

Clarion

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



OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2018



POLITICS
Decision 2018

The PSC has mobilized for state and national races.

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Ellen Moynihan

MEMBERS SAY **MAKE US AN OFFER**

Six hundred faculty and staff members from all campuses gathered on Wall Street to demand CUNY Board of Trustees Chair William Thompson do right by CUNY's faculty and staff – to ensure that the CUNY Board of Trustees makes a fair economic offer to the PSC without delay. **PAGES 6-8**

CONTRACT **Bargaining goes forward**

The PSC responds to a CUNY contract demand on the teaching load as the union prepares new actions to push collective bargaining forward. **PAGE 3**

DIVERSITY **Black faculty at CUNY**

Faculty members explained to City Council that CUNY employs too few full-time black faculty members, and offered ways to improve. **PAGE 4**



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A Hunter professor served on the team that issued the United Nations report urging drastic action to fend off climate change. **PAGE 5**

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A CUNY School of Law part-time program helps open a door to a career in public service law – and it's available to PSC members. **PAGE 9**



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 61 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10006. EMAIL: APAUL@PSCMAIL.ORG.

Hey, CUNY, I am missing my 'pay Czech'

● Were I teaching modern Czech literature, this would be a “teachable moment.” After a week and a half of unanswered emails and calls to the Baruch HR department, from whom I was requesting insurance benefits, I received this Kafkaesque response: “According to our records, you are not employed at Baruch.” This was during the third week of the semester, after six sessions of two classes I was most certainly teaching. But this is the essence of bureaucracy. I don’t exist on paper, or whichever records excluded my experience, and have no rights to healthcare. The language of the email was clear: It was a machine response to a human being. There was no greeting, no closing. There was input, my name and no output.

But that wasn’t the only erasure. This happened on the day of the first pay period. And when I looked at my bank account, there was no output there either. There was no pay. I still have not been paid by CUNY this semester. Yet I continue to do my job.

The subsequent emails have been just as cold and machinated. They lack a subject, rely on passive voice and sound like ATM-speak. They use words such as “unfortunately” and describe “machine error.” There is no human actor involved. The only human is the person not receiving the output.

I don’t need to read Franz Kafka’s fiction. My partner, the mother of my child, comes from the former Soviet Union. She has suggested that I stop doing a job that doesn’t pay. This situation has echoed her family’s experience in the USSR. There is no accountability. “Mistakes were made.”

It’s now six weeks into the semester. I have not been paid. I am contributing very little – wages from tutoring and other freelance work (which I’ve struggled not to neglect while I do work for Baruch at a fixed rate, unpaid) – to my family. But I am trying. I’m still a human being. I do exist, despite what the record doesn’t reflect.

This is CUNY Central, the essence of this bureaucracy. This is the state, under a governor who opposes the president but is friendly with school privatization. We need \$7K per course. We’re human beings, not machines.

Ian Singleton
Baruch College

Working for members

● At the start of the Fall semester, my occasionally misguided employer, CUNY, attempted to reclaim \$4,600 in unemployment insurance (UI) benefits that I had received over the summer. But we won. I say “we” because it was a team victory involving PSC grievance counselors, unemployment

insurance experts in the Workers Defense League (to which the PSC donates) and a union brother in my own department at Lehman.

Back at the end of May, I had filed my application for UI correctly and the NYS Labor Department had set my rate. But the six-person Unemployment Insurance & Workers Compensation unit in CUNY HR kept challenging my claim, delaying the payments for most of the summer. Then, when I was back in the classroom, I and Professor Ryan Raam, interim chair of my department, were summoned to show up for a hearing on September 10 in Brooklyn. CUNY’s evidence was all wrong on the facts, but they demanded their right to a hearing. This meant, according to Jon Bloom of the Workers Defense League, that I’d be needing a proper one-year reappointment letter to show the judge. Some departments at Lehman have not been in the habit of issuing those, and I’d never thought anything of it because we have good professional relationships in my department.

As they say in *Ghostbusters*, “Who you gonna call?” PSC, of course. Almost instantly, grievance counselors Stan Wine and Carol Rial sprang into action. Carol called Raam to explain about the one-year reappointment letter. Meanwhile, the Workers Defense League examined my file.

I got a call from the administrative court that there would be no hearing. So I kept my money and nobody had to travel from the Bronx to Brooklyn. Like they say, “Solidarity forever, the union makes us strong.”

Ruth Wangerin
Lehman College

Outside the classroom

● With 46 years as an adjunct faculty member at Queensborough Community College, the piece on adjunct pay (*Clarion*, “The email I will not send,” June/July 2018) caused me to think about my own situation and that of many of my colleagues.

There is no question that for some, teaching many classes on a few campuses with low pay might lead to poor quality of education scenarios and a list of personal problems that could reflect in the classroom. However, there is another “type” of adjunct not mentioned

in the article. We are retired high school educators. We easily spend extensive time preparing courses, meeting with our students and grading. We have the time to do this and our schedules are a luxury, in terms of total time, when compared to our former programs in secondary schools.

Low pay is one of the reasons that we rarely avoid controversial material and couldn’t care less about what our students may write in our required, annual student evaluations. We enhance the quality of education and enjoy what we are doing while both CUNY and our students save money!

Bernard A. Bilawsky
Queensborough Community College

Silencing dissent

● *New York* magazine recently reported that the Graduate Center investigated a PhD student for criticizing Israel in an email.

CUNY continues to be manipulated by members of the board and

administration who support the current policies of the Israeli government. As Israel murders large numbers of unarmed civilians in Gaza, and passes newer apartheid laws with stricter divisions of daily civil rights based on race, we see rapidly escalating CUNY complicity with punishing expression, speech, assembly and thought of students, faculty and staff who are compelled to speak out against these atrocities.

These legally and ethically indefensible actions by the CUNY apparatus against individual students and employees are couched in false dichotomies and distorted language. At the root of this drive to punish and repress opposition to Israeli government policy is the sinister campaign designed to conflate “Jewish” with “supporter of occupation and apartheid.” By imposing a radical racist content on a diverse and multifaceted people, the Israeli government has come up with a bureaucratic strategy that pretends that something is

true that is not true. I, for example, along with 13,000 other Jews belong to Jewish Voice for Peace, an organization devoted to Palestinian rights and liberation. Yet the standards being imposed by the CUNY apparatus render our existence impossible by removing our Jewishness if we oppose murder and racism.

CUNY, a public organization, is subjected to the First Amendment, and thankfully we have organizations like Palestine Legal to insist, year in and year out, over and over again, that CUNY students and employees have this right. But even more importantly, as a university in service to the people of the city of New York, CUNY has a moral obligation to defend individuals and groups who stand up against oppression, in all its manifestations. CUNY has some hard work to do to meet its mandate, and this involves dismantling any punitive system aimed at New

Continued on page 5

Stopping bullying at the workplace



Members discussed different types of workplace bullying and ideas on how to respond to bullying during a CLT chapter meeting on October 1. Developing “contractual language that prohibits workplace bullying” is a PSC demand in the current contract campaign.

Clarion OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2018

Newspaper of the Professional Staff Congress/City University of New York, collective bargaining representative of the CUNY instructional staff. Vol. 47, No. 6. PSC/CUNY is affiliated with the American Association of University Professors, National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers (Local 2334), AFL-CIO, the New York City Central Labor Council and New York State United Teachers. Published by PSC/CUNY, 61 Broadway, 15th floor, New York, NY 10006. Telephone: (212) 354-1252. Website: www.psc-cuny.org. Email: apaul@psccmail.org. All opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the PSC.

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The next phase of contract talks

By ARI PAUL

The union is inching toward a notable anniversary.

On November 30, the PSC will have gone one year without a new collective bargaining agreement with CUNY. The Triborough Amendment of the state's labor law keeps the old contract terms in place until a new one is ratified. And because the union has defended salary steps in previous rounds of bargaining, annual step increases remain in place even while a new contract is being negotiated. As the one-year anniversary nears and other public-sector contracts are settled, the pressure on CUNY to deliver an economic offer has increased.

On the heels of a major PSC contract rally in lower Manhattan on September 27 (see pages 6-8), during which members demanded an economic offer without further delay, the union's bargaining team met once again with CUNY management on October 4.

GOING TO THE BOARD

The next step for the union comes as this newspaper arrived in campus mailboxes – the union mobilized members to testify at the October 22 CUNY Board of Trustees hearing to demand that the trustees' budget request to the City and State include a fully funded contract with real raises, funding for the teaching load

Teaching credit issue



Bargaining committee member Michael Spear, left, addressed teaching load policy. Steve London, right, said the state bargaining looms large.



Dave Sanders

reduction, and an increase in adjunct pay to \$7,000 per course for adjuncts. "The biggest issue of this contract is funding," PSC President Barbara Bowen said, noting that state's current practice of agreeing to raises without funding them in the annual budget forces individual colleges to pick up the cost. "The underfunding by the state has forced senior colleg-

es to gouge their academic budgets to cover the cost. That is outrageous."

During bargaining sessions, CUNY management has indicated that an economic offer to the PSC would be likely to mirror wage deals reached at the state level with the Public Employees Federation and SUNY's United University Professions – a pattern of 2-percent annual salary increases. Bowen observed that CUNY normally insists on adhering to a blend of the city and state collective bargaining patterns in its economic offer, but that the PSC has been able to maximize the value of those patterns. Increases of 2 percent per year barely cover the current and projected rate of inflation. The union continues to call for an offer that will address the salary erosion for full-time faculty and staff in the 1980s and 1990s and will work to reach an agreement that delivers the best value to members. PSC negotiators have also made it clear that substantial additional funding will be required to address the adjunct salary crisis.

Felipe Pimentel, an assistant professor of behavioral sciences at Hostos Community College, told *Clarion* that at a recent meeting of the University Faculty Senate, interim Chancellor Vita Rabinowitz expressed interest in resolving contract negotiations in "the near future" and that she invoked the statewide 2 percent bargaining pattern. "Regarding the possible outcome of the contract negotiations, interim Chancellor Rabinowitz mentioned the SUNY contract and she insisted on the so-called pattern bargaining model that has framed negotiations between the city and the state with different labor unions," he said.

OTHER CONTRACTS

Because CUNY's contract must be approved by the city as well – the city provides funding for CUNY's two-year colleges – the municipal labor pattern also looms large in PSC-

CUNY talks. On October 11, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced a tentative agreement with the United Federation of Teachers that includes annual raises of 2, 2.5 and 3 percent, with the final 3-percent raise covering 18 months, rather than 12. The membership of the largest municipal union, District Council 37, recently ratified a contract that included yearly raises of 2 percent, 2.25 percent and 3 percent, with a similar configuration for the final year.

"I expect CUNY will offer the state pattern for across-the-board increases, which is 2-percent per year, which is too little in this environment, but the real question is what else we will be able to win outside of the across-the-board increases and of course equity pay, especially for adjuncts and other low-paid titles," said Steve London, a member of the union's executive council and bargaining committee.

The union offered its economic demands when contract talks began and continues to press for them: wage increases for full-time faculty and staff that address historic salary erosion at CUNY, a minimum of \$7,000 per course for adjuncts, an equity increase above the across-the-board raises for college laboratory technicians and lecturers.

TEACHING LOAD

In the October contract negotiations, CUNY management presented its case for a new proposal, to allow faculty to members to use summer teaching credit toward their total academic year's teaching load. Although the management bargaining team had initially presented the proposal as an option it sought for all faculty, after hearing the union's initial response it indicated that it would be open to a more limited version of the idea.

Bargaining team member James Davis, an English professor who is also the Brooklyn College PSC chapter chair, told *Clarion*, "The university would like to blur the bright line that currently stands between teaching during the academic year and teaching during the annual leave time. Their stated reason is to allow faculty members and department chairs to reach mutually agreeable arrangements that fulfill academic program objectives, allow more courses to run in summer, and allow full-timers to teach them. The union has listened openly to the arguments, but is committed to preserving the autonomy that annual leave time provides faculty members to conduct research, write, and pursue creative work."

Davis continued, "The union is also concerned that, despite the university's stated goal of mutual agreement, faculty members may feel coerced, or actually be coerced, into giving up annual leave time to fulfill the goals of a department chair or a dean. The bargaining team remains open to discussion on this subject, but it has

received a lot of negative feedback from members and in turn expressed strong concerns to the university."

Michael Spear, a bargaining committee member and a historian at Kingsborough Community College, said that for faculty members at two-year campuses, preserving summer leave time was a crucial issue, in part because of the combination of heavy teaching loads and increasing research expectations.

"We have a high teaching load at community colleges and students have enormous needs, such as taking developmental math and English, so we put in a lot of work with our students," Spear said. "So, annual leave is precious for us because we need that time to do our research. Even with the teaching load reduction, it is really hard to do any research during the academic year."

Bargaining team members stressed that the administration's contract demand around the summer teaching load appeared to be one of management's primary contract goals and that the union would consider the dangers of the proposal as well as the needs voiced by some faculty in formulating a response.

The bargaining committee continues to meet and strategize on next steps, with two bargaining sessions scheduled in the coming weeks. While the political situation that led to the six-year delay for the last contract has changed, and PSC leaders do not expect a similar delay, committee members have noted that it is imperative that members keep the pressure on

CUNY to deliver a fair and timely economic agreement.

KEEP PRESSURE ON

"It is important to keep in mind that what happens outside the negotiating room impacts what happens inside of it," bargaining committee member Michael Batson, lecturer in history at the College of Staten Island, told *Clarion*. "Members have been engaged locally on their campuses, at delegate assembly meetings, at rallies last spring and some at bargaining sessions as presenters and observers."

The union held a kick-off rally and march for the contract in December, as well as the most recent Wall Street rally in September. At press time, the PSC was mobilizing members from around the university to testify at the Board of Trustees hearing, speaking to the issue of the urgency of funding a new contract.

"The October hearing is our chance to speak to the board in a different way than at the rally – there is power in the individual narrative as well as the collective voice. Bowen said, "We must remind the CUNY trustees that it is not acceptable for them simply to manage austerity or normalize budget cuts. The need to do their job and demand the funding we need."

Upcoming chapter elections

Chapter elections will be held during the month of April 2019. If you wish to run for election in one of the chapters holding an election please submit a signed declaration of candidacy, including your name, college and department, along with the office being sought, to the Election Committee at the PSC central office by no later than January 11, 2019.

For your convenience, a pre-printed declaration of candidacy form is available on the PSC website or from the PSC central office.

The chapters holding Spring elections are:

- Borough of Manhattan Community College
- Bronx EOC
- Brooklyn EOC
- College of Staten Island
- Hunter Campus Schools
- Higher Education Officers
- Kingsborough Community College
- Lehman College
- Manhattan EOC
- Medgar Evers College
- New York City College of Technology
- Queens EOC
- Queensborough Community College
- Registrars
- Research Foundation
- Research Foundation Field Units
- Retirees.

Profs: CUNY needs more black faculty

By ARI PAUL

CUNY top officials say that they're addressing a reported lack of full-time black faculty members across the university. Have they had success? That depends on whom you ask.

At a hearing of the New York City Council's Higher Education Committee on September 27, lawmakers examined what many believe to be a dearth of full-time black faculty at the university. From CUNY's perspective – as delivered in testimony from the interim chancellor, Vita Rabinowitz – it has successfully filled half of the campus presidency positions with blacks or Latinos, and professional development programs meant to promote and retain minority faculty members are thriving.

POOR REPRESENTATION

But for the council's Higher Education Committee members and, indeed, the many full-time CUNY faculty members who testified in September, the numbers tell a much different story. "Though minorities comprised 36 percent of CUNY staff, between Fall 2010 and Fall 2017, the number of black faculty inched from 933 to 941, making up 12.3 percent of CUNY's workforce. And though 44 percent of the staff hired during the 2016-2017 school year were non-white, just 15 percent were black," the *Chief* newspaper reported.

PSC President Barbara Bowen said, "Racial justice is a labor issue, especially in this country. The PSC is firmly committed to increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the faculty. One of the primary reasons for the difficulty in recruiting and retaining black faculty at CUNY is CUNY's substandard salaries and inordinately heavy teaching load. When you add those issues to the other, less tangible issues faced disproportionately by black faculty, it is not hard to see why there are fewer black faculty than there should be." She continued, "CUNY has also lost 4,000 full-time faculty lines since the 1970s. A huge opportunity for hiring a more diverse full-time faculty is being lost – just when the number of people of color earning PhDs has increased."

She added, "It's time the City and State woke up to the consequences of their failure to fund CUNY at a level that allows for sufficient numbers of full-time faculty, competitive pay and good working conditions. Any effort to increase the representation of black faculty will be hollow if a job at CUNY still means economic and professional sacrifice, even self-sabotage."

According to faculty members who addressed the issue at the hearing, the problem is particularly troubling for CUNY, a system that overwhelmingly serves communities of color.

"I am especially pained to see the distressingly low representation at Brooklyn College, where I've been teaching since 2009," said Ron How-

Issues in retention and recruitment



Arthur Lewin, a professor at Baruch College, addressed the City Council and said that lack of diversity in the full-time faculty at CUNY is a long-standing problem.

ell, an associate professor of English at Brooklyn College. "In the English department...I'm the only black male out of almost 40 full-time professors. This is in a borough with 900,000 black residents."

Worse, a higher education committee report specifically prepared for the hearing noted dismal results from a study across CUNY campuses that examined several equity factors, including a ratio of black students to black faculty: "The College of Staten Island, for instance, received a grade of F for a black-student-to-black-faculty ratio of 94-to-1, while Brooklyn College received a grade of D for its 52-to-1 ratio." York College, Lehman College and John Jay College received C grades, the report went on to note. Baruch College, City College, Hunter College and Queens College all earned B grades.

"The report cautions, however, that even high grades, such as A's and B's, are not necessarily indicators of exceptional performance, but instead are markers of equity between comparison groups," the city council report said.

One theme faculty members addressed in testimony to the council was that the problem wasn't solely about the lack of black faculty in general, but also the college administration's lackluster commitment to hiring full-time faculty members.

"From Fall 2010 to Fall 2016, Baruch College had 119 full-time faculty. Three of them were black (2.5 percent), the lowest number and percentage of black hires of all CUNY colleges," said Arthur Lewin, a professor of black and Latino studies at Baruch, in his

testimony. "Baruch College's own 2017 Affirmative Action Report admits that, if the college were to rehire proportional to the available pool of candidates, its 505 full-time faculty would have 35 more black professors. In recognition of this dismal fact, the administration, in its 2013 Strategic Diversity Plan, pledged that it would have periodic meetings with black and Latino staff to uncover the problems they face in getting reappointed, tenured and promoted. Five years later, the first such meeting has yet to occur."

ATTRITION

Lewin added that his own department has been reduced to just three professors and that his college's administration won't make new hires to replace the people who leave, something he called the "slow, deliberate destruction of the black and Latino studies department through unaddressed attrition."

James Blake, the president of the Borough of Manhattan Community College Black Faculty and Staff Association, looked at his campus from a historical perspective in his testimony, noting that when he joined the faculty in the 1970s, it was on the heels of sit-ins and demonstrations by black and Latino students throughout CUNY demanding a more diverse full-time faculty.

He lamented that the more things change, the more things stay the same, saying, "Unfortunately, among the faculty represented at CUNY, diversity remains an issue. I surveyed the academic depart-

ments at the college in terms of qualifying the population of black full-time faculty. What I discovered was disturbing. For example: modern language department, 27 full-time faculty, none of them are black; science department, 58 full-time faculty, none of them are black; computer science department, 16 full-time faculty, none of them are black."

Many of the faculty members who testified noted there was a correlation between the lack of black full-time faculty and what they saw as lack of CUNY's investment in much-needed departments and programs focused on African American studies. "Although nearly 25 percent of students in CUNY are black, the institutional support for programs reflecting black studies has been reduced over the last three years," said Brenda Greene, the executive director of the Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College. "Colleges have failed to replace faculty who have retired or resigned, thereby affecting program growth and the number of black studies majors."

Departing faculty have cited a lack of support from the administration as a rationale for resignation. In some colleges, there are no full-time or part-time faculty directly connected to a black studies program. There are also high attrition rates for directors and coordinators of black studies programs. In one college, there have been five coordinators of black studies in 10 years.

And PSC members also recognized that there have been past

practices to increase diversity that could shape future policy.

Anthony Browne, chair of the Africana and Puerto Rican/Latino studies department at Hunter College, for example, testified, "Recruitment of black faculty can be a challenge particularly in departments with an uneven history of tenured black faculty. A strategy that has been successfully utilized by both public and private universities to address faculty diversity is cluster hiring. A cluster hire would involve hiring a critical mass of black faculty members based on shared, interdisciplinary research interests. These hires could be in a single department of a cross-disciplinary research area that would provide the new hires with a community of scholars that would reduce feelings of isolation and marginalization."

TOWARD PROGRESS

And John Gallagher, a higher education officer delegate at Borough of Manhattan Community College, told *Clarion*, "On the HEO side of the house at BMCC we had a long-tenured vice president who insisted on rigorous affirmative action searches for staff titles. Everyone was hired from a nationally advertised search using a diverse search committee that didn't include the immediate supervisor. We managed to get an incredibly diverse staff in just about every definable category with great acceptance by the overall community. We regularly met or exceeded our diversity goals, filling well-paid positions with a diverse group of talented, dedicated professionals."

BEST PRACTICES

Several years ago, in the course of examining the issue of diversity among instructional staff at CUNY, PSC talked at length to several (now former) department chairs of color about their successful practices for achieving diversity among full-time faculty in their departments. These chairs spent a great deal of time ensuring that qualified faculty of color applied and were considered for faculty positions. They also worked with all untenured faculty and faculty interested in promotion to identify opportunities for funding and release time for research and scholarship. Recruitment and retention of faculty of color were successful in these departments.

Bowen added, "The racial composition of the faculty is not only an economic or labor issue; it is an intellectual issue. Whole fields of knowledge have been transformed by the work of black scholars together with the contributions of other faculty of color, working-class faculty and women of all races. Their work has immeasurably expanded what it is possible to know. CUNY students, above all, should be the beneficiaries of – and participants in – this transformation."

Dave Sanders

A Hunter voice on climate action

By ARI PAUL

A report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released in October unleashed a flurry of press responses, with many environmental activists from around the world declaring it a wake-up call and an urgent plea – as if made from the planet itself – for serious and drastic action to fend off the devastating effects of climate change. Ashley Dawson, a professor of English at College of Staten Island and the author of *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change*, called the study “pretty shattering.”

“The authors found that if greenhouse gas emissions continue at the current rate, the atmosphere will warm up by as much as 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit (1.5 degrees Celsius) above preindustrial levels by 2040, inundating coastlines and intensifying droughts and poverty,” the *New York Times* reported.

One of the dozens of scholars from around the world who authored the report is William Solecki, a professor of geography at Hunter College and the founding director of the CUNY Institute for Sustainable Cities.

A UNION CAUSE

The PSC has long been active in the climate justice movement, and members involved in the environmental justice committee were eager to know, after the study's release, what the panel thought people should do in response. The report said that averting climate catastrophe would require an investment of \$54 trillion to avoid 2.7 degrees (Celsius) of warming, and offered the idea of implementing carbon dioxide emissions taxes as high as \$27,000 per ton.

Solecki, in an interview with

Time is running out for planet Earth.

Co-author of a key United Nations report



William Solecki, left, spoke to students about the groundbreaking climate report to which he contributed.

Clarion, noted that the report was not meant to be prescriptive, but rather a basis of inquiry for governments to use as means of assessing the threat of climate change. Of course, the issue of “what do we do now?” has been on a lot of people's minds.

“The assessment of the literature is that there is a variety of alternative energy sources and that all of them need to be examined,” he said. “There is global variation in terms of which ones are the most effective and meaningful. Nuclear power is complicated, for all the reasons that we know, and

it was evaluated in the assessment, as well as other forms of alternative energy.”

LOOK TO CITIES

A scholar focusing on cities, Solecki said it was important to look at how urban centers around the world have historically tackled environmental problems and made transformative changes – coastal cities, for example, have researched resiliency plans in response to the threat of rising sea levels and serious hurricanes.

Many members asked: What can we, as academics, even in the social

sciences and the humanities, do to mitigate the damage? Solecki responded that contributions from the liberal arts were vital in the fight for climate justice. After all, much

of the work isn't just scientific study about the environment, but about winning hearts and minds to make the kinds of tough policy changes necessary to face the threat.

“The report looked at six dimensions of feasibility, and the most challenging things were social issues, social values and finances, the capacity of institutions to change,” he said. “Absolutely, there is a lot of work that the physical sciences need to do, but the most challenging questions are going to be embedded in the social sciences.”

SOCIETAL ISSUE

He added, “And the humanities will play a significant role in providing people an opportunity to understand and reflect on what these changes might mean. We're starting to see a real flowering of climate literature and a lot of art, people are developing plays. Philosophy and ethics are going to be central to this discussion.”

The gravity of the report is sobering enough, but in the chaotic final days of preparing the report as well as responding to the constant queries about it since its release, Solecki has remained calm and focused on the facts.

“You get buried under all the comments and making sure all the comments are addressed, you don't really think about it too much,” he said. “It has been a whirlwind from start to finish.”

Letters

Continued from page 2
Yorkers who want freedom and autonomy for Palestinians.

Sarah Schulman
College of Staten Island

The PSC difference

● As a member of the PSC, a delegate and a chapter chair, I am often asked, as I walk through my campus, what is the state of contract negotiations. I don't always have a lot to say, since I'm not on the bargaining team, but people know, since I attend the Delegate Assembly and the Chapter Chair meetings, that I sometimes have information.

What used to surprise me was the fact that I was always being asked about negotiations not only by faculty, HEOs and CLTs but also by public safety and buildings and grounds workers – these members of other unions would stop and ask me. I thought it was because they were interested in our negotiations and wanted to compare them to their negotiations, so in the spirit of union collegiality I'd tell them and ask how their negotiations were going. Usually they didn't have any answer. This confused me until I analyzed the situation.

My brothers and sisters, I'd like to share my conclusion with you.

We are very lucky. Public safety workers are represented by Teamsters Local 237, who also represent NYCHA workers, public school safety officers and a smaller group of CUNY public safety workers. Guess who gets most of their attention – it isn't public safety. College Assistants and other office workers at CUNY are represented by District Council 37, which is a very large union, but they also represent public librarians, workers in the Mayor's Office, public hospital workers, museum workers, etc. and a smaller section of workers at CUNY. Guess who gets most of their attention – it isn't a small local. Faculty and staff are represented by the PSC-CUNY. Everyone they represent is at CUNY. CUNY workers and their needs are all they handle!

I am grateful that my needs are what our officers concentrate on. That is why I share information with my fellow York College workers. They need it from us. At your campuses build a unified body of workers by talking with everyone.

Scott Sheidlower
York College

Editor's note: Clarion reserves the right to edit all letters that are submitted for publication.

Phased retirement deadline

By CLARION STAFF

Phased retirement at CUNY offers a way for full-time instructional staff members to move to retirement, and many have already made the transition. The program, originally agreed to between the PSC and CUNY as a pilot program, is now permanent. The deadline to apply is November 15, 2018.

Full-time faculty who are 65 and older, have at least 15 years of pensionable service and are members of the Optional Retirement Program (mostly TIAA-CREF) are eligible to apply to “phase” for up to three years. Faculty can apply to receive 50 percent of their salary during that time in exchange for continuing 50 percent of their workload, but

must irrevocably commit to retiring at the end of the phasing period.

BENEFITS COVERAGE

During the phasing period, faculty receive full health coverage and pension contributions based on their reduced pay. Faculty with accrued sick leave are eligible for Travia leave at full pay during their final semester, but do not have the option to return to full-time CUNY employment. More information is available on additional issues the agreement covers.

HEOs and CLTs are eligible to phase for up to one year with a 20 percent workload reduction (one day per week) for 80 percent pay, if they meet the same eligibility criteria as a faculty member. They also

receive Travia leave at full pay at the end of the phasing period, full health coverage and prorated pension contributions.

TRS EXEMPTION

Full-time employees who belong to the Teachers' Retirement System are not covered by the program, because reductions in their pay would directly reduce their retirement benefit.

Agreement between the instructional staff member and his/her department chair/supervisor about what constitutes the 50 percent workload and how to schedule it over the period is very important. A full version of the agreement is available online at <http://www.cuny.edu/news/features/psc-announcement/PhasedRetirementAgreement.pdf>.

Are you thinking about life after CUNY?

CUNY contract – 600 march

By CLARION STAFF

The timing wasn't accidental.

On September 27, 600 PSC members from all titles and campuses formed a picket line in front of the New York Stock Exchange and marched through the Financial District to the offices of Siebert Cisneros Shank and Company, the financial firm at which CUNY Board of Trustees Chairman William Thompson is chief administrative officer. The September 27 date of the march coincided with the seventh anniversary of the birth of the Occupy Wall Street movement, which, pointed out that austerity and disinvestment in public institutions is directly connected to the rapaciousness of the financial sector.

PSC members rallied to make a similar point: Wall Street and New York City's finance sector, aided by President Trump's pro-corporate tax policy, increasingly hoards wealth as CUNY, recognized as one of the nation's most important engines for upward social mobility, is increasingly starved of funds. The union gathered to urge Thompson and the CUNY board to demand full funding from Albany for the next PSC contract and to settle a contract that includes real raises for all faculty and staff, equity increases for the lowest-paid full-time staff and faculty, and an increase in, adjunct pay to \$7,000 per course.

Below are excerpts from the speeches delivered by PSC activists. President Bowen's speech is excerpted on page 8.

SHOW US THE MONEY

We hear, "Oh, but the budget, oh,

No to cuts

but there's no money." Well, look around. Where have we just finished walking? These halls of wealth, the wealth that is dripping from these buildings, the wealth of New York, the wealth of this state, the wealth of this country needs to be redistributed. That's where the wealth is.

It has been seven years this month that the Occupy Wall Street movement shed a light and yet seven years later, inequality in this city, inequality at CUNY and in this country is worse than ever. And we will not tolerate that.

'Every aspect of our lives has become more expensive.'

CUNY management says they raise students out of poverty, and they do, but they pay substandard salaries to full-time faculty and staff and near-poverty wages to part-time faculty at CUNY. We need Bill Thompson, whose company is here, whose investment banking firm is here, we need Bill Thompson to call on all of the Board of Trustees, to call on all of the CUNY administration, to call on the state government and the city government to invest in CUNY, to give us the funding, to find the money.

We are the PSC. We have been strong for many years, we are strong now and we will become even stronger. We were threatened by the recent Supreme Court case [*Janus v. AFSCME*] but it did not stop us. What's more, it strengthened us. You should know and CUNY knows that our membership is larger than ever. Our commitment is larger than ever.

Our unity is larger than ever. We will not give up, we will not stand down. We know what has to be done and we're going to continue calling for it.

ANDREA VÁSQUEZ
PSC FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
GRADUATE CENTER

A STRUCTURAL DEMAND

I want to make two arguments today. One, that the demand for \$7K is a moral demand. This is a nominally social democratic city in which no public sector employee should be paid poverty wages. It is a travesty that there are 12,000 adjuncts paid poverty wages in New York City, where there is more wealth amassed than any city on this entire planet.

But I also want to make the case to you that \$7K is a structural demand. We are doing nothing short of attempting to change the structure of the CUNY labor force. Without adequate adjunct pay, this system will continue to adjunctify and the system of tenure will be eroded to the point that it will no longer exist. We are demanding \$7K in order to change the incentives of management in this system.

LUKE ELLIOTT-NEGRI
CHAPTER CHAIR
GRADUATE CENTER

LOW PAY, HIGH COSTS

Every aspect of our lives has become more expensive in New York. The consumer price index over the last year has gone up 2.4 percent. CUNY has recently imposed a 2 percent cut on all of the senior colleges in the system, sequestering



Carly Smith, PSC vice president of part-time personnel, said it is unacceptable that CUNY pay is not comparable to fast-food workers.

about \$50 million. They are saying that this is a labor reserve. This is all they're going to provide to us for our next contract in raises for full-time faculty, for full-time staff, for part-time faculty, for part-time staff. Is 2 percent enough? Not even close to enough. Our demand is for 5 percent raises across the board and \$7K for adjuncts.

We're here on Wall Street. Many of us could be working on Wall Street – our mathematicians, our

chemists, our biologists could be crunching numbers, providing data, making huge salaries. Our English professors, our librarians, they could be researchers, analysts providing reports, making huge salaries. We're not interested in that. We're interested in educating the next generation of the middle class in New York City – bringing people out of poverty, not creating poverty.

We put our trust in the CUNY Board of Trustees to secure the funds from Albany for our contracts. Can we trust them? Hell no. Do we have confidence in them?

We are going to have to take this fight to the Board of Trustees, to Albany, and make it known that they are not trusted right now. Bill Thompson – his office is right here – must do his job: just communicate our needs to Albany and we must have a contract that brings our salaries into line with other universities in New York, with other universities in the region and to provide us with a living wage so that we can provide for our families, so that we can secure the grounds of our own existence to do the work that we are here to do.

ROBERT FARRELL
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, LIBRARY
CHAPTER CHAIR
LEHMAN COLLEGE

FUND CUNY NOW

We are here today because we are facing a policy, as we know, of starving public institutions like CUNY – and more than just at CUNY – and we are here to say no. This policy of



PSC members assembled outside the New York Stock Exchange to demand that CUNY management reverse the trend of austerity and improve CUNY's working conditions, by funding competitive salaries and insisting that the state increase funding for public higher education in the city.

Erik McGregor

On Wall St.



lars, it's not \$100,000, but less than \$30,000, do they not deserve a fighting chance to make it in this rich city and this rich country?

The overwhelming majority of our students, who are immigrants and from communities of color, do they not deserve to participate in the wealth of this country? We know, we all know what adverse conditions they fight every day and that they make an extremely impressive commitment to higher education. Why don't they deserve exactly the same facilities that their peers enjoy at NYU and Columbia? If the ideal of equal opportunity has to have any meaning, they deserve not the same, but more.

But how? How are we to provide them this education that they richly deserve if our own work conditions are so debilitating? The majority of CUNY faculty are adjuncts and their salaries are an insult to their profession, to their commitment and to their dedication to their students. Full-time faculty and staff struggle every day with those same conditions of work that are not fit for our students or for them. Our department chairs routinely complain that they cannot hire and retain quality faculty because of uncompetitive salaries and poor research conditions.

Now the question is, why does any of this matter? It matters because, friends, remember when we fight for ourselves, we are also fighting for our students. Our working conditions are their learning conditions.

NIVEDITA MAJUMDAR
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ENGLISH
PSC SECRETARY
JOHN JAY COLLEGE

JUSTICE FOR CLTS

College laboratory technicians are required to work 35 hours a week, yet our workload causes us to work beyond without compensation for the hours we put in. We are being bullied, pacified and told to listen, stay quiet and keep doing our job.

We are CLTs working in labs, we are CLTs working in theaters, libraries, greenhouses, academic departments and administrative offices all across CUNY. CLTs keep the animals fed, the plants watered, the experiments running and build the production sets. CLTs are the go-to people when you need something for your classroom, when you need help with your equipment, when the projector won't turn on, when something's broken and you need it fixed, when there's a chemical spill. When you need to fire a kiln or to use a blowtorch, who do you call?

CLTs are highly skilled in their profession, some receiving awards and recognition on state and national levels. And yet, we can't get promoted. We have CLTs with PhDs, we have CLTs who are radio jockeys and are award-winning grant writers. Yet CLTs are working 20,



Amy Jiu (left), chapter secretary for college laboratory technicians, spoke about the need for lifting salaries for some of CUNY's lowest paid workers.

30 years at CUNY and still are stuck at the lowest ranks in our title.

College laboratory technicians are the backbone of CUNY science and technology, yet we are still the lowest paid among our full-time and part-time employees. We need your support as we fight against low salaries, excessive workloads and lack of promotional opportunities.

AMY JIU
CHAPTER SECRETARY, CLTS
HUNTER COLLEGE

\$7K: EVERYONE'S FIGHT

Adjuncts have gone from invisibility to visibility. We have gone from footnote to text.

Now we have also come to a place of being an ally to each other because we have come to learn that if one group doesn't get something, the other will lose. We have come to understand that the full-timer is burdened by all the responsibilities that we can't fill, like admissions, registration, committee work, etc.

We all are in this together. You're all here because you have learned that, that we've made some progress. We've gotten 80 percent [pay for] sabbaticals. We've gotten paid three-year appointments for adjuncts. We've gotten health insurance for adjuncts. We've gotten parental leave for full-timers. But that's not the whole story.

The whole story is that the Board of Trustees has to take responsibility as stewards of this university. They can't hide behind their own wall, right?

MARCIA NEWFIELD
GRIEVANCE COUNSELOR
BMCC, RETIRED

MY DEGREE MATTERS

When I got into CUNY, my mother was ecstatic. My mother was super happy that I got into college because I'm one of the few people, maybe the first generation in my family, to go into college. And it was thanks to funding of public support programs

that help out the teachers, most definitely, and who help us students get a step into the door.

I was still continuing my education with BMCC [Borough of Manhattan Community College] and also with trade school, which I realized wasn't for me. BMCC is the school I came back to and I'm grateful I came back to it.

Now, thanks to the government funding to help out the disadvantaged and to also help out our students and our teachers, I am not only able to readmit into the school around 2018, I am physically more healthy and emotionally more healthy to handle more of life's challenges and to continue my education and hopefully be the first person inside my family to have a college degree.

DEJA JOHNSON
STUDENT
BMCC

POLITICAL ALLIES

We are not going to accept austerity budget nonsense about how we have to share cost-cutting. We won't accept this rhetoric and we won't accept the logic.

I'm really proud today to introduce a few special guests who won't be speaking but are proudly marching in solidarity with us to demand better funding for CUNY, better pay for adjuncts, a better deal for our students. We have two future state senators and a future assemblyperson who all have relations with CUNY: Robert Jackson, a longtime advocate for CUNY students; Jessica Ramos, who is going to be my senator. These are candidates who took on the Republican-aligned Independent Democratic Conference, and that was considered impossible.

And also, I'm proud to call her my neighbor, my future assemblywoman, Catalina Cruz. And she is a John Jay graduate as well as the first DREAMer to be elected to state office. She's going to be fighting for us at CUNY.

These are all candidates who took on the machine. They did what was impossible. We are also going to do the impossible.

SUSAN KANG
CHAPTER DELEGATE
JOHN JAY COLLEGE

DOING CUNY'S JOB

We've been doing CUNY management's job for too long and so have all of you. We've been working at low wages and on contingent appointments, subsidizing the university.

They shouldn't be getting our funds. We've been driving resources to the university. That's their job to drive resources to the university.

We've been devising solutions, creative solutions, to get our employees onto healthcare. That's their job to find healthcare for their employees. And we've been finding ways to get to the imperial governor and figure out how to make the case for our students. That is their job to make the case for CUNY's students.

So our message today is very simple. To the CUNY management and the Board of Trustees: do your job.

JAMES DAVIS
CHAPTER CHAIR
BROOKLYN COLLEGE

SOLIDARITY ALL AROUND

I am proud to be a member of the PSC and I am proud to be part of a labor movement. I have this dream that all workers will organize and that they'll support each other's struggles, they'll come and show up at events like this to support their demands for better working conditions and for fair pay.

So I want to call out the other labor organizations that I have seen here especially Fast Food Justice. I see Fast Food Justice signs. These are part of the people who worked so hard to get the \$15-an-hour minimum wage.

SHARON PERSINGER
PSC TREASURER
BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CUNY adjuncts are paid low wages that are

systematic starvation of the public sphere is wrong, it's unethical and it will not stand. We are here today as CUNY workers, as CUNY students, because we know that our fight for a fair contract is part of the larger struggle to end the massive transfer of our society's resources into as few hands as possible.

We say no to cutbacks. We say no, in particular, to the exploitation of part-time faculty at CUNY. We know as a union, we know as workers and as students, it is unjust to stand by when our adjunct brothers and sisters and siblings, the majority of CUNY faculty who teach the majority of classes, are making an average income comparable to fast-food workers. It is low-wage work and that is unacceptable.

We know as a union that it is unsustainable for us all and all our titles when CUNY is funded by slashing full-time faculty positions and paying adjuncts poverty wages. We are one CUNY faculty, we are one CUNY. We are one PSC. And we say that an attack on faculty is an attack on our students. It's an attack on us all. It's an attack on public education.

CARLY SMITH
ADJUNCT LECTURER,
COMMUNICATIONS
VICE PRESIDENT, PART-TIME
PERSONNEL
BARUCH COLLEGE

FIGHTING FOR STUDENTS

Don't the students, the majority of our students whose annual family income is not half a million dol-

Ellen Moynihan

Erik McGregor

CONTRACT

All of us or none

By **BARBARA BOWEN**
PSC President

We are here to put power behind a message to Wall Street and the CUNY Board of Trustees. To Wall Street, we say: We will not stand silently by while you make the rich even richer, enabled by Trump's corporate tax giveaway. Wall Street posted \$25 billion in profits just this year. CUNY's whole budget is \$3 billion. A fraction of Wall Street's profits would lift CUNY out of poverty and support the life-chances of the workers who help to generate this city's wealth. New York's working people, its communities of color and its immigrants – documented or not – produce much of the wealth that makes Wall Street buoyant. That wealth must be shared.

And to Bill Thompson, in his Wall Street office high above us, we say: You are entrusted with the wellbeing and the future of a precious resource, a university that was the result of a radical movement to democratize college education – The City University of New York. It's time for you to stand up and demand what CUNY needs. Stop accepting the underfunding of CUNY as inevitable. Another funding policy is possible.

FINDING A VOICE

I am tired of hearing how progressive New York State is when the city's public university is chronically, deliberately underfunded. Where is the voice of the CUNY Board challenging the practice of cutting CUNY's per-student budget every year? The PSC is now the only public voice consistently demanding adequate funding for CUNY. I am proud that we are that voice, but we should not be out there alone. Where is the voice of the CUNY board calling for a contract for the people who make CUNY work? The voice saying that hiking tuition every year is not an acceptable way to fund a public university?

And where is the voice refusing to accept the bizarre practice of New York State government of not funding union contracts? Yes – that's what's happening and it's going unchallenged by the Board of Trustees.

New York State routinely agrees to contracts for public-sector workers but then does not provide the funding to cover the cost. The PSC won a titanic battle in the last round of bargaining and secured more than \$200 million for our members from New York State in back-pay. But the State has apparently taken the position that public-sector contracts will not be funded. That's why senior colleges are being told to cannibalize their own academic budgets to pay for a contractual obligation. In what world is it fair to approve raises for public-sector workers and then expect the institutions where they work to gouge their own inadequate budgets to pay for them?

The PSC's contract demands are a call to stop normalizing substandard salaries and conditions. The union has had productive

sessions at the bargaining table, but now it's time for an economic offer from the Board of Trustees, an offer adequate to the need. Salaries for full-time faculty at CUNY, once a source of pride, have been eroded in value, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Since 2000, the PSC leadership has been working hard to catch us up. But senior college salaries are now 20, 30, 40 thousand dollars lower than those at comparable institutions – like Rutgers or Penn State. Full-time salaries for the lowest paid, especially college laboratory technicians and lecturers, are way below those in New York's high schools. I get

The bargaining team has told management across the table that we will not settle without having this demand addressed. We have also made it clear that public funding beyond the typical level of contract funding will be needed to make it happen. Adjunct salary increases have to be an addition to, not a subtraction from the rest of the economic package. I can't promise that we'll win. I can't promise that we'll do it all in one contract. But I promise that we will fight.

The demand for \$7K is not just about adjuncts. It is about all of us. Why? First, because CUNY's low pay for adjuncts is a



PSC members marched on Wall Street with a united message about the contract.

a little sick every time I hear the protesting-too-much slogan “the greatest public university in the world.” No one believes more in CUNY's capacity than those of us right here, those of us who have dedicated our professional lives to the hope it offers. But CUNY cannot even begin to be the greatest urban university in the world while it continues to offer substandard salaries and conditions.

THE HARDEST DEMAND

In this contract we are also fighting for basic supports for academic life, such as tuition waivers for our children, long-overdue improvements for graduate employees and adjustments in the important structural changes we made in the last contract: HEO salary differentials and three-year appointments for adjuncts.

And this year, as you know, the PSC is taking on perhaps the hardest demand we have ever attempted: raising adjunct pay to \$7,000 a course. Why \$7K? Because that amount would bring adjunct pay level with the comparable fractional pay for full-time Lecturers. And it would bring CUNY into the 21st century. Adjuncts at Penn State earn more than \$6,000 a course; at Fordham they earn \$7,000-\$8,000.

clear injustice and it should be opposed by everyone who cares about justice. Second, because it sends a message to our students that their education is not important enough to have decently paid instructors. Third – and this may be less obvious – because we will all gain materially when adjuncts are no longer paid a near-poverty wage.

Paying anyone \$3,000 to teach a college course is an injustice. It's just plain wrong to expect someone to live on \$25,000 a year for college teaching in New York City. CUNY survives its gross underfunding because it pays half its teaching force substandard wages. That has to stop.

Substandard pay for adjuncts sends an unforgivable message to CUNY students, who are 77 percent people of color. It tells them: Your college education is worth only low-wage pay, you are not worth public investment. We cannot allow that message to stand.

Here is our message: The work of teaching is itself worth fair pay, and our students are worth being taught by well-paid instructors. It doesn't matter if you are a full-time accountant teaching one course or a long-time adjunct depending entirely on her adjunct income. The work itself has value. The work is worth \$7,000 a course or more.

CUNY's ability to pay anyone less than their work is worth helps to hold all our wages down. Unions began as an effort to lift the wage floor, in part because lifting the floor also lifts the ceiling. We will never fully lift the top salaries at CUNY until we lift the bottom.

CUNY's ability to hire adjuncts at low pay provides a disincentive to hiring more full-time faculty. It weakens tenure by creating a faculty workforce in which far fewer than half the faculty are tenured or on tenure-track lines. And then the full-time faculty who are hired carry much more departmental work than we should.

Because adjuncts are so underpaid, they have to rush from their CUNY jobs to the waitressing, dog-walking and proofreading jobs they take on to make ends meet. Even though they work many more hours than they're paid for, they cannot be on campus full time. One result is that the workload of all full-time faculty and staff is increased to fill the gap. If adjuncts were fairly paid, CLTs would see their workload decrease; HEOs would see their workload decrease; full-time faculty would see their workload decrease. We could all stop subsidizing CUNY with our extra work.

WORK TOGETHER

The only way the union has ever won anything hard is by working for it together. The adjunct demand is a demand for all of us. The climate activists told us that to change everything, we need everyone. Changing the adjunct wage would change everything at CUNY. We need everyone.

This union has done hard things before. We have won paid parental leave – the first public-sector union in the state to do so. We have won adjunct health insurance, graduate employee health insurance, junior faculty full-paid research leave, sabbaticals at 80 percent pay – higher than at most private universities. We have lowered the teaching load, raised the salaries and won \$200 million in back pay in the last contract.

I believe that we are the union that can break the low-wage work paradigm for adjuncts. If any union at a public university can do it, it's the PSC. I believe we can settle a good contract without striking, and without a six-year wait. The PSC leadership is prepared to be militant, and we've been militant before. We will do whatever it takes, but if you keep showing up and speaking up, we will have the power to win.

All of us have been inspired by the waves of teacher uprisings and strikes this year. For me, the most inspiring thing is that the teachers taught as they fought. They taught their states that the quality of pay for themselves is the same as the issue of quality education for their students.

All of us who work at CUNY are teachers, whether we work in a lab or a counseling office or a library or a classroom. So let's be teachers in the fullest sense of that word. Let's do what teachers do: expose the lies and uncover the truth. Let's expose the lie that there is not enough money for CUNY or our contract, the lie that austerity for CUNY is inevitable, the lie that substandard adjunct pay is all we can ever expect. Together, let's teach, let's win the change we need.

NYC has enough wealth to fund CUNY.

The above is adapted from remarks made at the September 27 demonstration.

A law program for the people

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

It was several years ago when Lauren DiMartino, who was a career strategist at Guttman Community College (a HEO position), was thinking about ways she could advance at her job and develop in her career. One of the places she turned to was her PSC-CUNY contract, which had tuition waivers for graduate-level education at CUNY. She's now a student at CUNY School of Law's part-time program, which enrolled its first class in the fall of 2015 and allows working professionals like DiMartino to take classes at night toward their law degree.

"For me it was like, 'Why would I not be taking advantage of this [benefit] and getting more credentials?'" DiMartino said, speaking about the contract's tuition benefit.

TUITION WAIVERS

At the end of this academic year, she'll graduate law school, take the bar exam and go on to clerk for a federal judge in the sixth circuit.

For many, law school tuition is a barrier to entry, and the CUNY School of Law is an affordable option, even when compared to other public law schools in the region. Two semesters of in-state tuition at the law school's part-time program costs a little more than \$10,500 per year, and for many PSC members the tuition costs are around half that amount because of union benefits.

For full-time faculty, HEOs, CLTs and most full-time CUNY employees in the PSC bargaining unit, the contract grants tuition waivers for up to six credits per semester dur-

Tuition waivers available for PSC members



Natalie Gomez-Velez, a professor at the CUNY School of Law and a PSC member, teaches law students at CUNY School of Law's evening program, which will graduate its first class this academic year.

ing the academic year for graduate-level education. Adjuncts who have taught one or more classes in the same department for ten consecutive fall and spring semesters also qualify for tuition waivers for up to one course. These waivers are done on a space-available basis.

In this round of contract bargaining, the PSC demands an ex-

pansion of eligibility for tuition waivers. The union is proposing that children and stepchildren of full-time faculty and staff covered by the PSC-CUNY contract receive undergraduate tuition waivers.

"As academic employees, whether we're faculty or staff, we understand the importance of a good quality education, and that's why we

want to expand tuition benefits to our members' children," PSC First Vice President Andrea Vásquez told *Clarion*. "The more access that we have to the educational programs at CUNY, the better it is for the whole CUNY community."

MORE BENEFITS

For teaching adjuncts, the union demands that the current eligibility requirements in the contract should be reduced. Rather than requiring them to teach 10 semesters in the same department at the same college, the requirement should be lessened to six.

"There are a lot of people who would like to go to law school but can't afford to do so," said Frank Deale, a professor at the law school and its evening program. "For a lot of people, dropping out of the workforce to become a lawyer is a huge investment."

There's a host of reasons, Deale said, why professionals may go to law school while working. Some are looking to reinvent themselves, others are looking to make a pivot in their careers or advance in the jobs they already have.

A PUBLIC INTEREST MISSION

The motivation for DiMartino to attend law school was to be more effective in her work in higher education and working with students.

"I was really moved by my students' stories and their potential and [I was] troubled by the obstacles that I felt that they were facing," DiMartino said.

The law school's mission, "law in the service of human needs," is

meant to be a motivating factor for its students. The school is ranked as one of the top law schools with the highest percentage of graduates going into public interest work, and its clinical program is consistently rated in the top ten in the nation. Training public interest lawyers is one the school's goals, and another is to educate a diverse student body.

"You need to have lawyers authentically represent communities that are underrepresented or you can't guarantee equal justice for those communities," said Mary Lu Bilek, the dean of the CUNY School of Law. "That means that you need to create access for people from those communities."

DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

The part-time program also gives a chance for prospective students who can't afford to take a break from work to get a legal education. While a traditional law school curriculum is three years, the part-time program spreads courses over four years including a required summer session after the first academic year. Students can move from being a part-time student to a full-time student, or vice versa, as their needs change while attending school. Bilek said that they look for barriers to access, and actively recruit people from underrepresented communities.

The school's Pipeline to Justice program accepts both promising applicants who were initially denied admission to CUNY Law and CUNY undergraduates. The program prepares them for law school.

"We have the license to follow the CUNY mission of reaching out to communities that have not had access to the law, and that's a real animating factor in the evening program," said Franklin Siegel, a PSC member and a distinguished lecturer at the law school. "It gives us access to people who mainstream law schools are not interested in."

Oscar Deonarine, who grew up in Queens and graduated from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, attended the Pipeline to Justice program, and now he's a student in the CUNY part-time law program.

"Growing up I always wanted to go to law school, but then I kind of thought it wasn't for me ... because of my circumstances."

After Deonarine graduated John Jay, he found a job as a paralegal at the CUNY Office of the General Counsel. Attorneys working there encouraged him to become a lawyer, and once the part-time program at the CUNY School of Law was announced, he jumped at the chance to pursue the degree.

Deonarine, is now in his fourth year. He still works for CUNY full-time, gets the tuition waivers and attends classes and clinics at night. Juggling it all, he said, isn't impossible.

"It takes a lot of sacrifice. It takes a lot of time management," Deonarine said. "It is very doable, actually, once you're determined and you're ready to make the sacrifices that you need."

Newly hired adjuncts get PSC training



Adjuncts at Queens College attend a PSC orientation training for new hires in October. The union has stepped up orientation efforts CUNY-wide this year.

'It takes a lot of sacrifice.'

Ellen Moyinhan

The PSC 2018 political agenda

By ARI PAUL

Every election is important, but for the labor movement the 2018 elections in November are a turning point.

It is the first time since the *Janus* decision was handed down – ruling that nonmembers in a bargaining unit are no longer required to pay agency shop fees to the union – that union members will be able to express their political agency at the ballot box. And since the 2016 election of Donald Trump as president, union members have seen unabashed class warfare in terms of tax cuts for the rich, an anti-union reorganization of the National Labor Relations Board and the appointment of two anti-labor justices to the Supreme Court.

VOTE IN NOVEMBER

Union members have a chance to change things at the state and national level to turn things around. It's of extreme importance that every PSC member who is registered to vote go to the polls on November 6, union leaders said.

Already this primary season, New York City politics have been upended by voter thirst for progressive change – an indication of both a move away from centrism and one that hopefully marks an upsurge in the mobilization of the progressive base. This summer, residents in

Races for Albany and DC



Bob Cermele, a PSC retiree, made phone calls to urge members to vote.

parts of Queens and the Bronx voted out an entrenched and established incumbent congressman in favor of progressive Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Democrat who seems all-but assured victory on election day given the nature of the district. New

York City Democrats appear tired of business as usual when it comes to their representation and unwilling to sit back and accept the status quo in the era of Trump.

A few months later, New York Democratic voters sent a similar

message at the state level, ousting most of the state senators of the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), Democrats who caucused with Republicans, thereby robbing the Democratic Party of a majority in the upper house and blocking the chance of any kind of large-scale, ambitious progressive legislation from making its way to the governor's desk. Among the new progressives who are likely heading to Albany next year are Jessica Ramos of Queens, Robert Jackson of Manhattan, Alessandra Biaggi of the Bronx and Westchester and Zellnor Myrie of Brooklyn.

PRO-LABOR CANDIDATES

The union has already reached out to many of these likely lawmakers-to-be – many of whom ran on anti-austerity, pro-public-service platforms – about the importance of pushing for full state funding of CUNY and SUNY.

"They're all eager to work with us and to fight for CUNY once they're elected," PSC Legislative Representative Mike Fabricant said.

John Jay College political scientist Susan Kang, who was active in the anti-IDC primary campaigns, told *Clarion*, "These IDC challengers are committed to public higher education and funding CUNY, and many of them support \$7K for adjuncts. We'll find that we have new

strong allies in the State Senate who will be willing to meet with the PSC and prioritize the needs of our students in Albany."

FLIPPING DISTRICTS

Union activists throughout the state have an opportunity to flip the State Senate not only back into Democratic control, but with a group of new, progressive Democrats. A narrow Republican majority in the Senate has suppressed lots of union-friendly legislation over the years. "We want to have a strong Democratic majority so strong progressive legislation that goes through the State Assembly can go through the Senate in a way that will meet the needs not just of the CUNY community, but all New Yorkers," Kang said. "CUNY funding is important, because not only do we have stagnating wages and rising tuition, we have crumbling infrastructure, a failure to hire full-time faculty and we need to have fully funded programs and services for students."

But not all of the new insurgent candidates are assured victory on November 6. John Liu ousted IDC incumbent Tony Avella in Queens, but he faces a strong Republican, Vickie Paladino, in the general election.

Worse yet, Avella has not accepted the drubbing lightly and has indicated he will stay on the ballot on the Independence and Women's Equality Party lines, issuing the implied threat of possibly splitting the Democratic Party vote to sway the outcome toward Paladino. Liu, who served in the City Council and one term as city comptroller, will still need rank-and-file union supporters doing door-to-door work to win in a district that has trended toward Republicans and conservative Democrats in the past.

HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT

Liu said that if elected to the State Senate he would work to increase the state's funding of CUNY.

"Public higher education is a substantial part of the state annual budget, but that seems not to have kept pace with the growth of the overall budget," Liu told *Clarion*. "I'd work to restore at least a fair share of the state budget for CUNY. That should alleviate the pressure on tuition increases, but it would also help fund fair contracts, which is in the best interests of the public, because there is a direct correlation between faculty budget and educational excellence."

Liu added that he would fight to protect public sector unions in light of the recent Supreme Court decision that forbids unions like the PSC from collecting agency shop fees from nonmembers in a bargaining unit. "Strong public sector unions further the public interest," he said.

The union is also encouraging members to support Democrat An-

Continued on page 11

PSC member's insights on Trump

By ARI PAUL

A recent *New York Times* investigation uncovered how Donald Trump – contrary to the image of an innovating real estate baron – gained hundreds of millions of dollars in tax avoidance schemes through the real estate empire he inherited from his father. The story paints Trump not only as mendacious, but points to how he has sapped the financial ecosystem.

John Whitlow, an associate professor at the CUNY School of Law, wrote an op-ed for the paper in response to the investigation, outlining how the sordid rise of Trump, the real estate tycoon, is anything but an anomaly in New York City. Drawing on his experience as a tenants' rights lawyer – he served as an attorney for Make the Road New York and the Urban Justice Center before entering academia – Whitlow wrote that the Trump real estate empire has acted in the same way most New York City landlords do, by working through tax loopholes and squeezing as much money out of tenants as possible, using legitimate means as well as testing the legal guardrails.

Clarion spoke with Whitlow about his insights.

Clarion: In your piece, you say the Trump Organization acts like any

A local matter

other New York City landlord. Why are NYC landlords so unscrupulous?

Whitlow: New York City has had a tight real estate market for at least a century, and in the past couple of decades, the rent laws have been whittled down to the point where it's not too difficult for owners of rent-stabilized buildings to move their apartments to the so-called free market. There's just a tremendous incentive for property owners to act in ways that maximize the return on their investment, which has a significant social cost when the asset in question is someone's home. This is a context that breeds unscrupulous, antisocial behavior.

TYPICAL NYC LANDLORD

Trump is portrayed as being unusually brash and outlandish. In terms of NYC real estate, is he among the most ruthless or merely par for the course?

He's mostly par for the course. The mix of legitimate business practices and outright graft on the part of landlords in this city is something that all tenants and tenant advocates are very familiar with. The line between legiti-

macy and criminality is blurred and shifting, and we're seeing that play out on a national scale with this administration.

How much local power does the NYC real estate industry have?

A tremendous amount. Real estate in New York City is analogous to oil in geopolitics in terms of its capacity to be an animating political economic force. The power of the real estate lobby is compounded, because since the 1970s, New York City residents have had very little say over the city's housing policy, which is mostly dictated by the state legislature. This means that real estate interests can lobby upstate politicians, who have no rent-stabilized constituents, for favorable policies, while city officials' hands are tied when it comes to issues of tenants' rights and affordable housing.

What can tenants do to make NYC more affordable and livable right now?

On a broad level, tenants can continue to organize so that the places they live in are rightfully

treated as their homes, instead of just their landlords' real estate assets. It should be noted that people are already doing this – in their buildings and neighborhoods – all over the city. A recent example of an organizing success is the right

to counsel for tenants facing eviction, which was fought for by a coalition of grassroots tenant organizations. To fundamentally address the crisis of affordable housing, I think we need municipal sovereignty over our housing laws, and strengthened rent laws and expanded public housing. This feels like a heavy lift, but I think it's a neces-

sity given the gravity of the situation we're in.

Before you came to CUNY, you were a public interest lawyer. Was the transition to academia difficult? Is there anything you miss about your time practicing law?

I love teaching and training students to become public interest lawyers, but every now and then I miss going into housing court and advocating for my clients.



John Whitlow

Vote union-backed candidates in Nov.

By CLARION STAFF

The PSC encourages all of its members who are registered to vote to cast a ballot on November 6. The stakes are high. The Democratic Party has the chance to form a majority in the State Senate, which would enable it to push a progressive agenda, including the fair and full funding of CUNY and SUNY.

At the federal level, the labor movement faces a pivotal moment. If union members can vote the Republicans out of the majority in the House of Representatives, they will deliver a severe blow to the Trump administration, and will put a much needed check on executive power.

Below is a list of candidates endorsed by the New York State United Teachers, the PSC's state-level affiliate union. Find your districts and vote for change.

US CONGRESS

DISTRICT # CANDIDATE

- 1.....Perry Gershon
- 2.....Liuba Grechen Shirley
- 3.....Tom Suozzi
- 4.....Kathleen Rice
- 5.....Gregory Meeks
- 6.....Grace Meng
- 7.....Nydia M. Velazquez
- 8.....Hakeem S. Jeffries
- 9.....Yvette D. Clarke
- 10.....Jerrold Nadler
- 11.....Max Rose
- 12.....Carolyn Maloney
- 13.....Adriano Espaillat
- 14.....Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
- 15.....Jose E. Serrano
- 16.....Eliot Engel
- 17.....Nita Lowey
- 18.....Sean Patrick Maloney
- 19.....Antonio Delgado
- 20.....Paul Tonko
- 21.....Tedra Cobb
- 22.....Anthony Brindisi

Each election counts

- 24.....Dana Balter
- 25.....Joseph Morelle
- 26.....Brian Higgins
- 27.....Nate McMurray

STATE SENATE

DISTRICT # CANDIDATE

- 2.....Kathleen A. Cleary
- 3.....Monica R. Martinez
- 4.....Louis D'Amaro
- 5.....James Gaughran
- 7.....Anna Kaplan
- 8.....John E. Brooks
- 9.....Todd Kaminsky
- 10.....James Sanders, Jr.
- 11.....John Liu
- 12.....Michael N. Gianaris
- 13.....Jessica Ramos
- 14.....Leroy Comrie
- 15.....Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.
- 16.....Toby Ann Stavisky
- 17.....Blake Morris
- 18.....Julia Salazar
- 19.....Roxanne J. Persaud
- 20.....Zellnor Myrie
- 22.....Andrew Gounardes
- 25.....Velmanette Montgomery
- 26.....Brian Kavanagh
- 27.....Brad Hoylman
- 28.....Liz Krueger
- 29.....José M. Serrano
- 30.....Brian A. Benjamin
- 31.....Robert Jackson
- 32.....Luis R. Sepúlveda
- 33.....Gustavo Rivera
- 34.....Alessandra Biaggi
- 35.....Andrea Stewart-Cousins
- 36.....Jamaal T. Bailey
- 37.....Shelley Mayer
- 38.....David Carlucci
- 39.....James Skoufis
- 41.....Karen Smythe
- 42.....Jenn Metzger
- 43.....Aaron Gladd
- 44.....Neil D. Breslin

- 50.....John Mannion
- 53.....Rachel May
- 63.....Timothy M. Kennedy

STATE ASSEMBLY

DISTRICT # CANDIDATE

- 22.....Michaëlle C. Solages
- 23.....Stacey Pheffer Amato
- 24.....David I. Weprin
- 25.....Nily Rozic
- 26.....Edward C. Braunstein
- 27.....Daniel Rosenthal
- 28.....Andrew Hevesi
- 29.....Alicia Hyndman
- 30.....Brian Barnwell
- 31.....Michele R. Titus
- 32.....Vivian E. Cook
- 33.....Clyde Vanel
- 34.....Michael G. DenDekker
- 35.....Jeffrion L. Aubry
- 36.....Aravella Simotas

- 37.....Catherine Nolan
- 38.....Michael Miller
- 39.....Catalina Cruz
- 40.....Ron Kim
- 41.....Helene E. Weinstein
- 42.....Rodneyse Bichotte
- 43.....Diana C. Richardson
- 44.....Robert C. Carroll
- 45.....Steven Cymbrowitz
- 46.....Ethan Lustig-Elgrably
- 47.....William Colton
- 48.....Simcha Eichenstein
- 49.....Peter J. Abbate, Jr.
- 50.....Joseph R. Lentol
- 51.....Félix W. Ortiz
- 52.....Jo Anne Simon
- 53.....Maritza Davila
- 54.....Erik M. Dilan
- 55.....Latrice Walker
- 56.....Tremaine Wright
- 57.....Walter T. Mosley
- 58.....N. Nick Perry
- 59.....Jaime R. Williams
- 60.....Charles Barron

- 61.....Charles Fall
- 62.....Michael Reilly
- 65.....Yuh-Line Niou
- 66.....Deborah J. Glick
- 67.....Linda B. Rosenthal
- 68.....Robert J. Rodriguez
- 69.....Daniel J. O'Donnell
- 70.....Inez E. Dickens
- 71.....Al Taylor
- 72.....Carmen N. De La Rosa
- 73.....Dan Quart
- 74.....Harvey Epstein
- 75.....Richard N. Gottfried
- 76.....Rebecca A. Seawright
- 77.....Latoya Joyner
- 78.....Jose Rivera
- 79.....Michael Blake
- 80.....Nathalia Fernandez
- 81.....Jeffrey Dinowitz
- 82.....Michael Benedetto
- 83.....Carl E. Heastie
- 85.....Marcos A. Crespo
- 86.....Victor M. Pichardo
- 87.....Karines Reyes



Union political agenda

Continued from page 10
drew Gounardes, who is looking to unseat Republican Marty Golden. Flipping the Brooklyn seat is key to putting the senate in the Democrats' control.

KEY RACES

Also of key importance is moving the House of Representatives into Democratic control, which would, at the very least, stymie the already incredibly destructive and reactionary Trump administration, which for two years has operated with a GOP-controlled Congress.

Democrat Max Rose has a chance to unseat incumbent Republican Dan Donovan in Staten Island. Flipping the seat is far from impossible. While thought to be a solidly conservative voting bloc, the previous Republican from the area, Michael Grimm, came into power after a

Democratic congressman. And Rose has already spoken to Donovan's inactivity in responding to the *Janus* decision, despite the high volume of public sector union members living in the borough.

PSC members and other supporters have been handing out campaign literature for Rose at the Manhattan terminal for the Staten Island Ferry, catching commuters on their evening commute on several occasions leading up to the November vote.

The union is hosting phone banks at the PSC every Wednesday from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., and members can also use the online OpenVPB system. The union is planning two rally/canvass days, one on October 20 for Gounardes in Brooklyn and another on October 27 for John Liu in Queens. Check the union's website for details.

Endorsement process explained

By CLARION STAFF

Members have been calling and emailing the union offices asking how political endorsements are made. It is a multilayered process, so here is an attempt to explain how it works:

While the PSC makes its own decision on endorsements in New York City elections, the PSC's state affiliate, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) is the final decision-making body on candidate endorsements for state office. The PSC's national union, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), has the final say on endorsements of federal candidates.

The process begins with the PSC's legislation committee conducting interviews of the candidates. For the current State Senate and Assembly

races these interviews were in May and June. The committee assesses the candidates' answers to committee questions, including a written questionnaire, and makes a recommendation to the union's executive council. In state races the PSC executive council then makes a recommendation to NYSUT.

UNION LOCALS' INVOLVEMENT

"NYSUT has a political action convention in early August," explained the union's legislative director, Kate Pfordresher. "Representatives from locals all over the state attend. Five PSC members, including Mike Fabricant, the PSC's Legislative Representative attend the convention and speak on behalf of the candidates the PSC recommends."

She continued, "There are several rounds of meetings and votes. Voting is proportional, so locals like the UFT with 90,000 members carry more weight than the PSC, but there are many locals much smaller than the PSC. The final step is the NYSUT Board of Directors. The board votes and has the final decision. The PSC has several seats on the board, including President Barbara Bowen, who remarked, "We did not get NYSUT to endorse all the candidates recommended by the PSC this year, but some were. And in other races, we got NYSUT to remain neutral."

All of the legislation committee's monthly meetings are open to PSC members. Information on the committee's upcoming meetings is posted on the union's website.

Susie Cagle



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Vote November 6

People fought for years and decades – and often died – for the right to vote. It takes but a few minutes to cast a ballot in the upcoming midterm elections, which will be a chance to flip the State Senate back into Democratic Party hands and to rein in the Republican control of

Congress for at least the next two years.

Around the country, GOP activists are attempting to suppress the right to vote, especially in low-income communities and for people of color, because they know that every vote counts. Make yours count in this historic election.

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POLITICS

Kavanaugh and the CUNY contract

By KATE DOYLE GRIFFITHS

The Lexington Avenue subway line that regularly delivers me from Brooklyn to Hunter College, where I have taught as an adjunct for more than several years, was mercifully swift – I arrived in the “normal” 45 minutes, even under the crippling austerity of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

With the extra half hour I had allotted myself to make up for the new reality of perpetual subway delays and a vertical commute doubled by single-elevator access in Hunter North, I almost had time to buy coffee from one of the surrounding Upper East Side caffeine purveyors, these being the only options now that the cafeteria and Starbucks are closed for business. (Without cash, as I was still awaiting my paycheck, the many street cart options were temporarily out of the question.)

MAKING CONNECTIONS

In my class, I was excited, despite being without coffee, because the discussion turned to the topic of settler colonialism, the subject of a recent lecture, and the logic of “empty space” ready and waiting to be colonized. One student likened the simultaneity of war for land, and this logic of empty land, with the “open secret” of sexual assault on display at the confirmation hearings for Brett Kavanaugh, now a Supreme Court Justice, indicating that she believed Republican supporters of Kavanaugh are similar to settler ideologues of that period, in that they are aware of Kavanaugh’s guilt and the ubiquity of sexual assault as a mechanism of control, but wedded to an overt denial (or repression) of the truth.

Any educator loves seeing students draw compelling connections, even seemingly tenuous ones; for me this was a welcome note that made me pause and reflect on the events of the last two weeks. I have spent it organizing with the International Women’s Strike (IWS), a coalition of women and queer activists from political and labor organizations, locally and nationally, to call for a series of demonstrations and walkouts leading up to and following Kavanaugh’s confirmation. And, like so many people, I have been inundated on so-



New Yorkers protested the appointment of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

cial media with a new wave of stories and #MeToo posts about the experiences my friends and family have had with sexual assault at school, at work and in personal relationships. I even shared my own stories, including one about a rich angry man who reminded me very much of the controversial judge.

POOR CONDITIONS

Those stories, many about out-of-control frat boys like Kavanaugh once was, along with the sorry physical state of Hunter College have weighed on me. Reading news articles about politicians mocking sexual assault survivors including Christine Blasey Ford and Anita Hill, but also survivors represented in a teacher-led sit in in West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin’s office, filled me with despair and rage at the disrespect for the basic humanity of women and for regular working-class people that

elite politicians so easily demonstrated. (Manchin was the one Democrat who voted to confirm Kavanaugh.)

This feeling of disrespect was just compounded when looking around at the condition of my beloved Hunter College. No cafeteria, no bookstore, reports of bed-bugs in the library, disabled access doors often themselves disabled. Even our ugly statue is gone or out of commission, at least for now. Students and faculty packed like sardines in the single elevator that goes to any given floor in the building where I work. It really felt, to me, this week, like a message about how little respect politicians and the wealthy have for us, for our students and for the project of educating the working class of New York City, to which so many of us devote so much of our time and ourselves.

But I also found hope, in the example of West Virginia teachers, moving from

strikes to sit-ins and arrests, and in that of the thousands of women and feminists who demonstrated three times this week in New York, as well as in Washington DC and cities and towns across the country, sometimes engaging in civil disobedience. Kavanaugh was confirmed, yes, but this week, I also didn’t feel alone in my anger and sense of disrespect. I felt my experiences as a union member, as a labor activist and as a feminist organizer beginning to come together.

BROAD SOLIDARITY

Reading about Kavanaugh’s growing list of accusers, I remembered that hotel workers across the country are on strike and thought of the brave example of Nafissatou Diallo who, with the support of her hotel workers’ union local, confronted Dominique Strauss-Kahn for a rape that took place yards from the location of Monday’s demonstration at the Yale club. I thought of the strike that took place in Chicago last year for greater worker protections against sexual assault and harassment by guests and management, and which paved the way for a major contract victory for hotel workers announced recently. I thought of Fight for \$15 workers at McDonalds striking over sexual harassment.

For me the lesson is that, in my own fight for better pay and working conditions as a CUNY adjunct (and as an SEIU member at Fordham University where we recently won \$7K for adjuncts), the broader the solidarity we can mobilize, the more our fight takes on the overall atmosphere of disrespect which we all must navigate daily, the more powerful it will be. We are not alone. The more connections we can build among the disrespected, even those that might at first seem tenuous, the more powerful we will be. As my friend and leader of West Virginia teacher strikes Emily Comer put it, in reference to teachers and sexual assault survivors who were ultimately arrested for sitting in, “y’all are my heroes.”

My heroes in this political moment are the women, feminists and union members who are standing up and fighting back, who have made it clear that this defeat, however painful, is a beginning, not an end.

Kate Doyle Griffiths is an adjunct instructor of anthropology at Hunter College.

Workers’ role combating assault