
THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

♦ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ♦ President: Amy Porter♦

April Forum

to be conducted via Zoom:

NOTE: Access details will be sent out and instruction on using Zoom will be available. See *President's Corner* inside for details.

Speakers:

GALE BREWER on Covid-19

&

JULIE MENIN on the Census

DATE: Thursday, April 16

TIME: 7 pm.

Please join us!

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Volume 45, Issue 4

April 2020

District Leaders' Report

Curtis Arluck & Paula Diamond Román

We are co-writing our report because we are writing in very unusual times. Covid-19 is affecting our lives in a previously unimaginable way. Things are being changed for us personally, as a community, and as a nation. Almost all of us now know someone, in some aspect of our life, who has been a victim of this pandemic, including long-time CB9 member Walter South, Comptroller Scott Stringer's mother Arlene Stringer-Cuevas, musicians and authors and train conductors and medical personnel and police officers, and various family members.

Unfortunately, the very fabric of our democracy has also taken a hit. We have had to struggle to protect the vulnerable among us, the homeless, the precariously housed, those living from paycheck to paycheck, and the food insecure. We have also had to struggle against an administration in Washington that promulgates misinformation, fires those brave enough to speak out, and pits the states against each other during a time of national emergency. We need to remain vigilant about all these issues and continue to fight as Democratic activists until the last victim of Covid-19 is safe.

Presidential Primary Postponed to June 23rd

The New York Democratic Primary for President has been combined with the primary for legislative and other offices and will be held on June 23rd. In our area, there will be contests in both the 10th (Nadler) and 13th (Espaillat) Congressional Districts, and the 31st (Jackson) State Senate District. 30th District Senator Brian Benjamin and 69th AD Assembly Member Danny O'Donnell, State Committee Members Dan Cohen and Lynn Thomas, and our Judicial Delegate/Alternate slate are all unopposed.

Congratulations to Brian, Danny, Dan and Lynn. Jerry, Adriano and Bob, we look forward to working for your re-election, virtually for now, and on the streets, we hope, in June.

But, What Kind of Election Will It Be?

As things now stand, the June 23rd primary will be held at the usual poll sites, and in the ten or so days prior to the election, there will be the opportunity to vote early. West Side High, 102nd Street, off Amsterdam, is the early voting site for virtually our entire area. But can in-person voting really take place with the coronavirus still so prevalent? Will poll workers, most of whom are over sixty, really want to jeopardize their health by working 15-hour days amongst hundreds, and in some cases a few thousand, strangers? Will voters be willing to take this risk? And, will the operators of the early voting sites, usually school officials, want their buildings to be used for voting for ten days, rather than just one?

Clearly, there must be greater access to absentee voting. But there are problems here as well. In New York, many of the impediments to enhanced absentee voting are embedded in our state Constitution, which cannot be amended until 2022. Right now, you can't get an absentee ballot unless you are ill, disabled, or will be out of town on election day. This would provide a pathway for people still symptomatic to vote by mail but what about everyone else?

Most election experts believe that coronavirus concerns are probably sufficient reasons to request an absentee ballot. But would the state be able to mail out Absentee Ballot Applications to every registered voter? This is not clear. And if voters, especially those who are ill, lower income or elderly, must go through a whole rigmarole to get their absentee ballots, will they vote at all? So, we need to spread the word, and to make it easier for them to get absentee ballots.

Then, there are the problems with the absentee ballots themselves. They must be sent out and later counted by Board of Elections employees, three of whom have already died of the virus, who are demoralized, understaffed, and disproportionately over the age of sixty. We need to make sure the BOE has the resources they require for this to be a viable alternative.

And, What Kind of Democracy Do We Have?

Electoral democracy has ceased to exist in any state governed by the Republican Party and is seriously eroded in every state where the Republican Party, which should be called the Voter Suppression Party (VSP), controls the Governorship or legislature. The President has admitted that his party cannot stay in power unless it suppresses the votes of groups likely to vote for Democrats. The VSP has already made it clear what this looks like in Wisconsin.

In a midnight legislative coup d'état, the Wisconsin Republican legislators drastically reduced the powers of the Governor just before the newly elected Democrat took office. In addition, they gerrymandered the districts so that a 46% share of the vote resulted in the VSP getting 63% of the Assembly seats, suppressed Democratic votes with voter ID laws based on their lies about voter fraud, and successfully fought to suppress absentee ballots cast by voters terrified about voting in person during the pandemic. All of this was then upheld entirely by the rulings of Republican-appointed judges in Madison and Washington.

This is a very bleak and scary picture. But our country, and democracies around the world, have survived worse threats. By working together, and focusing on the common enemy, we will do so again. Even as we shelter in our homes, we will not stop thinking about what's going on outside of them.



Norman Levine

Norman Levine, a long-time member of the Broadway Democrats and Morningside Heights communities, died on Tuesday evening. (Norm had been ill for a while and was home on hospice care.) Right up till his final illness, Norm was a vibrant,

important member of the Broadway Democrats, always staying true to his internal Lefty compass.

Norm was born in Poughkeepsie and moved to New York City when he was ten years old. He attended Bronx High School of Science and City College. Norm was a technician at CBS News for most of his career. He worked closely with Dan Rather, Walter Cronkite and Edward R. Murrow, among many others. He was a life-long member of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and a dedicated fighter for unions and workers' rights. A true techie, Norm worked the cameras at the first Super Bowl, was a ham radio operator, and set up early attempts at audio-visuals for our forums.

Even after Norm retired, he continued to work for his community. He was a long-time member of the Broadway Democrats' Steering Committee, as well as club treasurer. Norm also acted as a "water boy" for Curtis' 50th birthday 50K triathlon. He worked for Assemblyman Ed Sullivan as a community liaison. He volunteered with the Morningside Retirement and Health Services, helping to keep other seniors in their homes.

Norm often had a very uncomplicated approach to political issues, not because he lacked the sophisticated philosophical underpinnings but because his underpinnings were so well-established that right and wrong were usually very clear to him.

Norm and Joan were among the original cooperators in Morningside Gardens (MSG), a middle-class co-op development where they've lived since 1957. MSG is the neighbor of Grant Houses, a NYCHA housing development; Norm, along with Joan, welcomed that relationship.

In recent years, as housing prices rose, Norm entered the fray to maintain MSG as affordable home ownership for the middle class, even though he and Joan could have personally benefitted from the increased value of their apartment. At one time, they had a second home in Goldens Bridge, New York, which governed itself under communal living standards, and Norm used his technical skills to contribute to the basic operations of the community.

Norm and Joan married in 1955, raising two children in MSG. Eric, or Rick, was a folk musician and disability rights activist; Mike, a guitarist and editor for music technology publications and websites. Rick passed away in 2008 after a long illness.

Norm loved music, particularly the popular music of his childhood. He encouraged and appreciated the musical talents of his children, grandchildren, grandniece and grandnephews. Rick and Mike also took after their maternal grandfather, Norman Studer, founder of Camp Woodland where city kids learned to respect their rural neighbors and their folklore, and where Pete Seeger was one of the music counselors. Norm worked tirelessly with Joan and Rick to preserve the materials of the camp, now archived at the University at Albany.

Norm worked with Joan on her recycling programs, including sponsoring one of the earliest electronic recycling events. Paula's father was an electronic technician and, while cleaning out her father's belongings, Paula put together a quantity of electronics parts from the 50s and 60s. The organization co-sponsoring the event refused the parts until Norm, recognizing how distraught Paula was becoming, faced them down and convinced them to take the parts. That was Norm.

We express our deepest condolences to Joan, Mike, his wife Laura, Norman's grandsons Nick and Zack, Zack's wife Nandi; and Norman's nephew Alan Hecht and his family. There will be a memorial service when we can all be together again. We will miss him very much.



President's Corner

Amy Porter

Dear members and friends,

As I sit here writing, I hope you are well and safe. Though it has only been a month since our last newsletter was published, our entire world has changed. I am wishing comfort and healing to all who are struggling with sickness, loneliness and fear. I send prayers to those of you who have lost loved ones. We are very sad to report that we have lost one of our own beloved and longtime members, Norm Levine.

We wanted to meet with you for our last month's forum. But for everyone's safety, we chose to cancel the forum and our in person debate watch party. At the last minute, thanks to Alec Barrett of West Side Democrats, we joined, along with Daniel Marks Cohen of Three Parks Independent Democrats, a small Zoom Debate Watch gathering.

Speaking by Zoom during the breaks and then writing in the chat room while watching the debate was fun. Dan Cohen was showing off how he could multitask and be on Zoom, Twitter, Facebook, and email simultaneously, all while putting his son to bed!

We miss not being able to meet in person with each other. We don't know how long our lives will remain uprooted. While hoping for the best, we are planning for a long-term adjustment to this new way of life. Like all organizations and groups, Broadway Democrats is trying out new ways to connect with you. We held our last regularly scheduled Steering Committee meeting by Zoom. I am pleased to report that, despite the chaos of our learning how to use Zoom, we were able to attend to Steering Committee business and plan for our next forum. For our regularly scheduled April forum date, we plan to hold our first Zoom club-wide forum. We hope you can join us and will send out instructions on how to do so. If you are unable to figure out how to use Zoom on your computer, Paul Shneyer has generously offered to help you. You can email Paul at pasesq@aol.com.

On Sunday, I met by Zoom with our newly formed Membership Outreach Committee, consisting of Mav Block, Heather Ducharme, and Paul Shneyer. In the next couple of weeks, we and other Steering Committee members plan to call and speak with as many of you as possible, find out how you are doing, and let you know about community resources that can provide you with the kinds of support you might need. If you would like to join us and make calls to members, please contact me at aporter.bwaydem@gmail.com.

To keep myself sane now, I try to focus once a day on what we can be thankful for every day. So here goes:

We salute you who are working in our hospitals under the most devastating conditions. Your heroic commitment and sacrifice is extraordinary. We are grateful to the front line workers in our neighborhood food stores, grocery stores, pharmacies, hardware stores, banks, other front line services, and to the people delivering food and supplies to our homes. We clap for you all every night at 7 pm for the risks you take every day for us.

Let us also remember to thank those of us who are staying at home and practicing social distancing, for our own good and for others. The media is telling

us how much time we now have for ourselves at home. Indeed, there are those of us who are feeling lonely and bored. Yet for many of us who are now working from home, looking for work, applying for unemployment, taking care of children and parents, figuring out where to buy food and toilet paper and thermometers or how to make next month's rent, staying at home is extremely stressful. Suddenly, we have less time for everything. Many are struggling to focus on and keep to our daily schedules amid the most serious pandemic crisis the world has known in our lifetime, in the epicenter of the pandemic's worst outbreak, without the structure and social supports on which we have formerly relied. This, too, is heroism.

Please everyone wherever you are and whatever you are facing now, remember to be grateful to yourselves. And let us be grateful for one another. We hope to speak with you soon.



From the Steering Committee

Meika Mustrangi

DIGITAL CAMPAIGNING DURING COVID-19

While we practice social distancing in order to control this pandemic as quickly as possible—what can we do to ensure we win in November and in years to come? Myriad opportunities to participate in our democracy are open on our computers, tablets, and smartphones and it doesn't mean doing it alone. While we keep a safe physical distance, we can stay connected and work together to elect Democrats up and down the ballot. Below are a few ways to get involved virtually.

Help more people be counted in the 2020 Census

"In 2010, New York City's self-response rate was less than 62%—compared to a national average of 76%. An undercount puts our fair share of billions of dollars in federal funds and our political representation at stake."

(from the NYC Census website cited below)

Census data is used to determine legislative and congressional districts when they are redrawn every ten years. In order to be properly represented in government, everyone needs to be counted. Remember: The 2020 Census ends in mid-August.

To find digital means of helping to remind people of the importance of filling out the census, see:

www1.nyc.gov/site/census/get-involved/join-the-get-counted-team.page#volunteer

Help register voters with Michelle Obama, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Tom Hanks, and others at "When We All Vote"

According to their website: "Launched in 2018..., When We All Vote is changing the culture around voting using a data-driven and multifaceted approach to increase participation in elections. In the months directly before the 2018 midterm elections, When We All Vote organized 2,500 local voter registration events across the country, engaged 200 million Americans online about the significance of voting, and texted nearly four million voters the resources to register and get out to vote."

Join their texting team "to make sure every eligible voter is registered and ready to vote in every election."

action.whenweallvote.org/page/s/volunteer

Help Get-Out-The-Vote with Swing Left/Vote Forward

Swing Left was created in the wake of the 2016 elections and "focuses their efforts on flipping seats from red to blue and winning Democratic majorities. Instead of engaging in the primaries, Swing Left organizes and fundraises year-round to give eventual Dem nominees critical support in their general election battles. **Vote Forward** was born as an experiment in Alabama in 2017 and has grown into an organization whose "mission is to empower grassroots volunteers to help register voters from under-represented demographics and encourage them to vote. They build tools to enable Americans, wherever they may be, to encourage fellow citizens to participate in our democracy." *(from their website cited below)*

Swing Left and Vote Forward are working together to increase civic participation.

Prepare pre-printed "please vote" letters from now till late October and mail them just before the November elections to maximize voter turnout:

votefwd.org/swingleft

Connect with fellow Democrats on Go Blue 2020's Facebook group

Find support, camaraderie, and answers to questions!

www.facebook.com/groups/1906655419569727/



From the Steering Committee

Richard Siegel

THOUGHTS FROM AN ESSENTIAL EMPLOYEE

I hope everyone reading this is safely sheltering in place. I wish I was able to do so. Working in the public hospital system, many of us continue to go to work each day. Most are wearing various degrees of PPE to lessen the risk. Most are scared. Yet we still go in. We try to support each other. Those of us who lead departments do everything we can to show support for our staff. Giving verbal encouragement and buying food is often the best we can do.

We are there for the patients. We are there for the families. Especially now, when families cannot come to visit, we try to make some connections. When we can give good news—that is particularly rewarding. We struggle when we have to give not so good news. We dread hearing a code alert called over the speakers. Death is now a part of every day.

Most of us go because this is our mission. We went into healthcare, and especially we in the public hospital system, to help others. To quote the mantra of the Sixties, it makes us feel good to “to be part of the solution”. Finally, we love the 7 PM cheers. They are for ALL NYers—working together to make things better.



From the Steering Committee

Joe Nunley

LET'S MAKE THE WORLD HEALTHY

Right now we are all united in our terror of this dystopian nightmare facing the entire world. It should bring all of us together in recognition of our common humanity but there are powerful forces in America that do not want that to happen. America First nativism is antithetical to any altruistic belief system. This calamity calls into question our national hubris. We were not prepared. We presently lead the world in confirmed cases and we will soon lead the world in fatalities, at least for a time. This is incredible. Making America Great Again seems a dubious conceit. Let's now make America adequate.

For months millions of people have been told to engage in social distancing. This is not an option for people of extreme poverty living in a shack in

India or prisoners in Riker, here in New York City, fifty to a room, sleeping fifteen inches from each other, or in the immigration detention camps where we have nearly 40,000 people in crowded conditions who are not criminals. It's the equivalence of going to jail for a parking ticket. Would anyone in the White House spend 24 hours in such a cage? (*cont.*)

I applaud the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and our own Representative Adriano Espaillat for calling for the immediate closing of these detention centers while this pandemic rages. ICE has the authority to do so without presidential action. It's a humanitarian crisis. The situation is terrifying and deadly.

Governor Cuomo must give clemency to a large number of inmates, as should every governor in the country, as should the President. Suddenly, the fact that we have the largest number of people incarcerated in the world, 2.4 million, can clearly be seen as the repugnant absurdity that that is.

We are humanity. This crisis which knows no one gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or social class, should be treated as such. A single nation by itself cannot end it. I applaud the EU for bypassing Trump's sanctions against Iran to get essential medical equipment there. I applaud presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden for calling for an easing of sanctions against Iran. I applaud Germany for bypassing U.S. sanctions against Venezuela and getting absolutely necessary petroleum, food, and medical equipment there. (Estimates are that 100,000 Venezuelan lives have been lost due to these sanctions.)

The U.S. currently has sanctions against 39 countries. For the period of this pandemic, they should be ended. (I'm against all sanctions against all nations but that's another article.)

We should end all military actions, all drone strikes, all bombings, worldwide.

We need to utilize this crisis to end the Syrian War. If Russia and Iran will cooperate with us the UN has the power to do this. The danger of the spread of the pandemic in Syria is frightening as hundreds of thousands are in displacement camps.

I want to thank Taiwan for sending both America and the EU ten million masks.

I wish to acknowledge Cuba which has sent medical teams of fifty doctors and nurses to six different countries to help them fight this disease.

This international mobilization and cooperation has shaken us out of our lethargy. How petty our other concerns now seem. This pandemic does not compare to the climate catastrophe to come that has already taken its first steps. Scientists are now declaring that a quarter of a million people a year will die from climate change in a decade. The mobilization of mankind now against this pandemic is providing a template of the scale in which we will need to mobilize against climate catastrophe. Never stop pushing for the Green New Deal! Never, ever!

☞

Please, remember:

- *Keep physical distance when outside.*
- *Wash your hands.*

and

- *Stay in touch with friends and family!*

We want to hear what *you* have to say!
Email submissions to palmonrode@gmail.com
(in MS Word format, please).
Please note that we will consider all submissions, but we reserve the exclusive and final right to determine what to publish.



Membership

In order to vote in club elections (endorsements, elections of officers, judicial convention, amendments), you must be an eligible, voting member of the Broadway Democrats. You must have attended at least one of the previous nine monthly public meetings and you must pay your dues. Dues partially defray the costs of presenting forums and putting out this newsletter. Dues are \$25; senior dues are \$10.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Special Interests: _____

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FIRST
CLASS

Assemblymember: Daniel O'Donnell
District Leaders: Curtis Arluck,
Paula Diamond Román
President: Amy Porter
Newsletter Editors: Pat Almonrode, Gretchen Borges

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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