



As We Celebrate The Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ... How Do You Define “Hero”?

Webster's dictionary defines the word “hero” as someone of great strength or ability. Someone who is admired for his achievements, possessing noble qualities, who is self-sacrificing and courageous. Poet Maya Angelou, reflecting on heroic personality traits, wrote, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said...people will forget what you did....but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the living embodiment of the word hero. It wasn't only his thinking or his words. It wasn't just his actions or accomplishments, big and small. What made Dr. King a true hero was his personal code of honor and his innate decency. His moral compass was based on faith, unswayed by polls or driven by self-aggrandizement. Although a believer of non-violence, he was a relentless warrior, whose fight for equality was based on the fundamental principle that human dignity, respect from others and self-respect are not privileges for a few, but basic rights that should be enjoyed by all.

Dr. King is remembered as a hero because he led by example and inspired others to do the same, memorably saying: “If a man is called a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets as well as that, and all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause and say, here lives a great streetsweeper who did his job well.”

The Teamsters Retiree Division hosted a program on January 12 to honor the legacy of Dr. King. Retired Commissioner of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, **Christopher P. Moore**, an eminent historian and Curator Emeritus at the New York Public Library Schomburg Center for Black Culture, gave an insightful presentation highlighting Dr. King's work. Many of Local 237's retirees who attended

lived through the turbulent times of Dr. King's fight for justice and equality. Many participated in the marches, demonstrations and rallies which ultimately resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts. Several offered the following recollections:

Sarah Frierson participated in the historic march on Washington, D.C., in 1963. However, this was not the first time she encountered Dr. King. Sarah met him when he came to Harlem in 1958, where he was stabbed during a visit to sign copies of his book about the Montgomery Bus Boycott. For Sarah, what was most memorable about Dr. King was his stand in opposition to the Vietnam War. Her husband was an Army career officer. “That really hit home. He raised issues, like Agent Orange, that no one was addressing. I think we, especially young Americans, need to re-read Dr. King's words, and understand that, although he spoke decades ago, his words are relevant now as well.”

Carolyn Harrell met Dr. King in the 1960's when he came to New York City to help with the struggle to decentralize public schools so that parents and community members could have greater input in the education of local students. He spent one week working from a Presbyterian church in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Carolyn recalled that “not only was Dr. King a dynamic speaker, but he was very warm and inspiring. He gave us encouragement to continue on.”

Pernell Hepbourn saw Dr. King at the Canaan Baptist Church on 116 Street in Harlem, where he came to install the new pastor, Rev. Wyatt T. Walker. Pernell admits that “I

was a young boy and really didn't get the full significance of Dr. King's words at the time, but I remember how the crowd lit up as he spoke so powerfully and movingly. I knew something great was happening. Incredibly, the next month, Dr. King was assassinated.”

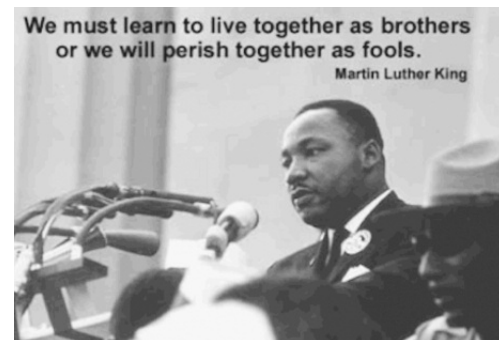
Deborah James said that Dr. King's words were for everybody — directed to people around the world. “His message was: Don't discriminate. He did not speak to just one segment of people. His views and actions were for the benefit of all.”

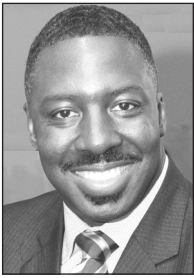
Aureola King recalled that “Back in the day, we learned in school the words on the Statue of Liberty about ‘huddled masses yearning to breathe free,’ which instilled in us what America was supposed to stand for. Because of that, I participated in many of the New York City protest rallies on behalf of equality and ending the Vietnam war. I also went to Washington, D.C., in the '80's to demonstrate with the Teamsters, and although I thought I would never have to do it again, I joined the Women's March on Saturday.”

Carolyn Whitley participated in many of Dr. King's rallies, including the March on Washington in 1963. She said that “when we arrived in the nation's capital, we saw all of the police, who seemed like they were anticipating big problems. But it was totally peaceful and that gave me an awesome feeling. Then, when Dr. King spoke, I thought: ‘Oh, my God’ I hope his message gets through around the world.”



Historian Christopher P. Moore delivering his remarks.





A Message From the President

Gregory Floyd

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

Do We Need A Black History Month?

February is Black History Month. It is a time to celebrate the accomplishments and heritage of black people in our nation. Its founder, historian Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, along with his associate, Jesse E. Moorland, created the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, or ASALH) in 1915 to promote black history and recognize achievements of African Americans.

In 1926, ASALH launched a "Negro History Week" to help advance its mission and to create and coordinate school curricula on the topic. Dr. Woodson had long argued that education was an essential ingredient in understanding and appreciating contributions of black Americans. He said, "If a race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and stands in danger of being exterminated."

Dr. Woodson chose the second week of February to commemorate black history because the birthdays of both President Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederic Douglass are contained within that week. As the celebrations and studies spread, so did the push to expand the week into an entire month, which President Gerald Ford did by decree, in 1976. As President Ford noted: "In celebrating Black History Month we can seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

Today, the purpose and accomplishments of Black History Month are often called into question, being criticized as outdated, separatist or merely symbolic. Some African American millennials argue that having a formal, month-long ob-

servance gives the nation a pass to ignore black history the rest of the year. Despite producing a renowned PBS documentary, "More Than A Month," filmmaker Shukree Hassan Tilghman says he's now tired of being the face of Black History Month and that "needing a history month is not a position of empowerment." Fox News contributor Stacey Dash, who is black, said on air: "There shouldn't be a Black History Month. We're American, period. That's it."

And, in a study featured in the book *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership*, author Harold Cruse wrote: "As the number of professionally trained black intellectuals has grown, there has been a parallel lessening of a collective sense of common experience, common purpose and even common commitment."

For me, there is no controversy. I look to the inspiration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., when he said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter," and I know that Black History Month serves as an important organizing principle. It's a time to both acknowledge past accomplishments as well as a time to strategize about political, economic and social accomplishments to come.

To the critics I say: Black History Month is not about validation from other communities, but a call to action in our own community. It is a time to assess our current power, to thank those who paved the way, and to harness the potential while identifying individuals who will lead us further. As Frederick Douglass said: "If there is no struggle, there is no progress." Black History Month helps to keep the struggle and progress alive.



My Thoughts On Being An American

By Nancy B. True, Director, Retiree Division

These days I find myself reflecting more on family and life in general. As a third generation child of immigrants, I carry with me the stories of my great grandfather who immigrated to Boston in the 1800s. He became a proud public servant, a police detective, in Everett, Massachusetts. His children, all born in the United States, were raised with a strong sense of family, responsibility to community and to immigrants who were making the same voyage that their father had made.

Throughout his life, my great grandfather, James Bruce, would be at Boston Harbor to greet ships as they came in. If a traveler from his birth country had no place to go, he would take them home to live with his wife, Margaret, and their six children. They believed in the American Dream.

This and other stories of immigration continue to bring a sense of pride

to members of my family. As a nation of immigrants we all have family stories of struggle and achievement that make us proud. These stories are the foundation for our belief in helping others. This pride in the possibilities of America are what motivated my grandfather to send his three daughters to college, despite the fact that he left school at an early age to help support his family. This pride is what motivated his daughters to pursue careers in teaching and lifelong community service and instilled in their children a belief in community, work and helping others.

This sense of pride is what motivated all of us to join a union and work collectively to ensure a better work and family life and a solid retirement for all. Local 237 is a reflection of the "beautiful mosaic that is New York" — as Mayor Dinkins once described it — and the pride that comes with helping others. Our union is a diverse community committed to helping all union members.

Over the years, the face of immigration has become more and more diverse. Yet, all are seeking what my great grandfather, James Bruce, was seeking: a better life. We, as Americans, are all striving for a better life in partnership with others.

As we move ahead in 2017, I encourage you to find ways to open conversations with others, create bridges (not walls) and to find ways to contribute to a more united country and a celebration of our diversity. Speak with your children about your family history. Share your stories of union membership with your children and grandchildren. Make your voice heard on behalf of workers and the communities where you live.

In my office, I have a photo of my great grandparents and their family, standing outside their home in Everett. Next to my grandfather, Walter, is a young boy named Henry who was given a home and an opportunity to succeed by the Bruce family. It is a daily reminder to me of the caring and responsibilities that come with being an American. Now more than ever, we need to act on these responsibilities and ensure that as Americans, the United States is a country for all.

RETIREE news&views

Published bi-monthly by the Retiree Division of Local 237, International Brotherhood of Teamsters (USPS 013028). Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.
Postmaster: Send address changes to: RETIREE News & Views, 216 West 14 Street, New York, NY 10011 212-807-0555, retirees@local237.org, www.local237.org

GREGORY FLOYD
President

PATRICIA STRYKER
Recording Secretary

RICHARD HENDERSHOT
Vice President

NANCY B. TRUE
Managing Editor

RUBEN TORRES
Secretary-Treasurer

PHYLLIS SHAFRAN
Editor



Retiree Legal Fee Reimbursement Benefit

By Mary Sheridan

Director of Legal Services Plan

Did you know that you still receive your Legal Services benefit after you retire? Not only do you have the same right to representation as when you were working, you receive an added benefit. Should you reside outside of the 11 New York State covered counties and need a lawyer for a matter covered by the Legal Services benefit, you may be entitled to a reimbursement toward some of your private attorney fees.

If you live in one of the covered New York State counties, then you still have an at-



torney available to you for a wide range of civil matters. These matters include domestic relations (Family Court proceedings, divorce and separation), purchase and sale of primary residences (co-op, condo, 1- and 2-Family homes), wills, powers of attorney, health care proxies, some private adoptions, credit and consumer problems, tenant rights and bankruptcies. Representation can include consultation, legal research, drafting of documents and pleadings, negotiation and

trial work. A lawyer is provided to you at no cost.

But if you leave the covered area after retirement and have a legal matter described above, you may receive a portion of those fees back. For instance, if you buy a primary residence in Florida, you would hire a Florida real estate attorney. After the transaction is complete and your private attorney paid, you can submit the claim form and receive up to \$470 for legal fees spent.

Please remember to call your Legal Services Plan for information on possible reimbursement for your outside attorney fees. We can be reached at 212-924-1220.

Optical Benefits

By Mitch Goldberg

Director of the Welfare Fund

You are eligible for the following benefits, without charge, once in any two-year period from the date of your last benefit:

- A complete examination by a licensed optometrist, including testing for glaucoma for all adults and when indicated for a child. Exams are not available in New Jersey or Florida due to regulations on examinations in those states.

- One pair of prescription eyeglasses plastic or glass single-vision, bifocal or trifocal lenses in a standard shell frame, including eyeglasses case or standard soft daily wear contact lenses. Adjustments and repairs of eyeglasses not requiring parts are also covered.

You and your eligible dependents are entitled to choose various types of frames from



an extensive selection; however, the frame type may vary from one participating optometrist to another. You or your eligible dependents may purchase additional pairs of eyeglasses, or lenses, or have additional examinations at your own expense. The amount you or your dependent will pay will be the same as the amount paid by the Fund, if purchased the same day.

If you live within the Metropolitan area; you must use one of the Optical Centers listed on the brochure you receive when you request a claim voucher. If you live outside of the Metropolitan area, you may go to an optical center of your choice; you will be reimbursed for their services at the same rate paid by the Fund for services at the Metropolitan area Optical Centers. If you live outside the Metropolitan area you have the option of using

Davis Optical and you should have received a card and brochure which describes your Davis Optical benefit.

If you or any of your eligible dependents need an eye examination, eyeglass or lenses, contact the Fund Office and ask for a claim voucher for the optical benefit. The approved voucher will be stamped and returned to you with a brochure that lists the participating Optical Centers. You and/or your covered dependents must sign the approved voucher and take it with you to the Optical Center. The voucher is good for 30 days. No voucher will be accepted by an optometrist unless it is approved by the Fund Office and used within 30 days. If you cannot use the voucher within that time period, return the unused voucher to the Fund Office; you will be required to obtain a new voucher by following the same procedure.

The phone number for the Fund office is: **212-924-7220.**

What to do when a retiree, spouse or domestic partner becomes eligible for Medicare

SEVERAL MONTHS BEFORE YOU BECOME MEDICARE ELIGIBLE, YOU WILL RECEIVE A RED, WHITE AND BLUE MEDICARE CARD INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE BOTH PART A (HOSPITAL) AND PART B (MEDICAL) INSURANCE. (For most individuals, Medicare eligibility begins the first day of the month of their 65th birthday; for those individuals who receive Social Security Disability benefits, Medicare begins 24 months after they become eligible for benefits.)

As a NYC retiree, you AND YOUR MEDICARE ELIGIBLE DEPENDENTS are required to have both part A and Part B of Medicare

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR MEDICARE ELIGIBILITY, CONTACT THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION AT 1-800-772-1213, OR CALL MEDICARE AT 1-800-MEDICARE. (Please note: enrollment in Part B for permanent residents of Puerto Rico is different. THEY MUST GO to a Social Security Office to enroll in Part B)

PLEASE FOLLOW THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS WHEN YOU RECEIVE YOUR MEDICARE CARD.

- MAKE SEVERAL PHOTOCOPIES OF YOUR/YOUR

SPOUSE'S/ DOMESTIC partner's MEDICARE CARD

- MAIL ONE COPY OF YOUR MEDICARE CARD(S) BY CERTIFIED MAIL TO:

NYC EMPLOYEE BENEFITS PROGRAM
OFFICE OF LABOR RELATIONS
40 RECTOR STREET, 3RD FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10006

1. TO INFORM THEM OF YOUR MEDICARE ELIGIBILITY AND TO ENSURE THAT YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE RECORDS ARE UPDATED.

2. TO BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR THE MEDICARE PART B PREMIUM REIMBURSEMENT FROM THE CITY OF NEW YORK. (RETIRES AND THEIR MEDICARE ELIGIBLE DEPENDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THIS PROGRAM.)

MAIL ONE COPY TO:
TEAMSTERS LOCAL 237
RETIRES' BENEFIT FUND
216 West 14th Street
3RD FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10011

'Tis The Season... Retiree Holiday Party

**Local 237 Retirees celebrated the holidays in style!
Great music, tasty food and a visitor from the North Pole.**



The band was a big hit at the celebration. So was Santa, AKA Milton Wadlar.



They could have danced all night... well, maybe a good chunk of it anyway.



Santa with Nancy True, Director of the Retiree Division, and retiree Nora Davila.



Winston George, assistant director of the Retiree Division, cutting the proverbial rug with Pat Stryker, Recording Secretary.



Susan Milisits, Assistant Director of the Retiree Division, with two happy retirees.



Santa decided to show off his dancing moves with one of the retirees.



Winston George with Luz Carty, Retiree Assistance Coordinator of the Retiree Division.



Here's that man again, talking with Grace Klein and Ruth Friedman.

Goodbye My Pension

By Patricia Stryker

Director of Political Action and Legislation
and Recording Secretary
of the Executive Board of Local 237



In November, on the 7th to be precise, there will be a question on the ballot when you go to the polls to vote. The question is: "Shall there be a convention to revise the Constitution and amend same?"

This happens every 20 years, the last time was 1997 and it was defeated.

The question sounds innocuous — what could be wrong with holding a Constitutional Convention in New York State? Answer — a whole lot.

The reasons are many but I would like you to focus on the big one for public employees.

In the environment in which we live now, you can't help but notice that many people are hurting because their salaries and benefits are lagging behind.

Public employees have health care and a defined benefit pension that is protected in the State Constitution — Article 5, Sec. 7. "After July first, nineteen hundred forty, membership in any pension or retirement system of the state or of a civil division thereof shall be a contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired." What that means is no changes permitted to your pension.

While we would have no problem if everyone enjoyed the same benefits as City and State retirees, but they do not enjoy the same benefits.

Many people working in the private sector have lost their defined benefit pension — now they have a 401K to which the employer may or may not contribute.



At a public employee conference that we attended several years ago, one attendee told us what his father-in-law said at their Thanksgiving dinner about the guy's future retirement allowance (defined benefit pension). The father-in-law was upset that his son-in-law would get it.

Why I brought this true story to your at-

tention is for the following reason: Many folks who do not have what we have are not happy that we have the benefit of a defined benefit pension while they do not.

Who will be motivated to vote? Surely, we should be extremely motivated since we have the most to lose. However, those who do not have what we have and are really unhappy will have an opportunity to level the playing field so that no one has a viable pension.

Let us take action! Talk to your family members, relatives and friends, educate them; we cannot sit back. This is an extremely serious issue which we must take seriously and protect the pension that we worked many years to receive through our hard work. On November 7, go to your polling place and vote "No" on the question, "Shall there be a convention to revise the Constitution and amend same?"

We asked several of our retirees: "What Does Receiving a Pension Mean to You?" Here is what they said.

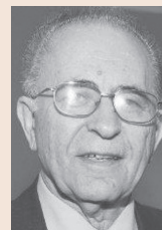
Wilfredo Velez
Caretaker, NYCHA

"The pension means survival — food, bills, cost-of-living, something we couldn't do with Social Security alone."



Rocco Brienza
Maintenance Worker,
Department of Health

"Having a NYC pension means a lot to me. It would be impossible to survive on Social Security alone. Having the pension and the COLA provides security to retirees and their families."



Annie Jones
School Safety Agent,
NYPD

"My civil service pension from the City of New York has allowed me to retire with the assurance of being able to take care of myself and my family. After 20-plus years as a School Safety Agent, Level 3 (Sgt.), I am enjoying being a retiree. The pension provides dignity, freedom and the resource for me to continue being active in my church, my union and the community."



Gerrymandering: What Is It and Should I Be Concerned?

In 2021, in the 50 states, elected officials will initiate a process, based on the 2020 census, to redraw district lines for the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as state legislative lines. This is called redistricting. A better term for this process would be "gerrymandering." (Gerrymandering: to manipulate the boundaries of a district so as to favor one political party over another.)

If you look at some of the district lines for certain Congressional seats, you wonder how they were determined — some look like an octopus with tentacles going in eight different directions. It is done this way to skew election outcomes towards a particular party.

The result is that although there are more registered Democrats in many states, their power is diluted by concentrating party members in fewer districts, allowing Republicans to win more districts with a plurality.

Two years after the election of Barack Obama, in 2010, the Supreme Court issued its Citizens United verdict, which changed the playing field. Super PACS could spend unlimited money on state legislative races and gerrymandering succeeded in turning over state houses to Republican control. So, in 2011, when district lines were redrawn, gerrymandering succeeded in diluting the power of Democrats.

BREAKING NEWS!

The Supreme Court will examine gerrymandering in 2017

Gerrymandering has helped give the Republican Party a significant advantage in Congress. When the last district maps were drawn, Democrats lost between 21 and 41 seats. Partisan gerrymandering has become the norm in U.S. politics because the Supreme Court has declined to declare it unconstitutional. In 2017, the Supreme Court will take up the issue. Depending on how the court rules, its decisions could have far-reaching implications.

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

Some thoughts for
the occasion from poet
Maya Angelou:

*If you have only one smile
in you, give it to people
you love.*

*Try to be a rainbow in
someone's cloud.*

RETIREE NEWS & VIEWS

216 West 14 Street
New York, NY 10011



Affiliate of



JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2017

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE
PAID AT
NEW YORK,
NY

On a personal note...

Congratulations...



...to **Beulah Mincey** on her retirement on January 31, after 43 years of dedicated service to the members of Local 237 Welfare Fund. Beulah is pictured with **Local 237 President Gregory Floyd** at a retirement party given in her honor. Floyd called her "an exemplary employee who served with competence and compassion."

Below left, members of the Executive Board: **Trustees Jeanette Taveras, Edmund Kane, Curtis Scott** and **Recording Secretary Patricia Stryker**, along with President Floyd, presented Beulah with a commemorative crystal plaque.

Below right, **Nancy True** welcomed her to the Retiree Division, and **Mitch Goldberg**, Director of the Welfare Fund, and **Deputy Director Len Proctor**, thanked Beulah for her many years of dedicated service and wished her well in her retirement.



...to **Luz Carty**, Retiree Assistance Coordinator in the Retiree Division, became the proud grandmother of Gohan Lennon Thillet, weighing in at 6.5 pounds, born December 9, 2016 to Ariana and Felix.

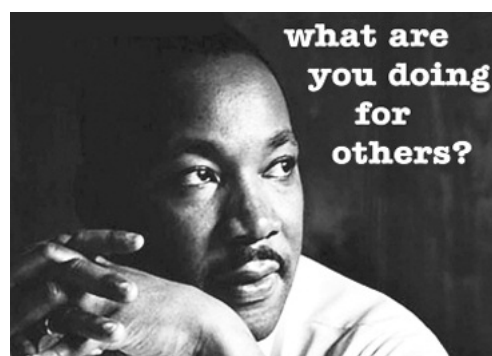
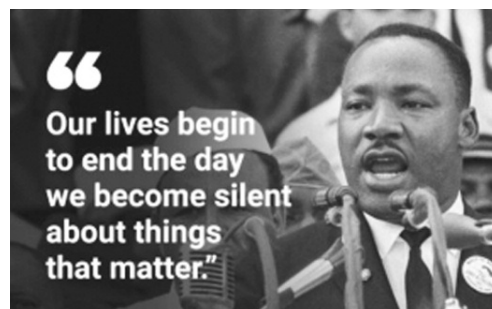
Condolences...

...to the family of **Joseph Pellegrino**, NYCHA retired Supervisor of brick layers who died at the age of 80 on December 14, 2016.

The Retiree Division mourns the untimely death of musician **Gaka Takanashi**, bass player extraordinaire and a regular part of the Division's Jazz Journey Class. His talent, his gentle and caring manner, his ability to connect with others will be missed by all who knew him.



Luz and Gohan



HOLD THE DATE

February 24, Black History Month Celebration, 11am, ground floor conference room in Local 237 headquarters.

"Afri-Can on the Ameri-Can Soil: In the Quiet Nighttime Of My Sleepless Dreams"

a musical and poetic journey, written and directed by Marjorie Eliot.