



Paul Frangipane

## FIGHTING AGAINST THE NEW MCCARTHYISM

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## McCARTHYISM

## CUNY will stand tall

By MICHELLE FINE

I left the University of Pennsylvania in 1991, after a decade there, to come to the CUNY Graduate Center. My mother was the youngest of 18 siblings, a Jewish refugee from Poland, and my father an orphan who fled Poland. They both arrived at Ellis Island in 1921 at the age of seven. Rose Hoffer and Yankel Yankelovich didn't schlep here for their stories to be weaponized as a rationale for academic McCarthyism.

It seems particularly ironic and cruel that the House Committee on Education and the Workforce is holding hearings on university accountability and protecting students' civil rights, while funding violent assaults abroad, most particularly in Gaza, and domestically on students who are international, Muslim or Latino; students with disabilities; low-income and working-class students; the undocumented; pro-Palestinian activists; queer and trans students. Where were the congressional hearings for Mahmoud Khalil, Rumeysa Ozturk and the countless others who fled and live in fear?

## JEWISH VALUES

Let me be clear: I am a Jew at CUNY, and like thousands of other Jewish faculty, staff and students nationwide, I do not feel unsafe. I refuse to be complicit in your campaign to destroy public education.

This assault on higher education and on organized labor is not protecting Jews, any more than the vicious ICE attacks are about keeping communities safe. These hearings are foreplay to advancing an anti-intellectual, anti-worker, in fact anti-Jewish, anti-Black, anti-Muslim, anti-Latino, anti-LGBT regime that smells more like white Christian nationalism than challah.

Our elder sister, the always present Audre Lorde, reminded us that our silence will not protect us; so we say, "Not in our name." We will not permit a resounding, and increasingly global (even among Jews) critique of Israel to be weaponized as antisemitic speech.

Outrageous acts of institutional violence have historically been enacted to "presumably" reduce antisemitism. In 1922, when City College was 73% Jewish, and Harvard was 20%, Harvard president Abbott Lawrence Lowell announced that he had a "Jewish problem," which would be resolved with a quota. He was concerned that "there is a rapidly growing antisemitic feeling in this country, fraught with very great evils for Jews." He elaborated that the antisemitic feeling among students was increasing and [!!!] growing in proportion to the increase in the number of Jews." Oy!

Quotas were his answer to antisemitism on campus. (Thank you, Ronald Takaki.)

In my three minutes, I will pull from scholarship and biography. I am a scholar of education. I write books, teach and am often an expert witness in educational justice lawsuits; I think a lot about how to mobilize evidence to challenge dominant lies that are told about working-class institutions.

More recently, I have been documenting the aggressive investment in what our late colleague Charles Mills would call epistemic ignorance: the federal mandate to not know or not teach. The voracious desire to whitewash decades of critical scholarship and teaching.

For students of CUNY history, we know that repression is a very painful but failed experiment; the desire to learn to engage with very different others is irrepressible. "They" (a



Paul Frangipane

Michelle Fine at a rally against the new McCarthyism outside City Hall.

promiscuous "they" that shifts in form but not desire over generations and context) can try to destroy education and trade unionism, render literacy illegal, ban books, censor words. And yet people will find ways to be educated – while enslaved, in prison, in internment camps, in occupied territories. To be free, queer and trans. To pursue their dreams of freedom. It's an itch, a hunger, a yearning – education is an asymptote. People's desires for dignity, freedom and education swell, even (maybe especially) when threatened. Censorship and hegemonic rule are never fully successful; ironically, they may just be provocations.

## AUTHORITARIANISM

Education is an irritant to authoritarian control. Whether we consider the history of apartheid in South Africa, Chile during the Pinochet regime, modern-day Hungary, scholasticism in Palestine or repression in the U.S., we see the weak, desperate moves to cut the tongues and numb the minds within educational institutions – as if that could extinguish what Emily Dickinson called the 'slow fuse of the possible' lit by the imagination. Today we witness a dystopic carnival of strategies to destroy education, deny undocumented children access to Head Start, ban books, shutter universities, censor educators, fire provocative faculty, surveil libraries, destroy archives, tear down data-driven websites, police our language, infiltrate our boards of trustees, take over social media, privatize access and whiten the curriculum, summon our chancellors to DC.

When I think about academic accountability, I am reminded of the brilliant philosopher Maxine Greene, who called upon artists and teachers to provoke aesthetic awakenings and openings and refuse anesthetic numbing. That is of course in the marrow of CUNY.

It is often said that CUNY is the engine of economic mobility, but that's not why faculty and staff stay, even as we are so badly un-

derpaid. We stay because CUNY is infused with a radical imagination for the world. We protect democracy, dissent, dialogue; we conduct science and research to build a stronger city; we grow teachers, social workers, environmental scientists, nurses and police officers; we collaborate with city agencies, community organizations and activist movements. We are deeply accountable to the people of the city.

A few years ago, we hired a brilliant scholar who had been smeared by the anti-Palestinian right wing. Angry calls from Jewish donors threatening to withdraw their monies flooded the provost's office. A few faculty volunteered to speak with the concerned philanthropists. In tones both angry and determined, one told us: "CUNY is the most antisemitic university in the country; Jews don't feel safe."

We explained: "To the contrary, CUNY is so Jewish. We have Jews of all flavors: Hasidic, Lubavitch, former Lubavitch, reform, socialist, agnostic, atheist; in Jewish studies, in Arab studies, in the union, heading up SJP. We are everywhere." And we argue – indeed there are some heated Jew-on-Jew struggles that have tumbled into the courts; old Jews accusing young Jewish faculty of antisemitism because of pro-Palestine advocacy. It's not fun, but it's the work of democratic public education. University life is not safe: It is provocative, engaging, challenging. And more so as we have students taping professors, pardoned January 6 rioters in our classrooms, IDF soldiers, students from a range of political and religious perspectives.

## OUR WORK

But this is our work. And these are our commitments to accountability – not through banishing, but engaging.

In the spring of 2024, as the encampment unfolded, I like so many in the community went up to City College. We brought our children and grandchildren to witness peaceful

protest. There was art, discussions of gentrification, boycotts, the long history of nonviolent protest at CUNY.

For two days, I facilitated a small group on the green with a simple ask: What are the questions in your heart? People shared deep/hard questions: How do I teach when my class has so many Orthodox Jews and Muslims? What's a genocide? Does "Palestine will be free from the river to the sea" mean the extermination of the Jews? What's antisemitism? What's a Semite? What is anti-Zionism? Can we talk about hostages and the Palestinian prisoners at the same time? The air was filled with songs and melodies in Yiddish, Arabic and Spanish. Shabbat dinners, seders, prayer circles. Deep political education. This is the work of the PSC, of community, and of education for and with the public.

At the Graduate Center, three Orthodox Jewish students have separately found their way to my office, each asking just for a space to speak the unspeakable. One admitted, "I have so many questions, and I can't ask them in my home community – they call me self-hating or antisemitic; it's why women shouldn't be educated."

## STUDENTS

Muslim students come by or email and report fear and censorship for wearing hijab or keffiyeh – these students don't bring their grievances to public safety or University administrators. It's difficult to measure anti-Arab and anti-Muslim acts of discrimination with self-surveys or incident reports, when students rightly fear that a complaint will double back on them. This is our work at CUNY – and I promise you a large majority of CUNY workers are engaged in this labor.

In the spring of 2024, the evening of the brutal police raid on the encampment, many in the CUNY community traveled down to One Police Plaza to stand with our students who had been beaten and arrested. We stood together not because we all agreed, but because we knew our students were dedicated to a justice mission bigger than themselves.

And yet, as Washington launches an investigation into CUNY, our own CUNY administration has terminated four adjunct faculty and suspended one student – for reasons unspecified, with chairs uninformed – tied to political speech out of the classroom.

We hold ourselves accountable to serious scholarship, to teaching with heart, to various struggles for justice and to CUNY – a gorgeous, messy, democratic and sprawling community of people, ideas, debates, protests and movements. Gentle and yet fierce, we neither engage in anticipatory obedience nor cower in the face of threats; when our students stand for a world not yet achieved, we stand beside them and then hold complicated conversations.

This campaign against CUNY is just one more chapter in the long history of CUNY struggle. We've got this. CUNY is a force of nature. CUNY can't be stopped.

*Michelle Fine is a distinguished professor of psychology, urban education, liberal studies, women's and gender studies and American studies at the Graduate Center.*

## How CUNY fights back

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# The PSC confronts McCarthyism

By ARI PAUL

The PSC spent much of the summer battling against the rise of right-wing McCarthyist assaults on American universities, including specific attacks against members and academic freedom at CUNY. This organizing hasn't stopped – the PSC plans to continue building solidarity throughout the academic year in order to beat back the authoritarian wave against free thought and higher education.

In July, House Republicans held yet another hearing grilling university leaders, this time calling on CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez as well as the leaders of Georgetown University and the University of California's flagship campus at Berkeley. A day prior to the hearing, the PSC held a rally with members and elected officials outside City Hall, demanding an end to the right-wing attacks on universities.

## CYNICAL ATTEMPT

"What's going on on Capitol Hill right now is a very cynical attempt to try to weaponize a real issue in our society: antisemitism," PSC President James Davis said on *Inside City Hall*. He added that Republican lawmakers sought to exploit "sincere anxiety around that issue directed in the most insincere way to try to discredit what's going on at these universities."

The union received support from all over the city against the attacks on CUNY. Congressman Jerrold Nadler said in a statement, "These hearings are nothing more than an attack on higher education cloaked under the guise of fighting antisemitism. If congressional Republicans were truly committed to combating antisemitism, they would stop covering up the antisemitism in their own party and demand President Trump stop employing antisemites in his Republican administration."

To underscore the problem, the rally, which was attended by more than 100 people, gained the attention of pro-Trump agitators who heckled the rallygoers, often invoking bigoted language against participants. "We have a few aspiring Brownshtirts here," said Comptroller Brad Lander.

## GOP ABSURDISM

At the July hearing on Capitol Hill, the CUNY chancellor and the other university leaders, to their credit, were able to swat down some of the more absurd assertions made by Republicans, and offered carefully worded testimony that insulated them from backlash. However, unlike the PSC and other advocates, they did not use the platform to call out the disingenuous nature of the hearing and the attack on free thought. As *The Nation* noted, many CUNY faculty and staff said the chancellor "failed to defend those community members, as well as the

## Attacks on academic freedom



PSC President James Davis leads a rally for fired faculty at Brooklyn College.

tenets of free speech and robust, open conversation that are critical components of a thriving academic institution." The magazine quoted Heba Goweday, an associate professor of sociology, saying, "It was an egregious abdication of his responsibility as an academic and his responsibility as a leader of an academic institution."

"An administration that is serious about confronting civil rights violations would not move to decimate and eliminate the Department of Education, including the Office of

Civil Rights that investigates claims of discrimination on campus, as President Trump and his congressional allies have just done," Davis said in an op-ed in the *Daily News*. "MAGA Republicans on the House Education and Workforce Committee are not interested in protecting civil rights on campus, and are not interested in the truth."

## BROOKLYN PROBLEM

And the PSC has been dealing with troubling McCarthyism at Brooklyn College. *The Intercept* reported that four adjunct instructors there "say

the university fired them because of their activism for Palestine," noting that the college's "decision to cut ties came as a surprise to both the faculty and their department heads, who had already recommended their reappointment and assigned them classes for fall – some of which had student waitlists." It added, "The affected professors, and faculty in support of them, said they remained in good standing with their academic departments and had great reviews from students."

"When academic freedom and freedom of speech are not protected, irrespective of the faculty member's particular rank or title, it sends a chilling message to the campus community. It also devalues the profession," Davis said in a letter to the chancellor. "It says that some faculty members possess these rights, but not those on contingent appointments. The labor contract and Manual of General Policy must be upheld. If the faculty members in question failed to fulfill their professional responsibilities, a condition of their academic freedom rights, then it is incumbent on the University to prove it. Otherwise their appointments must be reinstated immediately."

## PSC DEMANDS

Davis continued, "The PSC demands the immediate reinstatement of these four faculty members to the Fall 2025 schedule and an explanation to the affected department chairs, behind whose backs these non-reappointments occurred. In light of your July 9 appearance before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, it is particularly urgent that you stand up for academic freedom and freedom

of speech for CUNY faculty members, irrespective of rank or title."

*The Intercept* also said, "A separate letter from more than 100 Jewish CUNY faculty and staff, addressed

## A local and federal issue

to Matos Rodríguez, condemned the removal of the four professors and argued that the decision violated departmental academic autonomy to determine staffing for scheduled classes. 'Firing them does not make CUNY, New York City, New York State nor the United States safer for Jews,' they wrote. 'Firing our colleagues is an abhorrent act setting a dangerous precedent.'"

## RALLY

On July 31, the Brooklyn College chapter of the PSC led a spirited rally with 150 supporters for the fired adjuncts.

"Let's be clear: Our firings had nothing to do with our job performance or our teaching records," said Corinna Mullin, one of the Brooklyn College "Fired Four," during the rally. "The PSC has warned that this has 'all the appearances of an ideological purge,' echoing the shameful McCarthy-era attacks on CUNY faculty in the 1950s. That history is repeating itself."

She added, "This is not just about us. It's about the future of higher education and critical thinking. The dignity and rights of labor. The ability to teach and learn the truth about uncomfortable histories and presents. The right to stand in solidarity with our students, with the Palestinian people facing genocide and with all oppressed peoples."

Likewise, Davis emphatically told the crowd at Brooklyn College, his home campus, that history would be on the PSC's side. "We will win these jobs back," he said.



Members demonstrating against McCarthyism outside City Hall.



## GLOBAL

# From 1973 to today

Editor's note: *This piece and the Paul Brown piece on page 5 are part of an ongoing exploration by PSC members on the subject of rising authoritarianism and how we can fight it.*

By **ÁNGELES DONOSO MACAYA**

**B**y September 1973, union activity in Chile was vigorous and visible: There were 6,700 active unions with almost a million unionized workers. This promising outlook changed rapidly after the September 11 coup. Augusto Pinochet's military junta took steps to weaken the organizational strength and political power that workers had gained during the government of Salvador Allende and the Popular Unity (1970-1973). The military declared the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT, founded in 1953) illegal and implemented a policy of repression and extermination unparalleled in the country's history, largely focused on the working class and peasant sectors.

## WORKERS TARGETED

Dozens of union leaders and hundreds of urban and rural workers were persecuted, kidnapped, tortured, and murdered or disappeared, and several thousand survived (the civil-military dictatorship murdered 2,123 people, disappeared 1,093, and imprisoned and tortured more than 40,000). In addition to mobilizing the armed forces and maintaining a secret police and intelli-

gence services, Pinochet deployed loyal media outlets like *El Mercurio* and *La Segunda* to support his reign of terror and spread fabrications and fake news – because both censorship and disinformation are necessary for the perpetuation of state terrorism (and, today, of genocide).

## CONTEXT

I delve into the context to emphasize how dangerous, and therefore how risky, it was to resist the dictatorship – even uttering the word “dictatorship” was daring. However, after a forced retreat that lasted three years (until 1976), the union movement began to regroup. In 1977, the Coordinadora Nacional Sindical (National Trade Union Coordinator) was formed, uniting leftist sectors. Its first public event, the commemoration of May Day in 1978 in Santiago, was violently repressed. Other Christian-oriented and anti-Marxist confederations were also formed, and some unions were reorganized, but with extremely restricted bargaining power given the anti-union foundation of the Labor Plan imposed in 1979.

Despite the fear, uncertainty and precariousness brought on by the economic crisis that reached its peak in 1982 (a direct result of the rampant implementation of neoliberal policies), the various groups that had been denouncing the crimes perpetrated by the dictatorship acted with the conviction that

they could not abandon the struggle, much less leave the streets: The Pinochet regime, like Donald Trump's today, was oppressive and illegitimate.

The assassination of Tucapel Jiménez, president of the National Association of Fiscal Employees (ANEF), on February 25, 1982, marked a turning point in this regard. The CNS and ANEF had been holding meetings for months to reconcile differences and achieve worker unity. In May of the following year, the Copper Workers' Confederation (CTC) called for a Paro Pacífico Nacional (Peaceful National Strike). Since political parties had been banned for almost a decade, and many of their leaders remained in exile, the massive response to the call came as a surprise to everyone, including the organizers.

## MOVEMENTS

After that Paro, the CNS, the CTC and other confederations organized under the National Workers Command (CNT) and continued to call for nationwide Jornadas de Protesta (Days of Protest). They didn't wait

for the political parties: With the political opposition weak and decimated (a weakness very different, needless to say, from that of the Democratic Party of Schumer and company), the growing workers' movement became instrumental. It advanced and achieved unity despite external difficulties and internal ideological conflicts, managing to convene and bring together in the streets a variety of groups that until then had operated dispersedly.

## UNION ROLE

The Days of Protest called on all of civil society to strike however they could: They called on people to not go to work, to not buy anything, to take to the streets to march, and to bang pots and pans at night. All of these were effective ways of disrupting the status quo –

or, in other words, to strike. These Days of Protest, which continued periodically until 1986, were joined by pobladores (neighbors organized through land takeovers), students, workers from different sectors (nurses, teachers, doctors, truck drivers, journalists, photographers, etc.) and political parties; they were all violently repressed. Despite the repression, civil society was tenacious and did not give up. The popular protest, initially brought together by the union movement, transformed and expanded the visibility of the opposition to the dictatorship in the public sphere and, little by little, weakened Pinochet's claim to absolute power, until it went up in smoke after the 1988 plebiscite.

*Ángeles Donoso Macaya is a professor of Spanish at Borough of Manhattan Community College and the Graduate Center.*



Ángeles Donoso Macaya

## What Chile can teach the U.S.

## McCARTHYISM

# We are fighting back

By **JEANNE THEOHARIS**

**I** love teaching at CUNY. There is nothing in these dark days in this country that gives me more hope than having class and witnessing the sense of possibility, the intellectual resolve and the generosity that my students embody. In this segregated country we live in, my classes are a rainbow – African Americans and West Indians, students from Pakistan and Yemen and Israel, Orthodox Jewish students, Palestinian Muslims and Catholic Nuyoricans – gay, straight and trans, we talk and listen across lines that seem unbridgeable in other parts of American society. In this current political moment of division and cruelty, our Brooklyn College students are kind and careful with each other, tender with each others' dreams and committed to learning what they haven't learned.

## CUNY BETRAYAL

This summer the chancellor went before Congress. And instead of celebrating that beautiful community – and standing up for the faculty and students of CUNY – he gave in to the bullies of Congress, who think DEI is a nasty word. Who weaponize antisemitism to try to take a hammer to public education. Who think freedom of speech only applies to what they want to hear.

I am a scholar of the Civil Rights Movement, and Americans today love to celebrate



Jeanne Theoharis at a rally near Brooklyn College.

that history. But too often civil rights history exists in the passive voice: Bus riders are ejected, students are expelled, civil rights activists lose their jobs. The people who did the expelling and the firing, well, we don't remember their names and we wouldn't have

been them. We wouldn't have called King an instigator; we wouldn't have named names for the HUAC. We wouldn't have arrested Brooklyn college students for demanding African American and Puerto Rican history. But many people did just those things then.

## Supporting BC fired members

And are doing so again.

Firing four women faculty for their pro-Palestine politics is the red line of McCarthyism. Deciding that Brooklyn College's lawyer, not the department appointments committee, makes hiring decisions is the red line. Cowering before the bullies of Congress and the City Council is the red line. Claiming these cases are “confidential employee matters” while having defiantly name-checked one of the Fired Four as an “instigator” before the Faculty Council in May is the red line. Testifying before Congress and proudly asserting one of these adjuncts “no longer” works at CUNY is the red line of McCarthyism. Treating anti-genocide protests as antisemitism is the red line of McCarthyism.

## DOING WHAT MATTERS

And we're here to say to the chancellor of CUNY and to the president and provost of Brooklyn College: It doesn't matter what is in your heart. It matters what you do. Firing adjuncts for their politics puts you on the side of McCarthyism. Claiming you are firing people for conduct but refusing even to name that conduct is McCarthyism.

We are here to say that enough is enough. We are here today to call on Chancellor Matos Rodríguez and President Anderson to stand up to the bullies and reinstate the Fired Four. We are here to say that there might be costs to standing up, as there have been before in history, but it's time to decide our students and faculty – the fate of public education and academic freedom – are worth it.

*Jeanne Theoharis is a distinguished professor of political science at Brooklyn College. This is an edited version of her speech at the July 31 rally for the Fired Four.*

Paul Frangipane

## GLOBAL

# Lessons for the PSC from France

By PAUL BROWN

At the end of June, while spending part of my summer vacation on a trip to France, my partner and I stopped by a Montmartre field office of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), one of the major confederations of labor unions in France. I had long admired the CGT from afar for its militant leadership in France's famously robust labor movement. Thanks to the labor movement and the legacies of the Front Populaire government in the 1930s, French workers generally work less and live longer than we do in the United States. Recently, as the Macron government attempts to roll back workers' rights and force unpopular neoliberalism and austerity onto the French people, the CGT has played a leading role since 2023 in organizing and mobilizing millions of workers against a government plan to raise the French retirement age from 62 to 64.

## RETIREMENT

While the struggle for a dignified retirement continues in France, there have been some major successes in the past two years. Last June, when Macron suddenly dissolved parliament to cynically dare the French public to hand power to the growing far right, the CGT took part in the rapid four-week electoral mobilization around the Nouveau Front Populaire coalition, which managed to win a plurality of seats in the National Assembly, thereby blocking the far right from power and delivering a resounding message that the French public does not want fascism or austerity. Thanks to continued pressure – from the Nouveau Front Populaire in government and the CGT and others in the workplaces and streets – there is growing hope that the increase in retirement age can be defeated as the Macron government struggles to impose it.

With this in mind, I knew I wanted to try to meet some CGT members while in France to express solidarity. I didn't know what to



Paul Brown, at left, brought some lessons home from Europe.

expect walking in unannounced, but the CGT staff there were very welcoming and thrilled to find out I was a union member from New York City. The local's secretary, Nancy, had been similarly following U.S. news from afar, and expressed excitement at the recent upset victory of PSC-endorsed Zohran Mamdani in the Democratic mayoral primary. I explained to her about how I and many other PSC members organized within our neighborhoods and our workplaces to spread not only word about his campaign, but hope that his pro-worker

policies could actually win and deliver for working New Yorkers.

Sadly, though, most of the news our CGT siblings have been following from the U.S. concerns the increasing authoritarianism and racist ICE crackdowns that are aiming to stoke fear in our communities and workplaces. I was shocked to learn from Nancy that France has recently been experiencing its own anti-immigration crackdowns, led by right-wing Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau. Just a week prior to my visit, 4,000 heavily armed police and soldiers were de-

ployed to bus and rail terminals around Paris to arrest and intimidate migrants, predominantly from Africa or the Middle East. It was a sobering reminder that the grave problems we are currently facing are not exclusive to the United States.

We were able to share strategies in addition to solidarity with our CGT comrades. I spoke about the ways that PSC members have been pushing back, from member education about our rights to refuse collaboration or entry to immigration authorities without a judicial warrant, to the PSC's Immigrant Solidarity Working Group's efforts to end ICE recruitment on CUNY campuses and the recent organization of member-led court support for migrant New Yorkers. While our union should be proud of this work, I also learned many additional strategies we could and should pursue from the CGT's lead.

## EXPANDING PRESENCE

In Montmartre, a Paris neighborhood with a large immigrant community, that particular CGT field office has expanded its work to helping non-member migrants navigate legal processes to obtain work papers, and has also opened its office space to multiple local community organizing groups. I found this inspiring, and urge the PSC to allocate more resources to direct support of immigrants – not only on, but off campus, too. I believe we can also do more in establishing union spaces as the centerpieces of a coordinated broad front of resistance to the dual threats of neoliberal austerity and crypto-fascist authoritarianism that we face in this country.

In the end, we exchanged buttons from our respective unions, as well as contact information to keep in touch. Whether across the Atlantic in France, or across the borders in Canada and Mexico, the international working class must work together to fight for the life we all deserve. We are always stronger in unity.

*Paul Brown is an adjunct lecturer in the science department at the Borough of Manhattan Community College.*

## Looking at French trade unions

## POETRY

## At a protest

In the shadows of the tall towers,  
by the federal courthouse, near watchful  
Police Plaza in lower Manhattan,  
hundreds gather in a paved-over park.

People mill about alone or in groups,  
listen to the speeches, talk to each other,  
or just stand there taking in the crowd.

Others hoist poster board signs.

Traffic goes past. Someone pounds a drum.

I lose myself in the standing crowd.  
When the chanting starts we all join in,  
not with our small individual voices  
but touching into something larger  
that belongs to us too, a fierce voice  
meant for everyone to hear.

This is what democracy looks like.

The shadows lengthen over Foley Square.

The chanting ends, the crowd thins out.

The courthouse and police headquarters  
remain. History is here. It moves through  
the massive structures and through us.

Because power would silence us  
if it could, we must speak

the words that matter when it counts.

Matthew Gartner

Associate Professor, English  
Kingsborough Community College



# PSC leads campaign to defend s

By CLARION STAFF

The PSC is leading the campaign against the Trump administration's attack on scientific research in New York City. Cuts to vital projects don't just impact a few researchers; they can rob the city of medical advances and support for many vulnerable and in-need people.

PSC members and supporters gathered in front of the Trump Building at 40 Wall Street on June 30 to call out the Republican members of New York's congressional delegation for budget bills that would cut billions from U.S. research agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and other research-funding agencies. The Trump administration has already terminated thousands of grants that address diversity, equity and inclusion, or study vaccines, climate change, gender or other areas of inquiry that the Trump administration is working to suppress.

## LETTER FOR RESEARCH

More than 2,000 CUNY and SUNY researchers and allies have signed a letter calling on New York's congressional delegation to defend federal research funding for CUNY and SUNY. The letter to the delegation argues that every dollar invested in NIH-funded scientific research generates \$2.56 in economic activity. In New York State alone, this amounts to \$8.27 billion in economic activity and 30,522 jobs. A new study by economists has estimated that a 25% cut to science funding would lead to a 3.8% decline in GDP, similar to that seen in the Great Recession.

Members from around the University have sounded off on why these cuts are so devastating for the city.

## Sexual health

For Marie, a 24-year-old barista from Queens, the local Title X clinic was a lifeline. It was where she got affordable birth control, allowing her to finish her degree at Queensborough Community College. It was where a routine wellness exam and a free cervical cancer screening caught precancerous cells early. For thousands of New Yorkers like Maria, these clinics aren't political talking points; they are the foundation of a healthy life. But now that foundation is cracking.

Imagine a New York where a simple STI test becomes a luxury, and where family planning is out of reach for those who need it most. Consider the people living with HIV who will no longer have access to care and treatment: Their viral load will increase and impact their own health, but it can also lead to increased rates of spreading the virus. Consider the increased maternal deaths in our communities that are already disproportionately impacted. Consider the queer and

## Under attack by Trump

gender-diverse youth that will have nowhere to turn for support.

Funding cuts are pushing us closer and closer to this grim reality. New Yorkers are losing access to cancer screenings, HIV prevention services, basic reproductive health services and sexuality education. Reduced access is only part of the story: Increased costs for services and a greater public health burden are also consequences on the horizon. This is the very real cost of federal funding cuts on New Yorkers' sexual health.

These cuts impact all of us, but they leave our most vulnerable at the greatest risk: Lower-income individuals, communities of color and LGBTQ+ people will be hit the hardest, especially with Title X funding cuts. Title X was created to ensure equity in reproductive health: It allows people of all economic levels access to high-quality family planning services. Currently, Title X is under attack. There has been a funding freeze over the last several months, so many Title X funded programs and clinics have had to close. The last time Trump assailed Title X funding, many states were able to make up the difference. Now, however, state budgets are stretched thin. That means Title X cuts will be felt more severely.

While many of the arguments around sexual health funding cuts are related to abortion, the cuts impact many services that are not abortion-related. Title X health centers offer a variety of services such as birth control, screenings for breast and cervical cancer, family planning counseling, initial infertility assessments, STI diagnosis and care, and general wellness examinations. These funding cuts will result in increased unintended

pregnancies and unsafe abortions, rising STI rates, reduced access to preventative care and even clinic closures. These cuts directly impact the health of our neighbors in every borough.

Beyond the public health crisis, cutting sexual health funding is also a poor economic decision. A study examining data from 2010 found that for every public dollar invested in family planning, an estimated \$7 of taxpayer money was saved in averted Medicaid and other public assistance expenditures. Cutting funds to Title X therefore merely delays and multiplies the cost to the public, which will then be paid by the New York taxpayer.

## RELATED HEADLINES

There are related headlines that are also concerning: Trump has fired the team that works on contraceptive guidelines, which has been the group that has traditionally ensured that people can make informed decisions about which contraception methods are best for them. And Trump has slashed funding related to LGBTQ+ health: Over \$800 million has been cut for research related to the health of queer people. We should all be concerned about the domino impact these actions will cause.

The chipping away at New York's sexual health funding is about to become a public health crisis if we don't act now. Each of us can 1) call our congressional representative to let them know how vital preventative sexual health care is to our future, and urge them to oppose any cuts to Title X programs; 2) donate to Planned Parenthood of Greater New York; and/or 3) share this op-ed with our friends and neighbors

## Defending our faculty



Paul Frangipane

## Support for research

to help spread the word about why sexual health services are essential to New York's future.

**Spring Cooper**  
Associate Professor, Public Health  
School of Public Health

## Risking lives

Defunding science, far from saving money, will cost Americans their lives. Not metaphorically, but in a very real sense. Iowa Senator Joni Ernst's cynical dismissal, at a town hall in Iowa, of how cutting Medicaid will inevitably shorten life, shows her, and the administration's, indifference toward robbing Medicaid participants of years of healthy life.

The destruction of science is reflected in the new budget and the wholesale firing of government scientists

and shuttering of regulatory agencies. The loss of regulation of food, air and water will subject everyone to polluted air, fecal matter in meat, toxic metals and plastics in our food, and bacteria and viruses in our water. We will live shorter and sicker lives.

With these cuts to science, there's no limit to, or even any way to measure, how consequential the loss will be. A modern pandemic may have seemed like fiction before COVID; the next one will be worse, and this time there won't be vaccines to slow its progression. Agencies meant to respond to such a crisis have been decimated. To avoid making our lives sickly and short, making our children sick and plaguing our old age, funding needs to not be cut, but to be increased.

Scientists' work cures chronic diseases, cancer, Alzheimer's and so many others that steal time with family and friends, steadily improving and extending our lives. These advances require funding. Scientific funding is not just about creating a few jobs at a research institution; it is about building the infrastructure that literally cures diseases and responds to crises.

## LOTS OF DAMAGE

Even if funding cuts are reversed in the next budget, the damage will have been done. It takes years to build a scientific infrastructure, and only then can major advances be made. Science is not easy, and it is slow. The work requires a team composed of graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and technicians. Science takes hard work, and it doesn't pay well. However, this hard work returns \$2.46 to \$10 for every dollar invested by the government. The administration is proposing a budget that will destroy labs full of dedicated professionals that have been built up over years. The labs would have to be rebuilt from scratch, wasting the taxpayer's investment in the careers of the scientists who have dedicated their lives to making yours better.

Many scientists have already made plans to leave the country in pursuit of the freedom to conduct research, leading to the type of brain drain that once afflicted Eastern Europe. One of America's leading rocket scientists was deported about 75 years ago to China, giving China a modern space and rocket program decades before they would have developed one without the gift from the American taxpayer. This time, too, the atmosphere of uncertainty continues to work to the benefit of other countries, especially China and India. Recovery will take generations. We are giving up what truly made America great.

**Michael Green**  
Professor Emeritus, Biochemistry  
City College

## International affairs

For the last 13 years, I have served as the academic adviser at Queensborough Community College for in-



Paul Frangipane

**PSC President James Davis leads a rally defending research outside a Trump property near the New York Stock Exchange.**



# science research

ternational students on an F-1 visa, which is a status that enables foreign nationals to pursue an education in the United States. During my tenure, I've worked with intelligent, driven and talented individuals who have made significant contributions to their adopted communities, despite the daunting challenges they face. Not only must my advisees contend with the academic rigors that all college students experience, but they must also surmount difficulties with which their native-born peers need not be concerned. Before they even begin their degree, they must prove their financial self-sufficiency and study plans to a U.S. consular officer to obtain a visa, arrange travel, find a place to live and orient themselves to their new surroundings, often without any local support.

In spite of these hurdles, several students have engaged in research with faculty members on topics ranging from development of new materials for solar cells to integrated electronics for satellite circuitry. Others have taken on leadership roles in student government or participated in prestigious training seminars to become global citizens and agents of change. One particularly outstanding student came to our college from the People's Republic of China in 2016. After completing a course of study at Port of Entry, our intensive English language program, in only seven months, she pursued her associate of science in chemistry, graduating with a 3.78 GPA. In addition to her impressive classroom performance, she engaged in chemistry research focusing on the synthesis of organic compounds used in the development of more affordable medicines. She presented her work at multiple events, including CUNY's Undergraduate Research Symposium and Research Scholars Program Symposium, and was published in a scientific journal.

## OVERHAUL NEEDED

To be sure, the need to overhaul our immigration system is undeniable. The Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR), the sub-agency tasked with conducting removal proceedings and assessing appeals related to these proceedings, reported a backlog of 3.6 million cases as of November 2024, with only 700 judges to adjudicate petitions. Such egregious under-resourcing not only places an unbearable burden on the hard-working public servants dedicating themselves to ensuring the safe, orderly and fair processing of cases for new arrivals, but also puts millions in legal limbo, making it exceedingly difficult for them to know whether they will be able to remain and integrate into their host communities.

Since at least the end of the Second World War, our universities have become some of the best on Earth, not only because of the trillions we have invested in building the facilities needed to educate students, but also



City Comptroller Brad Lander supporting PSC members.

because of the global talent we have cultivated and recruited to conduct bleeding-edge research that advances humanity. In implementing massive spending cuts to scientific programs, Trump has prompted countless scientists to take their work to other countries, which will result in the loss of our competitive advantage in research and development that has been a foundation to our long-term prosperity. By slamming the golden door shut on prospective students, we exacerbate this brain drain by encouraging promising minds to look elsewhere for a chance to become the next generation of scientists and intellectuals that will continue to enhance the well-being and interests not only of our country but the entire planet.

All who recognize the value of research and the humanity of immigrants have a part to play in combating the degradations the Trump administration has wrought upon the scientific infrastructure that has been painstakingly constructed over the past seven decades. Take the Citizens for Science Pledge; contact your elected national representatives to express your support of federal funding for scientific research; and become engaged with local science initiatives and organizations. By adding your voice to the chorus proclaiming the critical importance of funding for scientific research and the embrace of immigrants, we can protect and promote the prosperity we have long enjoyed.

**Jeff Ballerini**  
International Student Academic Advisor  
Queensborough Community College

## Bronx burning

We in the Bronx should all be scared to death of the cuts to federal support for medical and scientific research. This will hurt our health, our universities, our children and our economy. **We can do something about this:** We can all call our mem-

bers of Congress and U.S. senators, and tell them to protect funding for research and training by agencies like the National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation.

## ROOTS

I live in the Bronx, grew up in the Bronx and went to NYC public schools. My mom was a public school teacher at PS 32 in the Bronx, and both of my kids went to NYC public schools. I have been a professor of biology at City College for 27 years, and have taught the children of native New Yorkers and of immigrants. My students become the next generation of doctors, scientists, physician assistants, physical therapists and teachers. For over 20 years, I directed a program funded by the National Institutes of Health that has supported dozens of undergraduates who want to get a

PhD in biomedical science and work toward future knowledge and cures. This program pays students to do research as a job – they earn money for doing research – so they don't have to work extra part-time jobs.

## IMMIGRANTS

One of my trainees grew up in the Bronx in a family of immigrants from Jamaica, attended local schools, then came to City College, where he did research on genes we need to understand to find cures for some forms of blindness. Thanks to the support of this program, he is now a doctoral student in molecular biology at the UCLA Medical Center. Another trainee came to this country from the Dominican Republic after high school. He started at Queensborough Community College while learning English, then transferred to City College, where he did research on the structure of proteins, won multiple awards and is now doing PhD research that could lead to new drugs. Federal research support makes it possible for these students to pursue their scientific dreams. But that program was suddenly terminated.

Without medical and scientific research funded by the U.S., by our tax dollars, there will be no new doctors, no new scientists, no new drugs, no new cures. Funding from the federal government contributed to over 99% of all new drugs introduced in the period from 2010 to 2019. In the past five years, U.S. universities (which rely on federal funds) had patents on over half of the new drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration. My brother nearly died as a child due to a blood disorder; without the medical research to understand and treat his condition, I would not still have my beloved younger brother to scream about the Knicks with. Yet funding for research to find cures for diseases like cancer or Alzheimer's disease is now being canceled.

Forbes reported that research and training grants drive \$95 billion in economic activity. Think of all the people who work in hospitals and universities and labs, who deliver supplies and equipment, or who do all the other jobs at places like Montefiore Hospital, or Albert Einstein University, or Lehman College. In New York State alone, funding from the National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation supports over 30,000 jobs and provides over \$8 billion in economic activity. Basic science not only saves lives, but also drives the U.S. economy.

## PRESSING QUESTIONS

Do you care about having excellent universities in the Bronx, so your kids and grandkids can pursue their professional dreams? Of course you do.

Do you care about having universities to train enough doctors and health-care professionals to look after you and your family? Of course you do.

Do you care about having enough scientists and engineers to find cures for diseases like cancer or sickle-cell anemia, and to invent the next technological breakthroughs like smartphones, so you can have a video call with your abuela who lives far away? Of course you do.

Do you care about good jobs in the Bronx? Of course you do.

To ensure a future in which we have all these things, we have to tell the people who decide how to spend our tax dollars – politicians – what we want. It's so easy. Call or email your member of Congress or U.S. senator, and tell them to protect the funding for research and training by agencies like the National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation. Let's keep the Bronx educated, working and healthy.

**Jonathan Levitt**  
Professor, Biology  
City College

**Speaking truth about science**

# Gov. highlights free community college



On August 12, Governor Kathy Hochul rallied at LaGuardia Community College with PSC members and others to, as her office said, 'celebrate the more than 16,500 New Yorkers statewide who have applied to her landmark free community college program for adults in high-demand fields.'



# PSC helps progressive candidates win

By ARI PAUL

PSC members helped push Zohran Mamdani across the finish line in the Democratic Party primary for mayor. But the union's legislative committee was also busy this spring, with members working for several progressive City Council campaigns, winning in their primary contests.

For Heather James, the union's legislative chair, these victories happened because individual committee members and other PSC members worked tirelessly in the district and focused their energies at the grassroots level. These victories will help keep the City Council progressive and attuned to the PSC, as well as education advocates and trade unionists generally.

"The PSC's strategic ranked choice endorsement, which included Zohran Mamdani, and the excitement around his campaign, drew many members into our electoral work," James said, noting that the momentum behind Mamdani raised public awareness of the PSC's electoral activism this year.

"Committee members and others served as City Council primary District Captains in support of council candidates throughout the city," James said. "All five of our priority council candidates won their races, and we engaged new members in phone banking, door knocking, house parties and rallies. The work of the Legislation Committee continues to expand as we grow our political presence. With the labor movement in jeopardy and higher education under attack at the national level, our work is critical."

## BROOKLYN ACTION

Arturo Enamorado, a lecturer in behavioral sciences at Kingsborough Community College, spent much of the spring campaigning for the reelection of Council Member Alexa Avilés of Brooklyn. He recalled being impressed with her electoral work when he met her in 2023.

"We had a long chat about unions and organizing working-class people of color, and when I had the opportunity to be her district captain, it was like helping my neighbor, though I live in Jamaica, Queens," he said. "From the PSC standpoint, Alexa Avilés has always stood firm for our students and members, voting against budgets that would effectively cut our work. Further, she consistently held Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez accountable and asked direct questions about the lack of stable leadership across the community colleges, mine included. She has never forgotten her Baruch College education and is a true leader."

He added, "For her campaign, I was deeply involved from the beginning, helping carry petitions and eventually door knocking in Red Hook, Sunset Park and Bensonhurst. On election day, I did poll site visibility and worked with other PSC members in the record heat to do a Central Labor Council door knocking in the district."

## Hitting the streets for allies



City Council Member Alexa Avilés of Brooklyn, supported by the PSC.

Karen Miller, a professor of history at LaGuardia Community College, campaigned for City Council Member Shahana Hanif of Brooklyn, who has been a vocal PSC supporter over the years. Miller recalled that she was especially impressed with Hanif's support for the PSC at a press conference in defense of higher education in April.

"Shahana Hanif spoke at this event and I was excited that she represents me. She is co-chair of the Progressive Caucus and talked about specific legislation that she was introducing to help protect New Yorkers from deportation," Miller said. "It was around then that I found out she was being challenged in the primary by someone who was bankrolled by real estate and big business interests. Furthermore, Hanif is the first Muslim city councilperson, and Islamophobia was clearly an element of the discourse that was being used against her. Her opponent, Maya Kornberg, was positioning herself as progressive, but only in the vaguest and most disingenuous terms, and her literature was paid for by Uber."

## JEW FOR SHAHANA

Miller added, "I joined the Jews for Shahana email group and then found out about the legislative committee's efforts to recruit district captains. Laura Tanenbaum [PSC chapter chair at LGCC] and I both live in Kensington and she was starting to get involved and recruited me. She is always my go-to person about elections, so it was fitting."

Miller said that Hanif's race was an important one for CUNY faculty and staff. "I need CUNY to be funded and defended by elected officials," Miller said. "She went to Brooklyn College and is clearly very committed to CUNY and to public education. I also like her K-12 positions and stand with her on other policy questions."

Patience Yeboah, a senior academic transfer advisor at John Jay College, worked on the campaign for Elsie Encarnacion, running for a district covering East Harlem and parts

of the Bronx. "My district begins at the end of Elsie's district," she said. "We are connected, so our representatives need to be for the people and the community. As a participant in

the PSC Leadership Training program, I wanted to focus on a project that increased my engagement in political activism at the local level."

Also in the Bronx, Remysell Salas, an adjunct lecturer in ethnic and race studies at Borough of Manhattan College, served in leadership capacities both for Pierina Ana Sanchez of the City Council and for Mamdani.

"My work in the Bronx has always been rooted in long-term relationship-building, with an eye not just on the present political landscape, but on where we're headed," he said. "I've consistently mobilized relationships with local organizations, community leaders and University stakeholders, ensuring our collective work is aligned with the needs of the district."

For the Legislative Committee of the PSC, building power in the Bronx is vital for the public higher education agenda. "The Bronx is not just significant, it's strategic. With campuses like Lehman College, Bronx Community College and Hostos, we have a high concentration of PSC members, students and faculty who live, work and organize in the bor-

ough," he said. "That gives us not only human capital, but real political leverage. If we mobilize effectively, we can shift the conversation and the priorities around public higher education in this city."

## GROW THE BASE

Salas added, "To grow our political influence, we need to activate our base. I would like to see more students and members stepping into action, not just during campaigns or crises, but as part of a sustained, visible movement. We can and should be louder, more present and more consistent in the Bronx. This also means showing up where decisions are made: trustee meetings, community boards, town halls and legislative offices. We need to be known not only for our demands, but for our commitment to the communities we serve. That visibility builds credibility and influence."

All of the City Council candidates who were endorsed by the PSC won their primaries, including in five open seats. They were Christopher Marte, Harvey Epstein, Erik Bottcher, Gale

Continued on page 9

## City Council primary results

# A city budget with CUNY gains

By CLARION STAFF

PSC members and other advocates have fought against Mayor Eric Adams's austerity agenda, including devastating funding cuts to CUNY, especially community colleges. Due to union pressure and organizing, Adams reached a city budget agreement with the City Council that delivers necessary funding to CUNY.

These budget wins are on top of the Adams administration's restoration of budget cuts earlier this year, which were, once again, a product of constant agitation and organizing by a coalition of social justice advocates, including the PSC.

## HOPEFUL

"We are hopeful that with a strong state budget and our new collective bargaining agreement, PSC members will have the opportunity to continue building the University system that students and New York City deserve," PSC President James Davis said in a statement.

## PSC organizing pays off

He said the budget includes:

- \$109.5 million: \$94.5M baseline, \$15M in general operating funds from the City Council
- \$10.1 million for CUNY ACE
- \$7.8 million for CUNY Reconnect
- \$5.5 million for CUNY ASAP for All
- \$5.5 million for Research Institutes and the Research Foundation
- We are grateful to see \$3.1 million for CUNY Citizenship Now!
- \$2 million for Social Work Fellows
- \$1.2 million for the School of Labor and Urban Studies
- \$1 million for CUNY STEM
- \$150,000 for the New York Immigration Coalition's work to protect immigrant New Yorkers during this time of unprecedented attacks on their rights.

"We thank the New York City Council, especially its leader, Speaker Adrienne Adams (whose CUNY Reconnect Program helped to boost CUNY), and Com-

mittee on Finance Chair Justin Brannan for their steadfast support of CUNY," Davis said.

"CUNY has also recovered the immense funding loss over the course of past financial plans, and those investments are now baselined," Speaker Adams said in her budget announcement. "We also restored and expanded over \$135 million in CUNY funding because we all know the path to the middle class runs straight through our public colleges."

In his budget announcement, the mayor also praised CUNY Reconnect. "We're taking steps to get working class New Yorkers back on track by supporting CUNY Reconnect, something that the speaker has talked about often, which will enable adults to achieve their education and career goals," he said. "Many drop out, never return. We want them to get back into school and finish their goals of being a college grad."



PSC members and supporters advocating for CUNY at the City Council.



# Zohran Mamdani: A mayor for CUNY

By ARI PAUL

In 2022, when the state legislature voted on a state budget plan, many lawmakers understood, even as they voted to approve the funding package, that there was still plenty of work to be done to adequately sustain vital state programs. Years of fighting against austerity under Governor Andrew Cuomo had taken its toll, and while the new governor that year had made improvements to the budget, many groups in the state still felt like they were being left behind.

One lawmaker that year, a democratic socialist from Queens, voted “no” on the budget. And the reason he gave in his floor speech was that the agreement failed to meet the needs of CUNY students, faculty and staff.

“While this budget is an improvement for CUNY, this still leaves the 16,000-plus students, faculty, staff and recent alumni that call my district home without the investments that they deserve,” Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani said, adding that needed “investments would fund academic advisors, create adjunct pay parity, adequately fund mental health services and would decrease and ultimately eliminate tuition,” all things the PSC had called for under its New Deal for CUNY legislation.

## PSC SUPPORTER

He said, “As we fall short, I think of the stories of those I’ve connected with as I’ve fought for the New Deal for CUNY. I think of Rebecca, an adjunct professor driven into homelessness by lack of adjunct pay parity. I think of Stephanie, who is forced to work multiple jobs, sleeping only two to three hours each night, just so that she could keep [up] with the cost of tuition. I think of Devon, a chronically homeless student, who is never able to get mental health care due to the lack of such services on his campus.”

Mamdani added, “It is for all of them that I must vote ‘no,’ and it is for all of them that I will continue to fight to pass the New Deal for CUNY.”

Mamdani shocked the world this summer when he, a 33-year-old democratic socialist, won the Democratic Party primary, crushing Cuomo, who had resigned as governor due to sexual harassment allegations. The PSC encouraged its members to rank Mamdani anywhere in the top three slots in the primary, along with Comptroller Brad Lander (the two candidates cross-endorsed each other as voting day neared) and City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams. Members campaigned for Mamdani during the primary and successfully pushed the reelection of several progressive City Council members.

Now the PSC urges its members to push Mamdani past the finish line and into the mayor’s office this fall. If elected, the PSC will have a committed friend of CUNY in the mayor’s office, a refreshing change after four years of alleged corruption and brutal austerity under Mayor Eric Adams, who is running for reelection on an independent party line. Cuomo is also running as an independent, and the Republicans

## A record of support for students and PSC

are running Curtis Sliwa, a caricature of a 1970s buffoon vigilante.

Mamdani has stood out in the legislature as a friend of CUNY. His platform – a social democratic agenda that harkens back to FDR’s New Deal – focuses on the public good by raising taxes on the richest New Yorkers to support workers, education, transportation, housing and social services. These are all things that the PSC supports, but the union is especially heartened to see CUNY as a major focus of his agenda.

## NEW DEAL FOR CUNY

Mamdani has been a constant presence at PSC rallies in support of the New Deal for CUNY, which calls for free tuition and the hiring of more faculty and staff at CUNY. While the lion’s share of CUNY funding comes from the state, the city’s community colleges rely heavily on city funding. Under Adams, community colleges have suffered brutal austerity cuts, as the mayor made it clear that he served the interests of the 1% and solidified his relationship with President Donald Trump. While pressure and campaigning by the PSC and other groups has forced City Hall to restore much of this funding, Mamdani still stands out as the candidate for CUNY.

In addition to fighting for CUNY in state budget talks, Mamdani is the coauthor of a bill that seeks to redistribute wealth from the top two richest universities in New York City – Columbia University and New York University, both of which enjoy a near total exemption from property taxes despite being among the city’s largest landowners – and add to CUNY funding in order to better serve the city’s working class and public institutions.

During a campaign fundraising event at the home of a PSC member, attended by faculty and staff from around the system, Mamdani pro-



Zohran Mamdani

claimed that the PSC has been a union close to his heart and his agenda.

Mamdani joined Senator Bernie Sanders at Brooklyn College on September 7 and spoke both in support of the PSC generally and its fight against repression at the college.

“The city budget is crucial to the funding of CUNY’s seven community colleges, which play a crucial role in educating the next generation of teachers, nurses, scientists and so many others who serve our communities,” said

Laura Tanenbaum, the PSC chapter chair at LaGuardia Community College. “Zohran’s mandate in the primary already served to push the city budget in a more progressive direction, and his decisive win in the fall will change the political calculations of many across the city and nation, opening more space to aggressively fight for public education as well as the rights of our immigrant communities and against all of the Trump regime’s attacks.”

Her colleague, Ian McDermott, an associate library professor at La-

Guardia, agreed. “Public institutions are constantly under attack, and Mamdani’s focus on strengthening public institutions, from CUNY to the MTA, would benefit faculty, staff and students alike,” he said. “Whether freezing the rent or making buses free, these are initiatives that will help CUNY, especially students at LaGuardia Community College, where I work. Next time we need to negotiate a contract, I will feel much better if the PSC is negotiating during a Mamdani administration.”

In addition to funding CUNY, Mamdani has vowed to institute free childcare for New Yorkers, expanding on the transformative agenda of universal pre-K instituted under the administration of Bill de Blasio. And he also earned the endorsement of the United Federation of Teachers, which said in a statement on social media that the union’s delegates endorsed Mamdani “because they believe he is the best candidate in the race to advance our union’s agenda: to protect our premium-free health care, fix Tier 6, pass the ‘RESPECT Check’ bill, implement the class-size law, revamp mayoral control and more,” referring to the Tier VI pension and a bill that would raise pay for K-12 paraprofessionals.

## EDUCATION POLICY

In an interview with *Jacobin*, Nivedita Majumdar, PSC chapter co-chair at John Jay College and former PSC secretary, said, “Mamdani’s greatest priority when it comes to K-12 education in the city has to start with improving conditions in schools across the city’s poorest districts. That’s where the inequities are starkest. You can walk into a school on the Upper West Side or the West Village and find smart boards, functioning libraries, after-school programs – everything we support and need for our children and our communities. But that’s not the case in schools in

East New York or the South Bronx with crumbling infrastructure and no art teacher. The issue is certainly not about taking resources away from excellent schools – it’s about fully funding struggling schools; they’re the ones in real need not just of school supplies and counselors but wraparound services. That’s the equity conversation Mamdani needs to lead.”

## MEMBER ACTION

The PSC will be working for Mamdani’s election.

“This election cycle shows the PSC’s growing political strength, as early supporters of a strategy to defeat former Governor Andrew Cuomo in the Democratic Primary for Mayor,” PSC President James Davis said in a statement. “Zohran Mamdani, who has shown up for CUNY students and PSC members time and time again in the State Assembly, ran an exceptionally skillful campaign. By cross-endorsing each other, Mamdani and Lander manifested the best the Democratic Party has to offer, not just for public higher education, but also the diverse communities that CUNY serves.”

Davis added, “PSC members will keep our sleeves rolled up, ready to continue campaigning for Zohran in the general election, partnering with him to make CUNY the extraordinary public university system that our city deserves.”

## Progressive candidates

Continued from page 8

Brewer, Shaun Abreu, Elsie Encarnacion, Carmen De La Rosa, Kevin Riley, Pierina Ana Sanchez, Oswald Feliz, Justin Sanchez, Amanda Farias, Tiffany Cabán, Shekar Krishnan, Nantasha Williams, Ty Hankerson, Lynn Schulman, Lincoln Restler, Jennifer Gutiérrez, Crystal Hudson, Chi Ossé, Sandy Nurse, Alexa Avilés, Shahana Hanif, Rita Joseph, Farah Louis and Kayla Santosuosso.

The committee hopes that it can harness this energy for the next election cycle.

“We cannot mourn, we must organize,” Enamorado said. “I have my feet moving toward the general election, looking to reach voters who have felt ignored but are also in organized labor. Still, I am already looking to the next Democratic primary for the state legislature.”

Miller noted that the next step for the union is working to hold elected officials accountable.

“Continuing to work with City Council and elected officials is an important part of any union’s larger strategy,” she said. “We need to push all of the City Council and all elected officials to support and protect CUNY, its students and its workers.”

*The legislative committee meets every third Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm on Zoom. Meetings are on the PSC calendar and open to all union members.*

## Marching with labor in Manhattan



PSC members march in the Labor Day Parade on Fifth Avenue on September 6.



## Free Member Benefits

**NYSUT Member Benefits appreciates everything that NYSUT members do on a daily basis to benefit those in the education and health care fields. We are proud to offer the following programs and services to NYSUT members free of charge.**

### Premium Calm Service

Available as a free benefit to in-service members and retirees offering unlimited access to the full library of content at [calm.com](https://calm.com) and in the Calm app for iOS or Android devices. Explore guided meditations, specialized music playlists and much more.



### Peer Support Line

Created in partnership with Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care, this confidential helpline can provide answers, resources and empathetic support when you need it. For more information or to speak with someone at the Peer Support Line, call toll-free 844-444-0152.



### Student Loan Center

This helpful resource allows NYSUT members to speak with a Cambridge Credit Counseling loan counselor, attend a NYSUT Student Loan Workshop, or visit the Cambridge Student Loan Portal.

### Financial Learning Center

Powered by Kiplinger's Personal Finance, this platform offers articles designed to assist NYSUT members with achieving their personal financial goals and better understand the nuances of insurance, savings, investing and more.

### New Member Life Insurance Policy

New NYSUT members are eligible to receive a free term life insurance policy providing coverage for up to \$25,000 for one year, guaranteed renewable at the end of the year.

### Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance

All NYSUT members (both in-service and retiree) are automatically provided with a \$5,000 accidental death & dismemberment insurance benefit.

### Travel Assistance Services

All NYSUT members (both in-service and retiree) are automatically provided with travel assistance services from AXA Assistance that focus on providing coordination services to travelers.

### Legal Assistance Plan

NYSUT members in a non-full dues or split dues category are eligible to participate in this new benefit offering limited legal assistance from the law firm of Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, P.C.

### National Affiliate Resources

Your status as a NYSUT member provides you with access to complimentary life insurance from the National Education Association, along with discounted access to therapy and mental health resources from Talkspace **(NEW!)**, an accidental death & dismemberment insurance benefit and trauma counseling services from the American Federation of Teachers.



### As a NYSUT member,

we are fighting for you every day for better contracts, safer working conditions and fair pay. Through our advocacy, we uphold hard-won labor rights for our members — and the best possible conditions for the students, patients and other individuals who our members serve.

We also offer exclusive access to dozens of programs and services endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits and our national affiliates, the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association. From crucial insurance plans to everyday savings, this brochure can help with utilizing all we have to offer.

We're union proud and honored to serve you.

In solidarity,

**J. Philippe Abraham**  
*Chairperson, NYSUT  
Member Benefits Trust*



Learn more about these free benefits by visiting [mb-nysut.org/freemb](https://mb-nysut.org/freemb) or scanning the QR code.



## Insurance

### Auto/Home/Boat/Motorcycle

Special group rates on coverage for auto, home, renter's, boat, motorcycle and personal excess liability coverage from Farmers GroupSelect. **866-697-8822**

### Catastrophe Major Medical

Supplements existing medical/drug coverage and includes home health care, convalescent care and critical illness benefits. **800-626-8101**

### Dental

Competitively priced coverage from MetLife, including preventive and routine services. **888-883-0046**

### Disability

Income replacement benefits provided by MetLife. Helps to cover expenses if you become partially or totally disabled and unable to work. **888-386-9788**

### Long-Term Care Insurance

New York Long-Term Care Brokers insurance specialists help you choose the best coverage at a competitive rate. **888-884-0077**

### Pet Insurance

Nationwide offers insurance plans for pets that can help NYSUT members with the cost of veterinary care, from preventive care to accidents and illnesses. **877-738-7874**

### Term Life/Level Term Life

Financial protection for your family from MetLife. **888-386-9788**

### Vision

Full coverage from Davis Vision for an eye exam, and one pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses per benefit period when using an in-network provider. **800-626-8101**

### WrapPlan® II Universal Life Insurance

Transamerica provides coverage that increases as your term life coverage decreases or ends. **866-697-8897**

### Convenience & Savings with Payroll Deduction

Enjoy the convenience, elimination of service fees, and up to a 20% discount when you use payroll deduction as your payment method for Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

## Legal & Financial Services

### Legal Service Plan

Legal expertise on a variety of personal legal matters provided by the law firm of Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, P.C. **800-626-8101**

### Financial Counseling Program

Unbiased financial counseling with a financial planner from Stacey Braun Associates. **800-626-8101**

### Synchrony Bank

Earn preferred rates on certificates of deposit, money market and savings accounts. **800-901-2965**

### Cambridge Credit Counseling

Free expert counseling on student loan repayment options and credit issues as well as discounted debt management services.

**Student Loan Counseling - 888-254-9827**

**Credit Counseling - 888-254-0398**

### UnionDirect Mortgage Discount Program

Save up to \$2,700 on lender fees and closing costs with special purchase and refinancing mortgage discounts from Mid-Island Mortgage. **800-506-9788**

## Personal Services

### Connect America

NYSUT members can save up to 40% on a medical alert system to help preserve independence; in-home and mobile systems available along with advanced GPS and automatic fall detection. **855-343-9737**

### Defensive Driving Training

Online training course offered at a savings of almost \$20 per course fee; provides savings on your liability and collision insurance and can reduce up to four points on your license. **800-626-8101**

Use code: NYSUTDDC





## ACTION ALERT

### Show up for immigrants

Unions and community groups will rally and march through lower Manhattan the evening of Thursday, September 25 to protest ICE's persecution of immigrants at 29 Federal Plaza and in our communities, reject any deployment of federal troops or law enforcement personnel to our city, and demand that city and state lawmakers pass legislation to protect immigrants and oppose collaboration with the federal government's program of mass deportation. For more information on the site of the initial rally and the march route, visit <https://psc-cuny.org/calendar/ice-out-of-our-courts-ice-out-of-new-york/>.

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NEWS

Clarion | September 2025

# Members organizing for immigrants

By **BARBARA BOWEN**  
Former PSC President

"Many of us in the PSC are looking for meaningful ways to fight back against the rising tide of fascism in the U.S.," says Geoff Johnson, who teaches at the College of Staten Island. Johanna Fernandez, Associate Professor of History at Baruch, comments: "I've never been involved in such face-to-face political work. You see the political violence of the state." Pennee Bender, recently retired from the Graduate Center, observes, "There are so many things now that we can't fight; this is one we can fight." And Anitta Santiago, who teaches in CUNY Start at Hostos, adds, "For all the bad you see, like ICE manhandling a man with a serious back injury, you also see the beauty of people in action."

#### IN ACTION

The PSC has been in action supporting our immigrant neighbors in the federal courthouses since early summer. Johnson, Fernandez, Bender and Santiago are among the 146 who have joined the union's work to protect the legal rights of immigrants and support New Yorkers who face the growing terror of the federal immigration court system. With many members returning many times, we had more than 360 discrete visits to the courtrooms. Starting in late May, the federal government began making hundreds of arrests a day inside federal immigration courthouses, targeting immigrants who had shown up for required court hearings. The epicenter has been New York City. By early June, scores of heavily armed, masked agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) were lining the hallways of the courthouse buildings in Lower Manhattan, waiting for those who were leaving their court hearings. Regardless of whether the judge had granted a follow-up hearing, ICE agents have grabbed immigrant community members and forced them into detention, sometimes physically tearing them out of the arms of their families.

## PSC doing courthouse actions

PSC members recognized that the threat of violent arrest by ICE in the courts has made some CUNY colleagues, students, and their communities newly vulnerable. Led by the union's Immigrant Solidarity Working Group, the PSC has trained and organized members from every CUNY campus to participate in weekly shifts at the immigration courts. Early every Friday morning throughout the summer, PSC members have gathered in Foley Square to prepare to visit the courthouse buildings as observers – as is our right under the law – and talk with fellow New Yorkers who are awaiting their court hearings. Participants ask those awaiting hearings if they would like someone to sit beside them, to read to their children in the waiting room,

#### Standing up to ICE

to share information that would help their families find them if they are detained. Coordinating with volunteer social workers and community organizations, some of which have been doing court support for decades, the PSC has been the only union in the city to have an organized presence in the courts. Andrea Vásquez, PSC Secretary and leader of the Immigrant Solidarity Working Group, comments: "It is no surprise that our members care deeply about our students, our communities and our city. Bearing witness in the courts will continue even as we bring this work to the campuses this semester. We understand that we must exercise our legal rights if we are to retain them and we also understand that we must or-

ganize to build our power as a union if we are to face future challenges."

Below are excerpts from the testimony of three PSC court watchers who shared their responses at an August union meeting.

## HARD PROCESS

It is difficult – feelings of helplessness and anger are inevitable when we watch as someone is taken by a gang of masked men. I won't forget accompanying one gentleman who had received a return court date but who then had his backpack rifled through by an agent as other masked men stepped forward and hustled him off. I felt guilty for not doing more – for not being able to stop it. I think all of us who have done court observations have felt that way. But the work also feels meaningful and important. We are there to offer support in the ways that we can and to bear witness to the horrors being visited upon our neighbors by a racist, authoritarian state. As NYC education workers, it isn't something we should allow to happen without being present in some way, without saying "no."

Standing with immigrants in court is worthwhile in its own right, but I believe it can also level up our ability to act collectively and effectively in these times. None of these horrors are likely to stop anytime soon, and we need to strengthen our organizing muscles. We need to build solidarity within the PSC and increase our capacity to take meaningful actions in the years ahead.

**Geoff Johnson**  
College of Staten Island

## NOT EASY

I've been to the courthouse six or seven times since June. It never feels easy and often leaves one feeling powerless, but I keep going back because, like many of you I'm sure agree, it feels like important work on several levels:

One level is the support and comfort we can provide to individuals as

we sit with them and walk with them through the very hostile hallways

On another level, I feel a larger sense of solidarity that our actions engender among all individuals that gather in the courthouse but also as representatives of a union that is expressing its solidarity with immigrants.

Then there are the times when folks are taken by ICE agents, which are horrible and upsetting. But we are able to provide the important work of witnessing and documenting the arrests. We can gather information that will keep those arrested on the radar and not just let them disappear. We can reach out to their loved ones or friends and let them know what has happened and help them be tracked through the detention system and hopefully get them some assistance.

And for me on a larger level is the need to take some action in the face of all the illegal and inhumane actions by the government. And to stand up in public to say these actions are wrong.


**Pennee Bender**  
Graduate Center

## WITNESS

Coming from a family of immigrants, my recent experience as a court watcher has given me the opportunity to witness how broken the immigration system has become. I have seen how ICE is intentionally intimidating. Aside from being masked, ICE officers are heavily armed despite the airport-like security that everyone must pass through to get into the buildings. Since Trump has deputized all federal enforcement agencies, ICE is comprised of agents from diverse sectors, including ATF, Treasury, and others unrelated to Homeland Security. The mishmash of different agencies makes me question how organized ICE really is – there is too much potential for more chaos. I would not call myself courageous, but when I see immigrants bravely come in for their hearings, walking through the spectacle of ICE and the press without legal representation nor interpreters, I figure I too can put on a brave face to help out, and to bear witness.

**Sandra Cheng**  
City Tech

# New Yorkers Against ICE



6 pm • 9/25 • Foley Square