

**NOVEMBER 2022**



**Academic Year 2022-23 No. 3**

[psc-cuny.org/retirees.org](https://psc-cuny.org/retirees.org)

**VIRTUAL CHAPTER MEETING  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1-3PM**

**PART I: THE ASIAN-AMERICAN  
COMMUNITY: FIGHTING RACISM**



**Moderator: Carol Huang**, Assistant Professor, CCNY School of Education and PSC chapter chairperson; Secretary, Asian-American/Asian Research Institute.

**Speakers:**

**Van Tran**, Associate Professor of Sociology, CUNY Graduate Center: A summary of discrimination against

Asian-Americans, including racial exclusion in immigration laws, internment of Japanese Americans in WWII, and more.

**Ravi Kalia**, Professor of History, CCNY, Asian-American/Asian Research Institute: Presentation on CUNY's Asian-American Research Institute and its role in CUNY's new Black, Race and Ethnic Studies Initiative.

**Elaine Chiu**: Inaugural Chairperson, Anti-Asian Violence Task Force, Professor of Law, St. John's University School of Law: Presentation on the spike in anti-Asian American racist incidents in the city.

**PART II: UPDATE ON HEALTH CARE  
CRISIS IN NYC**

As usual, you must register in advance for this meeting: PLEASE CHECK LINK [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAqfuGprj4tH9yQIRuC-7h-VJgt-KP2YxjE](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84461212693)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with information about joining the meeting. PLEASE SAVE THE CONFIRMATION.



**NOTE ON MEMBERSHIP:** Membership dues notices were mailed out. If you have not received a renewal notice in the mail, please contact PSC Membership Dept. at 212-354-1252

**Continuing members:** You can return your dues envelope with a check or Pay Your Dues online <https://psc-cuny.org/retireedues/>

Please tell people you know who have recently retired or who are not getting email or dues notices to JOIN US.

New members: <https://psc-cuny.org/about-us/retiree-membership/>



## THE MONTH THAT WAS

### RETIREE HEALTH CARE—THE SAGA UP UNTIL NOW

As of this deadline our retiree health care remains as it was, and all our drug, eye, dental and hearing benefits stay safely with the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund. The State Supreme Court Case that Judge Frank ruled on last Spring is before the State Court of Appeals (NYS's highest court). The NYC attempt, sparked by the Mayor and the Municipal Labor Committee (MLC), to change New York City Law (Administrative Code 12-126) has not yet found sponsors in the City Council. Thanks for your emails and phone calls urging the Council not to support this end run around health care for retirees, which also opens the door to changing health care for all active City employees.

### FRAUD INVESTIGATION

Meanwhile, as many of you have noted, the *New York Times* ran a major article on corruption and cost overruns among Medicare Advantage plans. The supposed “savings” from placing Medicare patients with the private Advantage plans too often results in patients being denied services as well as “up billing” to charge the plans for extra services.

Here is a clip from the article, “The Cash Monster was Insatiable-How Insurers Exploited Medicare for Billions,” in the October 8, 2022, *New York Times*:

“*New York Times* review of dozens of fraud lawsuits, inspector general audits and investigations by watchdogs shows how major health insurers exploited the program to inflate their profits by billions of dollars.

“The government pays Medicare Advantage insurers a set amount for each person who enrolls, with higher rates for sicker patients. And the insurers, among the largest and most prosperous American companies, have developed elaborate systems to make their patients appear as sick as possible, often without providing additional treatment, according to the lawsuits.

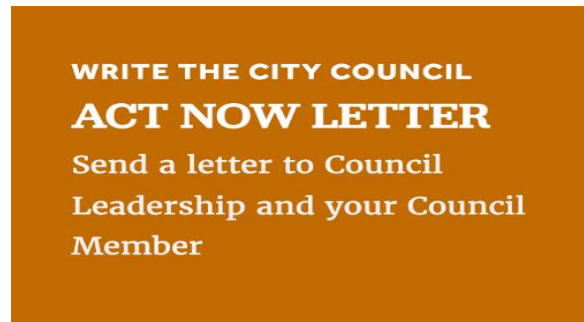
“As a result, a program devised to help lower health care spending has instead become substantially more costly than the traditional government program it was meant to improve.

“Eight of the 10 biggest Medicare Advantage insurers — representing more than two-thirds of the market — have submitted inflated bills, according to the federal audits. And four of the five

largest players — UnitedHealth, Humana, Elegance, and Kaiser — have faced federal lawsuits alleging that efforts to over diagnose their customers crossed the line into fraud.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/08/upshot/medicare-advantage-fraud-allegations.html>

MEANWHILE, a Delaware Supreme Court judge halted the state's efforts to move its 30,000 retired state employees off of their traditional Medicare supplemental plan and onto Medicare Advantage. The Court found that government officials provided inadequate and/or misleading information about the nature of Medicare Advantage, which provides materially worse benefits than traditional Medicare, and has been the subject of dozens of fraud lawsuits.



**WRITE THE CITY COUNCIL  
ACT NOW LETTER**  
Send a letter to Council  
Leadership and your Council  
Member

All of this, however, is not to say that it is time to take our feet off the pedal. If you have sent an email already, please go ahead and do so again. We all know about the squeaky wheel.  
<https://psc-cuny.org/issues/act-now-to-protect-our-health-insurance/>

As you know, this critical health care issue is full of surprises. Your source for

up-to-date coverage and action is: [psc-cuny.org/retirees](https://psc-cuny.org/retirees)

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

It is heartening that the City Council has not moved to change the Administrative Code. This indicates that they not only think it is a bad idea, but that the political fallout will hurt them in the future. Considering the clout of union endorsements and the MLC support for the change in the Administrative Code, that is a testimony to how this issue has become a major item in NYC politics.

My suggestion is that we use this quiet time, as we await the decision by the Appellate Division, and continue to pressure the City Council to take no action, to stress the alternatives to Medicare Advantage. If we can make a convincing case for a package of policies that can save NYC money on health care costs, without Medicare Advantage, we will convince even more unions to join the opposition, and will allow the City Council to avoid voting on a change in the Administrative Code. I know we have offered alternatives in the past, but now seems like the right time to stress this approach in contrast to a change in the Administrative Code that even the City Council does not want.

Irwin Yellowitz, CCNY

## UPCOMING ELECTIONS: You Can Make a Difference!



**At the October 3<sup>rd</sup> Retirees Chapter** meeting, four speakers offered ways to be involved in the upcoming election:

**Prof. Susan Kang**, Chairperson of Political Science at John Jay, moderated the panel. She began by pointing out that the future of our democracy is at stake.

Historically, during midterm elections, the presidential party loses seats in Congress. Today many Americans are less trusting in our political institutions. Many young people are disillusioned with our political systems and many of them do not vote. But young people are crucial for voter turnout. Prof. Kang noted that during the 2020 election, there was a blue wave, with many young adults turning out to vote.

What we do to get people to vote is crucial. We can talk to all types of voters about what really concerns them, such as our economic situation and our democracy. Prof. Kang pointed out that we need to make voting more accessible. Turnout in this election will be crucial.

**Luke Elliot-Negri**, PSC Legislative Representative, stressed that Democrats must keep the U.S. House and gain one or two Senators this

election. With that, there is a real chance the federal government could enact policies that would be transformative for CUNY.

What to do: For the House of Representatives, it's important to do canvassing and phone-calling in Staten Island and Nassau County, where the races are close. In Pennsylvania, there are close races for both Governor and Senate. So, it is important to sign up with Seed the Vote and take a bus to PA to canvas. Also, it's important to make phone calls. Sign up here to volunteer <https://bit.ly/PSCVolunteer2022>

**Kate Pfordresher**, recently retired PSC Political and Policy Director, spoke about Working America, a non-profit organization founded by the AFL-CIO. Begun in 2007, the group first reached out to union members and their families, and currently has three-and-a-half million members. Working America now also reaches out to non-union members, focusing on class issues, housing, health care, and the desire to unionize.

For the election, volunteers are needed to canvas voters, make phone calls, and write letters. The group is focusing on eight states with important races for Senate and Governor. There are templates for different issues, such as worker pay, housing and health care. Volunteers can choose the issue and the state they prefer. They can sign up at [www.workingamerica.org](http://www.workingamerica.org) and check the volunteer page.

**Peter Hogness**, past editor of the Clarion for 15 years, is currently a volunteer with Seed the Vote, which supports grassroots organizing in swing states. The group aids local



organizations in the community and through these contacts knows what issues concern the people there. Thus, people are more likely to trust them. When knocking on doors, the same person will knock on doors each time to speak to the residents. The organization focuses on working-class communities.

This election, Seed the Vote is working in Pennsylvania with Senate candidate John Fetterman and Gubernatorial candidate Josh Shapiro. It is also working in Georgia and Wisconsin. Phone banking is being done in Arizona, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Wisconsin, where volunteers are listening to voters' concerns and engaging with them. Volunteers are still needed for phone banking and for canvassing in Pennsylvania. You can get a Volunteer Form from the PSC. For questions or more information about Seed the Vote, you can contact

[peter.hogness@yahoo.com](mailto:peter.hogness@yahoo.com) . ☐

## NOTES ON WORKING CONDITIONS

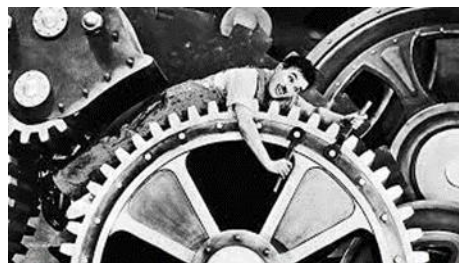
### OVERTIRED AND OVERWORKED

Joan Greenbaum, LaGuardia & Graduate Center

We are retired, but what about the rest of America. Workers are increasingly finding that they are exhausted. Exhausted from trying to do too much at work and exhausted from the ever-expanding workday of cell phones and emails. Professionals at CUNY experience this as do railroad workers. It takes many forms but often boils down to fewer workers trying to do the same or increased amounts of work. Recently PSC HEOs and CLTs offered a series of workshops on bullying in the workplace,

and what to do about it. These workers have found that while the programs they supervise and the labs they control have expanded, the number of full-time HEOs and CLTs has not increased. And in the case of CLTs the number has been declining.

Faculty too are experiencing more of the same—larger classes, more electronic speed-up for record-keeping, as well as a seemingly 24/7 flow of electronic homework and emails to review. Those of you who retired recently may be more familiar with these demands than those who retired one or more decades ago.



Chaplin in *Modern Times*

Overwork and speed up were first thought of in terms of demands on factory workers. The classic film *Modern Times* depicted this with Charlie Chapin caught as a cog in the assembly line. Now lawyers, doctors, and teachers are the recipients of these demands as well as baristas and warehouse workers. The recent spurt of union organizing at Starbucks and Amazon, as well as the demands of teachers in city after city, show us that issues as critical as bathroom breaks and time off for sick days are at the root of workers needs. Last month the railroad workers unions threatened to strike over days off to see doctors and advance notice of weekly work schedules. Work-life balance is out of whack across the board.

In private corporations this speed up and overwork may be attributed to the digital demands of a global economy, but, it is a basic feature of capitalism to increase the productivity of workers—either through working faster or extending the working day. Technology just intensifies it. So why then do these practices extend to the public sector? Simply put, we tend to treat state and city budgets as if they were corporate enterprises. Each budget year we are told we can only have a small slice of the pie. The PSC has been successful this year in arguing that the pie can be expanded for social goods such as the New Deal for CUNY (ND4C), including the need for more counselling staff for students. However, there is much to catch up on. And now in mid-year the city is trying to cut-back on the CUNY budget. Years of so-called austerity—the polite word for creating speed-up and overwork – has resulted in loss of lines and worker speed-up. Workers at CUNY like those nationwide are expected to do more with less.

The TikTok generation has used the term “acting your wage” for what we used to call “working to rule,” which meant that workers did the minimum that was expected, but not those critical extras that created better service or impassioned teaching or even quality products. (Reporters call it “quite quitting.”) To younger workers this term also means being able to walk away from an overly demanding job.

What’s important across the work world is the recognition that people have begun to talk about their working conditions. They are lifting the veil of silence and talking about the conditions that make them go home angry,

stressed, and exhausted. We are seeing this with the impressive uptick in new union organizing, increased numbers of strikes and workshops on bullying and the ‘quiet quitting’ going on.

If you found yourself in a situation before you retired that made you “overwork,” particularly if you are a more recent retiree, please write to us with your examples at [retirees@pscmail.org](mailto:retirees@pscmail.org) with Newsletter in the subject line.



Marcia Newfield, BMCC, former VP  
PSC Part-timers

### **THE HOLIDAYS ARE COMING**

It’s never too early to think about building memorable events—especially with grandkids and loved ones. Some suggestions for the upcoming season:

## THE TRAIN & GLOW SHOWS AT THE NY BOTANICAL GARDENS



Constructed out of sticks, stones, leaves, pea pods, reeds and toadstools, this replication of 190 landmarks of NYC (e.g., Grand Central Station, Brooklyn Bridge, the Guggenheim Museum, Central Park) has been expanding for 30 years and never fails to delight. It is a marvel of imagination and ingenuity—each piece can take 900 to 1,000 hours of work. For the past two years, another special exhibit has been the Glow, a configuration of LED light installations that begins at 5 p.m. Both shows open on Nov 19 and go through Jan 16th. You can get tickets for one or both for what promises to be a special evening, including a repast at the garden cafe or Bronx food tables. The holiday events also include a special show for children in the afternoon. ([nybg.org](http://nybg.org))

**THE NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY** at 77th St. and Central Park West is less well known but has splendid educational offerings. Louise Mirer, a former CUNY Chancellor of Academic Affairs, who became CEO in 2014, has greatly enhanced the museum. Current exhibitions include **The Salem Witch Trials: Reckoning and Reclaiming**

(through January 22). Another current show is 40 compelling portraits of the Harlem artistic community and dresses worn by the Grandassa Models in the late 50s-60s by **photographer Kwame Brathwaite** (January 15). Brathwaite deployed his photography as an agent of social change. This is followed by an exhibition of **“I’ll Have What She’s Having: The Jewish Deli”** (April 2), an exploration of the immigrant influence on American food culture. All the exhibits have corresponding events for children at the DiMenna Children’s History Museum downstairs, which also hosts family programs. ([nyhistory.org](http://nyhistory.org))

**AN UNEXPECTED GIFT CHOICE** : Tim Sheard, editor of *Hardball Press*, has done it again in his line of Books for Little Heroes — created a breakthrough in subject matter and approach: **WireWomen: Lighting It Up** is an illustrated book written by a collaborative of electrical apprentices in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 3, New York City. It is an unabashed plug for their trade—and indeed timely. After a five-year, fully covered apprentice program resulting in a master or bachelors degree in Labor Studies from SUNY/Empire State College, these workers become journey wirewomen, which is a lucrative career (\$81,000-\$112,000 yearly). Along with giving this book to young girls who may not be aware that such a career exists (only 2.4 percent of U.S. electricians are women), an adjunct faculty might also benefit from knowing this. The vivid color illustrations by CUNY graduate Setare Arashloo and the text by SUNY Professor Sharon Szymanski demystify some of the tools these tradespeople

use for the wonders we take for granted,  
such as lighting up Yankee Stadium.  
You can order this book from  
[www.hardballpress.com](http://www.hardballpress.com)



## POETRY CORNER



### Hide and Seek

Ingrid Hughes, BMCC

Their voices ring from the front lawn,  
then from the slope behind the house.  
making our lot larger by their play.

One bounds up the stairs, another dives  
into the closet for the excitement of  
waiting  
to be caught among the coats.

For several moments we hear  
only the thuds and leaps of the seeker  
seeking.

Then a smothered giggle from a bush  
and a shout of discovery.

In one door and out another, they rush  
by us  
as if we were furniture.

We are held in the music of their cries.



**Erratum:** Last month we published a  
obituary for Carol Smith of CCNY. We  
failed to include *Jack Hammond* as a  
co-author along with Fran Geteles.

### KEY WEBSITE ADDRESSES:

PSC Retirees website

<https://psc-cuny.org/retirees/>

What's Happening with Retiree Healthcare

<https://psc-cuny.org/whats-happening-retiree-healthcare/>

Pay Your Dues online

<https://psc-cuny.org/retireedues/>

Change Your contact information

<https://psc-cuny.org/form/psc-membership-update-form-retirees/>

Join the Chapter

<https://psc-cuny.org/about-us/retiree-membership/>

Read the Chapter Newsletter <https://psc-cuny.org/retirees-chapter-newsletters/>

And very important for health benefit  
questions: **Welfare Fund**

<http://psccunywf.org/>

**TURNING THE PAGE** is a publication of  
the Retirees chapter of PSC-CUNY,  
Local 2334 of NYSUT and the AFT.