

RETIREE

# news & views

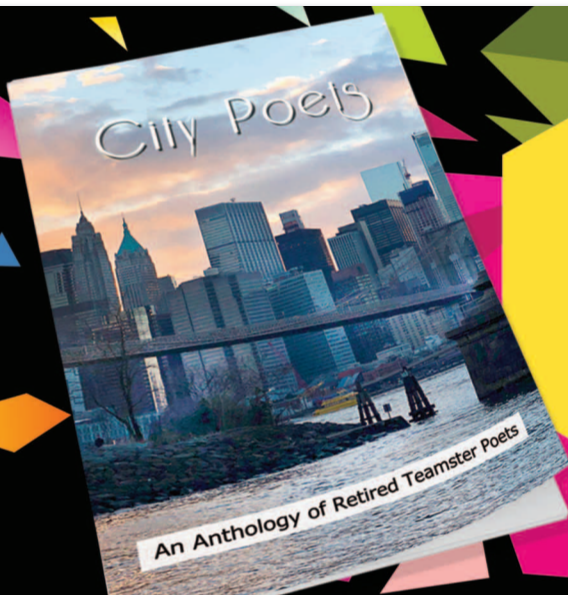
A PUBLICATION OF LOCAL 237 RETIREE DIVISION

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## Retiree Division: Our new Normal, for now

We are working, learning, teaching, and caring from home. Although we are still apart, we are here for you, working for you. If you should have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out via telephone at **212-807-0555** and leave a message. A Retiree Division staff member will return your call. You can also reach us via email at **retirees2@local237.org**. We are here to help. We look forward to seeing all of you in the near future. Stay safe and be well.



## HOT OFF THE PRESS!

We are proud to announce the publishing of the first Retiree Division Poetry book entitled: **City Poets: An anthology of Retired Teamsters Poets.**

All poems have been created by our very own retirees of Local 237, led by renowned poet, Peggy Robles-Alvarado.



### **The Dress by Dorothy Ross Thompson**

My dress  
the long slinky dress  
beautiful black crepe material  
hugging my body like a second skin  
as I dance the night away  
enjoying every moment gliding  
around the dance floor  
taking a break sitting at the table  
enjoying my Harvey Bristol Cream wine  
the star of the night sitting in the shadow of crystal  
sparkles from the chandelier

Books will be  
distributed at  
our next Retiree  
Division function.

To be determined at a later date.

Retiree Participants in the class:  
Claudine M. Fulford, Cornnis Crawford,  
Dorothy Ross Thompson, James Johnson and  
Jessie L. Taylor (Eartha Simmons not pictured)





### by Gregory Floyd

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

Some have said that the tragic murder of George Floyd, a black man by a white police officer in Minneapolis, and the ensuing protests, represent an awakening in America. Civil rights scholar Aldon Morris noted that the protests “are unprecedented in terms of white participation in a movement targeting black oppression and grievances.” Throughout America’s history, there have been countless protests against racial injustice, but as black scholar, Professor Sharde Davis said: “What feels different this time is that white folks are listening.” New York Times journalist Charles Blow called out those who don’t see this moment for its full meaning, writing that: “People are marching as a way of exhaling pain... This isn’t only about the pain of police brutality. It’s about all the pain.” Many point to what happened to George Floyd not as an isolated incident perpetrated by one “bad apple” but rather as part of systemic racism long evidenced in our nation in many ways, including policing, health care and economic opportunity. Blow quotes one protester as saying: “They are lucky that what black people are looking for is equality and not revenge.” The one-

## a message from the president

# WE THE PEOPLE

two punch of the horror of the pandemic crisis and the surge of death of blacks at the hands of white law enforcement can’t be minimized. More than 100,000 lives were lost in America; more than 40 million people became unemployed and the isolation felt by restrictions on social interaction, all hit people of color the hardest. In many ways, the protests brought on by the murder of George Floyd are about him and more. As Blow wrote: “Black people are saying: ‘See me! See what you have done to me and continue to do to me... They are staying, ‘Stop killing us!’ And in that, they mean killing in every conceivable way.”

The question now is where do we go from here? We’ve seen the expensive, full page ads from corporate America, including several by black-owned corporate giants, demanding an end to police brutality and calling for an end to systemic racism not just in policing but in all institutions... including finance, education and health care. We’ve seen elected officials at all levels of government call for changes to police practices and policies that range from job performance transparency to defunding. While some of those initiatives are well thought out and long-overdue, others suggest a misguided, knee-jerk reaction that reek of political pandering. The problem with many of the “solutions” is exactly what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: “It’s all right to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps, but it is cruel just to say to a bootless man that he

ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps.” But until there are more blacks on corporate boards; and until there’s not just job retention but promotion and recruitment for blacks; until educational institutions are more concerned with cultivating black talent than not just trying to fill a quota, and until we stop vandalizing and destroying our own hard-built black businesses in the name of a protest, then all we’ll have left is what President Abraham Lincoln warned against: “Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves.”

Many have said that this is a defining moment in America. But what will that definition include? Certainly it’s not enough that the Merriam-Webster dictionary is revising its definition of racism after a Missouri woman’s emails claimed it fell short of including the systemic oppression of certain groups of people. Instead, this moment must be more. It should be a movement toward goodwill. We’ve strayed too far from America’s motto: “E pluribus unum”, Latin for “Out of many come one.” And we can’t afford to embrace the new motto: “Out of many, come none.” Instead, let this moment — which was fermented on a health crisis and ignited by racial injustice, become the catalyst for reinvigorating and revising an old, but powerful message from the founding fathers: “WE THE PEOPLE”. Except, this time, we must be vigilant to ensure that “THE PEOPLE” includes everyone. ■

### a message from the co-directors

by Susan Milisits, LCSW

## Older Americans Month

Co-Director of the  
Retiree Division



Every May, we celebrate Older Americans led by the Administration for Community Living (ACL). This celebration began in 1963 to acknowledge the immeasurable contributions older Americans made to our society. The theme for 2020 is “Make Your Mark”. This theme was selected to honor the infinite ways that older Americans contribute to our community. We are currently living in challenging times that none of us expected. Our day to day interaction with people

we love and our community has changed immensely and will continue to for an extended period of time. What comes out of a difficult time is developing a new way of being or simply our new reality. During the next few months we need to think about ways to create a “New Normal”. One of the ways we can “make our mark” is to stay connected with our family, friends and the Local 237 Union. Studies show that stronger social networks and increased interaction with those around us can lead to health benefits like stronger memories and a reduced risk for depression. Especially during an unprecedented time when we need to keep a physical distance, knowing other ways to connect can help keep us all safe.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Retiree Division. The Retiree Division has grown so much over the years with the development of exciting and educational/cultural programs, social work services, outings and more. We have celebrated, rallied together and cried together when we had to. The bond to the Local 237 Union is like no other.



by Julie Kobi, LMSW

Co-Director of the  
Retiree Division

Another way to stay connected is through stories. The stories help build community and connect us when we cannot be together. Your stories are very important to the Retiree Division. Through our Oral History project, you can tell your unique story as a union member and share your story with other union members. By sharing your oral history story with us, we not only learn from them, but can encourage someone else to share their story as well. Your unique story is a piece of union history. Remember you have paved the way for the next generation of Local 237 members. Now is the time more than ever to stay connected. Join our weekly telephone support group to hear the voices of your Local 237 retirees brothers and sisters as well as staff. The telephone support group is open to all retirees near and far. We want to hear from you! Please share your stories, pictures and mementos. We can be reached by phone at **212-807-0555**. Leave a message with the answering service and someone from the Retiree Division Staff will respond or email [retiree2@local237.org](mailto:retiree2@local237.org) ■

### RETIREE news & views

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## Retiree Optical Benefit - A Closer Look

by Mitch Goldberg

Director of the Retiree Benefit Fund

Effective March 1, 2020, the optical benefit is \$150. Hopefully, this increase will help all members eliminate or reduce any out of pocket costs for the purchase of new frames and lenses. While the full cost of some frames (e.g. Designer Frames) and lenses (e.g. Varilux) will still require a copay, that cost should be decreased due to the increased payment toward materials in general. Surcharges will be applied for the following:

Polycarbonate single vision.....	\$25.00
Hi index Single Vision .....	\$50.00
Polycarbonate multifocal.....	\$30.00
Hi index Multifocal .....	\$60.00
Plastic photosensitive single vision...	\$60.00
Varilux Comfort 2 Progressive .....	\$90.00
Plastic photosensitive multifocal .....	\$65.00
Polarized Single Vision .....	\$70.00
Standard AR coating .....	\$35.00
Polarized Multi Focal .....	\$75.00
Additional 6 month supply of covered contact lenses .....	\$175.00

This is not a complete list of items with a surcharge but a list of the most common options chosen as upgrades to our basic allowance.

Optical vendors in the network can be located in several ways:

1. Via the CPS website at [www.cpsoptical.com](http://www.cpsoptical.com), on the website choose "Find a Provider"
2. On the Local 237 website at [www.local237.org](http://www.local237.org) Under the Benefits tab, choose NYC Agencies then scroll down to Welfare Fund Optical Plan, which will take you to the "Find a Provider" link. Find Local 237 on the "Select Your Plan" pull-down menu, enter your zip code and submit.
3. If you do not have internet access or want to speak to a CPS representative to find a location, please call CPS at (212) 675-5745.

For our out of metro area retirees who use the Davis or Visionworks Networks, the schedule of benefits has changed as well. Copays are now reduced \$10 for lenses. Frames and exams are now covered by the Fund in full. Using your benefits is easy. Just log onto the member site at [www.davisvision.com](http://www.davisvision.com) and click "Find a Provider," or call them at 1-800-999-5431.

Significant savings on optional frames, lens types and coatings! Member Prices are as follows;

Davis Vision Collection Frames:	
Fashion   Designer   Premier .....	\$0   \$15   \$40
Tinting of Plastic Lenses.....	\$15
Scratch-Resistant Coating .....	\$0
Premium Scratch-Resistant Coating.....	\$30
Ultraviolet Coating .....	\$15
Anti-Reflective Coating:	
Standard   Premium.....	\$40   \$55
Ultra   Ultimate.....	\$69   \$85
Polycarbonate Lenses.....	\$0/3-\$35
High-Index Lenses 1.67   1.74 .....	\$60   \$120
Progressive Lenses:	
Standard   Premium .....	\$65   \$105
Ultra   Ultimate .....	\$140   \$175
Polarized Lenses .....	\$75
Photochromic Lenses (i.e. Transitions®, etc.)/4 .....	\$70
Digital Single Vision Lenses .....	\$30
Scratch Protection Plan:	
Single Vision   Multifocal Lenses .....	\$20   \$40
Trivex Lenses .....	\$50
Blue Light Filtering .....	\$15

The Board of Trustees hopes everyone utilizes the benefits provided by the Welfare Fund. Hopefully we can continue providing benefit improvements in the near future. The Board's focus is to reduce or eliminate out of pocket costs for the benefits we provide to ease your financial burden. ■



by Mary E. Sheridan, Esq.

Director of Local 237

Legal Services Plan

## Foreclosures During COVID-19

Each State has their own rules when it comes to foreclosures. If you do not live in New York State, you should refer to your State government website for foreclosure relief rules and information.

The Federal CARES Act applies to all Americans. If you have a COVID-related hardship and have a federally insured mortgage such as FHA, VA, Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac or a HUD reverse mortgage, you are entitled to deferment on your mortgage payments for up to one year. No documentation of a COVID-related hardship is required, rather your verbal affirmation is sufficient. You can look up to see if you have a Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac mortgage at the following links:

**Fannie Mae:**

<http://www.knowyouroptions.com/loanlookup>

**Freddie Mac:**

<https://www3.freddiemac.com/corporate>

You can also call 1-800-2FANNIE or 1-800-FREDDIE to see whether or not you have a Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac mortgage.

New York State has placed a temporary ban on the filing of new foreclosure actions, and enforcement of existing foreclosure actions, until June 18, 2020. This applies not only to COVID-19 related missed mortgage payments, but also where homeowners fell behind on their mortgage prior to the national pandemic.

Governor Cuomo has since issued an Executive Order extending the ban to August 20, 2020 when the homeowner is eligible for unemployment insurance or benefits under state or federal law or otherwise facing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What about non-federally insured mortgages? In New York State, the NYS Department of Financial Services has directed non-federal insured mortgage holders to grant up to 90 days of deferment for COVID related financial hardships. Additionally, servicers cannot report late payments to credit agencies. They must waive late fees and give homeowners who qualify an additional 90-day grace period to complete a trial loan modification.

Importantly, forbearance or deferment does not mean that your mortgage payments are forgiven. At the end of the deferment period, the money will be due. You must work this out with your mortgage servicer. There are a variety of options depending on the mortgage, which could include a lump sum payment at the end of the forbearance period, repayment over a period of time or a loan modification where you add the missed payments back into your loan.

If you are in forbearance, you will not be charged late fees and a forbearance will not be reported negatively on your credit report.

Should you require legal assistance, please call your Legal Services Plan at (212) 924-2000 to leave a message. ■



## Let's Talk About Grief

by Luz Nieves-Carty, MPA

Assistant to the Director, Retiree Division

The year 2020 will forever be remembered... OR perhaps it will be the year we all wish we could forget.

We all may know someone who has passed away from the Covid19, or have experienced the loss ourselves. Our condolences go out to all affected by the deaths.

However, most of the country is grieving different types of losses. During this time, we are grieving the loss of certainty, predictability, safety, and physical interaction. Some of us are grieving the loss of jobs and income. Our daily lives have been upside down. Many couples have had to cancel and reschedule their weddings, children have been stuck in front of computer screens to learn and working adults everywhere have been adapting to working from home. So if you have feelings of anger, tiredness, forgetfulness and hopelessness, you're not alone and it's OK. The staff at Calvary Hospital's bereavement department say, "it's OK not to be OK right now."

Human beings have certain needs to survive and grow. These are organized in levels from the

most basic needs being physiological: food, shelter, and safety. Higher levels may include love, relationships and education. However, during a time like this it's hard to think about education when perhaps you've lost your job, and are worried about feeding your family. This pandemic has affected many people's priorities in terms of needs to be met.

Grief requires us to process the loss. Usually this involves a ritual such as a funeral, cremation or memorial. Due to the shutdown of society, we feel that it's unfair that we are not able to give our deceased a proper goodbye. Some people may have feelings of guilt. They may feel guilty because they survived while others didn't. They may feel guilty because they have not lost their jobs while others are struggling financially. This is a very normal reaction to what is going on but it opens up possibilities for what's called delayed grief.

Delayed grief occurs when a person can't fully experience grief until sometime after the loss. Understandably, since the world is focused on staying healthy and

avoiding contamination, dealing with the anxiety of it all may be postponed. People may feel they don't have the brainpower, time or permission to grieve properly. We have to juggle everything before we can tend to our grief.

Calvary Hospital, in the Bronx, offers many resources and groups to help us deal with grief. Calvary offer different types of bereavement groups such as death of a spouse or partner, a child, or sibling. There are also bereavement groups for specific people such as for men or teenagers. There are locations in Brooklyn, Bronx, and Manhattan. Due to the pandemic, the groups are currently online. All the groups are free and open to the community. There is also literature such as their newsletters. For further information, contact Calvary Hospital's main number at 1-718-518-2281.

The Retiree Division staff cares about you. We know that the mental, emotional stress will be lasting long after COVID-19 finally is no more. We ask you to be kind with yourself. Be gentle with yourself. Be patient with yourself. Take care of your mind. Limit the news you watch on TV. Get some exercise by going for walks. Don't forget to maintain social distancing and wear a mask. Talk to a friend, write in a journal or create some art. Now is a great time to show off those skills. We are here with you every step of the way through this journey. Together we will make it! ■

## Josefina y Ramiro Álvarez: el amor entra por la cocina, baja al batey y siembra vida. 29 Mayo 2020



Esta columna la dedicaremos a un matrimonio muy singular: Josefina López-Álvarez, del pueblo de Moca, en la República Dominicana, Provincia de Espaillat; Ramiro Álvarez-Ríos [nacido en Dorado y naturalizado en Moca] del barrio Capa de Moca, Puerto Rico, uno de nuestros jubilados. Desde el

2016 viven muy felices en este hermoso barrio Capá de Moca donde mantienen, juntos, una parcela de 1,800 metros. Toda cubierta de los colores naturales que nos ofrece la flora del Caribe. Son caribeños y los une el amor y la tierra; la tierra y el amor. El amor, la tierra y la cocina. Ramiro es chef, y ya no cocina, mientras que Josefina estuvo trabajando durante más de 25 años en el Goldwater Memorial Hospital, donde se conocieron, se enamoraron y se casaron. Si, precisamente en la cocina. Se dice que, en mejor de los casos y casados, el amor entró por el fogón la cocina. Ya lo decía me abuela Inés, que por el fogón fue que entró Ramón.

El fogón, que posiblemente es tan caribeño como la palabra batey, lo describe Manuel Álvarez Nazario en su valiosa obra *EL Habla campesina en el país*, de la siguiente manera, "... se prepara con tres piedras que se colocan en arreglo triangular para sostener la vasija que se pone al fuego que arde entre las mismas, o bien se prepara un anafre u hornillo portátil con un latón al que se abre una boca en la parte inferior, por donde se introduce la leña o el carbón vegetal y en la parte superior, sobre una rejilla o pedazo de lata con múltiples perforaciones, se coloca la vasilla en que se ha de cocinar." [pp.339-340].

Así que el fogón dominicano y puertorriqueño se funden en esta pareja de enamorados, tan especial. Ya lo decía mi amigo el poeta Tato Laviera que todo está *mixturao*. Oiga que sí, que en el Caribe todo está mezclado. Y como decía el gran escritor mexicano Carlos Fuentes, "En América todos somos inmigrantes". Pregúntele a Josefina y a Ramiro. Es muy cierto. Es por esta razón y otras más que debemos de respetar y amar a nuestros paisanos caribeños ...latinoamericanos que conviven entre nosotros. Son nuestros hermanos, forman parte de nuestra familia.

La familia de Josefina y Ramiro es muy numerosa, como buenos caribeños, entre ambos, tienen seis hijos y once nietos. Se llaman constantemente a través del teléfono, aunque Josefina también usa mucho el *facebook* y el *WhatsApp*, que lo caribeñizamos como *Guaso* y *feibub*. En sus conversaciones con sus familiares, crean con-

ciencia entre ellos, a través de hablarles sobre todo tipo de narraciones y experiencias que tienen con el cultivo de los vegetales, de las plantas medicinales, de las flores, de las rosas. Es que son dos buenos agricultores. Ramiro siembra plátanos, guineos, caña de azúcar, yuca, yautía, ñame, batata, calabaza, árboles de Panapén, entre otros. Se lo gozan todo. Tienen un gran modelo de parcela. Me comentan, "somos muy felices porque nuestro gran entretenimiento son nuestra siembra y nuestra cosecha, que compartimos con nuestros vecinos". Pero, que más hermoso es ver la tierra baldía que con nuestras propias manos se convierte en alimento y es el sentir y el llamado de la tierra. Oiga, nosotros somos de tierra y a la tierra nos debemos. Regresamos a la tierra.

Qué clase de buenos vecinos son Ramiro y Josefina, que comparten el fruto que da la tierra. Duermen bien tranquilos. Qué bonito. También aprovechan el agua de lluvia y la conservan y usan adecuadamente este líquido tan beneficioso para el ser humano. Son amorosos agricultores. Y algo máspreciado que se alimentan de lo que siembran. Comen lo que siembran. Qué ejemplo extraordinario de lo que todos debemos hacer. Pero que cocinan, como cocinan. Veamos. Josefina y Ramiro nos regalan algunas buenas recetas que ellos preparan a su gusto.

### Primera receta: Mofongo criollo

#### Ingredientes

Plátanos bien verdes  
Un paquete de chicharon crujiente  
Tres dientes de ajo  
Cuatro cucharadas de mantequilla  
Dos tasas de aceite para freír

#### Preparación

Ponga los plátanos, ya pelados y rebanados, durante 10 o 15 minutos, en agua con sal. Luego debe sacarlos del envase y secarlos, antes de echarlos al sartén con aceite caliente. Cocinar hasta que se pongan doraditos. Retíralos y majarlos en el pilón. Debe agregarles ajo, mantequilla ya derretida y el chicharon en trocitos. Mezclar y servir con su acompañante de su preferencia: pollo, camarones, carne de res, Caldo (opcional), etc.

### Segunda receta: Bacalao con coco

#### Ingredientes

Dos libras de bacalao sin espinas  
Un coco grande  
Cebolla bien picadita  
Aji verde bien picadito  
Dos dientes de ajo bien machacados  
Un ramito de verduras (cilantrillo, perejil, cilantro ancho, bien picaditos)  
Dos ajíes dulces machacados  
Una cucharadita de salsa de tomate

#### Preparación

Poner el bacalao en remojo (en agua) cambiándole el agua varias veces para que se desale bien.

### Por Néstor Murray-Irizarry historiador y gestor cultural

Néstor Murray-Irizarry  
Photo by George Malave

Ya desalado, póngalo a sudar (en el caldero) para que se dulcifique, pero no deje que se cocine inmediatamente. Con un poco de agua sáquele la leche al coco. Utilice una cuarta parte de la leche de coco en un recipiente aparte y cocine las viandas, la cebolla, los ajíes, el ajo y la salsa de tomate. Todo eso junto. Luego añada el resto de la leche de Coco y deje hervir un rato a fuego lento. Agregue el bacalao. Remuévalo todo. Espero otro ratito sin que se queme la comida. Silva con arroz blanco y habichuelas, si así lo desea. (opcional)

Una semana típica, en la cocina de estos dos queridos compañeros se describe a continuación:

Lunes: Vianda con bacalao;

Martes: Sopas;

Miércoles: Arroz con habichuelas y pollo;

Jueves: Pescado frito con yuca;

Viernes: Pollo con ensalada de papas;

Sábado: Carne guisada con arroz y habichuelas junto con ensalada verde;

Domingo: Tostones de panapén con pollo Guisao.

Pero la cosa no para ahí. También siembran plantas medicinales. Como si fuera poco tienen en la parcela mocana: sábila, ruda, anís, yerba buena, menta, albahaca y como saben que la parcha sirve para bajar la presión, pues tienen una gran enredadera de parcha. Aprovechan hasta la verja de su conuco. Siga el consejo de Josefina y Ramiro. Todavía tiene tiempo para sembrar, digamos, salvia (americana, blanca, cimarrona, de playa, del país, marina) como usted prefiera. Hay un libro fascinante de Henri Alain Liogier, *Plantas medicinales de Puerto Rico y del Caribe* (1990) que indica que, por ejemplo, la sábila (Aloe vera. F. Burm. F.) que también se le conoce como Aloe, Sábila, Aloes, Zabila (oiga, mucho cuidado consulte primero todas las plantas medicinales no curan por igual a todas las personas). Dice el científico que esta planta sirve como purgante en dosis de 2 a 5 gramos, pero no es recomendable para las personas que sufren de la vejiga y para mujeres embarazadas; la raíz en los cólicos. Con las hojas se prepara el jarabe Zabila contra la pulmonía. Las hojas machacadas en cataplasmas en infecciones cutáneas y la lepra; también se usa para aliviar las quemaduras producidas por la aplicación de rayos x; entre otras. (pp.438-439). La agricultura es la base fundamental de cualquier y economía. Puerto Rico no tiene por qué ser distinto. Nosotros somos de tierra. La tierra nos llama. Y volvemos a la tierra. Josefina y Ramiro nos invitan a que juntemos el amor a flor de tierra. ■

*We are so pleased to welcome our new Retiree Division Assistant Director Edith Johnston, LCSW. She joins us with over 15 years of hospital experience working with the homebound elderly and their caregivers, providing assistance with resources, benefits and entitlements. Some of you may have already spoken to her on the phone or with the new social work support groups. Welcome Edith!!!!*



**by Edith Johnston, LCSW**  
Assistant Director, Retiree Division

## Our New Reality

Covid-19 has come to change the way we do things. Going out without any safety precaution feels like the distant past. However, for our own safety and the safety of others we have to be very cautious in everything we do. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) offers daily updates on what we need to do to stay safe. It is important to check their website at CDC.gov.

The new normal may feel very uncomfortable because it has changed how we do things. For example, I went to a store recently and I had to wait on a long line outside for a long time.

Everyone in the line was about 6 feet apart from each other and wearing a face mask and it felt really strange and unfamiliar. I am not used to making a line to go to a store where I am going to spend money. Social distancing makes it very difficult to make human connections, and it feels unsafe as the person next to us can be an asymptomatic carrier.

However, as difficult as the new normal may feel, it has also helped us connect with our family and friends. I have seen and heard multiple examples of people helping each other, neighbors checking on each other, people volunteering to help seniors with the shopping and laundry to keep them safe at home. Young people are doing fundraising to contribute to their local food banks or help their neighbors in need. The way we do things may have changed, but we still care for each other. ■



## Retirement in the time of Coronavirus

### *The importance of friends, family and the Union*

by Nancy B. True

The past few months have been difficult – with no clear end in sight. Never, in our lifetimes, have we experienced a world-wide pandemic – that is unless you were alive during the time of the influenza pandemic over 100 years ago. We are all living in uncharted territory. Those of us who are maintaining social distancing, wearing masks and staying in our homes, are beginning to experience a sense of loss. We are all missing direct contact with family and friends.

As the weeks move into months and possibly more, new ways of maintaining social contact are key to maintaining a sense of connection to family and friends. Technology can help. Most “smart phones” have the capacity for video chats. I have an iPhone and am able to see my family and friends when we “face time.” For family get togethers, there is Zoom that can be downloaded on your phone or computer so that you can have members of the family or groups of friends together, all at once. In July, I plan to be part of a virtual birthday party, celebrating a 50th birthday party. Zoom will provide the platform for this event. Recently, I had a tele-appointment with my doctor using Jabber, another site that allows for video conferencing. There is also the good old fashioned telephone to have conversations with and hear the voices of loved ones.

Technology is not the only way to stay connected.

Many people who are staying inside are using the time to clean closets, organize paperwork and accomplish tasks that never seemed to get done. There is more cooking going on in the country than ever before. It is also a time when older adults, in particular, are thinking about family history, their family legacy, their union history.

As the family elders, we are also the family historians. Although we may have photos of the generations that came before us, in many cases they are not labeled with the names of the ancestors and the dates of the photos. Now is the time to take on this task. I have started moving photos from envelopes to albums.

In conversations with my son, Oren, I ask him what he would like to know about the family. We have talked a great deal about my mother, his grandmother, with whom he was very close. During these conversations he takes

notes – he knows how my parents met and fell in love, (it’s a wonderful story that involves bicycles and trumpets and a song called “A Tisket a Tasket”). He’s learned that her father, his great grandfather, was a skilled artisan, casting spoons in pewter, creating punchbowls and working with copper. We talk about my father and grandfather and their strong roots in Maine. His great grandfather, George, was a biologist and teacher who had lobster traps in the summer. His grandfather, Robert, was a loving family man who always wanted to become a doctor and achieved that goal – eventually establishing the first family practice program in the State of Maine. Oren now knows that every May Day, my sister and I would make small baskets of flowers for neighbors and leave them on their doorsteps. We would also dance around a May Pole in the backyard.

Reminiscing about our lives and sharing these stories is a part of aging that often gets lost in the hustle and bustle of life. It provides a chance to reflect upon our lives and to ensure that our family histories continue with future generations. It is a time to reflect upon the “good” and the more “difficult” aspects of our lives – and perhaps an opportunity to resolve past conflicts with family and friends.

Sharing our union histories achieves similar goals. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the value of work, workers and union membership. Union artifacts and oral (and written) histories serve a personal goal of reviewing a life well lived and a larger goal of preserving the history of the union for future union members.

As Local 237 retirees, we are fortunate to have a large and loving union family as well as our immediate family and friends. During difficult times like this, the importance of remaining connected to family and friends is even more important. I am so pleased that the Retiree Division, under the leadership of Susan Milisits and Julie Kobi is working hard to maintain connections through Retiree News & Views, telephone support meetings and reaching out to retired members who may feel alone or need help with resolving problems. I’ve been a beneficiary of this outreach, and feel truly connected to my union family.

Take care, be safe and reach out to family and friends. ■



## Did you serve in the Military?

by Lynn 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.

### VA Healthcare Updates Year 2020

Veterans who are experiencing medical concerns are asked to call the VA Nurses Helpline, which is staffed with live clinicians 24 hours, 7 days a week to answer COVID-19 related questions at (800) 877-6976. VA Video Connect uses technology to conduct live video visits between Veterans and their doctors via use of a laptop, smartphone, or computer.

Free hearing aids, eyeglasses, aid and attendance for housebound Veterans, LGBTQ services, mental health, substance abuse services, women’s health, \$12 30-day supply of medication (all types) are available to all eligible Veterans.

### Veterans and Wellbeing

The daily stress of COVID-19, whether a Veteran is affected or isolated, may enhance other mental health challenges. Veterans can call the Veterans Crisis Line 24 hours, 7 days a week.

(800) 273-8255, press 1 for Veteran

Text 838255 or live chat [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

### Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans

The Blue Water Navy (BWN) Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 (PL-116-23) was signed into law on June 25, 2019 and took effect January 1, 2020. This law authorized VA to extend presumptive diseases (certain diseases that can be related to a Veterans military service) of herbicide exposure, such as Agent Orange to Veterans serving in offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975.

### Veterans Affairs Home Loan changes in 2020

- No VA Loan Limits. If you apply for a home loan using your VA benefits, you can apply for a loan for the most expensive home you can afford, and the VA guaranty of the loan is 25% of the loan amount with no down payment.
- House Resolution 299 dictates those who still serve on active and were awarded the Purple Heart are now exempt from paying the VA Loan Funding Fees.
- VA Loan Funding Fees have increased. For an active duty first-time borrower, by approximately .15% and .30% for those who have used VA loans before.

### Veterans Affairs Caregiver Program Strengthened

Presently, this program is only available to eligible Veterans seriously injured in the line of duty on, or after September 11, 2001. VA plans on expanding the application of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers to eligible Veterans from all eras. VA provides a wide range of services for caregivers, including training, education, respite care, a telephone support line, and self-care courses.

### Veterans Affairs Medical Foster Home Program

VA Medical Foster Home Program provides housing and care for Veterans, serving as an alternative to nursing homes care. Veterans pay their caregivers \$1,500 to \$3,000 a month, depending on the location. VA accepts only foster homes that meet strict qualifications.

### VA National Cemetery Pre-Burial Determination

You can apply to find out in advance if you, or your spouse can be buried in a VA national cemetery. This is called a pre-need determination of eligibility, and it can help make the burial planning process easier for your family members in their time of need.

### Interested in finding out if you qualify for these 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. 4218 to meet with the Local VA Outreach Specialist Mr. Lyn Johnson. ■

## During the current COVID-19 crisis, the Alzheimer’s Association New York City Chapter is committed to serving families and individuals affected by Alzheimer’s and other dementias.

That’s why we are making our programs and services available through webinars and phone meetings. We offer a variety of education programs to increase knowledge and support those facing Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia. We also offer support groups to give caregivers an opportunity to exchange practical information on care giving, learn about resources and talk through ways of coping. Our early stage social engagement programs allow persons with dementia to socialize with their peers, and care consultations offer the chance to talk to one of our social workers or counselors to address service or support needs. The challenges and emotions that come with a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease or dementia can be overwhelming for caregivers and persons living with the disease. Our NYC chapter staff provide support in Spanish, Chinese Mandarin, Russian, Haitian Creole and English.

Contact us if you or someone you know is facing Alzheimer’s. You are not alone.

We are here to help whenever help is needed, whether it is a call in the middle of the night to our 24/7 Helpline 800-272-3900, a support group, or an educational program or visit our website at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) to get more information about programs offered at your local chapter. We hope that you will take advantage of the free programs, services and resources the Alzheimer’s Association offers across New York City. When Alzheimer’s touches your life, we are here for you.

alzheimer’s  
association



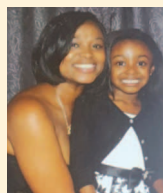
## on a personal note...

### In Memoriam



We grieve for our deceased Retirees of Local 237. We pause to honor those we have lost during this crisis. Our thoughts and prayers are with all families and friends. Please note the list of retirees who recently passed away is extremely large. Though we are not able to name all of the retirees who passed away; our hearts are with the all of the grieving families and friends. For a complete list of retirees who have recently passed, please go to the Local 237 home page at [www.local237.org](http://www.local237.org)

### Congratulations



Congratulations to our very own Retiree Division Staff **Shavon Banks** and daughter Riley. Scholar and parent of the month.



Congratulations to New Retiree **Ms. Christine Clark**, retired from NYCHA, closing on her new home in Warner Robins, Georgia.

### RETIREE DIVISION RECIPES



#### Noelia Quinones Puerto Rican Style Turkey Meatloaf

1 lb of turkey ground meat  
salt and pepper  
bread crumbs  
2 eggs  
ketchup

Bake in oven at 350 degrees for about an hour. Keep checking on it.

#### For mashed potatoes:

4 boiled Idaho Potatoes  
(When boiling potatoes add salt to one's taste and add a little bit of oil)  
1/2 cup warm milk  
Butter. Enjoy!

## RETIREE news & views

216 West 14th Street  
New York, NY 10011



Affiliate of



MAY/JUNE 2020

### Archiving a pandemic: Retirees sharing their story



#### Retirees: Jose and Gloria Melendez

Mr. Melendez Retired from NYCHA and coordinators of the Puerto Rico community group.

**How did your overall daily life change?** Our lives have changed tremendously. Normally during these summer months we would be on vacation. We are not able to go on planned trips. We love to travel. Even locally here in Puerto Rico we love to see our friends in towns. We are not able to right now.

Jose "I can't even go to the beach". We are very social and love to be out and about. We have learned a different way of life and are using more caution with family and friends. Jose—"one thing I'm not used to is a wearing a mask"

**What are some of the ways you have tried to maintain normalcy?** We have divided tasks, for example, Gloria is in charge of the grocery and postal errands and Jose maintains the house. This is new for them. We are trying new routines and schedules.

**What did you notice in the way people interacted with each other?** Jose shares "it pains me deeply the divide of younger and older people" Younger people walk so far away from you especially in stores or in the post office. You can't even ask a question when you are lost because people would run away. It almost feels a bit discriminatory between the younger and older population. It makes us feel really bad when people run away or think we may have coronavirus because we're older. In fact all age groups are experiencing the coronavirus.

**How did you maintain connections with people in your life?** Right now everything is via telephone or text messages with everyone. We use Skype for the video calling.

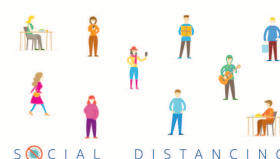
**Did you ever think you would experience something that would impact society on a larger scale?** Never in our minds did we ever think this would happen.

**Do you remember older members of your family ever talking about the Influenza Pandemic of 1918?** The closest we ever came to a large public health issue was in 1938 when the spread of tuberculosis resulted in the loss of multiple loved ones.

**What would you want someone 100 years from now to know about this pandemic? What thoughts and advice might you have for them?** We would say this pandemic was a huge and life changing event. Our advice -You have to take care of yourself, proper hand washing, and watching news to keep up.

*We miss our community with retirees. We miss New York and look forward to seeing all of you.*

### Telephone Support Group



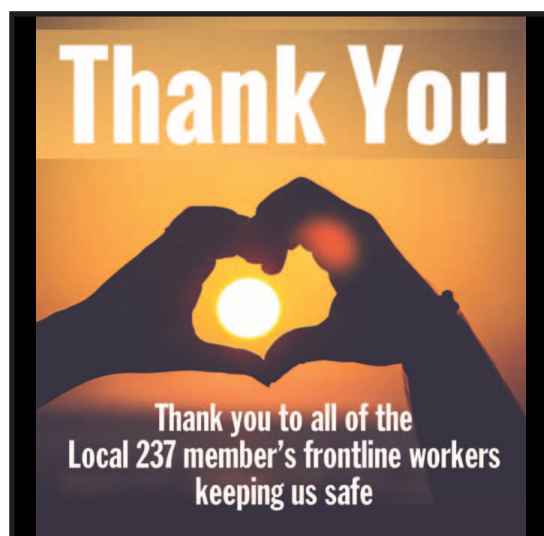
Just a reminder: The Local 237, Retiree Division telephone support group is active and going strong. If you are interested in participating in the group, please call the Retiree Division at **212-807-0555** and leave a message or email [retiree2@local237.org](mailto:retiree2@local237.org)

#### Here is feedback from the telephone support group

"We share what we are going through; we can't be together but this is the next best thing."

"Sometimes you have a question or a problem- you get ideas from the group and find solutions."

"Getting motivated from each other."



### NEW YORK

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(800) - 738 - 9437

Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) for Bronx Residents

NYCACC.ORG/SERVICES/COMMUNITY-PETS-PROGRAM  
(212) - 788 - 4000

Nobody Starves on Long Island

NOSOLI.ORG  
(631) - 484 - 3085

Healthy Pets Project of NYC

HEALTHYPETSNYC.ORG  
HEALTHYPETSNYC@GMAIL.COM



[TAHIR.CO/CORONAVIRUS](http://TAHIR.CO/CORONAVIRUS)