



BLACK History MONTH

“Knowing the Past
Opens the Door to the Future:
The Continuing Importance of
Black History Month”

Lonnie G. Bunch III
AN AMERICAN EDUCATOR AND HISTORIAN



Mae Carol Jemison is an American engineer, physician, and former NASA astronaut. She became the first black woman to travel into space when she served as a mission specialist aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavor.

“I rejected the notion that my race or sex would bar my success in life.” —Constance Baker Motley



Constance Baker Motley was the first African American woman to argue a case before the Supreme Court, be elected to the New York state senate, and be appointed a federal judge. Motley broke racial and gender barriers throughout her career while fighting for the civil rights of all Americans.



Legacy explorer Matthew Henson, along with Robert Edwin Peary and four Inuit assistants, were the first human beings to set foot on the North Pole, in 1909—a feat that took the pair nearly 18 years to accomplish. Not only was Henson one of the first men to arrive in the Arctic, but he was also the first African-American man to do so.



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s words and actions still resonate with us today and continue to inspire us.
Though there is much work that needs to be done, we can draw from our history to create a better future together.
We are powerful, together.

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”





by Gregory Floyd

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

February is Black History Month. It's a time to celebrate and educate. It's a time to acknowledge the accomplishments, delight in a rich heritage and retell the history of a people too often forgotten, mistreated, and misunderstood. The originators of the idea for a Black history celebration were historians Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, and his associate, Jesse E. Moorland. They created the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915, to promote black history and recognize achievements of African-Americans. But they knew that was not enough. As Woodson argued, "If a race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition; it is a negligible factor in the thoughts of the world and stands in danger of being exterminated." So, in 1926, they launched "Negro History Week", on

A Message From The President

February is Black History Month. It's not about validation, it's about involvement – it's about action

the second week of February, because both President Abraham Lincoln's and abolitionist Frederick Douglass' birthdays coincided. But it took 50 years for the week to become a month when President Gerald Ford created Black History Month in 1976.

Today, Black History Month is not without controversy. To some critics, the argument goes that empowerment is not accomplished by one month of recognition. Some find it outdated, only symbolic, not necessary, and even separatist. For me, there is no controversy. Black History Month is not about validation, it's about involvement; it's about action. It's both a time of recognition and a call to duty. In labor unions, there's an important organizing principle used to increase our numbers, demonstrate power and harvest our next generation of unionists—which is applicable here. Especially in order to grow a cadre of potential leaders who will take us to the next plateau, we must inspire and excite young people. We must also remember and thank those who have led the way with words and actions that changed history. Surely, there is tremendous

wisdom in the words of Winston Churchill, who said: "Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

The celebration of February as Black History Month should not be about avoiding mistakes, but instead, about creating more accomplishments, breaking more barriers, and earning the respect of all people. And, in keeping with the tradition of February as the month for acknowledging "The Best" in many categories — from the Super Bowl to the Grammy Awards — let's use the occasion to honor our own list of "Best In Class" and work to add more names to it. For sure, the list is already long with many giants and "firsts" past and present, including among them Dr. King, President Barack Obama, Justice of the Supreme Court, Ketanji Brown Jackson, and Congressman and Chairman of the Democratic Caucus, Hakeem Jeffries. But Black History Month — which remembers the past, celebrates the present and looks to the future — should also be a time that helps to motivate, mentor, and nurture our next generation of champions in the struggle for social and labor justice. ■

A Message From The Director

Looking for information? The Retiree Division has you covered

For this issue I would like to answer a few frequently asked questions from retirees. My hope is that this will help retirees who may be thinking about the same questions. Your questions are extremely important to us and we learn from all of you on a daily basis.

I'M A NEW RETIREE, DO MY BENEFITS CHANGE?

Below is an abbreviated list of benefits:

- **Dental:** annual cap/ yr of \$1250 for member and each eligible family member. *Provider: Health Plex 1-800-468-0600*
- **Optical:** Eyeglasses and exam once every two years for member and each family member. *Provider: CPS Optical 212-675-5745*, For retirees out of NYC Metro area you have two options:
 - 1) Reimbursement for service: \$45 exam, \$105 for materials or \$120 allowance for contact lenses out of network
 - 2) General Vision Services 1800-847-4661
- **Hearing:** Hearing aid \$1000 once every 5 years. *Provider: CPS Hearing 212-675-5745*
- **Death Benefit:** \$2500 is paid on behalf of the member only and will be paid to the person named as a beneficiary.

DO I PAY UNION DUES ONCE I RETIRE?

Once you retire you no longer pay union dues.

I HAVE QUESTIONS REGARDING MY PENSION. FOR EXAMPLE, I MOVED OR WANT TO CHANGE TO DIRECT DEPOSIT.

You must contact the pension system, either NYCERS 1-347-643-3000 or BERS 1-929-305-3800.

I MOVED, WHO SHOULD I CONTACT?

Please contact the following offices:

Social Security 1-800-772-1213

Local 237 Retirees' Benefit Fund 1-212-924-7220

Pension System NYCERS 1-347-643-3000 or BERS 1-929-305-3800

Office of Labor Relations 1-212-513-0470

WHO SHOULD I CALL IF I HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE RELATED QUESTIONS?

Retirees should reach out to the Office of Labor Relations at 212-513-0470; you can also email healthbenefits@olr.nyc.gov

WHO SHOULD I CALL IF I DID NOT RECEIVE MY MEDICARE PART B REIMBURSEMENT?

Retirees should reach out to the Office of Labor Relations at 212-513-0470; you can also email healthbenefits@olr.nyc.gov

I WILL BE MEDICARE ELIGIBLE SOON. WHAT SHOULD I DO? HOW DO I ENROLL IN THE MEDICARE PART B REIMBURSEMENT?

Retirees should reach out to the Office of Labor Relations at 212-513-0470; you can also email healthbenefits@olr.nyc.gov

As always, the Retiree Division is here to help with any questions you may have. If you would like frequently asked questions to be a regular topic in Retiree News and Views, please call the Retiree Division with your questions at 212-807-0555 or email retirees2@local237.org with the subject line "Frequently asked questions". ■



by Julie Kobi LMSW
Director of the
Retiree Division

RETIREE news & views

Retiree News & Views (USPS 013028) is published Bi-Monthly by the Retiree Division of Local 237, International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Periodicals Postage is paid at New York, NY. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Retiree News & Views at 216 West 14th Street, New York, NY 10011-7296. 212-807-0555, retirees@local237.org, www.local237.org

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Legal Fringe Benefits and IRS form W-2

by **Mitch Goldberg**
Director of the Retiree Benefit Fund

Each year at the end of January the Office of Payroll Administration issues W-2's to all retirees. Once these are received, the Fund office as well as the Retirees' Division starts receiving calls regarding the Legal Fringe Benefit. Hopefully I can answer why you received the IRS Form W-2 with my narrative.

Legal service benefits are available to you through the Legal Services Division established by the Trustees of the Fund. This plan of benefits has been established to provide a wide range of legal services at no cost to you. Under Section 61 of the Internal Revenue Service Code, Legal Service Fringe Benefits are considered income subject to Federal employment taxes (Income, Social Security (FICA) and Medicare). Accordingly, the amount of this benefit must be incorporated into a W-2 Wage and Tax statement. For tax year 2022 the calculated benefit cost was \$86.11. Under an agreement with the City of New York, the Fund reimburses the City for the FICA and Medicare taxes they paid related to this benefit: \$5.34 and \$1.25 as reported in boxes 4 and 6 respectively on your W-2 IRS Form. Although those taxes have been paid on your behalf under our agreement with the City of New York, the value of that benefit is considered income and that is why you received the W-2 and must report this on your tax form.

Since I'm addressing the W-2, let me also explain box 12A which represents the value of the Health Benefits provided to you by the City of New York. You will recognize this because it has a "DD" Code and then a dollar amount in the box alongside this code. This is informational only and has no effect on your taxes. ■



New Year's Resolutions

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

Have you ever wondered why most New Year's resolutions and goals are forgotten before spring starts? Despite the best of intentions, once the glow of a fresh new year wears off, many people struggle to make good on their plans. According to a study published in the Journal of Clinical Psychology, **only 46% of people who made New Year's resolutions were successful.** That means over half of the people who set a goal for the new year will fail!

Some of the top New Year's resolutions are: Exercise more, lose weight, get organized, learn a new skill or hobby, live life to the fullest, save more money/spend less money, quit smoking, spend more time with family and friends, travel more and read more.

If you are setting up a New Year's resolution or goal, make sure that it is manageable, write it down, and include the how and why. Find a way to hold yourself accountable for meeting your goal. This can be as simple as writing daily reminders to yourself to do what you resolved to do. Sharing your resolution/goal with others can be very helpful in achieving it. Find someone that you trust and make that person your partner. Years ago, I decided that I wanted to run a marathon. It was a big New Year's resolution. I started by reading about marathons and marathon training. I found a good outline and started my training at 12am on New Year's Day. I had two wonderful running partners and we helped each other to stay on track. By September of that year, we ran our first marathon. I discovered that outlining a plan of action will give you an opportunity to review the steps you need to succeed. ■



Let's talk about Medicare

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

HERE'S SOME GENERAL INFORMATION:

You are eligible for Medicare Part B if:

- You turn 65 years old
- You have been receiving Social Security Disability for 24 months, If you're receiving Social Security Disability, you will be eligible for Medicare Part B about 24 months from your first payment.
- If you're receiving Social Security when you turn 65 years old, the Social Security Administration will send you a Medicare card 3 months before your birthday.
- If you're NOT receiving Social Security, you will need to apply for Medicare Part B three months before your 65th birthday.

You must accept your Medicare Part B... UNLESS... You're still working, or you're covered by a working spouse's health insurance.

If you **are** receiving social security the Social Security Administration deducts a monthly premium from your social security check.

If you **are not** receiving Social Security- you will be billed by Social Security to pay the premium usually 3 months at a time.

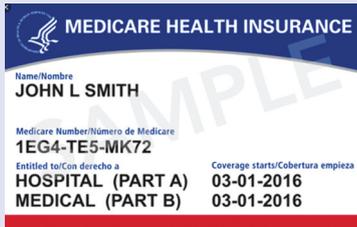
Once you submit a copy of your Medicare card to the Office of Labor Relations, you will be enrolled in the Medicare Reimbursement Program. A Medicare eligible spouse can also enroll in the Medicare Part B reimbursement program. You will receive an annual lump sum reimbursement for the premiums paid in the previous year usually in the spring.

(Note: For the Medicare Part B reimbursement program- you must be receiving city health coverage to be eligible.)

You must also provide a copy of your Medicare card to the union either in person or via mail at 216 West 14th street NY, NY 10011 Attn: Welfare Fund or via email at welfareinfo@local237.org.

For information about Medicare Part B Reimbursement- visit the Office of Labor Relations Health Benefit Program's website <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/olr/index.page>. Click on Health Benefits, then click on Retiree.

If you should have any questions, please feel free to call the Retiree Division at 212-807-0555.



RETIREE ON THE MOVE... IT'S NEVER TO LATE

Chiao-chung Chen, retired in 2011 from HHC. Mr. Chen is 80 years old and is currently enrolled in an online Master's Degree program for Computer Science through Georgia Tech. Mr. Chen reported he has had an affinity for learning for many years. He reported studying computers at different stages in his life. Mr. Chen: You are truly an inspiration to all of us and we wish you well on your studies.





You've Been Served With A Consumer Debt Summons – Now What?

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

Director of Local 237 Legal Services Plan

It can be a frightening and overwhelming experience to be served with a consumer debt summons. A summons is a legal document that orders you to appear in court to answer a lawsuit brought against you by someone or a company who claims you owe them money. It is important to take a summons seriously and take the necessary steps to protect your rights.

The first step is to understand what the summons is and what it means. A consumer debt summons is a formal notice from the court that you are being sued for a debt. It will include the name of the company who is suing you, the amount of money they claim you owe, and the court's address. The summons will also include instructions on how to respond to the lawsuit.

When you receive a summons, it is important to take action as soon as possible. You must file an answer to the summons with the court within 20 or 30 days, depending on how you were served. An answer is a written document that explains why you don't owe the money or why you believe the amount is incorrect. It can also contain affirmative defenses such as improper service, lack of standing and a claim that the statute of limitations has run and the case should be dismissed. Failure to respond to the summons could result in a default judgment against you.

Many people can not afford to hire an attorney in debt cases, but as a Local 237 retiree, you are eligible for free representation provided the case is in one of the 11 New York Counties covered by the Legal Services Plan. An attorney can help you understand your rights and obligations, draft an appropriate answer to the summons and complaint, and represent you in court if necessary.

It is important to remember that a summons does not mean you have to pay the debt. It is a legal document requiring you to appear in court and explain your defenses. Having an attorney is crucial to obtaining the best result in any given circumstance. Your attorney may be able to obtain a dismissal of the case or if not, work out a reasonable payment plan for you and avoid the issuance of a judgment.

Being served with a lawsuit for consumer debt can be a stressful and intimidating experience. However, it is important to understand your rights and act as soon as possible. Call your Legal Services Plan for more information and representation when needed (212) 924-1220. ■



La Afrodecendencia y la Educacion

Por **Néstor Murray-Irizarry**

Historiador y gestor cultural

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En 1956 el presidente de Colombia, Gustavo Rojas Pinillas, ordeno una nueva impresión, pagada con *fondos del Estado*, de la magna obra *El Mundo de la esclavitud negra en América*, del ingenioso y laborioso, y una de las figuras de más apasionante interés de los siglos XVI y XVII: el Padre Alonso de Sandoval, S.J. (1576 - 1652)

El libro sirvió de texto a los misioneros que trabajaban con negros esclavizados, y sobre todo fue la obra inspiradora que siguió al pie de la letra el gran apóstol de los esclavizados, *Pedro Claver*. Tal era la estima que tenía este libro, que existen varias referencias del General de los jesuitas que contesta a la petición urgente de *Claver* de que se publicara esta obra que él consideraba *de gran gloria de Dios*. El influjo de *Sandoval* sobre *Claver* fue definitivo.

Todo el apostolado con los negros, su metodología práctica, el espíritu que lo animo lo que hoy se pudiera llamar sociología aplicada, se lo debe Pedro Claver a Sandoval. Las ideas y las tácticas de Sandoval, se hicieron carne y sangre en la acción de Claver. Eran el uno para el otro. Sandoval al educar a Claver logro un discípulo que ayudaría a reducir la otros, y así crear conciencia, sobre la necesidad de abolir la esclavitud en América. Por esa razón, a la luz del libro del Padre Sandoval, se puede construir fielmente el proceso de los trabajos que hizo Claver con los negros esclavizados.

Es un tema apasionante. Durante muchos años y en la historia de la libertad humana no se había dado el realce que merecía el Padre Alonso de Sandoval. Algunos estudiosos opinan que el Padre Sandoval, a diferencia del defensor de los indios esclavizados, no tenía las exageraciones y apasionamientos, que tuvo el Monje Bartolomé de Las Casas.

Los estudiosos del tema de los afros esclavizados consideran al sacerdote como un *genio abierto, de virtud muy llana, sin el temor artificio ni doblez, y de una gran constancia en sus resoluciones*.

El padre Sandoval, quien nació en Sevilla, hijo de Tristán Sánchez, natural de Toledo y de María Figueroa. Tuvieron siete hijos, y todos fueron religiosos. Estudió en el seminario de San Martín de Lima y pronto sintió la vocación de Dios. Entró en la Compañía de Jesús en 1593.

El Padre Sandoval fue siempre un gran apóstol. Era un gran observador y tuvo ese instinto de lo concreto; gracias a él tenemos una fiel descripción del mundo negro, su especialidad, sino también del elemento indígena de las regiones del Urabá en Colombia.

En misión apostólica recorrió en diversas ocasiones el litoral atlántico, llegando a Santa Marta, donde dio una misión de veinte días. También visitó las agrestes tierras de Antioquia, Remedios, Cáceres y Zaragoza.

A los negros consagro su vida apostólica, y bajo la protección de la Virgen llamada Milagro, que también le regalaron en Zaragoza, su vida fue fecunda.

Su genio era impulsivo y ardiente; y tuvo contradicciones serias, especialmente a causa del problema de los bautismos. ¿Eran validos o inválidos los bautismos de aquellos infelices negros sobre los cuales derramaban muchas veces el agua allá en África sin que ellos tuvieran arte ni parte?

Una de las grandes dificultades mayores con que el Padre Sandoval tropezaba en la instrucción de estos negros, era la gran variedad de lenguas que ellos hablaban, y el venir todos tan rudos y bozales, que no entendían una sola palabra en español. El trabajo era rudo. El mismo Padre Sandoval confiesa que cuando oía la nueva llegada de un galeón negrero, su cuerpo temblaba y se estremecía.

Otra circunstancia que hacía muy trabajoso su ministerio de los negros esclavizados, eran las enfermedades contagiosas y el estado repugnante en que yacían muchas veces los catecúmenos.

Se narra que en 1611 habiendo llegado un navío de negros de Cabo Verde apesadado de viruelas, sarampión y tabardillo, las autoridades judiciales no les dejó entrar a la ciudad, para que no la infectasen. El Padre Sandoval trabajaba todo el tiempo, con situaciones similares.

El libro del Padre Sandoval es una obra monumental y es lectura obligada para toda persona que interese conocer de cerca la vida y la obra de los millones de individuos esclavizados en América. Es una obra de amor y compromiso con la libertad de los seres humanos. Fue el primero de todos en dedicarse con ardor al cuidado y catequización de los etíopes en esas regiones de América. Se le considera el primer apóstol de los negros. La educación vencerá, en parte, al racismo. ■

FEBRUARY IS HEART HEALTH MONTH



February 3, 2023 was National Wear Red Day. The Retiree Division wore red to raise awareness on heart disease. The Retiree Division provided literature on heart health. We will have literature available all month long.

Happy Valentines Day



In Memoriam



We pause to honor retirees we have lost this year.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all families and friends.

Gone but never forgotten.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW RETIREES



Evaristo Aldahondo (r), retired from NYC Department of Education after 43 years of service. He started as an Educational Facilities Officer then took the test to become a Special Officer for the Department of Education. Thank you for your service, and enjoy retirement. Pictured with **Jeanette Taveras**, Business Agent and Local 237's Recording Secretary.



Robert Rodriguez, retired from NYCHA on 1/1/23.

RETIREE news & views

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023

Are you moving?

To change your address, fill in the form below, cut it out, and mail it back to Retiree News & Views at the above address.

Name _____ ID# _____

New Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

New Telephone Number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

TEAMSTERS LOCAL 237

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