

RETIREE

# news & views

A PUBLICATION OF LOCAL 237 RETIREE DIVISION

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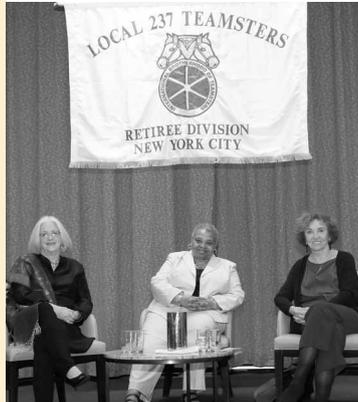
## Founders Day 2018



**F**ounders Day means so much to so many. It is a time not only to commemorate our union’s rich history and our union leaders who helped us meet the challenges of the times, but it also gives retirees a chance to talk with long-time friends who share a bond. It is our union that connects us. It makes us family.

The theme of this year’s Founders Day was: **“Retired from work, not from the union.”** At a time when unions are experiencing an all-time decline in membership, and, as we wait for the Supreme Court to decide the Janus Case, which if, as expected, does not rule favorably for union members — especially impact public sector members, thereby making it easier for “free loaders” to reap union advantages while not contributing to the cost of providing those benefits, our theme is also our battle cry.

Speakers at both the morning program and at the luncheon reflected the importance of unions and the role they play throughout our lives as working members and as retirees. **Nancy B. True**, Director of the Retiree Division, kicked-off the day’s event with her remarks, saying: *“Union membership brought thousands of members into the middle class—they were able to purchase homes, send their children to college and provide for their families throughout their lifetimes. And in retirement, a defined benefit pension, union benefits and health insurance coverage for the life of the member ensured the continuation of strong union/benefit support.”* **Doris Welch**, a retired NYCHA Superintendent— and the second female Superintendent in NYCHA’s history—addressed the audience next. She spoke about the importance of being a union member to her life. Doris told about the tests she took that resulted in career advancements, for which the union helped prepare her and benefits that the union provides that make for a secure retirement. **Patricia Stryker**, retired Recording Secretary on the Executive Board and the Director for Political Action for Local 237, spoke on the importance of voting. Commenting on the current political climate and the upcoming elections in November, Pat discussed the fact that many millennials don’t vote, and asked the retirees to urge their children and grandchildren to vote. At the luncheon, **Ruben Torres**, Vice-President of Local 237, took the podium and told the audience: *“I am sure that all of you here know the value of being a union member. But many younger and newer workers don’t have the same experience and knowledge of labor history. Some think that the 40-hour work week, health benefits and paid vacation days were part of the U.S. Constitution or the 10 Commandments. But we know better. These are hard fought for rights that many are trying to undermine in so many ways. You understand what we are up against. I urge you to become ambassadors of the labor movement and get out the word: We are not the enemy!”* The Manhattan Borough President, **Gale Brewer**, was also on hand to offer greetings and to commend the retirees for their role in helping Local 237 through its more than 65 years of accomplishments on behalf of working men and women. The Sunshine Club, represented by members **Ruth Coaxum, Grace Klein, Ruth Glover, Elsie Ortiz, Nubia Imani Beazer** and **Linda Tavolaro** then presented the Puerto Rican Family Institute with a contribution toward the relief effort. Dr. Mildred Allen gratefully accepted the check on behalf of the organization. ■



Nancy B. True, Doris Welch and Patricia Stryker



Members of the Retiree Division staff, Noelia Qinones, Susan Militsis and Shavon Banks.



Luz Carty, Charlie Cotto and a retiree



Hector Cotto with retirees



Exhibitors distributed important information



Ruben Torres at the podium



Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer



Sunshine Club presents check



National Anthem was sung by Miriam Torres (at the podium) Pledge of Allegiance led by Rocco Brienza (left)



T'ai Chi led by Jan Lucanus



by **Gregory Floyd**

President, Teamsters Local 237  
and Vice President-at-Large on the  
General Board of the International  
Brotherhood of Teamsters

I recently attended a Teamsters conference. It was billed as “A Weekend With The Teamsters” focused on education and reflection. It was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Here I was, in Milwaukee—the birthplace of collective bargaining for public employees—now headed by a Governor, Scott Walker, who successfully fought to make this a “Right to Work” state by arguing that: “We can no longer live in a society where public employees are the ‘haves’ and the tax payers, who foot the bill, are the ‘have nots’.” This is a man with Presidential aspirations, who enthusiastically boasted to a billionaire supporter—and was captured on video—saying that Right to Work is just the beginning of his plan to destroy unions. According to Walker: “The first step is, we’re going to deal with collective bargaining for all public-employees because you use divide and conquer.” For his efforts, like-minded Rush Limbaugh said about Walker: “The Republican Party has a demonstrated, genuine hero and potential star in its ranks.”

As president of Local 237, which is the largest public sector union in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, I must admit that the irony of

## a message from the president

# The Power of Hope

the moment did not escape me.

Now let’s not forget that the whole concept of “Right to Work” has racist origins. William Ruggles, working as a reporter for The Dallas Morning News, was horrified by the rise in the number of union members. Spurred on by the New Deal and labor shortages caused by World War II, union membership quadrupled from 1935 to 1947. By the mid-1950’s, more than one third of all workers belonged to a union. To help counter the growing strength of unions that accompanied the growth in membership, Ruggles wrote an editorial in 1941 proposing a constitutional amendment to prohibit workers from having to pay union dues to hold a job. The editorial caught the eye of Vance Muse, who offered to have his political organization, Christian American Association, advance the cause. Muse, an unapologetic racist, feared that unions fostered race-mixing. He said: “I am a Southerner and for white supremacy...white women and white men will be forced into organizations with black African apes, whom they will have to call ‘brother’ or lose their jobs.” Muse’s efforts were successful, and by 1947, more than 10 Southern states had “Right to Work Laws”.

This is the world of Scott Walker and so many other big money union bashers and union busters who worked hard to bring union membership to an all-time low of only 11 percent by 2014. Their special target is the public sector worker. We have been used as scapegoats for America’s economic problems.

Trust me, we are not the ‘haves’! Just ask the School Safety Agent, or the Police Officer working in a homeless shelter, or a NYCHA worker who also lives in public housing. The majority of them are African Americans and Latinos. Many live from

paycheck to paycheck. Some are single moms and a few even live in homeless shelters here in a city of vast, unequal wealth, that has increasingly made them the ‘have nots’.

Luckily, in New York, the state with the largest number of union workers nationwide, we have a Governor, Andrew Cuomo, who values the union worker. He recently signed into law some preemptive safeguards for the possibility that the Janus Supreme Court case does not go our way. The new law makes it easier for unions to register public employees and to impose rules on opting out. It also allows unions to deny certain benefits to free-loaders, such as legal representation for job-related cases.

But more must be done. And that’s where the theme of that Teamster weekend was so inspiring. The theme was “The Power of Hope.” To my thinking, there is no question that hope makes good things happen. Without it, all is lost. But with hope, we find the way. We need to harness hope. We need to let hope become the catalyst for change. Among its many virtues, hope can energize the labor movement and propel a powerful message to elected leaders and to the public-at-large that we are not the enemy! Unions built the middle class in America. And the public sector worker is the one we all rely upon every day and in so many ways to help make government services work and our lives function better. We just want to make sure that our children will have a place in the America unions helped to create. We don’t want them to be shut out. And we can do this as long as we stay united and draw inspiration from words Dr. King often said: “The impossible can happen, it just takes a little longer.” ■



## June is National Safety Month

by **Nancy B. True**

Director of the  
Retiree Division

When asked, everyone says that they are concerned about safety. Yet, saying and doing are often two different things. For younger Americans ages 1 to 40, injuries are the leading cause of death. For older adults, 1 in 4 Americans aged 65 + fall every year and as a result, they experience injuries that can be life threatening.

One way to help prevent injuries is to

increase our awareness about how to:

- Prevent poisonings (Poison control 1-800-222-1222)
- Manage medication safely
- Drive safely
- Handle an emergency (911)
- Prevent slips, trips and falls

**Falls** are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries for older Americans. Falls can be costly, not only in dollars but also in quality of life. Yet, falling is not an inevitable part of growing older. Lifestyle adjustments and home repairs can go a long way towards preventing avoidable falls. Ensuring that your home does not have electric cords crossing rooms or unnecessary clutter on the floor can help. Loose carpets can also be a hazard. Poor lighting, areas of disrepair or slick floors can be dangerous.

**Medications** can also increase the risk of falling. Side effects, such as drowsiness, dizziness and low blood pressure can make it difficult to see obstacles. Over 40% of seniors are taking at least 5 drugs a week, as well as over the counter medications. There is always the possibility that drug interactions will increase the risk of falling. It is important that all of your physicians are aware of the medications you are taking to avoid problems of this sort.

**Impaired Vision** can make it difficult to detect fall hazards. This applies in the home and on the street. Wearing glasses and using other low vision equipment can help prevent tumbles.

Impaired vision can also affect an older adult’s ability to read labels on medications and other household supplies. This can potentially create a hazard. Impaired vision can also affect the ability to drive. A discussion with your doctor and close family members may help you decide whether or not driving is still safe for you and the people around you.

### WHAT TO DO?

Personal safety should always be on our radar. A monthly check of our homes is an important preventive measure. Time spent looking for (and eliminating) tripping hazards, checking for potentially poisonous cleaning supplies accessible to curious grandchildren, and keeping your medications out of reach of others are some of the protocols we should be following regularly. Safety checks should not be limited to the interior of your home.

If balance is a problem, consider taking a T’ai Chi class at the union or a local Senior Center. Wear sensible shoes (with traction) at home and in the street and leave vanity at home and wear your glasses and carry your cane. View them as a new fashion accessory. Adjust your lifestyle to your current situation. Rather than carrying a heavy laundry basket, consider a small cart with wheels to transport it to the laundry room. That’s what I do.

At any age, safety should be of concern. As we grow older (and wiser) we often approach the world with broader horizons and a better understanding of who we are. Let’s take that approach to personal safety.

Here’s to a happy and safe summer! ■

### RETIREE news & views

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**GREGORY FLOYD**  
President

**JEANETTE I. TAVERAS**  
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# Viva! Puerto Rico

The annual celebration of Puerto Rican culture and history was on full display for this year's event. Local 237 retirees marched with pride along 5th Avenue from 47th Street to 79th Street alongside our colorful float with musicians skillfully playing Latin favorites. Thousands of spectators lined the streets waving Puerto Rican flags and showed not only their love for the island, but their spirit and resilience undeterred despite the devastating storms. ■



## Teamsters Local 237 Oral History Project



## In her own words:

Carmen Santos

Retired Housing Assistant, NYCHA  
Currently living in Orlando, Florida

On April 5, 1951, I started to work at the NYC Housing Authority as a stenographer. My job location was in the old building – Central Office in the Legal Department. Later on, through promotion, I also worked at St. Nicholas and Castle Hill Houses as Manager's secretary. I returned to Central Office years later and worked at Intergroup Relations, where I found myself doing various duties in translations and directing other clericals in their assignments. I tried to apply myself to another line of work, mainly Housing Assistant and finally, I did it by obtaining college credits.

My dream came through in 1985 when I was assigned to the office of Housing Applications. I enjoyed being able to help housing applicants get a decent place to live.

Little did I know my new work title would last hardly two years. I had to retire due to family problems dealing with my mother.

Nancy B. True was the "angel" I needed. She came through with flying colors to help me adapt to being a caregiver. Thank you Nancy.

Being a Teamster is and has been my "salvavida" (lifesaver). It's like having a family, a friend and a support all the way through." ■

## A letter from Mrs. Montgomery

Dear Nancy,

First, I want to thank you for your presence [and retiree Kenneth Fox] at the Street Co-Naming Ceremony in memory of Dabney on Saturday, April 21 and reading President Floyd's letter addressed to me for the occasion. It meant so much and I felt so honored. I am also happy that you were able to get pictures from Michelle Winfield for the publication.

Second, thank you for sending copies of the News & Views publication featuring, "Dr. Dabney N. Montgomery - A Remarkable Man." I can't begin to tell you how it touched me when I received it. I will, of course, share copies with the family.

Last, but not least, I thank President Floyd, you, and the members of Local 237, International Brotherhood of Teamsters for the love extended to me and to the memory of Dabney and the continuation of his legacy. In a speech I heard Ambassador Andrew Young deliver at the 50th Anniversary commemorating the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he said, "You are dead when people stop calling your name." Well, Dabney will live on for a very long time.

God bless you and the members of Local 237, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, always.

Best wishes,  
Amelia Montgomery



## What is Elder Abuse?



by Susan Milisits  
Assistant Director,  
Retiree Division,  
Social Worker

Although many people are uncomfortable discussing the topic of elder abuse, it is something that can happen to anyone. Each year, hundreds of thousands of older adults are abused, neglected, or financially exploited. Abuse can happen in many places, including the older person's home, a family member's house, an assisted living facility, or a nursing home.

## THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF ABUSE

**Physical Abuse** happens when someone causes bodily harm by hitting, pushing, or slapping

**Emotional abuse**, sometimes called psychological abuse, can include a caregiver saying hurtful words, yelling, threatening, or repeatedly ignoring the older person. Keeping that person from seeing close friends and relatives is another form of emotional abuse.

**Neglect** occurs when the caregiver does not try to respond to the older person's needs.

**Sexual abuse** involves a caregiver forcing an older adult to watch or be part of sexual acts.

**Financial abuse** happens when money or belongings are stolen. It can include forging checks, taking someone else's retirement and Social Security benefits, or using another person's credit card and bank accounts. Changing names on a will, bank account, life insurance policy, or title to a house without permission from the older person is financial abuse.

## WHO IS BEING ABUSED

Likely targets are older people who have no family or friends nearby and people with disabilities, dementia or memory problems. People who are frail may appear to be easy victims. Any older person can be a victim of abuse. But many are those who depend on others for help with activities of everyday life.

## SIGNS OF ABUSE

Some of the signs of abuse are listed below:

The older adult:

- Has trouble sleeping
- Seems depressed or confused
- Loses weight for no reason
- Displays signs of trauma, like rocking back and forth
- Acts agitated or violent
- Becomes withdrawn
- Stops taking part in activities he or she once enjoyed
- Has unexplained bruises, burns or scars
- Looks messy, with unwashed hair or dirty clothes
- Develops bed sores or other preventable conditions

If you notice abuse try talking with the older person to find out what is going on. Most important is to get them help. If an elderly person needs immediate assistance, call 911. Or you can call Adult Protective Services in your area. In New York City, the phone number is 212-630-1853. Adult Protective Services will investigate abuse cases, intervene, and offer services and advice. In addition, you can contact an elder abuse helpline. The number is 1-800-677-1116. ■



## Did you serve in the United States Military?

by Lyn Johnson

US Department of Veterans Affairs VA NY Harbor Healthcare System Outreach Specialist, VA Work Study Supervisor and the VA NY Harbor Minority Veteran Coordinator.

If the answer is yes, the US Department of Veterans Affairs may have benefits you can access as an IBT Local 237 Retiree.

Veterans of the United States armed forces may be eligible for a broad range of benefits and services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

General eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Active service means full-time service, other than active duty for training, as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service, Environmental Science Services Administration or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or its predecessor, the Coast and Geodetic Survey. Dishonorable and bad conduct discharges issued by general courts-martial may bar VA benefits.

Eligibility starts with a Veteran's DD-214 or DD-215 service discharge papers. If you do not have a copy of your DD-214, standard form SF-180 can be used to request a copy of your discharge papers from the National Archives. If you need assistance with completing the application, visit a local VA Medical Center or Regional Office for help.

Minimum duty requirements for Veterans who enlisted after September 7, 1980, or who entered active duty after October 16, 1981, must have served 24 continuous

months or the full period for which they were called to active duty in order to be eligible. This minimum duty requirement may not apply to Veterans discharged for hardship, early out or a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.

VA benefits may include full-range healthcare, such as hearing aids, eye-glasses, aid and attendance for housebound Veterans, caregiver program, nursing home, LGBT services, mental health, substance abuse services, wartime pension, women's health, pharmacy services, inpatient services, extended care services, agent orange registry, Persian Gulf registry, home loan program, burial benefits, educational benefits, justice reentry outreach program, homeless services, and a host of ancillary services.

## Interested in finding out if you qualify for VA benefits as an IBT 237 Local Veteran?

Contact your local NYC VA Outreach Program at [www.outreachnyhhs@va.gov](mailto:www.outreachnyhhs@va.gov) or call (212) 686-7500 Ext 4263 to meet with a VA Specialist. ■



## The Legal Services Plan Helps Members Prevent Eviction

by **Mary E. Sheridan, Esq.**

Director of Local 237, Legal Services Plan

The vast majority of tenants do not have a lawyer in Housing Court while the vast majority of landlords do. Your Legal Services Plan can represent you, at no cost to you, if your landlord is trying to evict you from your home, unless you live in a New York City Housing Authority apartment. We represent members in two types of landlord tenant proceedings – Holdovers and Nonpayments.

A Holdover Proceeding is one where the landlord wants possession of the apartment. Even if you have paid all your rent to the landlord, the landlord is stating it wants you out of the apartment.

A Nonpayment Proceeding is one where the landlord states you owe back rent and if you pay, you can stay.

Do not ignore any court papers you may receive from the landlord even if you believe you have not been properly served. Call your Legal Services Plan and we will screen your case and if eligible, set you up for an appointment.

Many times we have members call after receiving a City Marshal's Notice of Eviction. You must never ignore a Marshal's Notice of Eviction! Even if your landlord tells you not to worry about it, you need to act.

A Marshal's Notice of Eviction means your landlord has a judgment of possession against you, and the Marshal will come back to remove you from the premises. The Notice of Eviction will usually appear on or under your apartment door and through the mail, or someone may give it to you or another occupant in person. A landlord cannot have you removed from the apartment unless you have received this notice. You have 6 business days from the date on the Notice to go to court and stop the eviction. If you think you are about to be evicted, you can call the phone number on the Notice to find out if the Marshal is slated to evict you that day. You can also call the Legal Services Plan (212) 924-1220 to get emergency advice and an emergency appointment.

Don't panic! Go to the court indicated on the Notice, see the clerk, and file an Order to Show Cause to vacate the judgment of possession and stay (put off) the eviction until you have a chance to be heard. You should file an Order to Show Cause even if you agreed to have a judgment against you, and even if you did not follow an agreement with your landlord. If you owe money to your landlord, the judge should sign your Order to Show Cause if you bring money, proof you can get the money, or proof of payment to court. You should tell the clerk any circumstances the judge should know, including:

- You were not served properly with any court papers.
- You did not know that a judgment was entered against you.
- You don't owe any money to your landlord.
- You made payments to your landlord according to an agreement, and have proof you paid.
- You have the ability to pay whatever amount is due.
- You are approved for a loan/ one shot deal/ grant and have the approval letter.
- Your landlord is retaliating against you for complaining about bad conditions in the building.
- You have young children, disabled, military, or elderly people with you in the apartment.

When the judge signs the Order to Show cause, they will give you a court date. Your court date is usually a week or less from when you filed the Order to Show Cause. If you have contacted the Legal Services Plan and we can represent you, you must call us immediately with the court date so we can set up an appointment before then.

New York City recently passed a right to counsel law for tenants in housing court, however, currently only certain zip codes are covered. Your Union was at the forefront when creating a Legal Services Plan providing free lawyers for working people. **Contact your Legal Services Plan at (212) 924-1220.** ■



## Hearing Aid Benefit

by **Mitch Goldberg**

Director of the Retiree Benefit Fund

In January 2015 the union's Board of Trustees approved an increase from \$400 to \$1000 for the hearing aid benefit. Eligible retired members and their dependents may use this benefit every 5 years. The increase allows the Fund to cover a modern digital device with 4 frequencies of range at no cost. Comprehensive Professional Systems (CPS) has a local network of providers in the Tri State metro area. Retired members and their dependents may also go to a provider of their choice.

All retirees, their spouses or domestic partners and other eligible dependents are covered for hearing aid benefits.

### Benefit

A maximum accumulated benefit of up to \$1000 is available for the purchase or repair of a hearing aid in a five-year period since the date of the last benefit. A second hearing aid purchase or repair during the same five year period will be permitted if your hearing significantly declines during that period (with documentation from your physician).

### What's Covered

All national brands and varieties of hearing aids are covered. The Starkey 3 Series 20 and the Oticon Ino Digital Hearing Aids are provided at no cost. A comprehensive audiological evaluation, battery, ear mold and unlimited servicing are included during the first year after purchase, the first two years for the Starkey 3 Series 20 and the Oticon Ino Digital Hearing Aids.

### How to Obtain Benefits

Call or write the Fund Office and request a hearing aid benefit claim form. The claim form must be completed by the member, the physician or audiologist, and the hearing aid dealer.

The completed claim form must be returned to the Fund Office for processing and payment. Claims will be paid after confirmation of the purchase of the hearing aid and following the required 30-day trial period. ■

## A MESSAGE FROM NYCERS

# World Trade Center (WTC) Disability Retirement Process

Have you submitted your Notice of Participation for WTC benefits?  
The deadline is fast approaching.

This article explains the WTC disability process and additional benefits that may be available to individuals who have experienced WTC-related health conditions.

Members who participated in WTC Rescue, Recovery or Clean-Up Operations may file for disability retirement under current provisions of the WTC Law. A retiree or a vested member who participated in Rescue, Recovery or Clean-Up Operations may also apply to be reclassified as a WTC disability retiree.

To be eligible to apply for a disability retirement or for reclassification under the WTC Law, you must have filed a Notice of Participation in WTC Rescue, Recovery or Clean-Up Operations with NYCERS (Form #622, available on NYCERS' website at [www.nycers.org](http://www.nycers.org)). Your agency must verify your participation in rescue, recovery or clean-up operations at a WTC site.

**The current deadline to file Form #622, Notice of Participation in WTC Rescue, Recovery or Clean-Up Operations, is September 11, 2018.**

### WTC FILING REQUIREMENTS

For all WTC disability retirements under the WTC Law (except for reclassification for retirees or vestees), you, a person acting on your behalf, or your agency head must file an application for disability retirement either: (1) while you are active on City payroll; (2) within 3 months after you were last paid by your employer; or (3) within 12 months after you receive notice that your employment was terminated for medical reasons if you were on an approved medical leave of absence prior to termination.

### WTC RECLASSIFICATION

Individuals who are already retired for service or for a non-WTC disability benefit can submit an application for reclassification under WTC Law. If an applicant's participation is verified, the Medical Board finds that the member is disabled from a qualifying WTC condition, and the NYCERS Board of Trustees finds that the WTC Law presumption is not rebutted, then the applicant will be approved for a tax-free WTC benefit that is payable from the date the NYCERS Board of Trustees votes to award the applicant a WTC disability pension.

### ADDITIONAL WTC BENEFITS AND INFORMATION

Individuals who have experienced WTC-related health conditions (except for psychological conditions) can apply for additional benefits through the provision of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF). To determine what benefits may be available, in addition to NYCERS WTC disability retirement or death benefits, go to the VCF website at <https://www.vcf.gov/index.html> or call the VCF at 1-855-885-1555.

Visit [www.nycers.org/wtc](http://www.nycers.org/wtc) for more information on WTC benefits and filing requirements. You may also sign up for MyNYCERS, the secure online portal to your NYCERS account. MyNYCERS is not required for the WTC disability process, but it will enable you to log in any time to view your account information, change your address, and file certain forms online.

## on a personal note... Condolences...



Condolences to the family of **Arthur Claude Toombs Sr.**, retired NYCHA Superintendent who worked for the Authority for more than 30 years. He leaves behind a loving family including his devoted wife, Mrs. Grace Toombs and his three children of whom he was most proud: Arthur Toombs, Jr., Mrs. Annie LoRetta Toombs Holloway and LaQuita Toombs.

## Congratulations



Congratulations new Bronx Chairperson, **Jose Sanchez**, Former HHC Sergeant



Congratulations new Bronx Co-Chairperson **Theresa Davis**, former School Safety Agent



Congratulations new Chairperson of the Queens Retiree Group, **Brenda J. Wells-Arrington**, retired NYCHA Manager.



Congratulations new Brooklyn Chairperson **Anthony Cottone** retired NYCHA Superintendent.

## RETIREE news & views

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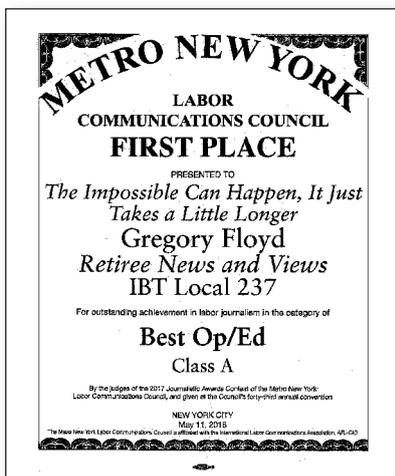
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PERIODICALS  
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# Retiree News and Views, A Real Winner



## 2 RETIREE news & views



by **Gregory Floyd**

President, Teamsters Local 237 and Vice President-at-Large on the General Board of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

**T**oni Morrison, the renowned writer and recipient of the 1993 Nobel Prize in Literature, once wrote: "When spring comes to the City people notice one another in the road; notice the strangers with whom they share aisles and tables and the space.... It's the time of year when the City urges contradiction most, encouraging you to buy street food when you have no appetite at all; giving you a taste for a single room occupied by you alone as well as a craving to share it with someone you passed in the street. Really there is no contradiction—rather it's a condition." The Ghanaian founder of Smart Youth Volunteer Foundation, Lailah Gifty Akita calls spring: "A season for the soul to regain its strength." And Reba McEntire, the country western performer, summed up her feeling on the season, saying: "It's a second chance."

It's no coincidence that Easter and Passover are spring holidays. The renewal of nature that comes with spring amplifies the promise of redemption embedded in the historical

a message from the president

# The impossible can happen, it just takes a little longer

events being commemorated by both religions.

Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus and His victory over death. Around the same time—and often overlapping—Jewish people celebrate Passover, the holiday commemorating the Hebrews' exodus from slavery in Egypt. In both festivals, nature and history converge with a resounding message of hope. Both holidays are about delivery from a state of despair. Easter assures the individual that life is eternal. It offers a way out of a world beyond repair. It celebrates a religion that provides comfort to those who had lost faith in the gods of Rome. It spreads the message that the death of one has the capacity to save many and the resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate affirmation of life. Passover summons Jews collectively into the world to repair it. The message of Passover is that a tyrant-like Pharaoh could be overthrown. A nation as powerful as Egypt could be defeated. Slaves could become free men. The oppressed could break the shackles of their captivity. Anything is possible, if only we dare to dream the impossible dream. It was the biblical record of the Exodus from Egypt that enabled the spirit of optimism to prevail for the followers of Martin Luther King in their quest for equal rights, because they were stirred by the vision of Moses leading his people to the Promised Land. In fact, the historic speech that King deliv-

ered at the Mason Temple in Memphis where he went on April 3 in 1968 to support sanitation workers protesting their meager wages of \$1.65 an hour and deplorable working conditions, had the prophetic line in it: "I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land." He was assassinated the next day.

It was ironic that many of King's supporters, aides and confidants had urged him against expanding their focus and leaving their comfort zone to take on new causes, such as the Poor People's Campaign which he was pushing. King would have none of it. Instead he urged the sanitation workers to go on strike telling them: "You have to escalate the struggle a bit." And he countered the containment argument of his allies with: "We have moved into an era where we are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society."

The legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is similar to the lessons of Spring. Without hope all will be lost. Even the history of America's official seal, suggested by Benjamin Franklin in August 1776, echoed this belief with the dramatic scene described in Exodus where Moses divided waters of the Red Sea. The history of our nation has a message that is clear: The impossible can happen, it just takes longer. ■

por **Nestor Murray-Irizarry, PhDc.**  
historiador y gestor cultural

Agradezco a la Local 237 de ofrecerme la especial oportunidad de escribir en español en su valioso boletín oficial de la División de Retirados. Estoy muy contento de recibir un reconocimiento, que comparto con los compañeros y compañeras de la División, la Presidencia y con los queridos jubilados que prestan su tiempo narrando lo mejor de sus experiencias como unionados.

Estoy muy seguro que este premio contribuirá a estimular el uso de nuestro idioma español en otras publicaciones similares. Además, considero que este nuevo premio debe ayudar a profundizar en el valor de la cultura latinoamericana y por consiguiente de la caribeña.

**Nancy B True and the staff of the Retiree Division wish all Retirees a Happy and Healthy Summer**