

Metro New York Labor Communications Council

Journalism Awards

2011 Contest Winners

Metro NY
Labor Communications
Council



S t o p & f r i s k

BEST ART WORK

(on the cover)

Class B

Warren Linn

Communique, CWA 1180

2011 Annual contest

In this journal are winners in the Metro New York Labor Communications Council's annual contest. The entries, for work in 2011, were wide-ranging in subject matter, including political action, contract struggles, acts of heroism and solidarity by union members, organizing the unorganized, the cost of health care, the fight for equality, workers rights, security in retirement, and human rights.

We hope that showcasing our members' best work will encourage others to try new approaches and techniques. Our goal is to promote the highest standards of labor journalism and media work. In this journal, we are proud to present some of the talented writers, editors, photographers, graphic artists, web meisters, and radio producers who make labor's story come alive for millions of New York workers and retirees and their families. Only first place winners are included in this journal.

2011 Winners

Matt Doherty/Gwen Wells – Excellence in Broadcast Media

"Out of the Flames, From the Ashes: The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire and Its Legacy," Radio presentation by Mimi Rosenberg and Ken Nash, *Building Bridges: Your Community and Labor Report*, WBAI

Mary Heaton Vorse Award

"Finding Life's Work – On Borrowed Time," Liza Frenette, *NYSUT UNITED*, NYSUT

General Excellence - Print

Class B 1st Place: *Allegro*, AFM Local 802

2nd Place: *Communique*, CWA 1180

3rd Place: *CSA News*, CSA Local 1, AFL-CIO

Special Mention: *Retiree News and Views*, IBT Local 237

Class C 1st Place: *Clarion*, PSC/CUNY AFT

2nd Place: *Transport Workers Bulletin*, TWU Local 100

2nd Place: *New York Teacher*, UFT Local 2

3rd Place: *Our Life and Times*, 1199SEIU

Special Mention: *Public Employee Press*, DC 37, AFSCME

Best Reporting

Class B 1st Place: *CSA News*, "More Than 10,000 in Pro-Union Rally," Yuridia Peña, CSA Local 1, AFL-CIO

2nd Place: *Momentum*, "Unfair Labor Practice Charges Settled," Stephen Rechner, UCATS Local 3882

3rd Place: *CSA News*, "Special Ed Initiative Lacks Appropriate Funding," Anne Silverstein, CSA Local 1, AFL-CIO

Class C 1st Place: *Clarion*, "A New Movement in Labor," John Tarleton, PSC/CUNY AFT

1st Place: *Public Employee Press*, Gregory N. Heires, "Uncollected Revenue Could Stop Layoffs," DC 37 AFSCME

2nd Place: *The Communicator*, Deborah Miles, "Nurse Receives Justice at Attacker's Landmark Sentencing," PEF

2nd Place: *NYSUT UNITED*, Sylvia Saunders, "NYSUT Sues Regents, State Ed to Block Teacher Evaluation Regs," NYSUT

3rd Place: *Our Life and Times*, "Workers fight for Peninsula," 1199SEIU

3rd Place: *Transport Workers Bulletin*, "Union Support Lifts 'Wall Street' Protests," TWU Local 100

Special mention: <http://labornotes.org/>, Mischa Gaus, "Verizon Strikers Turn Away Customers, Chase Scabs," Labor Notes

Best Feature

Class B 1st Place: *CIR Vitals*, "CIR Resident Combines Mobile Technology and Medicine," Heather Appel, and "The Bumpy Road to EHR Implementation," Hannah Thonet, CIR/SEIU Healthcare

2nd Place: *Communique*, "Stop and Frisk Feature" Lorraine Gamble-Lofton and Gary Schoichet, CWA 1180

2nd Place: *CSA News*, "Making Phase One Work at the Elementary Level," Yuridia Peña, CSA Local 1, AFL-CIO

3rd Place: *Momentum*, "Cairo, Wisconsin and NYU," Chris Crowe, UCATS Local 3882

Special Mention: *Retiree News and Views*, "Social Security: Serving Those Who Serve our Nation," Donna Ristorucci, IBT Local 237

Class C 1st Place: *Public Employee Press*, "Grim Holidays for Laid Off Members," Diane Williams, Alfredo Alvarado, DC 37, AFSCME

1st Place: *Our Life and Times*, "They Know We're Trying to Make the World Better," Patricia Kenney, 1199SEIU

2nd Place: *New York Teacher*, "Building a Peaceful School and Students with Emotional Intelligence," Cara Metz, UFT Local 2

2nd Place: *NYSUT UNITED*, "The Great Divide," Matt Smith, NYSUT

3rd Place *Transport Workers Bulletin*, "911 Ten years Later," Alan Saly, TWU Local 100

Special Mention: *Transport Workers Bulletin*, "Urban Sketcher," James Gannon, TWU Local 100

Editorial/Column

Class B 1st Place: *CSA News*, "My Teacher, My Hero," Ernest A. Logan, CSA Local 1, AFL-CIO

2nd Place: *Communique*, "The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same," Gary Schoichet, CWA 1180

3rd Place: *Retiree News and Views*, "What are our True Interests?," Nancy B. True, IBT Local 237

3rd Place: *CIR Vitals*, "Language Barriers in Health Care," Realba Rodriguez, CIR/SEIU Healthcare

Class C 1st Place: *Clarion*, "Are Rich People Leaving NY?" Sunshine Ludder and Chloe Tribich, PSC/CUNY AFT

2nd Place: *New York Teacher*, "Respect," Michael Mulgrew, UFT Local 2

3rd Place: <http://labornotes.org/>, "OSHA at 40: Time for a Makeover," Tom O'Connor, Labor Notes

Special Mention: *Our Life and Times*, "Our Planet is in Crisis and Our Health is at Stake," 1199SEIU

Best Headline

1st Place: *Transport Workers Bulletin*, "Jay Walks," TWU Local 100

2nd Place: *New York Teacher*, "The Sea Rates an A," UFT

3rd Place: *Retiree News and Views*, "Under the House Budget, We'll Work Till We Die," IBT Local 237

Best Photograph

Class B 1st Place: *Communique*, Gary Schoichet, CWA 1180

2nd Place: *Communique*, Gary Schoichet, CWA 1180

Class C 1st Place: *Transport Workers Bulletin*, Daniel Tasripin, TWU Local 100

2nd Place: *The Workforce*, Jill Asencio, CSEA Local 1000

3rd Place: *The Communicator*, Deborah A. Miles, PEF

Special Mention: *Clarion*, Dave Saunders, PSC/CUNY AFT

Special Mention: *Our Life and Times*, Jim Crampton, 1199SEIU

Special Mention: *New York Teacher*, Bruce Cotler, UFT

Best Graphic Design

Class B 1st Place: *CIR Vitals*, (front cover), CIR/SEIU Healthcare

Class C 1st Place: *Public Employee Press*, Workers' retirees pension spread, DC 37 AFSCME

2nd Place: *Transport Workers Bulletin*, "Ouch," TWU Local 100

Special Mention: *New York Teacher*, "Island Pride," UFT

Best Art Work

Class B 1st Place: *Communique*, Warren Linn, CWA 1180

Class C 1st Place: *Transport Workers Bulletin*, Fred Harper, TWU Local 100

2nd Place: *Clarion*, Jud Guitteau, PSC/CUNY AFT

Unique Performance

Class B 1st Place: *Retiree News and Views*, "Faces of Social Security," IBT Local 237

2nd Place: *CIR 2010-2011 Annual Report*, CIR/SEIU Healthcare

3rd Place: *Communique*, spread on Incarceration, Gary Schoichet and Lorraine Gamble-Lofton, CWA 1180

3rd Place: *CSA News*, Chapter Program for Fall 2011, CSA Retiree, CSA Local 1, AFL-CIO

Class C 1st Place: *New York Teacher*, "Unions Under Attack," UFT Local 2

2nd Place: *Public Employee Press*, Series on how economic crisis is affecting women, minorities and children, Jane LaTour, DC 37, AFSCME

3rd Place: *Public Employee Press*, "Remembering 9/11 Ten Years After," DC 37 AFSCME

3rd Place: *The Workforce*, "Always Remember," CSEA Local 1000

General Excellence - Web

Class B 1st Place: www.CSA-NYC.org, CSA Local 1, AFL-CIO

2nd Place: www.cirseiu.org, CIR/SEIU Healthcare

Class C 1st Place: www.1199seiu.org, 1199SEIU

2nd Place: www.uft.org, UFT

Best Design - Web

1st Place: www.cirseiu.org, CIR/SEIU Healthcare

Writing - Web

1st Place: <http://labornotes.org>, Verizon Strike, Labor notes,

2nd Place: <http://labornotes.org>, Triangle Fire, Labor Notes

3rd Place: *Transport Worker's Bulletin*, "Why we are supporting OWS," TWU Local 100

Best Social Media

1st Place: www.facebook.com/NYSUT UNITED

2nd Place: www.facebook.com/pages/District-Council, DC 37 AFSCME

2nd Place: www.facebook.com/seiu1199

Best Blog

1st Place: <http://blogs.nysut.org/blog,NYSUT>

2nd Place: www.edwise.org, UFT Local 2

Best E-Newsletter

1st Place: www.1199.org, 1199SEIU

2nd Place: *Transport Workers e-alert*, TWU Local 100

2nd Place: CL-update, UFT

Unique Performance - web

Class B: 1st Place: www.healthybronx.org, CIR SEIU

Class C: 1st Place: "It's What We Do," NYSUT

Best Video

Class B 1st Place: *Dr. Carolyn Koffler's Tribute Speech*, CIR/SEIU Healthcare

Class C 1st Place: *Workers Rights from Wisconsin to New York*, NYSUT

2nd Place: *Caring for the Disabled, Turning Troubled Lives Around, Helping the Mentally Ill*, PEF



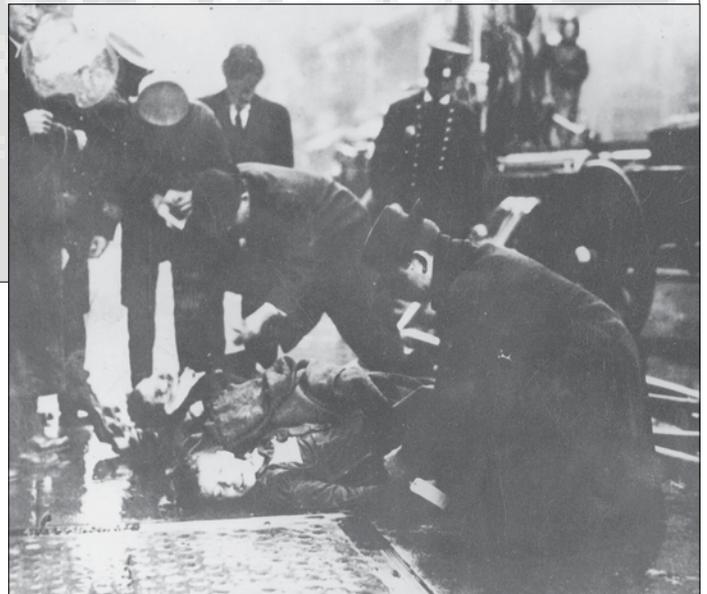
Produced by Mimi Rosenberg and Ken Nash

Monday, March 21, 2011, 7 – 8 pm EST, over 99.5 FM

OUT OF THE FLAMES, FROM THE ASHES: THE TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST FIRE AND ITS LEGACY

or streaming live at <http://www.wbai.org>

Visit our web site - www.buildingbridgesradio.org



MATT DOHERTY & GWEN WELLS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN BROADCAST MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

"The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire and its Legacy"

Mimi Rosenberg and Ken Nash

*Building Bridges: Your Community and
Labor Report, WBAI*

Doctors examining each body on the sidewalk and street for signs of life located only a few survivors. Officers gathered personal items for safe keeping and to help identify the victim, including money, pay envelopes, papers, and jewelry, then placed numbered tags on victims before taking them to the 26th Street pier temporary morgue.

Out of the flames, from the ashes: The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire and its legacy

Tune into our tapestry of archival sound, re-enactments—a docudrama of the “flowering girls” who lost their lives in the Triangle Fire, on this hundredth anniversary, of one of the most important events in the history of the labor movement. Threaded through the sound tapestry are the haunting voices from the fire intermingled with the poetry and songs that arose in the wake of the tragedy. Another thread of the tapestry is the voices of scholar/activists who deliberate on the legacy of Triangle for today—to organize and unionize, to regulate the workplace and create a safe, decent life for working people, to attend to the problems today sadly echoing the conditions at the time of the Triangle Fire.

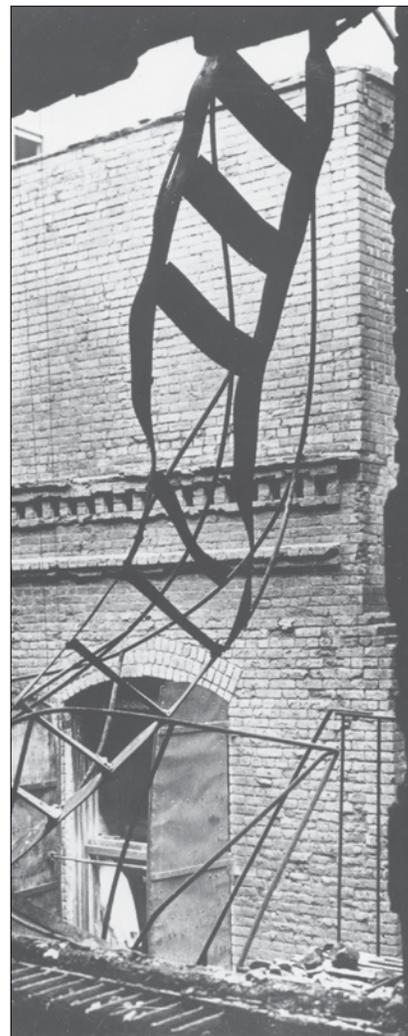
This is a drama of the dilemmas faced by working women, and the importance of the fire, in the annals of workers’ history—“not to mourn, but to organize.”

A fire broke out on the top three stories of a relatively new building just east of Washington Square Park, which housed the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, a large manufacturer of women’s clothes (a building which today houses New York University classrooms). Though the building was modern and advertised as fire-proof, the cramped layout of the factory space, large piles of flammable materials, locked doors by the employers, an inadequate fire escape, and the inability of New York City fire truck ladders to reach high enough to rescue the people trapped by the flames led to a staggering loss of life. All told, 146 workers died that day, mostly women workers, many still in their teens, some as young as fourteen, killed by the fire or their desperate leaps to the ground to escape the suffocating smoke, the heat and flames. It is the largest industrial tragedy in the history of New York City.

After the fire and the outraged of community residents, workers, labor activists, New York State passed a series of new laws regulating factory safety which, along with unionization, gradually eliminated the worst conditions workers faced. These efforts would reach fruition in the New Deal, in many respects the creation of the coalition of forces that came together in the aftermath of the Triangle Fire.

If Triangle is an old story, one about a century ago, it is also a very current story. While the U.S. was successful, at least for a while, in eliminating the worst abuses of the sweatshop era and improving the lives of its working people, there are millions of workers today who face conditions not unlike those faced by the Triangle workers. What people sometimes refer to as the global sweatshop is a vast archipelago of workplaces, in many of which young female workers toil long hours in dangerous conditions, very often without union representation or any rights.

Photos courtesy of ILGWU Records, Kheel Center, Cornell University.



The flimsy fire escape ladder descended close to the building forcing those fleeing to struggle through flames and past warped iron window shutters stuck open across their path. Sections of ladder which ended two stories above the ground, twisted and collapsed under the weight of workers trying to escape the fire killing many who had chosen it as their lifeline.



KEVIN PETERMAN

Chris Pendergast, a member of the United Teachers of Northport, with his wife, Christine, also a NYSUT retiree, has raised almost \$4 million for ALS research and grants. Pendergast, who has suffered with ALS for an incredible 17 years, was honored last month when Stony Brook Health Sciences Center rededicated its ALS Care Center in his honor.

Finding life's work — on borrowed time

By LIZA FRENETTE
lfrenett@nysutmail.org

The wheelchair was expected. And the headgear to hold the ventilator. The surprise was how they became transparent, unseen, because of the clear blue eyes full of hope — the eyes of a man who has lived beyond all reasonable expectations.

Chris Pendergast has Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or its most common name, Lou Gehrig's disease, a fatal condition that can claim a life in two to five years. Pendergast has survived ALS for 17.

A member of United Teachers of Northport, Pendergast found his

er planned on, laboring tirelessly to help himself and thousands of others who have ALS, a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord.

His efforts to raise money for research, grants and comprehensive services for ALS patients were recognized last month when the ALS Care Center at SUNY's Stony Brook Health Sciences Center was named in his honor.

Pendergast has raised close to \$4 million for ALS research and grants through events held by Ride for Life, Inc., the organization he founded. (See separate box.)

"The work has only begun," he someone

dies from ALS."

Pendergast, who was first diagnosed in 1993, works with support from unions, volunteers and several assistants. His wife, Christine, a retired teacher and former president of Port Jefferson Station Teachers Association, is his primary caregiver.

His office is a rabbit warren of halls, below ground in space donated by SUNY Stony Brook HSC. His real place, however, is above ground.

The newly named Christopher Pendergast Center for Excellence provides medical treatment, rehabilitation techniques and psychological support, occupational, physical and respiratory therapies, nursing, speech pathology, social work and

nutrition. Ride for Life has donated more than \$400,000 to the clinic.

"Chris Pendergast has not only led the fight against his own disease, but has provided leadership in the union movement as well," said NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi.

"Like those involved with ALS, teachers and unionists all over New York have benefited greatly from Chris' demonstration of leadership and determination in the face of adversity. NYSUT is honored to support his efforts," he said.

"It's amazing, his tenacity. He just doesn't quit," said Kathy Southerton, president of the Stony Brook HSC chapter of United University Professions and a recent NYSUT Local Action Project partici-

Official Publication of NYSUT

MARY HEATON VORSE AWARD

"Finding life's work – On borrowed time"

Liza Frenette

NYSUT UNITED, NYSUT

TO LEARN MORE

Visit www.rideforlife.com for event information.



pant. UUP members are among the health care professionals who provide services in the ALS clinic, including Dr. Rahman Pourmand, clinic director and Pendergast's own neurologist for the past six years.

"He's an inspiration, not only for the patients and the families, but even for me as a doctor," Pourmand said.

Comprehensive care helped Pendergast right from the beginning of his illness, as did the support of his union sisters and brothers in helping him continue to teach during the early stages of his ALS.

"My union was absolutely awesome in helping me," Pendergast said. The UTN advocated to get him an assistant in his classroom, and administrators were supportive.

"That intellectual exchange between a learner and a teacher is what is important in the classroom. While my body was falling apart around my mind, my mind remained sharp," he said.

For three years, colleagues, custodians, administrators, secretaries and even parents took turns driving him to school. They put together a book, "Driving Chris."

Pendergast's most well-known marker is Ride for Life, an organization that raises money for the clinic, grants and scholarships, and has already sent \$1.5 million to institutions for ALS research.

Riding his wheelchair like a knight on a horse, Pendergast has charged down roads from Montauk to Columbia University in Manhattan, where Gehrig went to college. This year, it took him 10 days, with the help of police escorts, caregiv-

ers, high school students and other ALS patients who each rode for a day. "We've lost 50 people who went on the rides with me," he said.

He once spent 16 days traveling from Yankee Stadium to Washington, D.C., where en route he asked President Bill Clinton to amend Social Security laws so patients with ALS don't have to wait a year to receive disability. "Maybe half would die before they got one penny of their money," he said. In 2001, the waiting period was waived.

Along his journeys, students present him with donations. "They're the cheerleaders," said his wife, Christine.

Ride for Life presents college scholarships each year to students whose lives have been affected by ALS. The organization has given out \$40,000 in scholarships to date; \$7,000 more will be awarded in May.

One recipient is Ashley Scutari, who was awarded a \$2,000 college scholarship in 2006 after losing her father, Frank Scutari, to ALS. Her mother, Sayville TA member Cathy Ann Scutari-Thorvaldsen, met Christine Pendergast at a support group in 1994. She lost her husband, a police officer, five years later.

"When my husband was sick we'd have to go into the city, to Columbia Presbyterian," said Scutari-Thorvaldsen, a middle-level science teacher. "There was no facility on Long Island. It never existed." Pendergast's fundraising and persistence propelled the creation of the Stony Brook clinic.

Each year Scutari-Thorvaldsen solicits her colleagues for contributions for the Educators Cup golf fund-raiser sponsored by Ride for Life.

NYSUT, a stalwart supporter of Ride for Life, honored Pendergast at the 2008 Representative Assembly for his work, "and it is inspiring

health & safety



to see he's still championing this cause," said Kathleen Donahue, NYSUT vice president.

An avid outdoorsman, Pendergast first went to his doctor for unexplained muscle cramping and loss of balance. His doctor told him to eat healthier and exercise regularly.

Repeated falls led him to a neurologist, who said the three letters — A-L-S — that would change his life forever. Pendergast was "stunned."

"What compounds a difficult, difficult reality is the fact that there will be no hope," he said somberly. "Even the most fierce of cancers has Hail Mary chemotherapy."

He has long stopped teaching and is now assisted during daytime hours four days a week by a home health aide. "I do not consider myself sick. I consider myself disabled," he said. "I get up every day and try to live the same kind of life

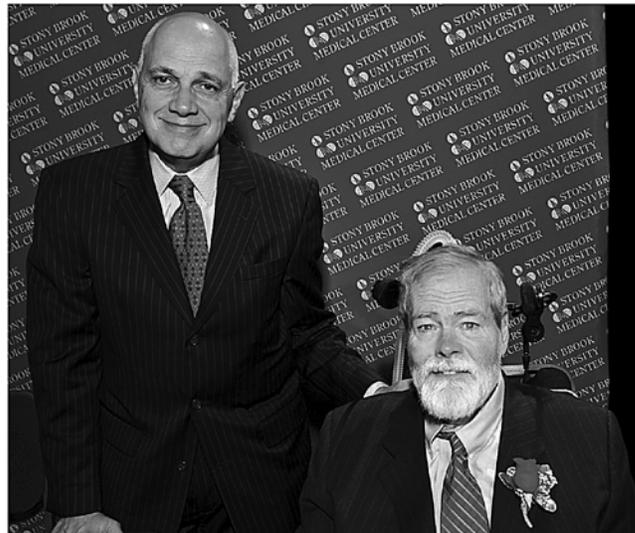
everyone else leads, except I have a tremendous amount of help."

No longer able to move his fingers, he relies on sensor pads in his headgear to move his wheelchair. His computer at home is eye-controlled through an infrared camera attached to his monitor. Once he loses his ability to talk, it will speak for him.

And so will his legacy.

In 2009, Congress passed a law Pendergast and the national ALS Association long advocated for that creates registration for people with ALS with the Centers for Disease Control. Funding for medical research is motivated by numbers. Current statistics show ALS affects about 30,000 people in the U.S., with 5,000 new cases every year.

"It really sucks that I have ALS," said Pendergast. "I hate it. But that is not going to determine whether I'm happy or not."



KEVIN PETERMAN

NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi, left, has praised Chris Pendergast for his leadership in the fight against ALS. He accompanied Pendergast and his wife, Christine, to Stony Brook University Medical Center last month when an ALS clinic was renamed in Pendergast's honor.

www.local802afm.org

LOCAL **802** AFM

ASSOCIATED
MUSICIANS
OF GREATER
NEW YORK

Allegro

April 2012

Vol 112, No. 4

Canned music at Lincoln Center?

NOT IN OUR TOWN!

**Why is Paul Taylor dancing
to canned music at
Lincoln Center?**

Did you know that the Paul Taylor Dance Company refuses to hire professional musicians for its performances at Lincoln Center (yet they pay charged premium prices for tickets)? In fact, tonight's performance is the first major dance performance ever at Lincoln Center to use canned music instead of professional musicians.

**Get what you paid for!
Stand Up for Live Music!**

Live music is an integral part of dance performance. Eliminating it diminishes the quality and emotional impact of the performance and is not in keeping with Lincoln Center's core values as a champion of live music. Please support live musician musicians by joining the Paul Taylor Dance Company and let them know you support live music! CALL 212 831-5662

802

THE ASSOCIATED MUSICIANS OF GREATER NEW YORK



PHOTO: WALTER KARLING

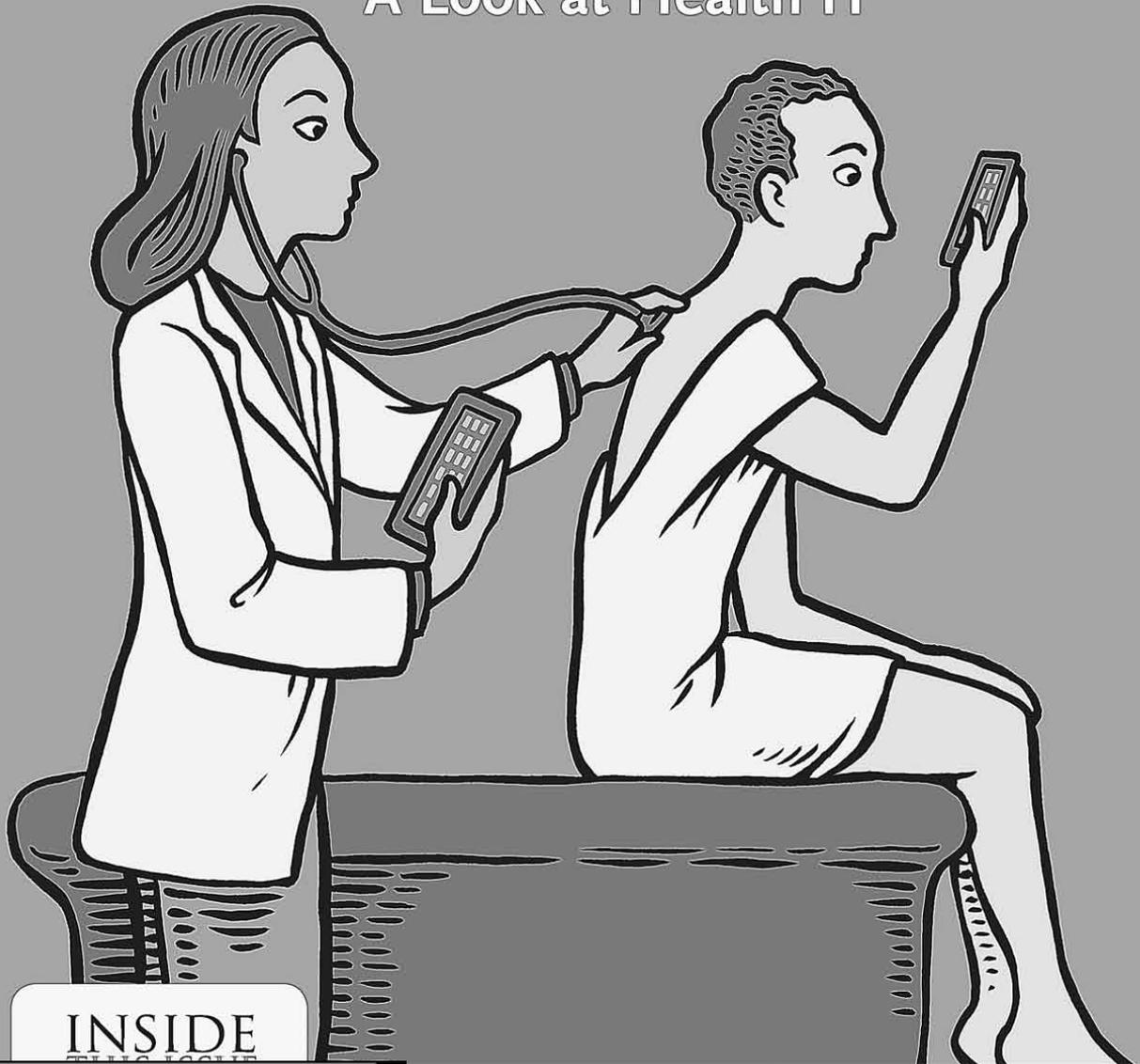
Say no to taped music! Musicians leafleted the March 13 performance of the Paul Taylor Dance Company, which now has the dubious distinction of being the first resident company in one of Lincoln Center's "big three" theatres to perform without live music. Above, Local 802 member and trumpeter Frank Hosticka.

GENERAL EXCELLENCE

Class B

Allegro, AFM Local 802

Residency in a Digital World: A Look at Health IT



INSIDE

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Class B

CIR Vitals, CIR/SEIU HEALTHCARE

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Word From the Wards:
How Do You Use iPads?

CIR Resident combines mobile technology and medicine

POSTED BY HEATHER APPEL

San Francisco General Hospital (SFGH) is a far cry from the high-tech world of Silicon Valley, which is just 40 miles south of the hospital. But a CIR delegate has found a way to harness that innovation and technological advancement to improve medical care at the public hospital.

Anesthesiology resident Brad Cohn co-created MediBabble, a free mobile translation application that's used by more than 12,000 healthcare providers. The app, which launched with five languages and just added a sixth, is free and available for download by anybody with an iPad or iPhone.

San Francisco was a natural place to pioneer the technology, Dr. Cohn said.

"Being at UCSF, it's a pretty culturally diverse area. You could walk into the hospital and find 10 different patients who speak 10 different languages."

Dr. Cohn, now a PGY 2 at the University of California San Francisco and a CIR delegate at SFGH, developed the idea for MediBabble while a medical student at UCSF. He and his classmate, Alex Blau, were commiserating over language barriers after a frustrating shift at SFGH. While the hospital offers assistance in more than 65 languages through a combination of staff medical interpreters, a telephone language line and a video medical interpretation system, it's not always sufficient, particularly at night and on weekends.

"You want to bring resources to bear as quickly and effectively as possible for your patients and

it's frustrating," Dr. Cohn explained. "That was the motivation for this project, and the more we thought about it the more potential we saw in it."

The concept, although simple, has grown into a fairly sophisticated tool. Currently available in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian, French and Haitian Creole, the app contains thousands of commonly asked questions and instructions, organized by system and symptom to facilitate both comprehensive and targeted medical history-taking.

Drs. Cohn and Blau focused on medical history-taking because most diagnoses come from the patient's self-reported medical history, something that can't be accomplished effectively if there are language barriers. They were fortunate to have the support of Dr. Lawrence M. Tierney, a professor of medicine at UCSF School of Medicine and Associate Chief of San Francisco's VA Hospital. Dr. Tierney is also the author of the seminal text on evidence-based history-taking. The application offers audible translations of common questions, voiced by native speakers. The initial languages were added based on the patient population at UCSF and SFGH. Haitian Creole was added in response to the 2009 earthquake in Haiti, in an effort to support relief workers who didn't speak the language.

Dr. Cohn hopes that the international use of MediBabble will expand over time. His residency program offers a special track in global health, which will offer him four months out of the next two years he can dedicate to the project. "I want to make this available to providers abroad who may not be as connected to the networks that we've been able to distribute it through here." Judging from its application in Haiti, it holds a lot of potential for international and emergency use.

In order to be accessible in resource-poor areas, whether they're safety-net hospitals or disaster-struck areas, MediBabble is fully functional without Internet connectivity, as well as in commonly shielded environments, such as hospitals, emergency rooms and radiology suites. It comes pre-loaded with Spanish and then users can add additional languages as needed.

(Continued on page 20)

BEST FEATURE

Class B

"CIR Resident Combines Mobile Technology,"

Heather Appel

CIR Vitals. CIR SEIU

OTB retirees and jobless families suffer

BY DIANE S. WILLIAMS

DC 37'S LONG FIGHT TO RESTORE the jobs and health insurance benefits lost when the Off Track Betting Corp. shut down could end in success if Gov. Cuomo and state lawmakers open the 2012 legislative session ready to help the 800 unemployed members and 900 retirees of Local 2021.

"It was my day off when I heard OTB was closed forever," said former Telephone Betting Agent Victorine Gordon. "The news was devastating. Since then my life is filled with worry and stress."

When OTB crumbled, Gordon was nine months shy of the 10 years of service she needed to retire. Her daughter Khalida, the mother of two, also worked for OTB. Since the closing in December 2010, she has found temp work for just one day, and mother and daughter struggle to stay afloat.

Former Betting Clerk Daryl Stallings applied to the Sanitation Dept., Aqueduct Race Track, Verizon and dozens of other companies. The family depends on his Police Clerk wife to make ends meet. "We have cut back and fallen behind," Stallings said. "I don't know where we'd be without help from our family."

For the middle-class Brooklyn family, Christmas is on hold. "We'll have a Christmas dinner, but toys and presents—that won't happen. It used to make me so happy to see my kids jumping for joy on Christmas morning. Today when they ask for things, I tell them we can't afford it. This year our holiday will be sorry," he said. "Now at 40 years old, I have nothing."

Brian Matarrese took an OTB severance package and retired. Now the OTB health insurance that covered a triple bypass, regular checkups and medi-

cation is gone. "These are not golden years, they are tarnished," he said.

ATTACK ON PUBLIC WORKERS

December may mean the last unemployment check for most of the laid-off members. The retirees hoped Gov. Cuomo would take responsibility for their health insurance at an annual cost of \$8 million in the \$168 billion state budget. But in October the governor said no deal. "We are not aging gracefully," Matarrese said. "This attack is not isolated, politicians everywhere are going after pensions and health care. As employees, health care was not given to us, we fought for it for decades through our contracts, but the mayor and governor decided to cut off our insurance benefits and throw us away like yesterday's news."

The former NYC OTB employees who did their jobs and took in a handle of up to \$1.3 billion a year got a raw deal through a cockeyed distribution formula that funneled millions to the state racing association, paid hefty executive salaries and left crumbs for day-to-day operations. Without OTB, New York State and, city lose about \$65 million a month to illegal gambling.

Now the mayor and governor have handed the former OTB workers an unwelcome legacy: They face life-threatening illnesses without health insurance and high rents and mortgages without jobs.

Local 2021 President Lenny Allen, DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts and Political Director Wanda Williams fight on, and the DC 37 Retirees Association has lobbied relentlessly in Albany to restore the benefits. In January they hope Gov. Cuomo and Albany lawmakers will reinstate the retirees' health insurance and let Catskills OTB President David Groth expand into New York City.

DC 37's lawsuit on the benefits is now before the state Court of Appeals, which has requested oral argument. "We see this as a positive indication and welcome the opportunity to provide additional legal arguments that show the lower courts' decisions were in error," said DC 37 General Counsel Mary O'Connell.

"There is no justice in the way we were treated," Stallings said. "When will politicians see we are hurting and help?"

As the holidays approached, Khalida Gordon took her 10-year-old in her arms and asked what he
(Continued on page 12)

BEST FEATURE

Class C

"Grim Holidays for Laid Off Members"

Diane Williams and Alfredo Alvarado

Public Employee Press, DC 37 AFSCME

Grim holidays for laid-off members

(Continued from page 11)

wanted for Christmas: “I want my mommy to go back to work,” the child said.

Union sues DOE to reverse layoffs

BY ALFREDO ALVARADO

The battle to get back the jobs of the 642 Local 372 members the Dept. of Education laid off in October escalated Nov. 16 when the union announced a major lawsuit against DOE.

The suit charges that DOE fired the support staff in bad faith and in violation of the State Education Law and asks the court to overturn the layoffs. DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts, Associate Director Henry Garrido and Local 372 President Santos Crespo Jr. unveiled the court action Nov. 16 at a news conference.

“These layoffs are irresponsible, unfair and unjust,” Roberts said. “It’s outrageous that DOE lays off workers who make as little as \$14,000 a year while the city squanders billions of dollars on contracts like CityTime and Future Technology Associates that are riddled with fraud and waste.” She charged that the laid-off workers and the communities they serve “are paying the price for the Bloomberg administration’s gross mismanagement of taxpayers’ dollars.”

“We hope the courts can see the blatant deceit by the DOE when they laid off these members,” said Crespo. “We want a swift and positive resolution that will get these hard-working people back to their jobs.”

In the lawsuit the union argues that the layoffs were done in bad faith because DOE refused to seriously consider alternatives.

“We made proposals to cut DOE costs by more than enough money to save these jobs,” explained Crespo. “But they rejected them outright without any further discussions.” The union offered a combination of furloughs when school was not in session and a reduction in hours.

JACKSON STANDS WITH DC 37

Garrido charged that the layoffs are “retaliation against the union for not letting the mayor dip into our Health Stabilization Fund.” The suit shows that by requiring all schools to absorb the same 3.26 percent cut, when schools in poorer neighborhoods lack the fundraising resources of wealthier districts, DOE violated the law that requires “equitable” dis-

tribution of funding reductions considering schools’ “relative needs.”

“There is obvious racial and socioeconomic disparity in the way the city produced the layoff list,” said Crespo. Most of the job losses, he said, hit neighborhoods like East New York, Brownsville, Williamsburg, South Jamaica and the South Bronx.

Garrido explained that DOE had “money that could have saved these jobs,” but instead set aside \$25.7 million from increased Medicaid revenue to fund charter schools and \$47.6 million for supplies.

At the news conference, City Council Education Chair Robert Jackson expressed his uncompromising support for the laid-off workers. “I stand with DC 37 and Local 372,” he said.

While fighting to reverse the layoffs, the union held a job and support services fair Oct. 20 to help the members get back on their feet. The event included a résumé-writing workshop and representatives from DC 37 benefits, the state Labor Dept., the City University and Metro Plus participated.

“I love my job and the kids,” said laid-off Staten Islander Mary Ellen, who came to the job fair although she hopes to return to work at Brooklyn’s Edward R. Murrow High School. “The mayor needs to actually visit some schools and see what the workers he fired do for the children.” “We will not go away silently,” promised Crespo. “Our children, our teachers and our communities deserve better.”

Who’s going to hire a 67-year-old?

Former School Aide Milagros Carrera was looking forward to retiring in a few years and enjoying her golden years with her husband, a former Local 372 drug counselor. Instead she will be spending her holiday season looking for work.

“My seven years at P.S. 145 in Bushwick were great,” said Carrera. She especially enjoyed working with the children and helping teachers in the classroom. “I miss my kids already,” she said.

Carrera, a mother of three grown children, said that Oct. 7, her last day at the Brooklyn grade school, was very difficult. “I cried when I left that school,” she said.

In her years in the public school system, Carrera also developed a deep appreciation for the teachers. “It’s a very stressful job, and it’s a tough job. People should respect them a lot more,” she added.

Carrera now faces her own tough job, finding employment during the worst economic crisis in 80 years. She says she has younger friends who have struggled to find a job and admits to being worried about finding a job at her age. “Who’s going hire a 67 year-old woman?” she asks.

But Carrera is not the type to give up easily when faced with a challenge. “I’ve worked all my life,” she explains, “and I’m going to keep on working until I’m ready to retire.”

This is going to be a rough holiday.

The layoff that hit Parent Coordinator Regina Dudley on Oct. 7 endangers the health and education of her two sons, Devante, 18, and Sayquan, 10.

Devante was looking forward to his freshman year at Virginia Union University, where he planned to major in graphic design. Without his mother’s steady job and paycheck to help pay for tuition and expenses, Devante’s college dream has now been deferred.

Sayquan, a fifth grader with Asperger syndrome and impaired hearing, needs weekly therapy sessions at Brookdale University Hospital, where he meets with a social worker and a psychiatrist to deal with his special needs. “They already told me that my insurance has run out and won’t even cover his next session,” said the single mother who lives with her two boys in Brooklyn.

“I’m real proud of Sayquan. He’s doing so well now in school too,” said Dudley, who worked at the School for Global Studies in Brooklyn.

With a dozen years under her belt working for the Dept. of Education as a drug counselor and Parent Coordinator, Dudley was blind sided by the sudden layoff notice from the DOE, but she is determined to keep her head above water.

“I’m going to hang in there,” she says about her difficult circumstances. “It’s going to be a rough holiday, but my kids need me now, more than ever.”

The students need help even more now.

Former School Aide Powen Lin was already familiar with the teachers, the parents and the students at Flushing’s P.S. 244 when he was hired by the Dept. of Education. Like many Local 372 members, Lin was a volunteer at the Queens elementary school before he started working there.

“I knew the school needed help, that’s why I volunteered,” said Lin, who began volunteering when

his 9-year-old son attended the school.

With P.S. 244’s large Asian student body, Lin’s language skills in Mandarin and Taiwanese made him an invaluable resource. The parents who often struggled to communicate with the teachers in English counted on Lin for help. He helped translate documents they didn’t understand and guided newer parents through the school bureaucracy.

Many of the parents, he said, work long hours. Lin, who was born in Taiwan and came to the city in 2008, helped them stay in touch with the school. In view of his important role for the parents, his dismissal “just doesn’t make much sense to me,” he admits.

His departure doesn’t make much sense for the principal of the school either. “He was against this,” said Lin.

Like many members who were laid off, Lin is struggling to find a new job while his wife goes to school. While he looks for work, Lin will continue to volunteer twice a week at P.S. 244.

There will be no gifts under our tree.

As an eight-year veteran at the Bronx Academy High School in Soundview, former Parent Coordinator Marilysi Garcia was not expecting the layoff notice, especially as the holiday season approached.

“I was in shock,” says Garcia, who lives near the school with her two daughters, Emy, 5, and Milly, 2. “With even a month’s notice, I could have starting looking for another job sooner,” said Garcia, who started as a School Aide.

She attended the union’s job fair to search for work and has applied for unemployment benefits, but financial problems hit her fast. She was late with the November rent, she worries that there will be no gifts under a Christmas tree for her daughters.

“The holidays are going to be really hard,” she says. “I just don’t know what I’m going to do.”

While she searches for a new job, Garcia has some time to care for her 2-year-old, instead of paying for child care, and she takes her oldest daughter to her kindergarten class every day and picks up her in the afternoon.

Garcia was the only Parent Coordinator at the school, which she hears will be closing in two years. “The students have been performing a lot better the last couple of years, so I’m not sure why they’re closing it,” she said.

Answering the BIG LIE about city workers' pensions

It's NO life of luxury

PEP photo by Gregory N. Heires

A By GREGORY N. HEIRES
S DEFICIT HAWKS screech about the high cost of public-employee pensions, you would think that DC 37 retirees are spending their golden years eating caviar and sipping champagne.

In reality, many of the 55,000 DC 37 retirees, particularly those who had low-wage and non-professional jobs, need their pension checks and Social Security just to scratch by.

Many leave the city workforce with credit-card debts or little savings after spending years in low- and modestly paying jobs that at least come with the promise of a secure retirement and health-care coverage.

"At this age, I have never had a vacation and I can't plan for one," said Dorothy Sharpe Spratt, 83. "I don't have the money for it."

How about savings?

"Forget that! I got to pay my bills."

The retired member of Social Service Employees Union Local 371 lives in a one-bedroom co-op in the Bronx. Her monthly pension income is \$815, and she gets \$1,372 from Social Security.

After meeting her household expenses and struggling to pay down a hefty debt at Macy's, she has little left.

"It's rough," she said.

NO SAVINGS FOR A RAINY DAY

Kathleen Rezek, a retired clerical worker, has a monthly income of about \$2,200. She says she can support herself on that, but can't squirrel away any savings for a rainy day.

Rezek has received support services from a clinic in the Bronx since her childhood. But she fears she will no longer be able to afford the services if her \$5 sliding scale is eliminated because of the loss of city funding under Mayor Michael Bloomberg's budget modification.

Most retired DC 37 workers are in the New York City Employees Retirement System, which provides the typical DC 37 pensioner with \$17,200 a year. The Board of Education Retire-



Kathleen Rezek



Shirley Thomas

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Class C

Public Employee Press, DC 37, AFSCME

job," said Robert A. Martin, associate of the DC 37 Municipal Employees Legal program. Over the years, MELS has had thousands of retirees with financial and medical problems.

They have the same problems as a lot of city workers as they face bankruptcies, foreclosures,

debt collection and evictions — problems that reflect their limited income and the underlying economy," Martin said.

MELS is helping Shirley Foster, a former Local 372 member who is fighting foreclosure proceedings on the Bronx house where she lives with her daughter and granddaughter.

Public Employee Press, January 2011



Dorothy Sharpe Spratt



Shirley Foster and daughter

Foster fell behind on her \$2,500 monthly mortgage after being hospitalized for intestinal bleeding and spending months in rehab. She came to the union after she was swindled by two crooked lawyers who pocketed thousands in fees without actually helping, said her daughter, Dorian Peoples, who helps with the mortgage and house-

hold expenses.

Foster, 70, retired in 1999 after working 9 years as a Family Assistant in the public school system. She suffered a fall in the office in 1999, and it took her several years to win the disability pension that provides her \$184 a month. Her monthly Social Security check is \$1,191.

“That’s my only income,” she said.

Former Sr. School Lunch Aide Rose Thomas lives in a one-bedroom co-op in Brooklyn. The combined income from her pension and Social Security is just over \$2,000 a month. She’s lucky if she has anything left over at the end of the month once she pays her \$900 rent, medical bills, household expenses, installments on an outstanding credit-card bill and cable TV and phone charges.

“I’m not really making it,” said Thomas, 68, describing her effort to get by on her fixed income.

“If I had to do it again,” Thomas, 68, said, “I would try my best to pay off the cards before retiring.”

HEALTH AND FINANCIAL TROUBLES

Helen King, who is on 24-hour oxygen support, moved into the Margaret Tietz Center in Jamaica, Queens, after finding she could no longer live on her own. Because she is dependent upon Medicaid, King is forced to pass along her \$570 monthly pension and \$950 Social Security check to the nursing home, which gives her a monthly \$50 allowance.

King, who suffers from scoliosis, kidney disease and arthritis, retired on disability 17 years ago from her job as a clerical worker. Her bank account is depleted because she had to pay the nursing home \$3,000 before the Medicaid coverage kicked in. She moved into the home in January.

King manages to appear upbeat despite her health and financial troubles. “With the rents in New York, there are those who have less. Oh, my goodness.”

King is one of about 100 retirees who receive phone counseling through the union’s Personal Service Unit.

“Our retirees have pensions and Social Security but for many of them it’s not enough to get by,” said Supervising Social Worker Stephanie Kleinberg, the outreach coordinator of the PSU program.

“It’s unusual for people to walk away from the city with a huge retirement pay. Some have no alternative but to spend down their savings to be eligible for Medicaid. It’s tragic.”



BEST PHOTOGRAPH

Class B

Gary Schoichet

Communique, CWA 1180



BEST PHOTOGRAPH

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Daniel Tasripin

Transport Workers Bulletin

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Jay Walks

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"Jay Walks"

Transport Workers Bulletin

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They know we're trying to make the world better

1199ers are on the Cutting Edge of Efforts to "Green" Health Care.

BY PATRICIA KENNEY

Health care, by its nature, seeks to protect and preserve; an unfortunate side effect is its environmental impact. The industry creates some five million tons of solid waste per year, consumes twice the energy of traditional office space and uses a vast array of toxic chemicals, from cleaning products to chemotherapy drugs.

But things are changing—spurred in part by healthcare reform's demands to cut waste, stricter governmental oversight, and increased awareness about sustainability. Health care is making changes that safeguard, rather than harm our environment. 1199ers are getting involved.

Bernard McKnight is an environmental service worker who's been at New York Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan for 13 years. A member of the institution's "Green Team," McKnight is among the hospital's employees who work together on sustainability and environmental issues.

"There have been a lot of big changes over the years. When I first started here we had a little recycling program, but it really didn't take off," says McKnight, as he gives *Our Life And Times* a tour of the long, winding tunnel which houses the hospital's bins and dumpsters of well-organized waste, garbage and recyclables. "Now we're laying the foundations so our programs can really branch out. We try to set smart, achievable goals. We want to make sure that what we do lasts, like composting in our kitchens,

using "green" cleaning products, water conservation, trash recycling and red-bag (biohazard) waste reduction programs."

McKnight's in one of several groups of 1199ers participating in a groundbreaking labor-management initiative in which workers are on the leading edge of "green" in their institutions. The program is sponsored in part by the U.S. Dept. of Labor and among its developers are the Union and the Healthcare Career Advancement Program, a partnership of SEIU locals and employers dedicated to healthcare education issues.

1199SEIU members in New York City and Baltimore are training to teach others about energy and water conservation methods, the reduction of waste and recycling, and the proper use of cleaning products. They're also preparing for new job responsibilities that will evolve as healthcare facilities implement broader sustainability programs.

"I've always been interested in global warming and environmental issues, says Michael Ramos, an environmental services worker at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, NY. "And right now we have a really good opportunity to learn information and spread the word about changing things."

Jessica Brunson is a housekeeper at NYU Langone Medical Center in Manhattan. She's also participating in the "green" healthcare project. She says it just makes sense to have workers playing a major role in such a major industrial shift.

"At first I thought 'I'm just a housekeeper. Who's going to this to me?'" But then I realized I have lots of ideas to share," Says Brunson. "We're on the front lines of defense, We deal with all the waste, so why not have the education?"

"Waste management is really important," Ramos continues. "There is just constant trash flow in a hospital—patients on IVs, tubes from feedings—and then we have the overflow. If we can get people to be more conscious of what they're putting in the garbage, it would be really helpful because it's really expensive. We pay by the pound to have our trash

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BEST FEATURE

Class C

"They Know We're Trying to Make the World Better"

Patricia Kenney

Our Life and Times, 1199SEIU

The bumpy road to EHR implementation: CIR Residents assess their hospitals

BY HANNAH THONET

It's the new American Dream. A Georgia native, hiking in Utah, suffers a fall and is transported unconscious to the region's community hospital, where the physician on call carefully reviews the patient's allergies and medications in the center's database and modifies the treatment accordingly. Once stabilized, he's transferred to a major hospital in Salt Lake City for a few days before returning to Atlanta, where he follows up with his hometown PCP two weeks later. No papers are exchanged. No faxes. No request for medical records. There are no delays in treatment. The tests aren't duplicated and the results are complete, easy to find and easy to read. This is an America with a universal electronic health records system.

We're not there yet. And the truth is we may never get there. And it's absurdly expensive. But most residents agree: electronic health record systems, however imperfect, are improving patient care.

Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which provides \$19 billion for the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, and thus paved the way for nationwide adoption of EHR systems, offering a minimum of \$2 million (and potentially much more) in incentives for EHR technology to hospitals that meet certain "meaningful use" qualifications.

Propelled by government funding and the looming threat of financial penalties to those who don't fully adopt a certified EHR system by 2015, health-

care providers are anxiously shopping around, inundated with sales pitches from technology companies eager to take advantage of this new flush of cash. In the rush to allocate stimulus funding, are the best decisions being made? Well-known healthcare blogger Maggie Mahar wrote recently in Health Beat, "In 2020 or 2025 many hospitals may discover that the choice they made in 2014 was less than optimal, and now they must strip out the old system, and install a new one."

What promise does EHR have for CIR hospitals? According to a survey completed by 109 residents at the 2011 CIR Convention, 82 percent use electronic medical records in some fashion, such as physician order entry (74 percent); inpatient records (76 percent); and outpatient records (69 percent).

Raised in the tech generation, residents have taken the lead not only to incorporate EHR tools into their practices, but to improve upon them. CIR residents are participating in their hospitals' Health IT meetings, pushing for the integration of tablets, and taking advantage of the technology to check in on patients from home, fuel their research projects, and document quality improvement measures. CIR Vitals spoke to residents throughout the country to see how CIR hospitals are meeting the challenges of implementing EHR systems.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

"For as long as I've been working in a clinical setting, computers have been a tool to help people do things faster. But it all depends on the software that's written. [EHR] software isn't designed with doctors in mind," said Dr. Neeraj Modi, a PGY 4 in Radiology at Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center. "It's sold by IT people to IT people, and IT people don't understand what we need. Unless you're involved in both sides and understand both medicine and technology, there's going to be hiccups."

Dr. Robert Leviton, Bronx-Lebanon's Chief Medical Information Officer, said, "One of the challenges is to create user interfaces that are easy to use so doctors don't have to become information technologists." Always looking to improve the

(Continued on page 20)

BEST FEATURE

Class B

"The Bumpy Road to EHR Implementation: CIR Residents Assess their Hospitals"

Hannah Thonet

CIR Vitals, CIR/SEIU Healthcare

CIR resident

(Continued from page 10)

A question that always comes up is how MediBabble users can understand the responses if the patients answer the questions in their native languages. Dr. Cohn explained that the application “doesn’t back translate.” It uses yes or no questions, or asks patients to point to the part of their body that’s affected.

Acknowledging its limitations, Dr. Cohn said, “It’s really only for collecting information. You can’t give information, and our greatest concern was misinformation by pressing a wrong button. It won’t replace a medical interpreter, it’ll just extend the reach.”

Dr. Cohn’s work on MediBabble is in keeping with the ideals that brought him to the medical field in the first place. A California native, Dr. Cohn went to the University of California at Irvine for college, without a clear idea of what career he would pursue.

“I went abroad to learn Spanish and happened to pick a medical-themed program in Ecuador, so early on in this process I was excited by international health work,” he said.

Dr. Cohn became involved in CIR during contract negotiations at SFGH and was elected delegate for 2011-2012. He was especially interested in protecting and expanding the Patient Care Fund, which allows residents to purchase critical equipment and fund community programs that benefit their patients.

With all the time pressures of his residency, he estimates he spends 20 hours a week on logistics and marketing for MediBabble. He credits the rest of the team for moving it forward: Dr. Alex Blau; Zhanna Shamis, a user interface designer; David Cairns, software engineer; and Janice Holve, JD, MBA, marketing and legal counsel.

Dr. Cohn feels lucky because not only does he get to continue to be involved with the software as it expands to include new features and new languages (Hindi, Urdu, German, and Gujarati, to name a few), but he actually gets to use the app in his own practice and see it in use by his peers.

“Even this morning I walked into an exam room and saw someone using it,” he said.

The bumpy road to EHR implementation

(Continued from page 19)

system, the hospital is a founding member of The Bronx RHIO (Regional Health Information Organization), a health information exchange that enables networked hospitals, individual physicians, and additional healthcare providers in the Bronx to view and share patient information, creating integration between hospital and local physician on a community level. They’re encouraging local physicians to take advantage of HITECH funding to set up their own EHR systems that will integrate with Bronx-Lebanon, but while private practices make the digital transition, the hospital also has the technology to auto-fax a patient’s records to physicians who still rely on paper charting.

Of course, software is not the only barrier to full implementation of EHR technology. Dr. Michael O’Neill, a PGY 2 in a dual Internal Medicine/Pediatrics program at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, explained that in pediatrics, physicians input

orders into their software system, but in IM, physicians handwrite the orders and a nurse inputs them; it’s a redundant process that introduces room for error.

When Dr. O’Neill took his concerns to the IM program directors, they introduced him to the logistical nightmare EHRs could create. “You have to consider: (1) Do we have the physical hardware? Do we have enough computers on the floor, or do we need more, and if so, how are we going to pay for them? and (2) Now we need more training—for both doctors and nurses; and (3) Do the nurses have enough computers [so doctors and nurses can issue and monitor orders at the same time without causing delays]?” Lack of sufficient equipment is apparently not a new problem; 43 percent of CIR’s 2011 Convention survey respondents said waiting for a computer caused work interruptions on inpatient service. LAC+USC even negotiated for 100 additional computers in recent labor management meetings. Because com-

(Continued on next page)

The bumpy road to EHR implementation

(Continued from previous page)

puters are expensive, clunky, and stationary (or, with a little innovation, awkwardly mobile), many hospitals are exploring the functionality of handheld devices, such as iPads. “It takes time, it takes money, and it takes training. Nothing is ever cut and dry,” Dr. O’Neill said. But the systems are always improving. Physicians in IM will soon be inputting orders into the computer themselves, just like pediatrics.

How EHR Is Improving Patient Care “For our patients and our hospital, EHR use is at close to 100 percent. There’s a big Medical Records Office with old paper charts that I’d like to see disappear. Having everything readily available so when someone comes in in the middle of the night [accessing old records] isn’t an issue,” said Dr. Scott Stein, a PGY 3 in Internal Medicine in New York’s St. Luke’s-Roosevelt Hospital Center, discussing improvements he’d like to see in his hospital’s EHR system. Having discharge summaries online really helps patient care, Dr. Stein said. “It minimizes the detective work we have to do in clinic because many times patients don’t know why they’re there.

Having the EHR pulls up that information immediately.” St. Luke’s-Roosevelt has adopted the software eClinicalWorks to expedite the note-writing process. Dr. Stein said, “We can’t see the same volume of patients when we’re first learning. Every time you talk about expanding EHR you have to incorporate a learning curve. But once you’ve mastered it, it’s better than reading paper charts. It’s better than reading horrible handwriting, which is a big problem in the profession.”

Adopting new software can be a tedious process, but it usually pays off in the end. Jackson Memorial Hospital’s Internal Medicine department has just started using the software PowerNote—a program that enables physicians to quickly document notes by clicking on evolving paths based on previous information entered and selected, so the computer forms prewritten paragraphs. It’s particularly useful in departments with significant turnover, such as the Emergency Department. “It’s kind of a pain to learn, but a lot of [residents] are really starting to enjoy the benefits of being able to write their notes a little faster,” Dr. O’Neill said.

Dr. Jenna Godfrey, a PGY 3 in Orthopaedics at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences

Center, said, “The one [bad] thing that happens at our hospital is that it promotes laziness because it’s easy to copy and paste your notes from the day before, whereas with handwritten notes you have to write them again, and reconsider, ‘Did I look at all the new labs? Is the patient in the same condition?’

“Overall the benefits of EHR outweigh any of the drawbacks. It’s significantly safer,” Dr. Godfrey continued, explaining that EHR had improved patient safety and reduced the rates of medical errors.

“There are so many things to remember when you’re writing orders Having [all medication and dosing options] come up on the computer is really helpful. The decimal point is never misplaced like it can be on illegible handwritten notes. All pharm orders go automatically to the pharmacist who can check for accuracy. “One of the things we’re starting in our department is the SCIP protocol. There’s a lot of Medicare and Medicaid regulations we need to meet now, such as, ‘How quickly did you get the Foley out? How quickly did the patient get antibiotics?’ These reminders and alerts are triggered through EHR, and you can regulate across the departments and hospital. EHR is a huge benefit for [monitoring] those things.”

Dr. Leviton at Bronx-Lebanon suggested that tracking patient progress on micro and macro levels would be a huge benefit, both for individual patients and for the entire healthcare industry. “We are able to identify if a patient has been in a hospital in the last 30 days. We can track and trend the number of tests and labs and look back retrospectively and make decisions based on that. We can get alerts and warnings that there are certain tests physicians need to order. Decision-making happens more regularly.”

More than 10,000 in Pro-Union Rally

BY YURIDIA PEÑA

On April 9, active and retired CSA members were among thousands of public, private and building trade union employees, as well as their supporters, in Times Square chanting “We are one” in response to recent anti-labor attacks and government union busting.

New Yorkers showed solidarity with the nation’s working class with signs that read: “This is what democracy looks like” and “Bargaining rights are human rights.”

Said George Young, the Principal of PS 46 in Manhattan: “I am here because I feel unions are the backbone of America.”

For more than 100 years, the labor movement has been at the forefront in the fight for a safe work environment, the right to a living wage, access to adequate health coverage, and protection from discrimination and nepotism. “I’m here because... every profession of the middle class is under attack, said Richard Oppenheimer, Family Day Care Director at Brooklyn’s Nuestros Niños and a CSA Vice President.

Labor leaders and workers spoke from the stage among a sea of unionists and their families who wore red t-shirts, sweaters, hats, armbands, ties, scarves, and headbands. “We are standing together for the American dream, for a dream that says that better days are ahead of us not behind us,” said Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers. No official crowd numbers were available, but various reports said between 10,000 and 15,000 people attended the mid-day rally.

The attack on the working class continues to

escalate in many states following in the wake of recent union-busting legislation passed in Wisconsin and Ohio. Many states have blamed their financial woes on state employees’ pensions and rising salaries. Right-wing conservatives are once again pushing states to adopt “right to work” laws. Twenty-two states in the country have similar laws, but at this writing, New Hampshire appeared set to become the first northeast state to pass such a law.

These laws weaken the power of unions and end collective bargaining rights. Elected officials like Governor Scott Walker disguise the statute as a freedom for workers since it allows them to opt out of paying dues to unions. But union advocates characterize these laws as designed to reduce the power of unions as well as demolish collective bargaining rights. “CSA has to support what’s going on [fighting anti-union interests], not only in New York but in the country,” said Pedro Cordero, Director, Goddard Riverside Day Care Center in Manhattan.

According to the NYS AFL-CIO, New York employs nearly two million unionized workers. In NYS, proposed budget cuts and layoffs are expected to eliminate nearly 75,000 public sector jobs. The AFL-CIO has found that 78 percent of private-sector union workers have access to medical insurance through their jobs, compared with 51 percent of non-union workers. And 77 percent of private-sector union workers have access to guaranteed retirement plans through their jobs, compared with just 20 percent of non-union workers.

The NYC Central Labor Council and the NYS AFL-CIO organized the mass demonstration that took over many blocks in midtown along Seventh Avenue. The event was one of more than 1,200 AFL-CIO Days of Action events across America held during the week of April 4 in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a champion of labor and a leader of the Civil Rights movement.

Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, where he had joined the city’s striking sanitation workers who were in a major labor dispute with the city over collective workplace safety and bargaining rights.

BEST REPORTING

Class B

"More than 10,000 in Pro-Union Rally"

Yuridia Peña

CSA News, CSA Local 1, AFL-CIO



BEST ARTWORK

Class C

Fred Harper

Transport Workers Bulletin

TWU Local 100

Uncollected revenue could stop layoffs

BY GREGORY N. HEIRES

DC 37 HAS SHOWN the Bloomberg administration how to bring in \$530 million in lost revenue - including taxes the city is doing little to collect - but instead, the mayor is moving forward with a plan to lay off thousands of municipal employees and gut public services.

The union proposal would provide the city with sufficient funds to scrap the November budget modification plan to lay off 2,000 DC 37 members by the end of June.

The union presented its plan to City Council members at a breakfast meeting at union headquarters Dec. 8 (see page 10). DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts wrote Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg about the plan before he announced the midyear budget modification in November.

"It makes no sense — fiscally or morally - for the city to destroy jobs and careers when it can easily find the funds to keep our members on the payroll without increasing taxes. All they have to do is collect the taxes that are owed," Roberts said.

UNION PROPOSALS

The union's recommendations include:

- collecting taxes on all billboards licensed by the city and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (\$22 million);
- collecting taxes on all cell phone antennas (\$19 million to \$27 million);
- eliminating improper property tax exemptions for businesses and wealthy people who buy properties from nonprofits and religious institutions (\$173 million), and

- adopting a 15 percent "voluntary vendor rate reduction" program for personnel and technical services contracts (\$316 million).

In December, the city announced a plan to crack down on scofflaws who owe \$700 million for parking violations in order to help close its \$3.3 billion budget gap. Roberts praised the city for the aggressive collection policy as she pressed the administration to target the \$540 million in outstanding revenues identified in the union proposal.

NO COST TO TAXPAYERS

"Our plan wouldn't cost taxpayers a dime. The union proposal involves collecting recurring revenues, not one-shots, which means it would help the city to address its spending gap for the long haul," said DC 37 Assistant Associate Director Henry Garrido. Garrido heads the union's white paper project, which in recent years has identified numerous examples of how the city could save hundreds of millions of dollars by eliminating wasteful expenditures on contracting out.

New York City spends more than \$10 billion a year on more than 19,000 outside contracts with consultants and vendors - roughly equivalent to the entire budget of Los Angeles. The union's preliminary examination of city records has found that more than 330 consultants are averaging nearly \$400,000 apiece, said Garrido.

When Bloomberg released the November budget modification, Comptroller John Liu said the city should "identify and trim fat around city contracts. Agencies should question whether contracts are truly necessary and ask for reasonable cost concessions from major contractors, as the MTA has successfully done."

The union proposal on contract concessions is modeled after programs implemented in Chicago and Los Angeles and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's 2009 negotiations that won \$40 million in concessions from its contractors in New York City.

In Chicago, an executive order required contractors to make concessions. In Los Angeles, a city council resolution called for "shared sacrifice" and asked contractors for 10 percent cost reductions. As the two cities grappled with crippling budget

BEST REPORTING

Class C

"Uncollected Revenue Could Stop Layoffs"

Gregory N. Heires

Public Employee Press, DC 37 AFSCME

shortfalls, the concessions saved them several hundred million dollars.

Elaborating on DC 37's plan, Garrido noted that the city has failed to collect taxes on 3,500 out of 9,000 registered cellphone antennas. Annual fees for antennas range from \$7,000 to \$10,000.

The city has issued permits for 7,000 billboards, but only 3,400 are registered on the tax rolls. The city is also failing to collect taxes owed by the owners of another 500 billboards on MTA property, he said.

Since Mayor Bloomberg came to office in 2002, property tax exemptions have more than doubled, from \$17 billion to \$40 billion, according to Dept. of Finance reports. Tax-exempt private properties have increased from 20 percent to 25 percent of the total property value in the city, according to the Daily News. The growing exemptions deprive the city of revenue and increase the tax burden on working families.

The city could also save up to \$173 million by capping exemptions under a program known as the Industrial and Commercial Incentive Program, which offers business tax breaks on construction and renovation. In November, Daily News columnist Juan Gonzalez revealed that ICIP is providing tax breaks for highly profitable strip clubs.

"Clearly, the city needs to examine its policies on revenue more closely," Garrido said. "You are looking at hundreds upon hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue that it should be capturing - money that should go toward services that are vital to the quality of life and the workforce that provides them."

It is no surprise that the city is losing millions of dollars in taxes on billboards and cell phone towers, since the Dept. of Finance relies on an "honor system" that asks building owners to make voluntary payments. The agency is also shirking its responsibility to begin collecting property taxes when churches and nonprofits sell tax-exempt properties to new owners who convert them to businesses or residences for the wealthy.

DOWNSIZING

Under Mayor Bloomberg, the DOF has reduced the ranks of its Assessors and Assistant Assessors from 200 to 110 and chopped the number of Tax Auditors from 460 to 280.

Getting rid of employees who bring in revenue is foolish, because it deprives the city of funds that

could prevent layoffs and service cuts," said Roberts.

In addition to the missed revenues identified in the current DC 37 proposal, the city's uncollected taxes and outstanding fines may total as much as \$2 billion, according to a 2009 Daily News investigation. These included business, hotel, sales and other corporate taxes; property taxes; fines, penalties and interest on parking tickets; and uncollected penalties for dangerous construction sites, dirty restaurants and other code violations.

In May 2010, the Public Employee Press reported that the city loses hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue every year because the Finance Dept. has downsized its staff of Assessors, scaled back site visits and switched to a substandard assessment method.

Before Bloomberg became mayor, annual site visits were legally required, but now sites are visited only every three to five years. Under Bloomberg, the DOF secretly replaced the assessment method used by cities nationwide with a simplistic system that undervalues properties in affluent areas of Manhattan.

In a major victory that demonstrated the huge savings available through reducing contracting out, City Comptroller John Liu hammered out an agreement with the Bloomberg administration in September to have union workers take over CityTime, a contracted-out payroll project that went \$780 million—about 1,000 percent—over budget. The city is cutting payments from its existing contract with Science Applications International Corp. by \$80 million and will end the deal by June. After June, Local 2627 members will be assigned to the project.

Inside the Wisconsin uprising: Teaching assistants help spark a new movement in labor

Workers Respond to Anti-Unionists: 'We Are One!'

BY: JOHN TARLETON

MADISON, Wisconsin—When Governor Scott Walker submitted a bill to the Wisconsin State Legislature on February 11, he said it was a “budget repair bill,” urgently needed to close a midyear budget deficit. The bill also stripped almost all collective bargaining rights from 175,000 public workers, but Walker insisted his only concern was balancing the budget. He thought his bill would be approved within a week.

Instead, Walker’s attack on labor ignited a protest movement that has rocked the Badger State and electrified union supporters across the country. After a month of sharp and growing conflict, Walker finally won passage of an anti-union bill—separate from any budget measure. But he also provoked the largest demonstration in Wisconsin history, at which well over 100,000 people vowed to force him from office in order to win back their stolen rights.

ADJUNCTS’ ROLE

The Teaching Assistants’ Association (TAA) at the University of Wisconsin (UW) played a central role from the beginning of what became the largest, most dynamic action by the labor movement in several decades. The 2,800-member TAA, the oldest graduate employee union in the nation, organized the first protest march against Walker’s bill on Monday, February 14—a demonstration they had originally planned as a protest against budget cuts.

Details of Walker’s anti-union proposal were first reported February 10, the evening before the

bill was introduced. “There was disbelief at first,” TAA Co-President Kevin Gibbons told *Clarion*. “It was so draconian and extreme.” In short order, TAA retooled its protest plans.

On February 14, more than a thousand people delivered valentines to Gov. Walker’s office, urging him not to “break our hearts” with union-busting and cutbacks. According to the *Wisconsin State Journal*, “People in the typically quiet, business-like Capitol looked on nervously at the group as they jammed the corridor leading to Walker’s office, pouring valentines on the desk of Walker’s office guard, their chants echoing off the building’s stately walls.”

The next day 10,000 people rallied outside the State Capitol and several thousand more took the raucous protest inside and set up a protest encampment. By now, the UW students had been joined by workers from all walks of life, as well as 800 area high school students who walked out of class to join the demonstrations.

The crowds continued to swell when the Madison schools closed for three days due to massive teacher “sick-outs.” In many cases, the striking teachers were joined at the protests by students and their parents.

According to Elizabeth Wrigley-Field of the TAA, the teachers’ boldness changed the tenor of the movement. “It became more than a big rally,” Wrigley-Field said. “It became a labor action.” The occupation of the Capitol had a similarly electric effect: this was not just a larger-than-usual rally after which everyone would go home.

The Wisconsin Constitution guarantees public access to the Capitol as part of the right “to petition the government, or any department thereof.” The protesters initially remained in the building overnight during round-the-clock hearings on the legislation, conducted by Democratic members of the State Assembly that lasted for over a week. Thousands of ordinary Wisconsinites used their two-minute time allotment to describe the impact of Walker’s bill—not only its union-busting, but also budgetary provisions such as the evisceration of BadgerCare, Wisconsin’s healthcare program for children and low-income people.

BEST REPORTING

Class C

"A New Movement in Labor"

John Tarleton

Clarion, PSC/CUNY AFT

'NEED A TASK?'

"It was one of the most moving things I've ever witnessed," Wrigley-Field said. "So many people were talking about how their lives would be ruined if this bill passed."

On February 17, fourteen Democratic members of the Wisconsin Senate fled across the state line to Illinois, denying Republicans the quorum needed to call the Senate into session for budgetary measures. Two days later, an estimated crowd of 68,000 descended on Madison, along with the national media.

Inside the ornate Capitol building, a small, self-organizing city flourished. The TAA took on a coordinating role in the occupation, with an ad hoc headquarters in a third-floor legislative conference room. "One person staffed the door while reading Luther's sermons for her dissertation, and another wore a piece of masking tape with the simple message, 'Need a task?'" recalled PSC President Barbara Bowen, who went to Wisconsin and stayed for a week at the AFT's request (see below).

Volunteers distributed donated food that poured into the building and set up a first aid station, a children's space, an information booth, a library, a lost-and-found, and a charging station for laptops and cell phones. A visitor could leave her bag lying on the floor and come back to find it in the same place hours later.

Visitors walking down a long corridor toward the center of the Capitol building were greeted with an array of homemade signs ("In Wisconsin, We Drink Beer Not Tea"; "You can't scare me, I work with high school students"; "Screw Us and We Multiply") and then the growing roar from the center of the building. At the epicenter, the crowd swung between singing "Solidarity Forever" and chanting slogans like "Whose house? Our house!" and "This is what democracy looks like!"

When the singing and chanting subsided, ordinary citizens took turns speaking at an open mic on the ground floor of the 203-foot-high rotunda.

UNITY

"We've got anarchists and cops, socialists and small business owners, Green Party members and steelworkers, teachers and students and drop-outs all working together," Jordan Petersen, a state-worker-turned-protest-organizer explained to *Clarion*. "There is something very special happening in this building."

Quiet time started by 10 pm, and the rhythmic pounding of the drum circle in the center of the rotunda would give way to quiet jam sessions in corner alcoves. Children in pajamas raced around the circular balcony overlooking the rotunda, while their parents chatted with friends at the end of a long day. Gradually, people would fall asleep on the sleeping bags and thin foam mattresses they rolled out on marble floors.

"I never thought it would happen in my lifetime," said Elizabeth Milovets, a senior at a local high school who camped out overnight at the Capitol with a group of her teenage friends. "We're living history, not just listening to it."

Milovets told *Clarion* she joined the protest to support her teachers, and out of concern that Gov. Walker would raise University of Wisconsin tuition by as much as 26%.

While the protest at the State Capitol was suffused with a spirit of solidarity and a keen awareness of the Right's attack on the middle and working classes, the demands of most protesters were moderate and pragmatic. They understood unions make their members' lives better and workers who want a union should not be denied the right to organize. For many, the anger over Walker's power play was fueled foremost by a sense of betrayal. He had violated their Midwestern sense of fairness.

"I naively assumed that while I was earning a living and raising my kids, democracy would continue and everything would be fine. I was wrong," said Maggie Wolfe, a teacher's aide and mother of three who was sitting on a foam mattress with a sign propped in front of her that read: "Freedom is when the people speak. Democracy is when the government listens."

The fight for democracy was a theme that ran throughout the protest movement, especially the idea that there is more to democracy than voting on Election Day. It also means taking action to hold elected officials accountable, demonstrators said—as illustrated by the fact that Walker never mentioned gutting collective bargaining during last fall's campaign.

On February 21, the 47,000-member South Central Federation of Labor in Madison unanimously endorsed consideration of a general strike, something no US city has seen since 1946. It noted that each union local had to make its own strike decision, but called for educating members on the "organiza-

(Continued on page 28)

Inside the Wisconsin uprising

(Continued from page 26)

tion and function of a Wisconsin general strike.”

On Saturday, February 26, a crowd of close to 100,000 people marched on the State Capitol, undeterred by a steady snowfall and temperatures in the teens. Walker had sought to limit opposition and pit public workers against each other by exempting police and firefighter unions from his bill. Instead, off-duty police and firefighters joined the throngs at the Capitol.

“We’re going to be next,” Adam Wunsch, a firefighter intern from Fitchburg, Wisconsin, told *Clarion*.

“A lot of police officers tend to be conservative. But they know the difference between right and wrong,” said Jim Palmer, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, which represents 11,000 municipal police officers from over 380 locals in Wisconsin. “We’re not going to take a short-term exemption and sell out so many devoted public servants.”

CONCESSIONS

The leadership of Wisconsin’s main public-sector unions agreed to Gov. Walker’s demands to have state workers pay 12.6% of their health insurance benefits and fork over 5.8% of their pay toward their pension (a 7% to 20% pay cut, depending on a worker’s income). The decision was designed to sharpen the focus on collective bargaining, and gain support from those Wisconsin residents who accepted Walker’s assertion that “we’re broke,” but were uncomfortable with taking away long-established rights.

Walker, however, refused to take “yes” for an answer. He continued to insist on adoption of his entire anti-union package—and his standing in state opinion polls, already damaged, slid sharply.

“We’re willing to give in on the money, but we want to have a voice in our classrooms because what happens to us affects our kids,” said Kimberly Myers, a 13-year teacher from Colfax, Wisconsin, who came to Madison for the march on February 26.

Private-sector unionists also came out to show their support.

Walker “wants to get rid of all unions,” said a member of the Milwaukee-based Steamfitters Local 601. “Break one union, break them all,” another steamfitter agreed.

JUST SAY NO

Over the following week, Walker used Capitol police to slowly squeeze the occupation of the Capitol building to an end. But it was a long, drawn-out process, as police who were not directly under Walker’s control declined to take part. Some off-duty cops, in fact, helped prolong the occupation by joining it, sleeping overnight on the marble floors.

After weeks of growing conflict, with Walker’s poll numbers sinking like a stone, Republican lawmakers decided they had to bring the month-long standoff to an end. While rumors about negotiations circulated in the press, GOP state senators launched a surprise attack. In a late-night maneuver on March 9, they forced through the anti-union measures in a separate bill, dropping all the fiscal provisions that had triggered stricter quorum requirements.

Democrats charged that the sudden move violated Wisconsin’s open meetings law, and vowed to challenge it in court. As the after-hours legislative drama unfolded, an angry crowd outside the Capitol grew to 7,000, while thousands more inside briefly reoccupied the building.

By passing the “budget repair bill” minus the budget repair, union supporters said Republicans had made clear what the fight was really about: an effort to bust unions and grab political power.

On Saturday, March 12, the labor movement responded with the largest demonstration in Wisconsin history. Well over 100,000 angry people vowed to win their rights back by forcing Walker and his Republican majority out of office through a recall drive.

RECALL

Eight Republican state senators are targets of the recall effort. Others—and Gov. Walker—will not be vulnerable until they have completed the first year of their current term in office. But early indications are that all of them should be worried.

To force a recall election, organizers must secure signatures equal to 25% of the total votes cast in the last election for governor within 60 days. That’s a tall order—but after two weeks of petitioning, recall activist say they’ve already collected 45% of the number they need.

While chants of “General strike!” rang out on the

(Continued on next page)

Wisconsin

(Continued from previous page)

night of March 9, that has not emerged as the movement's focus. Some, like TAA activist Peter Rickman, question whether "it's the best use of our resources, the best use of the sympathy...among the public at large." Others say it's a longer range option.

Unions face a heavy burden simply dealing with the immediate consequences of Walker's anti-union law. "All of our contract that we have worked for over decades is null and void," said the TAA's Gibbons. "This bill is a nightmare."

UNION DUES

Walker's law bans public employers from accepting union members' requests to have dues deducted from their paychecks, an attempt to cripple unions financially. "The employer can take deductions for the United Way...but they are prohibited from collecting union dues," notes a police union, the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Association. Dues checkoff was a central issue in the Memphis sanitation workers' strike during which Dr. Martin Luther King lost his life (see p.11).

The TAA plans to canvass members seeking authorization for monthly electronic transfers from their bank, and will organize union-building parties at which they hope to sign up many people at once.

Like other public unions, the TAA now faces annual certification elections, forcing it to put resources into a permanent organizing drive.

But in the fight to overturn these restrictions, Gibbons says the TAA also has new sources of strength. "A lot more people are now aware of what a union is capable of," he told *Clarion*.

General meetings now attract hundreds of participants, Gibbons said, and dozens of people are participating in each of the union's committees. This provides a window of strength, in which the TAA can tap the energy of their new movement, before the long-term drag of Walker's restrictions is in full effect.

"If there's a time we can push through this," Gibbons said, "now is the time."

Union members across the state appear determined to win their rights back, and early signs suggest that labor's new momentum could alter Wisconsin politics in ways that Walker never had in mind.

A popular chant on March 12 caught Wisconsin unionists' current mood:

"Scott, you may not remember me, but I can recall you!"

They know we're trying

(Continued from page 18)

taken away. We could save a lot of money and that really helps our hospital."

Nigel Smith, lead mailroom clerk at Einstein Hospital in the Bronx, NY, says that an institution can have an impact on environmental preservation by implementing even one change in a single area.

"Hospitals generate a lot of paper," says Smith. "Sometimes a report will be six or 10 pages and they'll just use the top page. I'd like to make sure more of that goes into the recycling bin and less goes into the garbage."

Smith is responsible for emptying 76 recycling bins throughout several departments at his institution.

"Some days I get more calls than others," he says. "I'd like to get more."

NY Presbyterian's McKnight says he knows "green" is a hot topic these days, but there really is a special link between health care and caring for our environment.

"When a person comes in to our hospital and sees that we're 'green,' they know we're not only going to try to make people better," she says. "They know we're trying to make the world better."

Faces of Social Security at Founders Day

INTERVIEWS

LEROY NIAS

Retired SSA sergeant, retired December 23, 2006; both he and his wife, Elsa, collect Social Security

Collecting Social Security is something we look forward to, not as our only income but a steady paycheck with our pension.



I came to this country in 1967 at the age of 24. I knew that paying into Social Security when I went to work is what I wanted to do. Social Security is a good idea. You never know what will happen. Social Security is there to provide money to your family if you get sick.

I retired at 62 and started collecting Social Security with my pension. We have no other family. We use Social Security to pay our bills. I'm so happy I was included in it. It's great to know you have an income, to know you have security.

I hope they don't cut it for newcomers, that they can get the same benefit. Many people sacrificed for us. I want to return the favor for those who are coming.

MAXINE MITCHELL

Senior housekeeper, Health and Hospitals Corporation; retired October 2008

I'm a widow so I started collecting Social Security before I retired at 65.



My kids are gone. Social Security alone is not enough, but with my pension it takes care of my needs.

Social Security has meant I can live better. I was able to retire, I didn't have to keep working.

SAL TACORONTE

Maintenance worker, assistant superintendent, NYCHA; retired in December 2002

I retired in 2002. I was 63. I took a buyout after 26½ years. It's lucky I retired as



BARBARA BAKER

Housing assistant, NYCHA; retired in 1987

I retired in 1987 on disability and started collecting Social Security the same year. I was 55.



I've given some thought to what Social Security really means to me at this time in my life. Firstly, I can live an independent life, I don't have to worry about living with family because I can't afford to pay the high maintenance and rent charges of today. I am able to live just as well as when I was employed at NYCHA. I'm also able to travel. I have many health issues, but I am able to go to doctors of my choosing. Those are the most important issues at this stage of life.

I am also thankful my mother was able to live independently for years before she died.

I am another Face of Social Security.

JACK JOLLY

Housing manager, NYCHA; retired 2001

My father, John R. Jolly, passed away in August of 1943 after a year-long bout with cancer. I had just turned six years old and my sister was four. We suddenly had no income. My mother had not worked in years. My mother said we didn't have the money for a loaf of bread. So we moved in with her parents.



Luckily for us, Social Security had started in the 1930s. My mother started receiving three checks a month from Social Security, for me, my sister, and her. We received them until I and then my sister turned 18.

Thanks to President Roosevelt, we were able to survive. What a lifesaver.

Now, I've been collecting since I retired in January 2001 at the age of 63.

Tom Oliver Crehore

was able to retire from his job as a CUNY sergeant in public safety and devote full-time to his lifelong passion



Pat Arizono

I was lucky early on. By ninth grade in Roosevelt School in Westfield, New Jersey, I knew I was going to be a writer. By high school I was editing the *Hi's-Eye*, and the yearbook, plus writing the Senior Show.

At the University of Virginia I took a playwriting class. When my first play won a contest and was put on over in Richmond, I was hooked.

Best advice ever from an instructor: "Yes, Tom, go for it as a writer but you're going to starve to death at least weekly, so never, ever, no matter what, will you work off the books. Because, someday [Hello, Someday!] you'll need every single dollar of your Social Security." Man, was he ever right.

And while I was winning playwriting contests, became a member of Lehman Engel's BMI Composers/Lyricists Workshop, and took on a zillion part-time jobs to keep on writing, I never did work off those books.

Eventually, Edward Albee did a whole bunch of my one acts in what's now Soho Playhouse, where Audrey Wood, Tennessee Williams' agent, saw some and got me a

Rockefeller Grant and an intro to the National Playwright's Conference up in Waterford, Connecticut. She also got me my first film job—I wrote two on commission—and one on my own, but, alas, they were never filmed. Not a total fool, I found a rent-stabilized apartment on the Upper West Side, began doing security for the American Bible Society, the American Museum of Natural History, and Hunter College—let me repeat, *all on the books*. At Hunter, by day, I was keeping those students safe and sound, but by night? Taking a playwriting class.

So, workwise? I'd already been a lumber truck driver, a forklift monkey, church sexton, school custodian, done reservations for TWA, and sold at least a zillion Christmas wreaths. So, again, hello Social Security, because at last I could retire (on an April's Fool's day) and not work any more for anyone else. And for almost the first time in my life, write 60-70 hours a week. Write what? A trilogy called *The Westfield Plays*, that hopefully someday we will all be seeing—because what I've known since ninth grade, of course, is that I wanted to be a Theatre Producer. And Social Security—and my pension as a member of Local 237, without which I'd be history—is why it's possible.

UNIQUE PERFORMANCE

Class B

"Faces of Social Security"

Retirees News and Views, IBT Local 237

Faces of Social Security

The Alliance for Retired Americans, Social Security Works and others are working with supporters in

Congress to say: "Keep your hands off Social Security." The campaign includes putting a face on Social Security to show how it makes a difference in people's lives. Here is another in a series of Local 237 faces.



CAROLYN WHITLEY

retired early, then had unexpected increases in rent and health costs

I retired as a Housing Authority housing manager in 1995. I wasn't eligible for Social Security because I was only 55. I lived on my pension; the economy wasn't as bad at that time.

I live in a Mitchell Lama development, which was one of the first in Manhattan to leave the Mitchell Lama subsidy program, in 1998. The new landlords wanted to charge high rent to get their money's worth, and in 2000 the rent went up. We're still fighting in the courts.

I started collecting Social Security in 2002, when I turned 62. It was very important to me, since my rent had gone up. In addition, I started to need medication that I have to buy every month, plus now I have to go for physical therapy. So that's true.

Faces of Social Security

The Alliance for Retired Americans, Social Security Works and others are working with supporters in Congress to say: "Keep your hands off Social Security." Putting "a face" on Social Security shows how Social Security makes a difference in people's lives. Here is another in a series of Local 237 faces.



BERNICE JUDGE

a retired housing assistant who remembers when there was no Social Security or safety net

Social Security means a lot to me, because thinking back to my childhood, there was no Social Security. There was a need for it, but we didn't have it until 1935. My family had seven living siblings (two others died). After Social Security came, my father wasn't eligible. He was a minister, and at that time ministers didn't receive salaries; they were paid by passing the hat in church. (Today ministers in most places are paid salaries and pay into Social Security.) He worked other jobs—bricklaying and carpentry, but then, you took what The Man paid you. My mother didn't have a "public job" outside the home. She did home sewing. When we were growing up there was no help for families that were poor—no welfare, no food stamps, no safety net. People shared. We helped each other.

My mother said we all had to work and go to school. She always stressed education. I was brought up in an area in South Carolina where few people completed elementary school. Even fewer went to high school. When people said their child completed school, they meant elementary school. The schools were segregated. There was no high school in our area. There was one in the city, but you had to live in the city to attend. My father arranged for us to stay in the city during the week so we could go. I went home on the weekends. I had to work after school—it was compulsory—and I worked in the summers. There was no help.

I finished high school at 17 and migrated to New York to work. My childhood sweetheart went the year before, and later we got married. My main object was to help my siblings go to school. That was my main goal for many years. And they all did. I helped them

go to college and get degrees. Two have PhDs.

Besides sending home money, I bought them things on layaway and sent them home. I was called the "layaway queen." My siblings came up, too, (that's how we said coming to New York) and my husband was able to get them jobs in the garment district. Later, when my mother became ill, she came up and stayed with us, and I took care of her until she died.

I'm not complaining. My family had love and goodness in their hearts. I had a good childhood. I accomplished what I wanted to in life. I'm so happy I was able to help my brothers and sisters. I worked, I married my childhood sweetheart, and raised two children.

I appreciate Social Security so much. I retired in 1993 as a housing assistant at the Housing Authority. I loved my job. I took Social Security and my pension immediately. All my siblings received Social Security. There are three of us left (I'm the oldest), and my youngest sister just started to collect last year. She retired as a teacher.

I'm so grateful that I was able to work at a job where I could contribute to Social Security, plus have a pension. At first, when I was younger, I didn't understand, but as I got older I did.

My husband and I worked and contributed to Social Security and raised our two children. They're grown up now and on their own. My husband passed away ten years ago and his Social Security and pension stopped, but my Social Security and pension are enough to meet my needs. I'm self-sufficient, independent. I don't have to rely on ANYONE—my kids or anyone else. I don't think I could have made it without Social Security.

Faces of Social Security

sound itself, congressional Republicans and some Democrats have cut benefits, raise the retirement age, and privatized Social Security." The Alliance for Retired Americans and Social Security Works Strengthen Social Security Campaign are working to get Congress to say: "Keep your hands off Social Security." The campaign includes putting a face on Social Security to show how it makes a difference in people's lives. This



CEJE

X-ray supervisor started collecting Social Security

I worked at Bellevue as an x-ray weekend supervisor. I was there for 24 years.

There was a buyout in '95. I was 55. I had been working two other jobs, at St. Vincent's for awhile, then Harlem Hospital. I had kids to feed, a family to take care of. I figured with the buyout I would get money from my pension for the rest of my life, and my plan was to take one job and not have to work 16 hours a day.

So I took the buyout, collected my pension, and went to work for the Bronx VA Hospital. I left the Bronx VA in 2005, at age 65, and that's when I started collecting Social Security. I could have worked an additional eight

months and collected the maximum Social Security, but I didn't want to work anymore. There wasn't that much difference, and I said, Let me go now.

When I arranged my finances, I realized that my Social Security could pay all my basic expenses: water, electricity, insurance, and so on. My house was already paid up. My tax guy always told me not to take out a second mortgage, and I never did. That was some of the best advice I ever got.

So with Social Security I'm able to live, take a little vacation here and there, have a little something for the grandkids. (I have five.) It gives us the flexibility and freedom to live comfortably. And we don't have to depend on plastic.

LABOR PAINS

Public-sector workers across the nation are being made scapegoats for their states' economic problems by politicians who are exploiting the opportunity to not only exact painful concessions but to try to do away with collective-bargaining rights altogether. Below is the latest news, at press time, from five states at the center of those fights.

WISCONSIN Governor trying to remove workers' rights

Wisconsin has become the epicenter of a national struggle pitting opportunistic politicians seeking to curtail workers' rights against hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens who are determined to end the assault on middle-class standards of living.

It began when newly elected, Tea Party-backed Gov. Scott Walker introduced a bill that would eliminate collective-bargaining rights for most public-sector workers on all matters except pay, where any increases would be capped. The bill further cuts their health care and pension benefits by requiring substantial increases in employee contributions.

Walker's bill also contains provisions that would have no impact on the state's bottom line. Under his proposal, the state would stop collecting union dues from employee paychecks. Walker would also give members of public-sector unions the right not to pay dues. And he would require each public-employee union to hold annual decertification elections to determine whether a majority of workers wanted to remain unionized.

Although Walker has insisted the bill is about balancing the budget, that argument has more holes in it than Swiss cheese. For starters, the move came after the governor created the very deficit he claimed to be addressing with two corporate tax cuts. And while the unions have agreed to the financial concessions, Walker has refused to accept them without the non-budgetary provisions taking away their rights. Moreover, Wisconsin stands to lose \$46 million in federal



Hundreds of Wisconsin's public employees and supporters pack the Capitol in Madison.

weeks.

State Senate Democrats fled the state to deprive the senate of the quorum it needs to pass the bill. Meanwhile, Assembly Republicans engineered a late-night cutoff of debate and vote on the bill on Feb. 25. On Feb. 26 the crowds outside swelled to 100,000 or more. Inside the threat to arrest anyone who refused to leave the building evaporated in the face of solidarity between the police, who were exempted from the bill but have publicly supported the protests, and the protesters, who have treated the cops with respect and courtesy.

On Feb. 28, the Republicans had the building locked, so no additional protesters could get in. Then they had the windows welded so supporters outside could not pass food along to those inside. Union leaders went to court to have the building re-opened and to defy assembly Democrats out on the streets and are meeting with Republicans and Senate Democrats until they reach a deal. The protesters have held fast.

There have been reports that a Senate Republican has withdrawn his support for the bill. Thousands continue to protest outside. Public opinion has turned against Walker, and opponents of Walker's bill have filed recall papers against eight Republicans. And together, the people of Wisconsin have inspired the nation.

— Cara Metz

NEW JERSEY Christie crusades against teachers

In New Jersey, Gov. Chris Christie is determined to fix the state's deep budget problems at the expense of public employees. In a feat of demagoguery, Christie has portrayed himself as the champion of the middle-class taxpayer fighting greedy unions. His favorite punching bag has been the New Jersey Education Association, the state's largest teachers union.

Since his election in late 2009, Christie has crusaded against the teachers union on two fronts: he's gone after their pay, health

benefits and pensions, saying that the cash-strapped state can no longer afford them and they don't deserve them, and he has pushed for merit pay, charter schools and the end of teacher tenure as the centerpieces of his self-declared "year of education reform."

This year, even as he proposes tax cuts for businesses of about \$200 million, Christie is demanding that teachers and other public employees pay about a third of their health care plan premiums (a savings to the state of \$323 million). In his budget address, Christie held a property-tax credit for senior citizens hostage to the health-care concessions.

With the state's pension system facing an estimated deficit of \$54 billion, Christie is also seeking to cut state workers' retirement benefits by 11 percent, which the teachers union says will penalize educators for the irresponsibility of politicians. At no time in the last 17 years has New Jersey fully met its annual obligation to the pension fund, and in many of those years, the state paid nothing at all. Christie paid nothing into the state pension system last year and he says he will make the legally required \$506 million contribution this year only if the Legislature approves his proposals.

UNIQUE PERFORMANCE

Class C

"Unions under attack"

Cara Metz and Michael Hirsch

New York Teacher, UFT Local 2

UNIONS UNDER ATTACK

AFT LEADERNET/TOM STRATTMAN

Last year, the governor blamed the teachers union for widespread layoffs after it refused to accept a one-year freeze and contribute at least 1.5 percent of salary toward their health benefits. Christie persuaded many voters to reject school budgets in districts where teachers did not agree to the givebacks.

Christie has created a revenue vise that is starving New Jersey's townships and cities: a strict 2 percent annual cap on local property taxes, coupled with a reduction in state aid. The goal: New Jersey's townships and cities will have no choice but to demand deep concessions in municipal labor contracts.

Moving on Christie's other front of battle, a task force convened by the governor recommended on March 3 that student test scores should be the most important factor

in teacher evaluations. This rating, Christie believes, should determine what teachers were paid, who is first in line in layoffs, and which teachers receive and retain tenure.

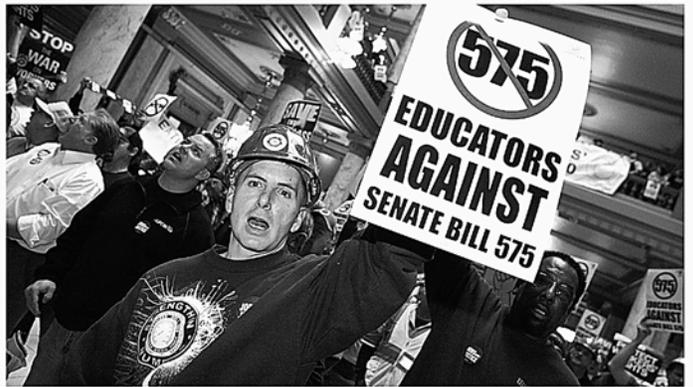
— Michael Hirsch

INDIANA Governor takes aim at unions

In one of his first moves as governor in 2005, Indiana's Mitch Daniels eliminated collective-bargaining rights for all state employees.

The results: no raises in years and higher health insurance costs for public employees,

Continued on page 8



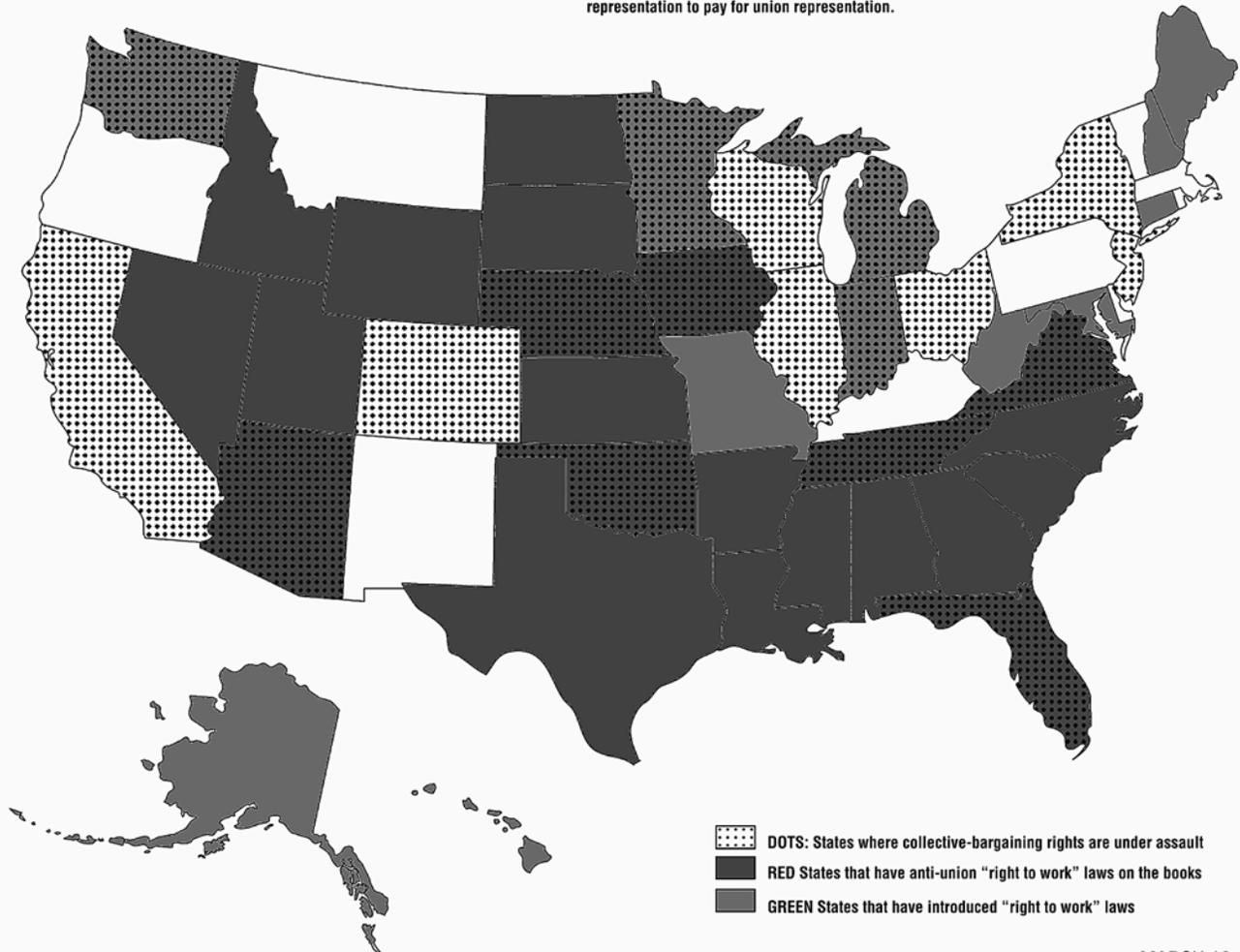
Indiana teachers gather at the Statehouse in Indianapolis to deliver a strong message to lawmakers.

Mapping the Assault

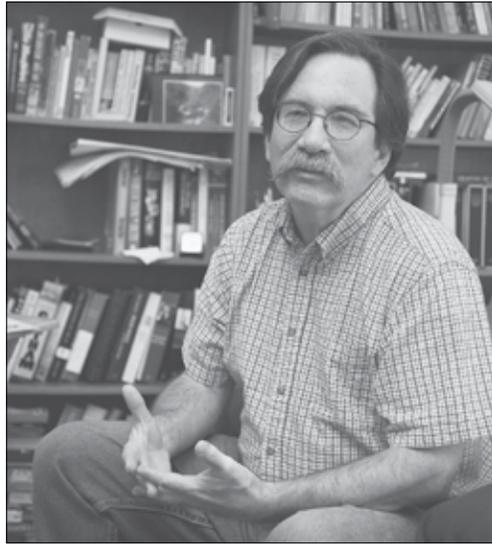
Labor unions are under attack in states all across the country. Since the November elections, 12 states have introduced anti-union "right to work" laws. That's in addition to the 22 states, mostly in the South and West, which already had "right to work" laws on the books. The laws prohibit contracts that require that all the workers who benefit from union representation to pay for union representation.

Legislation to strip public-sector workers of the right to bargain collectively is under consideration in 18 states. Politicians in these states claim their states' budget crises make this change necessary — but, really, it's just pure and simple union-busting.

Check out the map below to see where and how unions are under assault.



MARCH 10, 2011 / 7



Fighting for a writing-centered pedagogy

Glenn Petersen ▲
Professor of Anthropology
Baruch College

This year Glenn Petersen helped lead faculty resistance to the imposition of jumbo classes in several departments at Baruch. For college administrators, switching from writing-intensive introductory courses with caps of 32 students to giant classes with as many as 114 students per faculty member looked like an easy way to save money in hard times. A large number of adjuncts would have been eliminated and more work squeezed out of full-time faculty.

Petersen, who chairs Baruch's Department of Sociology and Anthropology, worried that such a move would undermine a writing-centered pedagogy that challenges students to think in new ways and argue for their ideas, not simply memorize facts. He recalled lying awake at night, thinking he would have to retire if required to teach the proposed jumbos.

Along with other faculty, Petersen spoke out. "We communicated that we weren't going to destroy teaching models we had developed over many years," he told *Clarion*. In the face of widespread opposition, Baruch's administration backed away from the plan before the end of Fall semester.

DIRECT ACTION

But with more cuts looming in CUNY funding, Petersen decided more had to be done. So he traveled to Albany to push for renewing the "millionaires' tax," joining other PSC members in meeting with legislators on March 22. And on March

took part in the demonstration, part of what the Associated Press called "an uncommon level of protest" over this year's budget.

"I took a stand for something I believed in, and did something that needed to be done," said Petersen. "My campus has *already* had its budget ripped to shreds, and further cuts will definitely hurt the quality of instruction. So I just couldn't see this being done to my students without resisting it."

It was not the first time Petersen had put himself on the line for his beliefs. A former Navy flyer in Vietnam, he later turned against the war and tossed his medals over the White House fence in a 1971 protest alongside future presidential candidate John Kerry.

"For the rest of my life," Petersen said, "I've felt the importance of demonstrating the force of one's opposition by one's actions when something is just wrong."

Why I decide

By JOHN TARLETON

This semester the PSC has faced a new level of challenges – and members have thought hard about how to respond. CUNY funding, the labor movement, and our own working conditions have been under assault,

often in ways that would have seemed un- just a few years before. Yet almost everyone is overworked, and finding the time for un- in an already busy schedule is difficult. But bers have responded to the challenge in man- ways. Here are some of their stories.

New opportunities for solidarity in the public sector

Michelle Fine ▶
Distinguished Professor of Psychology
Graduate Center

For more than 20 years, Michelle Fine has studied how poverty and opportunity are distributed by race and class. Today she sees public policy shifting the scales in the wrong direction.

"I live in New Jersey and work in New York, and in both states the inequality gaps are enormous and growing," said Fine. "Yet both governors have refused to equitably tax the rich and, by so doing, have shifted the financial burden onto poor children, poor students and our public institutions."

'A PRIVATIZING VIRUS'

"There's a privatizing and punishing virus among us," Fine observed. To oppose it, Fine has stepped up her involvement with PSC protests this semester. On March 23, she was one of nearly three dozen CUNY faculty, students and staff who took part in a sit-in at Gov. Cuomo's Albany office, where they were arrested for blocking the entrance.

For Fine, it was a way to give voice to public opposition to Cuomo's deep cuts in CUNY's operating budget and in TAP funding for students. "The union has been a key conscience in keeping CUNY public," said Fine, the coauthor



or editor of nine books including *Beyond Silenced Voices: Class, Race, and Gender in United States Schools*. "It seemed important for those of us who have secure jobs to speak out."

Fine, who also joined the union's May 5 rally and march for a fair contract, sees the attack on CUNY as a part of a larger push to close public spaces throughout society. But the breadth and severity of the attack, she said, open new opportunities for solidarity.

This hit home when the State Police, who arrested Fine and her colleagues on March 23, quietly

thanked them for doing what could not.

"The whispers in the e- police were such a confirm- the conditions are ripe- sector solidarity," said Fin- like we're building momen- state and across the nation- solidarity between unions- parents, community orga- upstate and downstate. generational, multiracia- tiethnic," she told *Clarion*- beginning to see alliance- ognize that unless we wor- we're all going to be priva- our public institutions."

'It's time to rise to the occasion.'

Lizette Colón ◀
Academic Counselor
Hostos Community College

Lizette Colón doesn't go to a protest by herself. In the week leading up to the PSC's May 5 rally for a fair contract and full funding for CUNY, Colón visited five classes and spoke to faculty and students about the importance of getting informed and involved.

With Mayor Michael Bloomberg proposing a budget that would short-change community colleges by \$52.6 million, Colón said, "my message was that it's time to show that you really care about your education and to make your presence felt." The PSC chapter chair at her campus, Colón also reminded former students she worked with as an academic counselor, about the rally and had bilingual flyers placed in campus toilet stalls. The Student Government Association provided free subway cards to

students traveling to the

At Hostos, 72% of stu- members of households- less than \$30,000 per year- goes up, students taking- courses would be espec- hit, Colón said, as their T- would be more likely to n- fore they complete their- degrees. "We have to kee- so that educational possib- stay real for everyone v- them," she said.

Colón thinks there ne- wider participation by l- bers the next time the u- a protest like the one on M- time to rise to the occas- will have a lot fewer right- or two," she told *Clarion*.

Colón was back in Lo- hattan on May 11, mee- City Council members in- annual "CUNY at the grass- roots lobbying day- budget's new deadline is



Lizette Colón (second from left) teamed up with community college students to visit city councilmembers at their offices on May 11.

GENERAL EXCELLENCE

Class C

Clarion, PSC/CUNY AFT

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'There are alternatives to austerity.'

Dave Bryan ▼
Special Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs
Brooklyn College

Dave Bryan's voyage from Brooklyn to Albany began in Madison, Wisconsin.

Bryan, who works in the Office of the Vice President Students Affairs at Brooklyn College, was following nightly coverage on MSNBC of the battle in Wisconsin between Gov. Scott Walker and the state's labor movement. Upset by what he saw, Bryan decided to do something he hadn't done before: get involved in his own union.

"Taking away a group's ability to decide what is in their self-interest is just not right," Bryan said. "It could happen here, too. It was time for me to become active and learn as much as I can and share that with other people."

Wisconsin protests caught his attention

Gordon Tapper ▲
Professor of English
LaGuardia Community College

"I feel it's important to have the union but I usually don't have the time to get involved," said Gordon Tapper, a LaGuardia professor of English, during the PSC's May 5 rally for a fair budget and a fair contract.

Tapper said events in Wisconsin had caught his attention, and reminded him that being a union member allowed him to participate in a public debate in which otherwise he might not be heard.

"It's a crucial moment. We have to build on the growing public backlash against the extreme right-wing agenda," Tapper added. "We're reaching a tipping point where people have to speak out."



Taking the classroom into the streets

Tony Gronowicz ◀
Adjunct Associate Professor of History
BMCC

Tony Gronowicz was one of more than 20 PSC faculty members who volunteered to lead open-air teach-ins during the May 12 protest that brought thousands of people to Wall Street (see page 12). Eight marches focused on issues such as education, housing, jobs, social services and immigration started at various points in Lower Manhattan and converged at the corner of Water and Wall. Teach-ins on the same themes were held along Water Street, soapbox-style, at different points on the sidewalk.

With 22 years' experience as an adjunct faculty member at CUNY, Gronowicz was ready to do whatever was needed. "I can teach anything," Gronowicz told organizers when they gave teach-in leaders their assignments. "Just tell me what you want." Currently Gronowicz teach-

es history at BMCC, where he also serves as faculty advisor to the Student Government Association. Author of *Race and Class Politics in New York City Before the Civil War*, Gronowicz said he finds teaching irresistible for the opportunity it gives to "conjure up the world." Skills as an analyst and a performer are both required. On this day he wanted to relate education to both the roots and consequences of the Great Recession. "This crisis is permanent until average people are in positions of power instead of the plutocrats," said Gronowicz, who finished fourth when he ran for mayor in 2005 as the Green Party candidate.

When his turn came, Gronowicz gave a presentation to a group of young protesters from the Queens Community House on economic inequality in New York and the loss of free tuition at CUNY. "I wish it [CUNY] was free," said a young woman after Gronowicz finished. "Education should be free."



Dave Sanders

Because our students deserve better

Donna Gill ▲
HEO Assistant
Hunter School of Nursing

As her son was growing up, Donna Gill warned him about the importance of not doing anything that would risk getting arrested. On the night before the March 23 action in Albany, the tables were turned. Gill was one of 33 CUNY faculty, staff and students who volunteered to risk arrest while engaging in non-violent civil disobedience inside the State Capitol building. And Gill's son reminded her of their past talks about not going to jail.

"It's a scary thought," Gill said during the bus ride up to Albany. "But the cause is worth it. CUNY is working on the bare minimum.

There aren't enough professors. The professional staff has been decimated. People are already overworked."

CUNY is also suffering in ways that seem small but have a larger impact. Campus buildings are not being cleaned as frequently due to a reduction in support staff at a time when enrollment is increasing, she said - and that sends a message to students about the value society puts on their education.

Students deserve better, said Gill. She told *Clarion* that Hunter's financial aid office, where she worked before moving to its School of Nursing, is straining to meet students' needs. "How are we going to service students if there aren't enough of us?" she asked.



Pat Annow

'Winding up' politicians like a clock

Terry Parker ▲
Assistant Coordinator
Library Media Resources Center
LaGuardia Community College

Terry Parker sees the impact of austerity every day at LaGuardia's library. The school's enrollment has grown by 32% since 2006, but the library lost three full-time staff members this past semester due to early retirement. Part-time personnel have also been cut and the library increasingly relies on student interns to maintain the shelves.

"We're told we have to do more with less," said Parker, who has worked at LaGuardia for 30 years. "But the truth is, we have to fight

and push and argue for everything we get."

On March 15, Parker joined hundreds of other CUNY and SUNY faculty, students and staff for a massive day of lobbying in Albany against budget cuts proposed by Gov. Cuomo and his Republican allies. Persistence is key to winning legislative victories, Parker said. He described politicians as being "like clocks that you have to keep winding up."

As for why he made the trip, Parker said it was simple: "When the union puts out a call, I believe it's important to respond. We need the union. And it can't survive if the members don't help out."

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My teacher, my hero

When Did Educators Become the Public Enemy?

BY ERNEST A. LOGAN

This column is dedicated to Rose Alpert, my fourth-grade teacher. July 24, 1918 - March 4, 2011

On Feb. 28, CSA members joined UFT members to speak out against threatened teacher layoffs. No one from CSA asked why we stood with the teachers. I knew you wouldn't.

We were there because I know you are fed up with the ridicule teachers are facing coast to coast. Most school leaders are taking this personally because we are teachers, too. You can become a chancellor, a commissioner or a secretary of education, but once a teacher, always a teacher.

Layoffs, never a good thing, are sometimes necessary for financial reasons. However, the 4,600 threatened teacher layoffs in NYC aren't necessary; the current administration is using teachers as pawns in a political game. Mayor Bloomberg is threatening mass lay-offs as a way to get rid of seniority rights, a loss that would affect you, too.

We've become so used to teachers as punching bags, no one is shocked when a public official suggests we get rid of a bunch of them. Around the country, corporate heads and political conservatives are blaming the fiscal crisis on teachers and other public workers while the wealthy have successfully managed to shirk paying their fair share of taxes and governors blithely bust teachers' unions or threaten to. Many Americans have been lulled into forgetting that the corporate and financial sectors are

the real culprits behind this recession and have not changed their ways. Meanwhile, these same people are trying to gut teachers unions as well as open the door to a minimum-wage work force for everybody. (Sometimes, the attacks on teachers are less cynical; they're born from a frustration over social challenges such as escalating child poverty.)

These motives and frustrations have coalesced into a free-for-all attitude that demonizes teachers as incompetent, unintelligent, overpaid, lazy and terribly privileged. It's an attitude that makes it easy to talk about eliminating the teachers we have and replacing them with new, lower-paid ones or maybe even with computers. Then everything would be better, right? America, have you lost your mind?

This craziness literally cheapens our nation. A nation that turns its back on what may be its most sacred professions is a nation that has lost its way. What is rational about this?

On March 3, Trip Gabriel wrote a front page New York Times story about the scorn being heaped on America's teachers. Writing about a 30-year-old Wisconsin science teacher, he said, "The jabs Erin Parker has heard about her job have stunned her. 'You are glorified baby sitters who leave work at 3 p.m.,' read the online comments and placards of demonstrators." In reality, Ms. Parker is such a dedicated teacher that she's pulling up stakes and moving in with her parents in Colorado so that she can afford to remain in the profession she loves.

• • •

As recently as last month, Bill Gates, America's newly proclaimed education expert, co-authored a Washington Post op-ed that focused on teacher failure. Among his claims was that over the past four decades, "our student achievement has remained virtually flat." However, education researcher Robert Rothstein points out in the Economic Policy Institute website that on the NAEP exams—which were established in 1980—American students, particularly black students, have improved substantially, in some cases, even phenomenally.¹ Mr. Rothstein isn't saying that this is anywhere near good enough, but he is suggesting that it makes teacher bashing irrational.

And, yet, the neo-experts have nearly convinced

BEST EDITORIAL/COLUMN

Class B

"My teacher, my hero"

Ernest A. Logan

CSA News, CSA Local 1, AFL-CIO

the rest of the middle class that teachers make too much money, have too many benefits and have so many protections that they can stay in their job even if they're no good at it. The undercurrent is that unions protect too many teachers and that is undermining student achievement by placing the well-being of teachers before that of children. Explain then why states without teacher contracts are among the lowest performing: Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas, South Carolina, Arizona, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Then there's Finland, the country that Education Secretary Arne Duncan touts as having the world's best education system. The entire teaching force there is unionized. What I am suggesting is that this recent rage against teachers' unions has been largely manufactured.

America seems on the road to stripping its educators of dignity and protections to such a degree that we will be unable to replace teachers we lose or create a pool of future Assistant Principals and Principals.

On March 16, Sam Dillon warned of this in a New

York Times story: "If educators are so disreputable and expendable, it is curious that there is hardly an adult American who can't tell you about at least one teacher who transformed his or her life." For me, it was Rose Alpert, my fourth grade teacher from P.S. 224 in Brooklyn, who transformed my despair over my father's death into the will to make something of myself in his honor. If you counted up all the individual teachers whom our fellow citizens brag about, yes, you would surely be talking about America's most sacred profession.

1) Washington Post, "The Answer Sheet," Valerie Strauss, "How Bill Gates Misinterprets the Facts," 3/11/2011: Economic Policy Institute, Web Site, Richard Rothstein, 3/8/2011.

2) Washington Post, "The Answer Sheet," Valerie Strauss, "The Real Effect of Teachers Union Contracts," 10/25/2010: Albert Shanker Institute blog, Matthew Di Carlo, 3/11/2011. (Di Carlo doesn't claim that this is evidence that a unionized teaching force produces better outcomes; he simply says it shows that a unionized teaching force doesn't produce worse outcomes.)

Are rich people leaving NY?

BY: SUNSHINE LUDDER AND CHLOE TRIBICH

Supporters of tax cuts for the rich never get tired of repeating the same claim: *If you tax rich people, they will leave.*

Governor Cuomo has said it. Mayor Bloomberg has said it. The Partnership for New York City, a group of 200 CEOs, has said it. But despite how often this line is repeated, there's no evidence for the claim that wealthy populations are moving in response to tax rates—and quite a bit of evidence points in the opposite direction.

THE FACTS

“Taxes Not Seen as Making the Rich Flee New York,” concluded a 2009 analysis in *The New York Times* that looked at the data behind the claims. The *Wall Street Journal's* Wealth Report reached the same conclusion in February 2011: “New York's Vanishing Millionaires—and Other Myths” was how the Journal summed it up.

Even E.J. McMahon of the right-wing Manhattan Institute concedes the point. “I kind of clench my teeth every time [then-Gov.] Paterson says people will leave,” he told the *Times* in 2009. “It is the selling point. It's also a dumb point,” McMahon said. “Nobody says your wealthy enclaves will shrink dramatically.”

HERE'S SOME OF WHAT RECENT STUDIES HAVE FOUND:

From 2003-2005, New York imposed a temporary tax hike on its highest-income residents. During the years that surcharge was in place the state saw a 30% *growth* in high-income tax returns.

New York consistently *ranks high* in its percentage of high net-worth households: currently New York is 12th among the 50 states. Significantly, four of the states that outrank New York have top income tax rates that are as high or higher.

The current income tax surcharge on the highest-paid people in New York was adopted in 2009. In the year after these high-end tax rates went into effect, the number of high-net-worth households in the state grew by more than 10%.

California voters raised the tax rate on millionaire earners to 10.3%—higher than New York's current top rate. The outcome there? California's millionaire households increased by nearly 38% over the three years after the voter-approved tax hike took effect in 2005—while the total number of taxpayers rose only 4.2%.

A similar trend—disproportionate growth of high-income households—also followed when California temporarily raised high-end income taxes in the 1990s. The California Budget Project calls the idea that rich people have left the state due to taxes “one of the oft-cited urban legends in California politics.”

When the number of high-income households in a state increases, it can be hard to distinguish how much this stems from incomes rising in the upper brackets, and how much it stems from people moving from one state to another. Still, it's striking that none of these studies found evidence for predictions that the rich will flee from higher taxes.

PRINCETON STUDY

Following the passage of a “half-millionaire” tax in New Jersey (at the same income level and rate as New York's current surcharge), Princeton University researchers conducted a detailed analysis of individual New Jersey tax data before and after the tax change, which took effect as of January 1, 2004. The bottom line? New Jersey's tax increase has raised close to \$1 billion a year—and led fewer than 1% of affected households to consider a move out of state.

The authors of the Princeton study noted the difficulty of pinning down the motivating factors for migration patterns. But here's what they did deter-

(Continued on next page)

BEST EDITORIAL/COLUMN

Class C

"Are rich people leaving NY?"

Sunshine Ludder and Chloe Tribich
Clarion, PSC/CUNY AFT

(Continued from previous page)

mine: people moving out of New Jersey are more likely to be on the lower end of the income scale, and move to places with lower housing costs.

SKEPTICISM

Similarly, a 2007 study by the New York City comptroller looked at population data for a recent period when New York City temporarily increased income taxes on top earners (also 2003-2005). According to *The New York Times*, the City's study found that "households with incomes of \$250,000 and higher were the least likely to leave."

It's possible that some wealthy people may consider moving out of state when their taxes rise, but studies have yet to demonstrate any statistically significant evidence for the idea. Rush Limbaugh loudly declared his departure after New York's current surcharge was approved, but he's likely outnumbered by others who move into New York for a job opportunity, or to be near family, or to take advantage of the concentration of business and cultural amenities supported here.

The *Wall Street Journal's* Wealth Report pressed the head of the Partnership for New York City for hard data to back up the Partnership's claims for rich people leaving New York due to tax rates. "It's a very difficult thing to measure" she said, and added, "We get a lot of it anecdotally. Our evidence is from conversations with lots of high earners."

The lack of sound data methods aside, there's reason for skepticism when anti-tax advocates base their claims on individual examples. The Partnership consistently advocates against taxes for high-income earners (see p.4), so it's reasonable to think that its anecdotal sample is not random.

David Thompson of Phoenix Affluent Market, a firm that provides state rankings of high-net-worth households, commented on the fact that some of the top-ranked states have high income tax rates on the wealthy. "Most high-net-worth households don't base their living decision on tax rates, but on things like quality of life, access to good education, infrastructure and culture," he told the *Journal's* Wealth Report.

New York, particularly Manhattan, has a special advantage of attracting and retaining wealthy residents: its cultural and business amenities and infrastructure. The fact that the vast majority of the state's income is generated in New York City suggests that even relatively high State and City taxes—

not to mention the cost of real estate and private school tuition—don't scare off high earners.

Meanwhile, everyday New Yorkers face limited job prospects and declining state services. As BMCC student Jenny Perdomo told *Clarion* during the fight over last year's State budget, "I think the people who are actually moving out of the city are not the rich. They're the hardworking people, like my sister, who just recently moved to North Carolina."

If the surcharge on New York's highest incomes is allowed to expire, public services will deteriorate—and regular New Yorkers will suffer. We should make sure that budget decisions are based on facts, not myths—no matter how often those myths are repeated.

Sunshine Ludder and Chloe Tribich are Senior Policy Organizers with the Center for Working Families (www.cwfny.org [1])

Verizon Strike: As billions roll in, workers walk out

BY MISCHA GAUS

AT VERIZON LOCATIONS throughout the Northeast, 45,000 workers started walking picket lines Sunday.

Their strike, brought on by a flood of concession demands the Communications Workers say will pick \$20,000 from each worker's pocket, is the largest the country has seen in four years.

Verizon, which has made \$19 billion in profits in the last four years, announced July 29 its wireless unit would pay a special \$10 billion dividend to shareholders. At the same time, its negotiators were pushing for \$1 billion in concessions from workers.

"We're on strike for our bargaining rights, just like Wisconsin or Ohio," CWA President Larry Cohen told members on a union-wide conference call Sunday. "We can never end this recession by cutting the wages of workers."

The company proposed to eliminate pension accruals for current workers and defined-benefit pensions for new hires. Its bargainers want to eliminate job security and shift the cost of health care to workers.

They demanded to replace regular raises with management-determined productivity measures. They want the right to shift more work away from union members and out of the country. They look to axe paid sick days and take away Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Veteran's Day as paid holidays. They want to fight items as small as a \$3 parking reimbursement.

A hundred concession proposals still sat on the bargaining table shared by the CWA and Electrical Workers (IBEW) as the contract expired Saturday night.

The strike appeared to surprise some, on both the union and management side. One pair of managers rushed into the field "fixed" a shorn phone line with duct tape.

Patti Egan-Walters, a business agent for CWA Local 1005 in New York, said another manager confided that he had been dispatched to drive around the city in a Verizon truck—but without any training in how to fix or install anything.

His orders? "When you run out of gas, come on back."

Negotiations in 2003 and 2008 ran through contract expirations. The company flew in a replacement workforce and housed them, but when the unions stayed inside, the cost of keeping a scab workforce idle quickly escalated, prompting a settlement. This time, members say the company's demands are so severe, the unions had little choice but to walk out.

"They want to take 60 percent of the contract and dump it," said Ed Fitzpatrick, president of IBEW Local 2222 in Massachusetts. "These boys are making billions and all they want is cheap labor."

Tashauna Jackson, a CWA Local 1105 steward, noted that the chairman of Verizon's board took home \$55,000 a day last year—and that in four years, the company's top five executives bagged \$258 million between them.

Yet Verizon says union members must suffer to bring labor costs into line with non-union competitors, prompting members to point out that the union would rather lift cable and wireless workers up to their standards. "We're not going the way of Wal-Mart," said John Colleran, a Local 2222 steward.

Verizon signed a neutrality agreement as part of the settlement ending the 18-day strike in 2000. It promised to allow the unions to organize its wireless workforce—but the company violated the agreement as soon as the ink was dry, fighting viciously against every organizing drive. Today, only 50 Verizon wireless workers have a union.

MOBILE PICKETS

At the Manhattan headquarters Monday, passing cars and trucks honked in support of picketers, to loud cheers and whistles. Workers chanted and booed as managers entered and left office doors just feet away.

Two cops stood watch under the Verizon sign,

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Verizon strike: As billions roll in, workers walk out

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while others directed anyone wearing a red shirt into an area enclosed by metal barricades. In Albany, a tight group of picketers blocked doors until police forced them to let managers through. One injury was reported in Monday's picketing.

Thirty managers in Manhattan, some with suitcases, entered the building at 7 a.m. Later a group of seven managers in work boots and backpacks (presumably filled with tools) were seen leaving. A dozen picketers followed them into the subway. "Are you kidding, you're going to follow me?" said one manager to a striker.

Workers from the headquarters office normally travel on foot to do installation and repair in lower Manhattan. The pickets would follow struck work throughout the day, said Local 1101 steward Ron Spaulding, making life as difficult as possible for scabs.

The "mobile picketing" strategy, honed in a four-month strike in 1989, is under way in Massachusetts, too. Techs track the vehicles leaving garages and send out the call. "We can get 50 people in a heartbeat," Colleran said, surrounding a manhole or scab truck in the field.

Members have noticed that many safety precautions have fallen away in Verizon's rush to get managers into the field, and mentioned their concerns to OSHA.

Strikers said Verizon's attacks would spread to other unions, and push down non-union workers even further.

Union members don't pay health care premiums at Verizon, a plum they have defended through previous strikes—and one which is increasingly hard to defend, because President Obama's 2010 health care reform will levy a tax on their so-called "Cadillac" plans.

"We fought for those benefits for all those years," said Brian Tyrrell, a special services technician in Manhattan, recalling the sacrifices of past strikes, including the 219-day strike in 1972.

Although the tax won't be levied until 2018, thanks to union lobbying, Verizon is demanding that union members start paying thousands of dollars now.

Some leaders, like CWA Local 1400 President Don Tremontozzi, argue that the unions should instead push the companies to back single-payer health care plans in East Coast states, which would take the issue off the bargaining table—and off the company's back—without decimating workers' paychecks or coverage.

OFF THE PICKET LINE

Both CWA and IBEW leaders are clear that tradi-

tional strike tactics won't win this walkout—and that they're not going to play by the usual rules. Heavy automation and outsourcing enable the company to maintain the network and send struck work, especially the sales and service work of call centers, flying around the globe.

"Our work is going to India, China—with globalization, the company is at an advantage," Jackson said.

So the unions are targeting Verizon wireless stores, where pickets are turning away customers and denying the company revenue at its most profitable source.

Union negotiators met with the company Monday. Rebutting Verizon's claims, they say the company canceled bargaining sessions leading up to the strike, and that they are prepared to talk.

Cohen has said the goal of the strike is not necessarily a contract settlement but simply to stimulate serious bargaining.

This leaves open the possibility that the unions could submit an unconditional offer to return to work, coming back inside to restart talks—and holding open the possibility of walking back out if Verizon's bargaining stance doesn't improve.

If Verizon, frustrated, locks the workers out, their access to unemployment insurance is triggered and the union could file unfair labor practices over the company's bad-faith bargaining position. Leaning on state benefits would take some of the pressure off the CWA's \$400 million strike fund and help the IBEW—which has no fund—stay in the game.

"It's possible to carry out a guerrilla strike campaign—though there are some risks," says Boston labor attorney Bob Schwartz, author of *Strikes, Picketing, and Inside Campaigns*. The company could discharge strikers if it convinces the National Labor Relations Board that the union is engaging in premeditated intermittent strikes.

But the unions are in uncharted territory, he said.

He pointed out that the unions maintain their right to shut down all parts of their employer's business — union and non-union — and apply pressure to its suppliers, which both unions are pursuing aggressively.

On Sunday's call with members, CWA District 1 Vice President Chris Shelton promised more.

"We're going to use some tactics we're not used to," he said. "But we have to, because the old tactics don't work anymore."

Jenny Brown contributed to this piece.

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Registration is now open for the Educational/Cultural Spring 2012 program!

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Changes to PAC rules create a political stir.

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Read the latest edition of the CSA News.

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CSA and the Alzheimer's Association, NYC Chapter, have embarked on a partnership to raise awareness about Alzheimer's Disease.

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CSA President Ernest Logan outlines a new approach to saving struggling schools.



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1199SEIU News Center

Capital Region 1199ers Join Heart Walk

May 17, 2012

A team of 1199SEIU members were among hundreds of people who participated in the first ever Spring Capital Region Heart Walk and Health Fair. The event was held at The Crossings in Colonie, New York, a suburb of Albany, on Saturday, May 12, 2012.

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Upcoming Events

May 23, 2012 - Pediatric Advance Cardiac Life Support

May 24, 2012 - Pediatric Advance Cardiac Life Support

May 31, 2012 - Six Flags Great Adventures

June 01, 2012 - Latinos Unidos Committee: Salsa After Work Party

June 06, 2012 - Advances In Wound Management

June 09, 2012 - Juegos Boricuas 2012

June 10, 2012 - National Puerto Rican Day Parade 2012

June 17, 2012 - End Stop and Frisk: Silent March Against Racial Profiling

June 21, 2012 - Barrier Precautions And Infection Control Measures

June 27, 2012 - The Jessie Owens Story

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1199 Retirees Division Launches New Hudson Valley Chapter

May 15, 2012

It is appropriate, although coincidence, that the 1199SEIU Retirees Division launched a new Hudson Valley New York Chapter in May, the month we celebrate Older Americans Month, National Nurses Week and Mother's Day. Retiree's Division President Lena Hayes said, "May offers the perfect opportunity to show our appreciation for our seniors and retirees, as well as for our nurses, many of whom are mothers."

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East on Facebook

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CIR works because it is run by residents, for residents. Housestaff determine what the priorities are for their own hospitals. Watch the video below to learn how CIR membership has affected the training experience of CIR members. Explore this website to learn how it can work for you too.



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by **BETSY SANDBERG** on MAY 21, 2012 in *EVENTS, HEALTH AND SAFETY, NEWS*

If it's raining Tuesday in Albany...

...then the nurses rally will be at the convention center at the Empire State Plaza. There's a good chance of thunderstorms and health care professionals know the importance, for their health and yours, of staying safe and dry. Whether at the convention center (and click here to get directions if you can join us) or [...]

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by **BETSY SANDBERG** on MAY 18, 2012 in *NEWS*

Fight Back Friday: privacy, ratios, caps & more

Hundreds of NYSUT members will lobby their lawmakers Tuesday. At 11:30 a.m., many of them will join a nurses effort to call for safe staffing and a safe patient handling task force. You can help support their efforts by joining them for a rally at the Capitol in Albany. But the advocacy will go beyond [...]

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by **BETSY SANDBERG** on MAY 16, 2012 in *NEWS*

The life you save could be your own

Under a restructuring plan, services and jobs at SUNY Downstate Medical Center will be drastically cut. Like, to the bone. Not because Downstate Medical Center is not highly utilized (it is) or highly qualified (it's internationally recognized for its excellence inpatient care and research). Thousands of Brooklynites use the center for both inpatient and outpatient [...]

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News & Updates



1199ers at NY Labor Day Parade Demand Jobs and Fair Economy

1199SEIU members took their campaign for a Fair Economy to the New York City Labor Day parade on September 10. Scores of 1199ers marched up Fifth Ave carrying placards that read: "Standing Up for Jobs" and "The Rich Must Pay Their Fair Share."

More News

- [Introducing Long Island Nursing Home Caregivers Rescued Residents From Hurricane Irene](#)
- [RNs at St. Mary's in Queens](#)

News & Updates



Aventura Hospital Healthcare Workers Unite for Stronger Voice on Patient Care!

Yesterday, healthcare workers at HCA-affiliated Aventura Hospital and Medical Center/HCA voted 269 to 160 to form a union with 1199SEIU Florida. Forming a union means that healthcare workers

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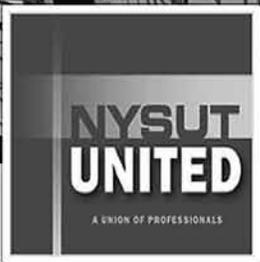
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NYSUT United
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Giveaway!

We have a copy of John Feldman's award-winning documentary "Evo: Ten questions everyone should ask about evolution" and teachers guide for one lucky fan.

One reviewer said - "Upon watching Evo my singular

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 Books that build self esteem for children with Audit...
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Healthy Bronx Initiative



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CIR Joins SNMA at Walk for Healthy Living



On Sunday, March 11, CIR doctors joined medical students from Albert Einstein's Student National Medical Association for a health fair and walk-a-thon.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

June 2, 2012
 Bronx CAN Health Initiative
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WHAT IS THE HEALTHY BRONX INITIATIVE?



FEATURED POST:

[Article] Stop Apartments from Making Tenants Sick

In January, the Gotham Gazette highlighted a public health project of the Healthy Bronx Initiative and Bronx Lebanon Hospital. Through the project health professionals visit public housing to provide health screenings, health education, and assessments of the quality of the environments in which tenants live.

[READ THE FULL POST →](#)

RECENT ITEMS:

"Healthstyles" radio interview on CIR's Healthy Bronx Initiative & Change Attitude Now (CAN)

Albanian Health Event

Daily News: Tenants at Bronx buildings with code violations given free health screenings

CIR doctor testifies: Minimum wage not enough to meet USDA nutrition requirements

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Monday May 21, 2012

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VOICES

Karen Roberts
April 23, 2012
Our district - along with so many others - is facing huge budget gaps. We have had to cut 15 million dollars this year, which will result in reductions all over the district. Often times the arts are the first areas to be cut. To make up for these cuts, I have been writing projects for Donor's Choose. Donor's Choose is an online giving...

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NYSUT is classroom teachers, college and university faculty and professional staff, school bus drivers, custodians, secretaries, cafeteria workers, teacher assistants and aides, nurses and health care technicians, and we need you to share your story.

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ing I was a School Social Worker for many years. The last 16 years I worked from the Niagara Career and Education Center with anyone who had and or more importantly an EAR to

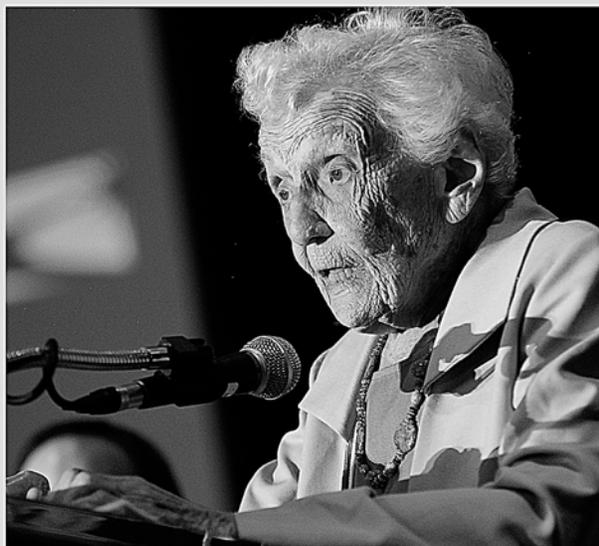


PHOTO CREDITS: Top and right, David Kamba; bottom, Erin Malone/CIR

“May your organization prosper for many years to come! Its purpose and goals are so important to our country.”

Dr. Carolyn Koffler

Dr. Carolyn Koffler Honored at 2011 National Convention for a Lifetime of Service

In 1937, resident physicians actually lived in their hospital dormitories. This was long before residents were given a voice in their workplace. Long before most residents were paid for their endless hours on the wards. But in 1937, Carolyn Koffler, MD, DrPH, was one of six interns who negotiated the first salary for resident physicians working in New York City public hospitals.

“I remember spending all of my free time writing letters to the editor, calling assemblymen. Hospitals weren’t

LaGuardia when she and her colleagues lobbied the city government for a fair wage. “[We] begged Mayor LaGuardia to understand how overworked we were, and received no compensation for any of it. He said that ‘we should be glad that we weren’t being charged’ for having such a great experience; we were learning so much.”

Despite the Mayor’s protests, Dr. Koffler and the Interns Council were ultimately successful in their efforts, and began earning salaries of \$15 a month. After leaving her residency, Dr. Koffler earned her doctorate from the Yale School of Public Health and continues to this day to advocate for a universal health care system. At CIR’s National Convention in Chicago this summer, Dr. Koffler, now 98, for

her pioneering efforts and unrelenting dedication to her mission.

Dr. Koffler wrote to CIR to thank everyone for a wonderful weekend at the convention. “I don’t think I’m capable of explaining to you the joy that I experienced as a result of your invitation to me to participate in your convention. To learn of the extensive work you are doing improving patient care and safety, providing better communication among hospital workers, etc., in addition to your efforts to improve housestaff benefits and better working hours is so impressive. May your organization prosper for many years to come! Its purpose and goals are so important to our country.”

To watch videos of Dr. Koffler telling her story, visit www.youtube.com/cirseiu.

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"Dr. Carolyn Koffler's Tribute Speech"

<http://bit.ly/Koffler>

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Workers rights from Wisconsin to New York



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"Workers Rights from Wisconsin to New York"

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The Occupy Movement

Metro New York's 2012 Communicator of the Year



Does anyone remember the where we stood last summer as the Great Debt Ceiling Debacle unfolded in front of our eyes? In the third year of the worst economic crisis to hit our nation in 80 years and with a real unemployment rate still hovering above 16%, the corporate media and the political class were consumed with the politics of deficit reduction.

The only things that matters, we were told, is reducing the deficit. Politicians from both parties tried to outbid each other to see who was the biggest deficit cutter of all. Wall Street said it was time to “take our medicine” and the ratings agencies that do

their bidding threatened to rain eternal hellfire down upon the land if there should be any deviation from the politics of austerity. Funding for education, healthcare, mass transit, an already meager social safety net and much, much more would have to be eviscerated.

The political discourse in this country never felt more disconnected from reality. We didn't quite have the words for it then but we sensed this was a brazen attack of the 1% against the 99%. Still, we were told, there is no other way. Fortunately, the rebels who set up camp at Zuccotti Park weren't listening to any of that. They spoke bravely,

honestly and powerfully about class and economic inequality, about the still-unpunished crimes committed by Wall Street and the pain felt by tens of millions of Americans. Many of us in this room and throughout the labor movement were deeply inspired and we also took our voices into the streets in solidarity with the Occupiers during those tumultuous two months. In the process, Occupy Wall Street shifted the political conversation in this country (and perhaps within the labor movement, as well) in a way that we haven't seen in decades and created an opening for the politics of economic, social and racial justice.

For this and much more, the New York Metro Labor Communications Council is proud to present its Communicator of the Year Award to the Occupy Wall Street movement. Joining us today to accept the award on behalf of OWS is Justin Wedes, one of the Occupy movement's most talented and innovative communicators. A former New York City school teacher, Justin was one of the first OWS protesters to be arrested—in his case it was for the crime of using a bullhorn to explain to passers-by at Zuccotti Park why the protest was happening. That did not slow Justin down for long. He went on to play a key role in OWS's social media team last fall and since then has been busy helping to develop many other exciting media and educational projects that can help Occupy grown and take root over time, which we looking forward to hearing more about in a moment. So, please me join me in giving a rousing welcome to Justin Wedes of Occupy Wall Street...



Photos courtesy TWU Local 100

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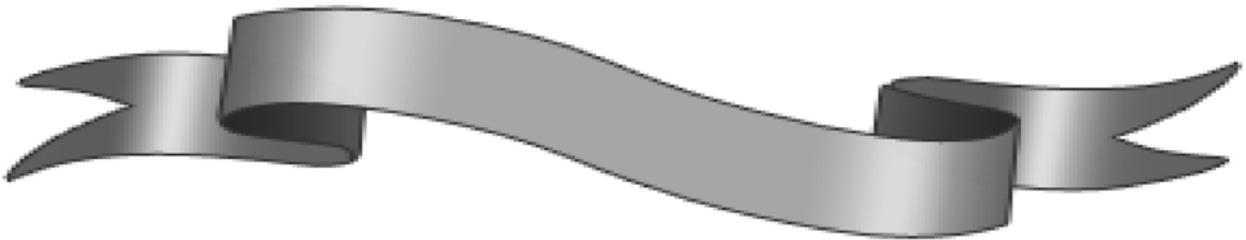
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—Robert McChesney, Rich Media, Poor Democracy

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2012 Contest Judges

Belinda Cooper is a Senior Fellow at the World Policy Institute an adjunct professor at NYU's Global Affairs Program and Columbia University. She has written for a wide variety of publications, including *The New York Times*, *World Policy Journal*, and the *Huffington Post*.

Sherry Kane worked as Communications and Political Director for a local union representing garment workers in New York for many years. She also worked with an educational exchange program for high school students for over two decades. Prior to working in New York, Sherry taught and ran educational programs in Central Africa, China, Central America, and Europe. She currently teaches in a college prep program for 1199SEIU members.

Amy Manso was a graphic designer in the labor movement for over 15 years, having worked for District 65/UAW and the ILGWU (and later UNITE). She currently works at a community center in upstate New York and is an active freelance graphic designer and fine artist.

Lallan Schoenstein is graphic designer who worked for UNITE HERE, UNITE and the ILGWU. She was an AFCSME DC 1707 shop steward and member of the contract negotiating team. She has retired from UNITE HERE and is working as a freelance designer.

WEB SITE JUDGES:

Elana Levin is Director of Strategy and Client Relations for Advomatic, a web development firm working for progressive causes. She previously served as Communications Director of the Writers Guild of America, East. Prior to that she served as Assistant Director of Communications for New Media at Workers United/SEIU and UNITE HERE. She also ran communications at the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy.

A former community organizer, Elana serves as Chair of Organizing 2.0— a group that leads workshops on online organizing, communications and strategy for grassroots organizers and held the Netroots NY conference. She is on the board of Workplace Fairness and is a New Leaders Council mentor. She tweets about labor unions, local politics, #OWS & superhero comics @Elana_Brooklyn

Deanna Zandt is a media technologist and the author of *Share This! How You Will Change the World with Social Networking* (Berrett-Koehler, June 2010). She is a consultant to key progressive media and advocacy organizations, and her clients have included The Ford Foundation, *The Daily Beast/Newsweek*, and Jim Hightower's Hightower Lowdown. She is a Research Fellow at the Center for Social Media at American University, and is a frequent guest on CNN International, BBC Radio, Fox News and more.

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