

RETIREE news & views

A PUBLICATION OF LOCAL 237 RETIREE DIVISION

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Teamsters Local 237 Oral History Project

Teamsters Local 237 has a proud and important history in the City of New York. Retired members understand the importance of preserving this history for future generations of members. The Teamsters Local 237 Oral History Project collects materials like hiring letters, photographs and other “artifacts” that bring the union’s history to life. Of course, the remembrances and stories of members are the most important part of the project. Many retirees have responded to our call to participate in this project. Here are some of the stories:

Esther Farmer, NYCHA Housing Manager, retired in 2006: In 1977, several women in our Local organized to win pregnancy disability benefits for women workers. We organized petitions, rallies and put out a newsletter. We sued NYCHA and Local 237 (led by Barry Feinstein at the time). In October of 1978, Feinstein announced we would be getting the benefits. The case did not go to court because we won. I was nine months pregnant at the time and had no income for the time I would not be working. Women had to fight for pregnancy disability even though it was the law.

Rosette Fabius, Kings County Hospital Food Service Supervisor, retired 2014: I am Haitian born. I came to the U.S. in the 1970’s looking for a better life. With my husband and our two boys, I have done all kinds of odd jobs in order to take care of the family. The children finished high school and went to college. I went to school to learn English. A good friend gave me a recommendation for a dietary job at Kings County Hospital. I worked my way up to become a Food Service Supervisor. I want to say thank you to God, to the USA and most of all to Teamsters Local 237.

Anthony Cottone, NYCHA Resident Building Superintendent, retired 1996: I started working for NYCHA as an operation trainee in Brooklyn, in May 1971. I worked and trained for two years making various repairs in the buildings, hallways as well as apartments. At the end of the two years I took an exam and I was promoted to maintenance worker. Through the years I would work the day and went to school at night in Manhattan where I studied building maintenance as well as building heating operations. It prepared me for the next step in my career.

Manuel Pena, NYCHA Assistant Superintendent, retired 2012: As an Assistant Superintendent at the Tompkins Houses I was recommended for a local hearing for no reason at all. I was tempted to accept it without any fight or argument; apparently there was no one on my side, then I remembered, wait, I was a shop steward at the Bushwick Houses for many years and know our agents work fair and square so I remembered Mr. Jim Giocastro. I got in touch with him and immediately he told me to fax a copy of the memo. He called the borough office

and the next day the case was dismissed. As a result of that I was able to retire with a clean record.

Ramiro Alvarez, HHC cook, retired 2008: My dream was always to finish high school and move to New York City. My uncle was living in New York and I asked him if I could live with him. He said yes. I came to New York in 1967. My uncle was working at Goldwater Memorial Hospital. I asked him to take me there to apply for a job. Once he said yes, I knew that was my first step toward my future dream. I was hired at Goldwater in 1971 as a Dietary Aide. I got to work in many departments till I reached the main kitchen. I knew I wanted to be a cook. My dream came true on July 5, 1985, when I successfully completed the course in commercial cooking and catering. I then became an official cook and a member of Teamsters Local 237 for 35 years. I thank God for Local 237, but my heart is always in Puerto Rico, and I decided to move back.

Winston Edwards, HHC, Hospital Police Officer, Shop Steward, retired, 2000: I took the test for Hospital Police Officer and scored high on it so the job was offered me. I was hurt two times. The first time was for bravely saving a resident and staff at the Neponset Health Care Center, and the second time I was hurt when I saved three persons from smoke and fire conditions.

Brian Middendoff, NYCHA Assistant Building Superintendent, retired 2014: I was working as a maintenance worker at the Jacob Riis Houses. I received a work ticket of a toilet stoppage at 3:45. I did not want to stay late. I went to the apartment and asked the woman to wait until the next day. I said to flush the toilet with a bucket and tomorrow I will come back and give her a new toilet and seat. She agreed. I showed up at 8 a.m. at her apartment the next day. She said, “There is the bathroom.” The door was closed so I stood in the foyer. She said, “Is there something



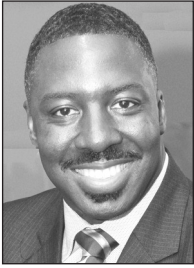
Retired members as founders and builders of our Local understand the importance of preserving this history for future generations of members.

Victor Maldonado, NYCHA Caretaker J, retired 1995: I started working in the gardens in the late 1960s. Then I took the test and got into the union. When I started I used to work 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the summer; in the winter it depends. If it was snowing, I used to work up to 10 p.m. shoveling snow. For every little thing I was called for help — from changing a bulb, to be awakened at any hour. It was a good job.

Carmen Santos, NYCHA Housing Assistant, retired 1987: I started working for the Housing Authority in 1951. Practically all my work life was as a Secretary at various levels. I wanted to go into a Housing Assistant slot. I took a test and passed and was appointed. I became a Teamsters member then and learned the benefits and possible promotions towards a better job that I didn’t have before. I enjoyed working for the Housing Authority because I had access to connecting with the tenants. I felt good working with my co-workers as a “family” where we shared our day-by-day experiences. I’ve really loved being part of the Teamsters family. It’s a wonderful feeling and I am proud of being one to this day!

wrong?” I said the door is closed. She said, “Go in, there is no one in the bathroom.” I knocked on the door and heard, “Excuse me.” So I waited outside about 10 minutes and later knocked again and heard “Excuse me.” This went on for another five minutes. The woman saw me standing there and said, “What’s wrong?” I said someone is in the bathroom. I knocked to show her and again heard “Excuse me.” She opened the door and guess what? It was a parrot.

Anne Sabatino Giudice, NYCHA Superintendent, retired 1990: I started with the Housing Authority in 1970 as a receptionist in Carey Gardens in Coney Island. I lived in the Sheepshead-Nostrand Houses and went home during lunch every day to check on my children. In 1975, I was promoted to Superintendent Secretary. I later took the Firemen’s Exam and studied with my oldest son. That is when I joined Local 237. I passed the Assistant Superintendent exam in 1981. It was tough! I was the first female to be appointed Superintendent. I was an original member of the Non-Traditional Women of Today. We met once a month for lunch and supported each other. I earned my job. I paid “my dues.” God Bless NYCHA and Teamsters 237!



A Message From The President

Gregory Floyd

Your Vote: The Most Powerful Weapon of Democracy

Isn't it ironic that the United States can be both admired and despised by people of other countries for precisely the same thing: Our democratic values.

Those values have been hard fought; they have cost many lives; they have been challenged throughout the ages and continue to be challenged today. Voting is the cornerstone of those values. Sadly, far too few people vote in this nation.

Despite the fact that there are so many examples of people in other nations fighting for the right to freely elect their representatives, here in America, voter turnout dropped from 40.9% to 36.3% in 2014.

It's been said that Americans will cross the ocean to fight for democracy, but won't cross the street to vote. And the facts bear this out: Only 57.5% of those eligible voted in the 2012 Presidential election. And right here in New York, only 31% of registered voters cast a vote in the last Presidential Primary. It is no wonder that New York ranked 44th in voter turnout for the 2012 presidential election! But to your credit, older adults are not to blame. Approximately 70% of senior citizens voted in the 2012 Presidential election — which was an increase in voting from 70.3% to 71.9% — despite the attraction of President Obama among younger voters. Unfortunately, it's young adults who are not voting. Regrettably, too many seem to care more about reaching the age to drive than to vote. In fact, young adults had the poorest voting record in the last Presidential election: just 21%. And adults, ages 25 to 64, voted at only 37%.

This election is definitely not one to miss. It could be a game-changer. There is so much at stake, from human rights to worker rights. In recent

decades, the long battle to protect unions, which stand up for the rights of working men and women — and in reality built and preserve the middle class — has grown intense. Some of our traditional allies have left us or diminished in their fervor, while the union bashers and union busters have intensified as well. So, it's up to individual workers.

When they enter the voting booth, they would do well to consider the pledges of the candidates and, equally important, their proven track records in getting the job done. Whether it's job creation and retention, immigration, education, health care, gun control, climate change, trade agreements, taxes, or issues of particular concern to retirees, like Medicare or the Affordable Health Care act, consider the choice carefully. Your vote is not just your voice, it's the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of any democracy. Don't forget that older adults comprise the largest portion of the overall population, making you an important voting bloc in presidential elections. You can determine the outcome.

I urge you to listen to the candidates cautiously. At a time when every tactic is being used to get your attention, go beyond the bumper sticker promises and theatrics of the blame-game. Ask the tough questions and remember: Only George Washington didn't have a previous administration to fault.

Most importantly, urge your children and grandchildren to vote. Every vote will count and sitting this one out is not an option. The good and the bad thing about democracy in America is that anyone can become President. That's also the problem! So, to get the President you want, it's like that old slogan from the Lottery: "You gotta be in it to win it!"

Election Day is Tuesday, November 8. Vote! The future of your grandchildren depends on the results.



Where the Two Parties Stand on Social Security Reform

By Nancy B. True, Director, Retiree Division

In this hotly contested presidential election, a thorough review of each party's platform reveals sharp contrasts between the Democratic and Republican positions on critically important issues to

older adults. Perhaps no clearer difference between the two parties can be seen than in their platforms on Social Security.

The Democratic platform includes significant strengthening of the Social Security programs. It calls for a substantial increase in the average benefits to beneficiaries while requiring wealthier Americans to pay a much larger share of the overall cost. It would extend the Social Security trust fund's solvency 50 years or more by lifting a cap on the payroll tax where wealthier Americans would assume a larger share of the program's cost. It would also increase average monthly benefits and cost-of-living adjustments. By boosting the minimum benefits paid to low-income beneficiaries, the Democrats' platform on Social Security would lift more older adults and disabled people out of poverty. It takes into account spending patterns of seniors that differ from the population as a whole, in-

cluding the disproportionate amount older adults spend on health care.

The platform states: "Democrats are proud to be the party that created Social Security, one of the nation's most successful and effective programs. Without Social Security, nearly half of America's seniors would be living in poverty....We will fight every effort to cut, privatize, or weaken Social Security, including attempts to raise the retirement age, diminish benefits by cutting cost-of-living adjustments, or reducing earned benefits."

The Republican platform on Social Security is quite different.

Its plank says that all entitlement programs, including Social Security, will be on the table for cuts, stating that: "We reject the old maxim that Social Security is the 'Third Rail' of American politics, deadly for anyone who would change it." Republicans also rule out generating new revenue for Social Security by either raising payroll taxes or lifting the current income cap on Social Security taxes. Instead, the GOP platform calls for either slashing benefits or creating a system of private accounts that offer those age 55 or under the option of investing over one-third of their current Social Security taxes into personal retirement accounts. It goes on to say that Republicans "believe in the power of markets to create wealth" — which was a plan resoundingly rejected by the American people when George W. Bush proposed it in 2005 — and that "we oppose tax increases." Finally, the party's plank states that "current retirees and those close to retirement can be assured of their benefits" which, by its omission, could mean cutting benefits for younger generations of Americans. Older adults should be offended by the implication that they are less concerned with the economic security of their children and grandchildren than for themselves. This is clearly not the case.

How you vote is a highly personal decision predicated on the consideration of many factors. On the issue of Social Security, Alex Lawson, executive director of Social Security Works, an advocacy group, tells voters to carefully compare the platforms of each party. But for his organization, "Grading it as if it were a high school paper, Social Security Works gave the Republican Social Security platform an 'F' grade for failing to listen to the American people."

As we head into the presidential election, it is crucial to understand the issues and vote accordingly.

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FOUNDERS DAY 2016

The Presidential election and what's at stake was the theme of this year's Founders Day celebration on June 10 at the New York Hilton. A well-informed panel engaged in an insightful discussion on the topic. The panel included Patricia Stryker, Director of Political Action and Legislation and the Recording-Secretary on the Executive Board of Teamsters Local 237; Anthony Thomas, Political and Legislative Director of NYC Central Labor Council; Nora Davila, retired Assistant Housing Manager; John H. Felder, former Assistant Director, Retiree Division; Donna Ristorucci, Retired Editor, Retiree News and Views; and Charles W. Thompson, retired Storekeeper.

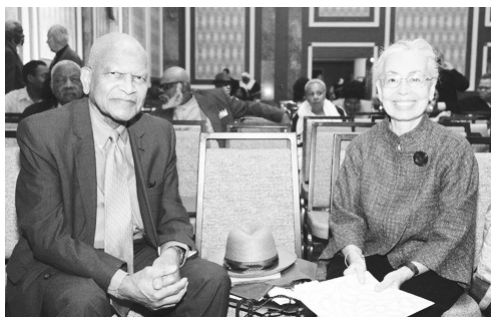
Pat Stryker spoke about her own evolution from voting like her father, to thinking from the perspective of a working person who appreciated the positive part unions played to improve working conditions. She also said that, since retirees traditionally vote, they play an important role in educating and urging their children and grandchildren to do the same.

Donna Ristorucci told the audience: "I actually participated in elections before I was old enough to vote. My friends and I went door-to-door urging people to vote for Lyndon Johnson because Barry Goldwater would drop a nuclear bomb...and LBJ won. I registered to vote when I turned 21. I have voted in every election — national, state and local. If I don't vote, it means someone is making decisions for me."

John H. Felder said: "I cast my first ballot in 1972. I can still feel the swoosh of the blue curtain as I entered the booth. I can still see myself squinting at the small print where the candidates were listed by party. I can still hear the dull clack of those rusty levers I pulled to make my choices. It was a very private, yet public declaration that I was a full adult, a participant in matters larger than myself. It was an individual, yet collective act. I am a forever voter. I will vote because it is my right. I will vote because it is my civic obligation. I will vote to effect progress in our community, state and nation."

Charles W. Thompson recalled: "My family was from South Carolina. My mother and grandmother could not vote. My Mother brought me to New York when I was very young. As I grew older I heard people talking about how they voted. I said that when I was old enough I was going to vote. I registered as a Republican be-

Left to right:
Patricia Stryker;
NYC Comptroller
Scott Stringer;
Gregory Floyd;
Congressman
Eliot Engel and
Nancy B. True.



Panelists Charles W. Thompson and Nora Davila.

cause I did not want to belong to the party of Bilbo, Rankin (Mississippi) and Thurman (South Carolina). But in 1960-70 the southern Democrats switched to the Republican Party so I then switched to the Democratic Party, which I love."

Anthony Thomas commented: "What's at stake in this election is not whether a Democrat or a Republican wins, but rather whether unions define what issues are relevant to workers and our members and whether we are going to hold elected officials accountable equally. If we are not in the business of advocating for union members, past and present, we are enabling politicians to simply use us and forget why we matter until the next election. For unions to be successful we can have no permanent friends, only permanent issues."

Nora Davila stated: "Thinking on it now, registering to vote was two things for me: A rite of passage and the initiation into the power of citizenship. When I first voted, I felt a tremendous sense of responsibility to get it right for myself. I still do now. I vote because I see many things that are unjust for too many. I want to put my 'currency' on the people I perceive will do the best to look out for all of us. It's a way to stand up for ourselves. My thinking was influenced by my father, and later, my sister. My father grew into the idealism of his nature during his youth in Puerto Rico when Pedro Albizu Campos, with his Black Shirts Youth, was advocating ideas of justice, self-determination and political independence for his country. They were the critical and independent thinkers in our family."



Sojourner Truth stops by Founders Day to discuss the importance of voting.

At the luncheon which followed the panel discussion, Gregory Floyd, President of Teamsters Local 237, told the audience, "I always look forward to Founders Day. It gives me a chance to catch up with so many friends. And I get to talk with people who have a history with our union and understand the struggle to protect the rights of working men and women and retirees. It's sad but true that so many people in our country don't know and don't care about what life was like for workers before unions put pressure on management and politicians to provide health and safety guarantees. Too many people think that a 40-hour work week and health benefits were written in stone, like a part of the Ten Commandments. But you know better. Gaining these and other rights was hard fought. Many of you were part of the struggle."

Congressman Eliot Engel was the keynote speaker. In his remarks, he stressed the importance of the upcoming presidential elections and urged everyone to vote. He noted that so many issues are at stake, including the future of unions. He said: "New York still has the highest percentage of union workers in the nation, but that number is shrinking. Unions fight for workers' rights. They are the reason why we still have a strong middle class. You must vote for the candidate who protects unions."

New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer was also on hand to offer his greetings to the luncheon audience.

Another highlight of the day's events was the presentation by the Sunshine Club, represented by Ruth Coaxum and Grace Klein to City Harvest, represented by Nicole Sumner, Coordinator, Corporate and Foundation Relations. The Club donated \$ 2,000 to this worthy non-profit dedicated to ending hunger in New York City.



Nancy B. True, Nicole Sumner, representing City Harvest, and members of the Sunshine Club, Ruth Coaxum and Grace Klein, who presented the check.

HOLD THE DATES

Puerto Rico Retiree Conference
November 30-Fiesta in Aguada
December 2-Conference at Caribe Hilton

●
You're Invited!

The Retiree Division Art and Photography class members invite you to the Retiree Art Exhibition Opening **September 30** ground floor conference room in Local 237 headquarters

RETIREE NEWS & VIEWS

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Are Retirees 'Judgment Proof'?

Mary Sheridan

Director, Legal Services Plan

Question: "I am retired and have been told that I am 'judgment proof,' is there really such a thing?"

New York State and the Federal Government provide that certain exempt funds and assets are protected from judgment collections. If your only source of income comes from exempt funds, then most creditors cannot collect money from you. However, if the creditor is an ex-spouse collecting child support or maintenance, or the government collecting taxes, your income is not protected.

I don't like the term "judgment proof" because even if your current



income is exempt from collection, a creditor can still obtain a judgment against you. Once a judgment is obtained it is good for 20 years. There may come a time during that 20-year period where you have assets or income that are not exempt and the creditor can then collect on its judgment. Additionally, having a judgment against you, although not collectible, may prevent you from obtaining new credit or even getting a rental apartment.

New York law (CPLR 5205) provides the following "statutorily exempt payments":

1. Social Security, including retirement, survivors' and disability benefits
2. Supplemental security income or child support payments
3. Veterans Administration benefits
4. Public assistance
5. Workers' Compensation
6. Unemployment insurance
7. Public or private pensions
8. Railroad retirement
9. Black lung benefits

To best protect your assets, you should have direct deposit to your bank account. Should your bank account ever become attached, you will then be able to show the source of your assets and demand the release of the account.

No matter what, never ignore a Court Summons should you receive one. Remember, we at the Legal Services Plan are here to help. Call us at 212-924-1220.

On a personal note...

Happy 50th Anniversary to retired **NYCHA Superintendent Anthony Cottone** and his wife, Grace, who will reach this milestone in October.

Congratulations to **Sgt. Ezzard C. Alexander**, who retired in 2007 from Coler-Memorial Hospital, on becoming the proud grandfather of Cameron Ezzard DeSilva Nuñez, born on May 23 to Antranise and Reynaldo Nuñez.



Congratulations to **Joseph Adams**, a retired School Safety Agent, who received his Masters Degree in Human Resources M.P.A. from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in June.

We offer condolences to...

...Retiree **Mrs. Cynthia Murray**, formerly Assistant Manager at Smith Houses and also the former President of the Assistant Manager Chapter in the union, on the passing of her beloved mother, Mrs. Eleanor Hope Suriel.

...the family of NYCHA retiree **Edward Bradley** who worked for more than 25 years.

...the family of retiree **Barbara Hazelwood**, one of the early members of the union and one of the first female rank-and-file leaders at Local 237. She held the position of President of Tellers chapter, Housing Assistant Chapter and Assistant Managers chapter. Since her retirement, Barbara served as Chair of the Retiree Division of Activities Committee and Education Committee.

...the family of **John M. Schocken**, a dedicated Emergency Services Supervisor for NYCHA, who retired after 25 years on the job.

...the family of **Steven Freiband**, who progressed through the ranks of NYCHA from Housing Assistant to the managerial level.

Getting an Update on Their Benefits

Len Proctor, Deputy Director of the Health and Welfare Fund, addressed a group of Queens retirees. Len said: "It was great to have a full house of enthusiastic retirees receiving updates on their Fund benefits."



A Great Day in Upstate New York!

Local 237 retirees recently got together for their annual picnic at Krucker's in Pomona, New York. With great weather and delicious food, a fabulous time was had by all.

