHING ALBANY**

The Governor's proposed budget continues to impose austerity onto our students and our members, now 5 years without a contract and 6 years without a raise. Cuomo holds a carrot of \$240 million toward back pay, but his proposal includes increasing tuition another \$1,500 and transferring a third of CUNY's senior college costs to NYC. Essentially his proposals amount to a \$485 million cut for CUNY. As Higher Education Chair Deborah Glick quipped, Buffalo is not asked to pay for SUNY Buffalo. Please see President Bowen's testimony on the PSC website: [psc-cuny.org](http://psc-cuny.org).

Do you receive action alerts from the PSC? If not, please sign up now to email your legislators to protect CUNY in the budget process. And if you can spare some time to visit your local State Senator or Assembly member, let us know so we can coordinate actions. Contact Eileen Moran, Retiree and member of the Legislation Committee: [eileenmoran7@gmail.com](mailto:eileenmoran7@gmail.com)

**NAME THIS NEWSLETTER:**

Please think about writing for the Retirees Newsletter—bits about your life in retirement, or an activity the PSC Retirees are engaged in. Names that have been submitted so far include: The Palladin, Older and Bolder, Breaking Bread and Bearing Witness. Email: [Retirees@pscmail.org](mailto:Retirees@pscmail.org) with your naming suggestions or article ideas.