

RETIREE

news & views

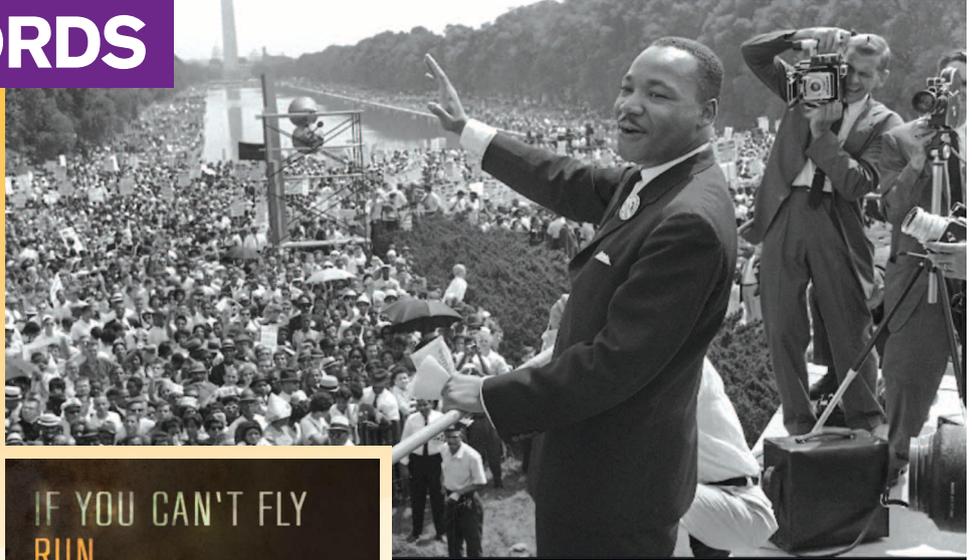


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DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

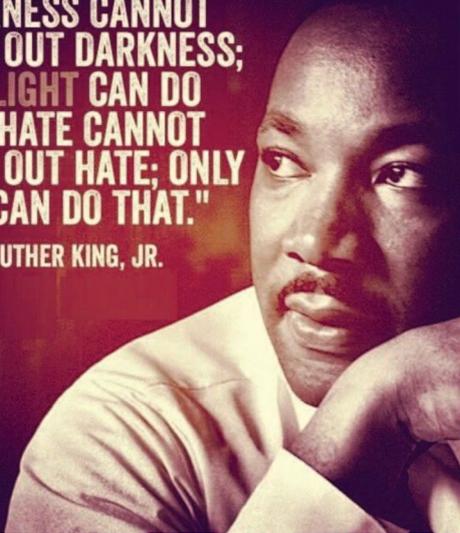
IN HIS OWN WORDS

*In memory of
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
His words continue to resonate
and inspire us as much today
as they did back then.*



**"DARKNESS CANNOT
DRIVE OUT DARKNESS;
ONLY LIGHT CAN DO
THAT. HATE CANNOT
DRIVE OUT HATE; ONLY
LOVE CAN DO THAT."**

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



**IF YOU CAN'T FLY
RUN
IF YOU CAN'T RUN
WALK
IF YOU CAN'T WALK
CRAWL
BUT BY ALL MEANS
KEEP MOVING.**

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR



**I have decided to stick with
love. Hate is too great a
burden to bear.**

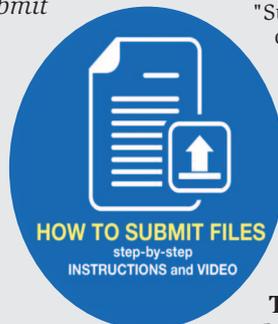
~Martin Luther King, Jr.



IMPORTANT NOTICE FROM THE OFFICE OF LABOR RELATIONS

The Health Benefits Retiree client service walk-in center is closed. Due to the closure of the office, retirees who mailed or faxed forms or correspondence March 11, 2020 or after, we cannot access or process that form. Please resubmit inquiries and documents as follows:

- 1) Forms and documents can be submitted electronically through LeapFILE.
- Before you begin, you may wish to [view instructions and a short video](#) on how to submit your forms/documents.
- When you are ready, use the following link to submit your forms and documents: <https://nyemployeebenefits.leapfile.net>



• Please do NOT submit your form/document more than once. This will only delay processing.

• You will immediately receive notification stating "Success! Your file has been received" upon completion of your document upload. You will **not** receive a separate email confirmation.

• Also, please do not send forms or documents via express mail. The office is closed, and the package cannot be accepted.

2) Inquiries and questions can be emailed to: healthbenefits@olr.nyc.gov - do not send forms through email (see #1)

To watch instructional videos, go to the office of labor relations website at:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/olr/health/retiree/health-retiree-leapfile-instructions.page>



a message from the president

Climbing That Hill

by Gregory Floyd

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

At the inauguration ceremony of President Joe Biden, Amanda Gorman, the 22 year-old poet laureate, read her poem, “The Hill We Climb”, which begins with the words: “We ask ourselves when can we find light in this never-ending shade?” She goes on to say that: “Somehow we’ve weathered and witnessed a nation that isn’t broken, but simply unfinished.” Further, she adds, “But while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated.” And, “We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be a country that is bruised, but whole, benevolent, but bold, fierce and free.” She concludes ... “there is always light. If only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it.”

Inspiring, uplifting words for sure — and a theme appropriate not just for an Inauguration — (especially one during a time of crises that have attacked our bodies and our institutions) but also, these are words appropriate for new beginnings. Many people have similar feelings. There are countless articles offering advice. For example, Peggy Noonan, former speechwriter for President Ronald Reagan and columnist for the Wall Street Journal writes: “You have to go into this year with dreams, there’s no other way to do it... we got through 2020 with pictures of normality in our heads. In a few

months they’ll start to come through.” Peter Wehner, a Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, recently penned an article that found some possible positive aspects to these troubling times, writing: “If we’re fortunate and wise, we will allow the traumatizing effects of the Trump years to catalyze a rededication to the ideals we once cherished in public life... America is fragmented, but also chastened, perhaps ready to rise again.” David Brooks, a New York Times columnist wrote: “We’ve been through an emotional four years. Suddenly, the sky has cleared. It’s possible America may emerge from this trauma more transformed than we can imagine.”

Much has also been written about making personal plans for the future — a sort of mental checklist of things we can’t wait to do — coupled with some anxiety and concern about handling the possible difference we’ll feel enjoying simple pleasures, plus some awkwardness to resuming old routines and of course, the sad reckoning for many, that someone is missing. Still, we should make the to-do list of things for the “after”: Going to the movies, catching a ball game, having a beer with friends at the local bar, Sunday Mass, hugging your mom, sharing a joke in the elevator with your co-workers, really enjoying a day off from work. And not wearing a mask.

Yes, wearing a mask at the supermarket, pharmacy and when picking up your take-out food order will all be joyously abandoned at the appropriate time, but so many of the measures and side-effects of the world we lived in may be harder to discard and are subject to debate. The change in the way we do business (do we really need an office?), how we interact when face-to-face (no more handshakes?) and even new words in our vocabulary, will long linger on. Zoom, PPE, Remote Learning, Social Distancing, Mail-in Ballots, Essential Workers, and Hydroxychloroquine



are all words we may not have been familiar with before the pandemic, but now are words we surely won’t forget when it’s over.

And words clearly have their effect. The old adage: “The pen is mightier than the sword” (although today, updated to: the computer or super-spreader events,) gives testimony to the impact of words. They cannot be minimized. But, as Peggy Noonan asks: Can a good inaugural speech heal the nation? Her conclusion is: “No. But it can assert an attitude, can turn the page, help people feel something better... encourage citizens to take part.” In President’s Biden’s inaugural address, he said: “Here we stand, where 108 years ago at another inaugural, thousands of protesters tried to block women marching for the right to vote.” He also said: “Through the Civil War, the Great Depression, World War, 9/11, through struggle, sacrifice, and setbacks, our better angels have always prevailed... History, faith and reason show the way...the way of unity. Without unity there can be only bitterness and fury. No progress, only exhausting outrage. No nation, only a state of chaos.” President Biden continued that “Disagreement must not lead to disunion... (and that) We must end this uncivil war that pits red against blue, rural versus urban, conservative versus liberal. We can do this if we open our souls instead of hardening our hearts.” Biden’s commitment and call to action was: “My whole soul is in this: Bringing America together... I ask every American to join me in this cause.” And, as Amanda Gorman wrote in her poem: “So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left with.”

Clearly, the hill we must now climb is very steep, but the rewards are even greater. To help get us there, try to remember the things you enjoyed before our world was upended, and let’s work to get them back — but even better. Not only for us, but for our children. ■

a message from the co-directors

COVID-19 VACCINE: WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR...

The year 2020 has changed our lives dramatically. As we begin 2021, the COVID-19 Vaccine has provided us with some hope for the future. This hope brings some concerns, which can be stressful. At present, we know there are limited appointments and availability of the vaccine is uncertain. Please be patient with the process. If you are not able to make an appointment, now is a great time to rely on your family and friends for support. Our goal is to provide you with some information on the COVID-19 vaccine. It is most important to keep yourself informed by listening to your local news outlet and following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. Here are some frequently asked questions about the COVID 19 vaccine:

What Vaccines are available?

At present, there are two vaccines available, Pfizer and Moderna. Both vaccines require a second shot to be effective. Johnson & Johnson’s vaccine could soon become available

Is the COVID-19 vaccine right for me?

If you have underlying medical conditions you should consult with your health care provider. If you are on the fence and have questions about the vaccine, speak with your health care provider to ensure all of your questions are answered. Knowledge is power.

How to make an appointment for a vaccine?

At present, the vaccines are given by appointment only. To find a location in NYC you can visit <https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov> on this website you can enter your zip code for a vaccination sites. Once you have found the vaccination site of your choice, you will then call that specific center for an appointment. Please note you may have to look beyond your neighborhood as vaccines are limited. Also, when calling to schedule an appointment you may experience very long wait times. You may have to call a few times. Be patient and keep trying.

For those retirees who live out of state, you can check with your local Department of Health to find a vaccination site in your area, or visit www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2020/coronavirus-vaccine-research.html



Susan Milisits
LCSW

Co-Director of the Retiree Division



Julie Kobi
LMSW

Co-Director of the Retiree Division

What are the side effects from the vaccine?

According to the CDC the most common side effects may include: On the arm where you got the shot: Pain and swelling. Through the rest of your body: Fever, Chills, Flu-like symptoms, tiredness, and headache.

Listed above are common side effects. If you are concerned about your side effects, allergic reactions or your symptom maybe worsening contact your health care provider right away.

Having the options of a vaccine are steps closer to keeping ourselves and our families safe. Just remember even if you are vaccinated the CDC recommends wearing a mask, 6 ft. social distancing, avoid crowds, and proper handwashing.

(*Please note COVID-19 information is continually updating. Please check the CDC website for the most updated information.)

For more information about COVID-19 Virus and vaccines available please visit the CDC website www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/ ■

RETIREE news & views

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Celebration of **BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Reflections of the Black History Committee

A Black History Meditations

Black
Deep Black
Black as a Costa Rican Night
Black History -
HIS - story or MINE?

My Black story began
in Brooklyn, New York
Tracing backwards
to the lush peach trees of Georgia

Further down south
Across the Atlantic Ocean
To the palm trees of the Bahamas

Who am I?
Proud daughter of Africa
Who came to America:

With legs still strong
I Dance to the beat of the Conga
My hands still strong, I love to paint
pictures of Family, precious memories
of Family

Black beans, Lima beans,
Collards, Cabbage & Kale
This is what we ate
with a little bit of cornbread on my plate

I am One who loves
the music of African American People:
Gospel, Jazz, Rhythm & Blues, and Hip-Hop

Flowing to the sounds of John Coltrane
Miles Davis & McCoy Tyner
Groovin' to the skats of Ella Fitzgerald,
Sarah Vaughn, & Maysa

Deep
As the Nile Valley
Black
Like the Sky at Night
Wide
As the Atlantic Ocean
Black Culture is My Right!

Meditation
Mesmerized & Hypnotized
Listening
to Sounds of Smokey Robinson
Donny Hathaway
Keeping me up late at night

Black History to Me
is walking in the Footsteps of Our Queens
Ruby Dee, Eartha Kitt, Maya Angelou, &
Cicely Tyson

Songbirds of the 50's, 60's, & 70's
Live Forever in My Heart

So, Queen Aretha, Sing to Me
Queen Cicely, Speak to Me
Queen Katherine, Dance with Me
Queen Maya, Lead Me to the Nile River &
the Valley of Our Queens & Kings

Who are We Today?
The Reincarnation of
Queen Nzinga,
Queen Nefertiti, &
Queen Makeda

Like Bread
Our People will Continue to Rise!

Life is So Precious
Our Time on Earth should be Cherished.

We Must Live Our Life
to the Fullest Potential

Because One Day
We, too, Will Join the Ranks
of Our Great Ancestors!

By Rhonda Amirah Brown



Left to right: Susan Milisits Co-Director, Frank Holton, Rhonda Brown, Dorothy Ross- Thompson, Nubia Imani Beazer, James Johnson, Cornnis Crawford, Pernel Hepbourn



Left to right: Theresa Davis, Carolyn Harrell, Nubia Imani Beazer, Rhonda Brown, Cornnis Crawford, Dorothy Ross-Thompson, and James Johnson (Carolyn Harrell is no longer with us. Our condolences go out to her family. Carolyn is missed dearly)

The celebration of Black History month is a celebration that I looked forward to for many years. It is a time for reflection and to learn of the many great black contributors to our country that we were not aware of. For our family it is a learning experience. We would watch historical events and movies that tells the story of the struggle of the blacks in the south. My family watch the movies and asks questions about what they saw and did it happen. Because I was born in 1947, I can identify with the segregation in the south.

I can bear witness to the separate cold-water fountains with warm weather, separate bathrooms, separate schools, different entry to the doctor's office. We sat upstairs in the movies, we were not able to swim at the same beaches and we were not able to sit at the Woolworth food counter. I also examined to my family how I remember being on the bus with my pregnant mother. I was holding one side of her coat and my brother the other side. He was crying because he was tired, and my mother cried too because there were no seats in the back of the bus. After that, my father bought a car. I told them how blacks and whites would work in the field together but at lunch the white people went inside to eat and we sat outside on the back porch. I relocated to New York City where things were different. Even though Black History month is the shortest month it still gives us a chance to remember where we were and where we are now. Sharing and learning who we are is what we do at this time of year. We learn from new things; remember old things and we celebrate them all.

— Theresa Davis



This for Black History month 2021 I remember political trailblazers in the black community who paved the way for others. In politics we can look at congress women Barbara Jordan of Texas who's auditory impressed us during the water gate hearings and at democratic national conventions in 1976. She along with congress women Shirley Chisolm of NY first woman to run for president paved the political footpath for Vice president Kamala Harris who is serving in office today. Those outspoken voices from the past have encouraged the 2021 political voices of congress woman such as Alexandra-Ocasio Cortez of the Bronx and congress woman and chair of the congressional black caucus Joyce Beatty of Ohio.

— James H. Johnson, Jr.



What Black History means to me...It reconnects me to the mother land Africa. It reminds me of my lost heritage and hidden history. Born and raised in South Carolina it keeps me focused on continuous struggles of human and civil rights. Yes, the aftermath of slavery and systemic racism are present in the 21st century. Yes, we had a biracial present and now a multi-racial black Vice president of the United States, however the future looks promising if we stay course to become united as equal Americans.

— Dorothy Ross-Thompson

Black History Committee: I enjoy the Black History Committee it gave me reason to come to the city. The information shared was always a pleasure and discussion of culture. The friendships made are a treasure. Thank you to the Union and Black History Committee.

— Cornnis Crawford

Know your history: 14th Amendment-1868 granted citizenship to all persons on or naturalized in the United States. 15th Amendment-the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race.

— Nubia Imani Beazer





by Mitch Goldberg
Director of the Retiree Benefit Fund

Optical Benefit Changes

In an ongoing effort to improve the benefits, the Board of Trustees of the Teamsters Local 237 Retirees' Benefit Fund is pleased to announce the following optical benefit change.

Effective April 1, 2021, for all retirees, General Vision Services (GVS) will be added as an optical vendor. Outside of the NY metropolitan area, where Davis Optical has been offered as our In-Network provider, Davis will be replaced by GVS. For those in the NY metropolitan area, Comprehensive Professional Systems will remain a vendor choice and GVS will also now be available as a vendor choice as well. All retirees will soon be receiving a mailing from GVS explaining the benefit being offered. For those outside of the NY metropolitan area, we will still offer a reimbursement for services and materials. ■

Correction: In the July/August 2020 issue of Retiree News and Views article entitled Support from Aetna for those taking specialty drugs. We recently learned the care coordination program is no longer in existence.

| EVERY 24 MONTHS | GVS NY Retirees | GVS All other states |
|---|------------------------|----------------------|
| Exam: | | |
| Dilation, when professionally indicated. | Covered | Covered |
| Frames: | | |
| GVS Collection Frame..... | \$200 | \$200 |
| Non-Collection Frame | \$200 | \$200 |
| Lenses: | | |
| Single Vision | Included | Included |
| Bifocal | Included | Included |
| Trifocal | Included | Included |
| Oversize | Included | Included |
| Standard Progressive..... | Included | \$75 |
| Premium Progressive..... | \$80 | \$105 |
| Deluxe Progressive | \$120 | \$145 |
| Materials: | | |
| Plastic | Included | Included |
| Polycarbonate for kids (up to age 19) | Included | Included |
| Polycarbonate - Single Vision | Included | Included |
| Hi-Index..... | Included | Included |
| Coatings: | | |
| Tints | Included | Included |
| Ultraviolet..... | Included | Included |
| Scratch Resistant..... | Included | Included |
| Plastic Photosensitive (single vision) | \$65 | \$65 |
| Plastic Photosensitive (Bifocal) | \$95 | \$95 |
| Polarized - Single Vision | \$95 | \$95 |
| Anti-reflective Standard Coating..... | \$40 | \$40 |
| Anti-reflective Premium Coating..... | \$90 | \$90 |
| Contact Lenses: | | |
| Plan Contact Lenses | Up to 6 months | Up to 6 months |
| Plan Contact Lens Evaluation, Fitting & Follow-Up Visits..... | Included | Included |
| Non-Plan Contact Lens (excluding colored) | \$150 credit | \$150 credit |
| Non-Plan Contact Lens Evaluation, Fitting & Follow-Up Visits..... | \$50 Copay | \$50 Copay |
| Out of Network Reimbursement: | In-Network ONLY | Up to \$150 |



by Mary E. Sheridan, Esq.
Director of Local 237 Legal Services Plan

Rent and Foreclosure Protections for New Yorkers

Gov. Cuomo has signed the COVID-19 Emergency Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2020. Among other things, the Act provides for a moratorium on residential evictions until May 1, 2021. To qualify for the stay of eviction, tenants must complete a hardship affidavit stating they have been financially affected by the pandemic. The financial hardship could be caused by a reduction in income and/or an increase in costs due to the pandemic. This affidavit should be sent to your landlord and you should keep a copy. Your Legal Services Plan is posting a link to the Hardship Affidavit on the Union's website.

The eviction moratorium also provides for health-related hardship for those 65 and older, disabled or suffering from underlying conditions which place one at greater risk for severe illness or risk of death due to COVID-19 if forced to move.

A tenant will not be protected from eviction where the tenant causes a health and safety hazard or persistently and substantially infringes on the use and enjoyment of other tenants.

The landlord must send the hardship affidavit with any rent demand. And, if the tenant provides a hardship affidavit, the landlord can not commence a new eviction proceeding until after May 1, 2021. For cases already pending, the tenant can not be evicted for nonpayment before May 1, 2021.

The stay in eviction does NOT mean that your rent obligation is forgiven. You will still owe the rent so remember to keep good records of your payments.

There are similar protections for foreclosures. Where owners of less than 10 residential properties, along with their primary residence, are behind on their mortgage payments, no new foreclosure actions can be commenced until after May 1, 2021 where the homeowner completes a hardship affidavit. For cases already pending, foreclosures are stayed for at least 60 days.

The Act additionally prohibits credit discrimination and negative credit reporting against property owners seeking credit because of a stay in foreclosure or where there are arrears owed and the owner has filed a hardship affidavit.

Another new development relates to the Senior Citizen Homeowner Exemption (SCHE) for property taxes. The law mandates a carryover of the 2020 exemption into 2021. SCHE provides senior citizens 65 and older with reduced property taxes where there is a combined income of up to \$58,399 per year. This applies for homeowners of 1, 2 or 3 family homes, condominiums or coop apartments. You can apply online at nyc.gov or download the necessary form.

Separately, there is an Executive Order that bans late fees on rent payments and also allows use of security deposits for back rent payments, providing for pay back over time.

NYCHA or Section 8 residents can apply for an interim recertification where work hours have been cut or you have lost your job. NYCHA is not requiring document back up for this process and tenants can apply for the interim recertification through an on-line portal.

As always, remember you have a Legal Services Plan! We can be reached at (212) 924-2000 during the pandemic. Our email addresses are on the Union website at local237.org ■



by Luz Nieves-Carty
MPA
Assistant to the Director,
Retiree Division

St. Valentine's Day, Diabetes and Covid19

During this pandemic, underlying conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes are constantly mentioned. However, knowing about these diseases and treating them has always been important. The New York City Health Commissioner encourages us to continue to visit the doctors and get treatment. Diabetes, especially, is important to manage because it can lead to complications which include the other conditions. So, with Valentine's Day chocolates on our minds, we ask... are YOU too sweet?

Diabetes is a deadly disease that kills more than 350,000 people each year. According to the Center for Disease Control's 2020 Statistic Report, over 34 million Americans are affected by diabetes, and over 88 million have prediabetes but do not know they have it. If you are living with diabetes, there are things you can do to help you manage it. You should begin with diabetes education. The American Diabetes Association's website, www.diabetes.org, offers diabetes education, articles and recipes in various languages. You can also call them at 1-800-Diabetes or 1-800-342-2382. It is important to learn the facts and live a lifestyle that is healthy and active.

Here are a few Facts & Figures:

Seniors have more diabetes than any other age group - 25 percent of those over age 60 have diabetes.

- Prediabetes occurs when a person's blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough for a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes.

- Type 2 diabetes occurs because the body cannot properly use the insulin it makes.
- Being overweight or obese is a leading risk factor for developing type 2 diabetes treating diabetes more difficult.
- Older adults with diabetes often have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, erectile dysfunction and infections that heal slowly.
- Older adults with diabetes are at risk for heart attacks, stroke and kidney failure.
- Seniors with diabetes are also more likely to have memory problems, depression and difficulty with diabetes self-care.

Diabetes can be managed by simply eating healthier, exercising and having a good medical team. Sounds easy right? Well, we know it's not. Especially, when we are told to stay indoors and social distance. However, there are action steps you can do. Cooking can be fun if you experiment with different recipes, spices and methods of cooking. Try baking, slow cooking or lightly pan frying. Exercising can be fun with YouTube workout videos online or dancing to your favorite classics. Reach out to others and stay connected. Make a list of 25 people you are grateful for and surprise them with a call.

The American Diabetes Association's website also has helpful information on how the COVID-19 impacts people with diabetes. According to the American Diabetes Association, there is not enough data that says people with diabetes are more likely to get COVID-19. However, if your diabetes is not managed you can get severely sick. COVID-19 symptoms can include fever, chills, cough, fatigue, headaches, sore throat, and new loss of taste and smell. If you feel that you are experiencing these symptoms call your doctor. According to the CDC, you should seek medical attention immediately if you have symptoms such as shortness of breath, chest pains, confusion, inability to stay awake and bluish lips or face. Contact your doctor immediately.

Yes, our world has changed. How we do things has changed. However, we are Teamsters! We are strong Brotherhood/Sisterhood. Always remember the Retiree division is here with you, and together we will all get through this time. Stay well, stay healthy and Happy Valentine's Day! ■

África en Puerto Rico: apuntes para conocerte mejor

Por Néstor Murray-Irizarry
historiador y gestor cultural



Néstor Murray-Irizarry
Photo by George Malave

I — En la década de 1990, un joven descendiente de afropuertorriqueños y de alemanes, nacido en Santurce, de nombre Alfonso Arturo Schomburg (1874-1938), emigró a Nueva York. Allí realizó, una encomiable labor cultural en beneficio de la herencia africana, particularmente de su historia. Con el paso de los años hizo un acopio de materiales y objetos tan valiosos, que organizó una colección tan importante que la Biblioteca de Nueva York la adquirió junto a otros documentos y publicaciones y establecieron el conocido Centro de Investigación Schomburg (Schomburg Center For Research in Black Culture (1925) en Harlem. Schomburg fue un gran investigador, escritor y activista puertorriqueño. El Centro es un excelente lugar para estudiar y analizar todo el caudal de conocimientos sobre el legado africano y de sus descendientes en el mundo. Sin embargo, hoy quiero destacar solo unos apuntes generales de la cultura africana que deben servir de guías para entender el comportamiento de los puertorriqueños. Veamos.

II — A través de la historia mundial la esclavitud ha sido, una causa de difusión de la cultura y el comercio de esclavos entre África y las Américas y ha resultado ser uno de los más interesantes ejemplos de aculturación. El hombre negro ya estaba en España antes de la conquista americana, así que los primeros negros en el Nuevo Mundo trajeron consigo una formación hispánica (Tompkins, 2010).

Por otro lado, en Puerto Rico los conquistadores y más tarde los hacendados y propietarios, introdujeron los esclavos negros para sustituir a los indios esclavizados y mermados por el gran sufrimiento que les produjo la cantidad de horas de trabajo sin descanso y las condiciones más deplorables de una vida sin esperanza. Se cree que el elemento esclavo de origen afro y sus descendientes solo trabajaron en la costa y en las haciendas de caña de azúcar. Además, se piensa que en el interior del país no hubo esclavos. Son premisas fal-

sas. Explico.

Las islas del Caribe, como producto de la conquista, fueron las primeras tierras en ser azotadas, en todos los sentidos, por la explotación minera, en primer lugar y luego por la explotación de la tierra. La caña de azúcar fue el principal cultivo. Los esclavos africanos y sus herederos, fueron en Puerto Rico, durante los siglos XVII, XVIII y XIX de la conquista europea, la gran fuerza económica de producción de riqueza. Hubo una gran época en nuestro país que el elemento poblacional negro superaba por mucho a los blancos. Claro se dice que no hay duda de que el puertorriqueño es una mezcla de razas. Pero esta aseveración es más compleja de lo que se habla popularmente. En mi país el estudio de la emigración aún comienza. Hay que hacer una investigación más profunda en lo que se refiere a la emigración.

La esclavitud constituyó, en nuestro país, una de las dos formas de producción predominantes, particularmente en el siglo XIX. El sistema de producción que prevaleció en gran parte del siglo XIX se caracterizó en esencia por la coexistencia de dos modos de producción: feudalismo y esclavitud. (Mayo Santana-Negrón Potillo, 1997) Según estos autores la reconstrucción histórica del sistema esclavista en Puerto Rico es una tarea fundamental, tanto para *aprender el sistema como para comprender cabalmente la formación social puertorriqueña del presente*. Hubo esclavos en la costa y en el interior del país.

Considero que estas tres últimas afirmaciones son las más importantes. También hubo esclavos urbanos que se dedicaron a realizar trabajos para otros propietarios, con el aval de sus amos, quienes recibían un gran por ciento de sus ingresos. Para conocernos como país y como personas tenemos que estudiar el sistema esclavista y sus consecuencias. Para esta asignación, al final de este artículo, les recomiendo algunos libros.

III — Siempre suele relacionarse al esclavo con la música. Eso no deja de ser cierto. Sin embargo, no fue su único legado. La verdad es más complicada que esa aseveración. Nos dejaron una cultura, una forma de visualizar el mundo, un comportamiento y una razón de vivir y de ser libres. Hay algo psicológico y sociológico en su gran legado. Su huella nos permite estudiar su léxico y su cocina.

Palabras como **cocolia** [cangrejo]; **bembe** [labio grueso]; **dengue** [enfermedad], **monga** [gripe]; **cocoroco** [persona de mucha importancia], **changa** [persona mala o antisocial], **cheche** [valentón o persona que se cree gran cosa], **chévere** [persona buena atenta o se refiere a que una actividad fue muy buena], **macaco** [persona que se cree que es muy bonita], **mongo** [perezoso, flojo], **ñangotarse** [ponerse en cuclillas];

entre las **comidas** podemos enumerar las siguientes: **calalú** [vegetales picados y cocidos], **fufu** [viandas o vegetales hervidos], **funche** [harina de maíz leche, azúcar, sal y mantequilla], **marifinga** [sinónimo de funche], **mofongo** [plátano verde frito y majado] **tostón** [plátano verde frito]; entre varios **dulces** se destacan: **bombotó** [torta hecha con harina de trigo y azúcar negra], **pon** [pudding]; Bebidas: **sambumbia** [bebida o comida mal preparada], **mamplé** [ron clandestino], entre otros. (Álvarez Nazario, 1974) Vivamos muy orgullosos de nuestra herencia afro puertorriqueña.

Libros recomendados:

Manuel Álvarez Nazario. *El elemento afronegroide en el español de Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1974.

Raúl Mayo Santana y otros. *Cadenas de esclavitud, y de solidaridad...*: Río Piedras. UPR, 1997.

William D. Tompkins. *Las tradiciones musicales de los negros de la costa del Perú*. CEMDUC-CUT, 2011. ■



HEART HEALTH

by Edith Johnston, LCSW
Assistant Director, Retiree Division



February is
**AMERICAN
HEART
MONTH**

Because February is Heart Health Month, I would like to discuss the importance of taking care of your heart. I will give you a few easy tips that you can use on your daily routine that are very important to have a healthy heart.

It is a well-known fact that heart disease is the #1 cause of death in the United States, and you could be at risk. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) offers some very important information on what you can do to take care of your heart, from diet and exercise to the importance of knowing your family history and changing some of your habits such as smoking and drinking. I will provide a link at the end of this article to visit their webpage. However, in this article I would like to note how maintaining long-lasting relationships/friendships, trying to stay away from stress, and having a hobby can also help you have a healthy heart.

FRIENDSHIPS: A Swedish study of more than 13,600 men and women found that having few to no close friendships increases the chance of the first heart attack by 50%. According to this study, people who have more friends are less likely to suffer from a heart attack. This should give us an incentive to cultivate our relationships with friends.

People oftentimes disconnect from friends once they retire, especially friends from work. However, retirees should take advantage of the extra time they have to spend more time with friends, strengthen old relationships, and create new relationships. You're

never too old to start building a circle of friends. My aunt started to attend her local senior center when she was 75 years old, and she was pleasantly surprised by all the new relationships she was able to establish. She started to participate in different activities, clubs and committees. Additionally, she started to see her new friends outside the senior center. They met for walks, to celebrate birthdays and now through the pandemic they support each other by phone.

If you're married, have a date night with your spouse. Think of the days when you were raising a family and had full time jobs; you probably couldn't go out as often as you would have wanted, but those days are behind, and it's time to enjoy each other's company.

STRESS: Stress is associated with cardiovascular disease. There are multiple activities that can help you reduce the stress in your life, such as taking a walk, listening to relaxing music (which can be different music for different people), saying no if you're feeling overwhelmed (it's OK to say no when someone asks you to do something for them), breathing exercises, or disconnecting from technology for a few hours per day. However, in order to relax, it is important to be aware of your feeling and emotions. When you know what's happening with you, you will know what you need to do to relax and reduce the stress or stressors in your life.

HOBBIES: Having a hobby or hobbies can reduce stress, and therefore the risk of cardiovascular



disease. Find something that you enjoy doing. Traveling is a wonderful hobby, painting, collecting cards or stamps, visiting museums. There is no limit to the possibilities, but most importantly, it has to be something you enjoy, something that gives you joy and does not feel like a chore.

Enjoy life, have fun, and take care of you heart! ■

Please visit the following links to get more information on how to take care of your heart.

<https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/infographic/hearthealth.htm>

<https://consumer.healthday.com/encyclopedia/emotional-health-17/psychology-and-mental-health-news-566/health-benefits-of-friendship-648397.html#:~:text=Friendship%20and%20the%20heart,attack%20b%20about%2050%20percent>

<https://www.bustle.com/articles/157609-11-things-you-can-do-today-to-reduce-stress-in-your-life>

<https://www.heart.org/en/news/2020/10/07/your-pandemic-hobby-might-be-doing-more-good-than-you-know>

on a personal note...

In Memoriam

To the family of retiree **Providencia Colon**, we extend our sympathy. Ms. Colon, a retired NYCHA Caretaker, passed away December 13, 2020. Ms. Colon was adored by many. She will be deeply missed.



RETIREE news & views

216 West 14th Street
New York, NY 10011



PERIODICALS
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RETIREE'S CORNER

Seeing Double



Twin Sisters – **Sheila Nored** and **Shirley Smith** retired from the City agencies. Sheila, pictured in yellow, retired from School Safety in 2018 and Shirley retired from NYC Housing Authority in 2019.

Affiliate of



JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021



From the Retiree Division staff:
**Susan, Julie, Edith,
Luz, Shavon, Noeila**

A RETIREES POINT OF VIEW ON THE COVID-19 VACCINE

by **Jesse Kasowitz**

Retired Attorney

As a retiree, you probably qualify for the 65 and up- 1B age group, that makes you eligible for Covid vaccination. As we know from watching the news, the vaccines have been largely unavailable to us. I learned by way of rumor (a friend of a friend) that Beth Israel Hospital was offering vaccinations to the 1B Group. I went there immediately and was able to sign up. As it turned out, the very next day the hospital ran out of doses and I was unable to assist two vulnerable friends. One of them had Parkinsons and Asthma; and the other a liver transplant.

In any event, the vaccines are now likely to become available increasingly. I recommend that you get vaccinated. The vaccines are safe. True that they were approved quickly by the FDA. Nonetheless, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were tested extensively before their approval. I've now received both doses. I had a mild reaction to the 2nd Pfizer dose. I had mild pain in my arm from the needle. I felt knocked out, tired and slightly nauseous, for the two days following. Now I feel fine. My 95% immunity will kick in two weeks from now.

It's true that it will be less effective against 3 new variants/mutations of Covid. Nonetheless, even against these, there is at least a 2/3 immunity; and if a vaccinated patient contracts the variant, it will be less virulent, less sickening. You'll be unlikely to get hospitalized or become very sick.

After vaccination, it will continue to be necessary to mask and distance, but there will be a difference. Your fear will diminish. You'll be less fearful of grocery shopping, dental care, or of getting together with relatives and friends, once they are also vaccinated. So get vaccinated. Do it for yourself, and do it for all of us. In this small way, we can help with the race to achieve "herd immunity," and finally put an end to this curse of a pandemic. ■



If you would like to share your COVID-19 Vaccination picture with us to be highlighted in the next issue of the Retiree News and Views please email us at retirees2@local237.org

Attention NYC Veterans

VA New York Harbor Healthcare System is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners to provide COVID-19 vaccines to Veterans and VA health care personnel.

At this time, VA New York Harbor is offering the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine to **Veterans 65 years of age and older currently enrolled in VA Healthcare.**

The vaccine is being administered at the following locations by appointment only:

- Manhattan VA Medical Center
- Brooklyn VA Medical Center
- St. Albans Community Living Center
- Staten Island Community VA Clinic

Eligible Veterans must schedule an appointment by calling
1-877-877-9267

Veterans who are not yet enrolled in VA Healthcare may visit www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply/ or call 877-222-8387 for more information on how to apply.

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

To our Retirees in Florida

We have received several letters regarding rescheduling of the Florida Conference. Unfortunately given the current health pandemic we cannot secure a date at this time for the safety of all of us. We will reschedule when we can. If you should have questions about your benefits, feel free to call us at 212-807-0555 and leave a message with the answering service and someone from the retiree division will return your call or send your questions via email to retirees2@local237.org ■

