
THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

♦ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ♦ President: Joe Nunley ♦

MAY GENERAL MEETING:

Food Insecurity in NYC and Beyond

Join some of NYC's leaders fighting food insecurity to discuss this important issue, its causes, and how YOU can be part of the solution! We'll hear from:

Jorge Negrón, Assistant Director of Food Programs
at [New York Common Pantry](#)

Gina Fuentes Walker, Call Center Director at [Invisible Hands](#)

Moderated by **Liam Elkind**,
co-founder and CEO of Invisible Hands

Thursday, May 12, On Zoom

Club Business 7:30 pm

Forum 8:00 pm

register at

[**bit.ly/broadwaydems-register-Zoom-meeting**](https://bit.ly/broadwaydems-register-Zoom-meeting)

for more information, email DistrictLeaders@BroadwayDemocrats.org

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Volume 47, Issue 5

May 2022

President's Corner

Joe Nunley

Political Prisoners Everywhere

In the last year our club has taken some strong positions on criminal justice reform and I'm proud of us for doing so. It's the one issue where we seem to all be progressives. This year we endorsed and campaigned for a progressive District Attorney for Manhattan, Alvin Bragg, and he was victorious. Last fall we had a forum on the Less is More Bill and campaigned vigorously for Governor Hochul to sign it, which she did. In November we had a forum on Elderly Parole, and passed resolutions in favor of The Elder Parole Bill and The Fair and Timely Bill. We are doing all we can to get these bills out of committee and voted on before the legislative session ends on June 2. And just last month we had a terrific forum on Bail Reform.

I'd like to extend the discussion of prisoners beyond New York to around the world and to the federal level in the United States. The question I ask is, "Are most prisoners, in fact, political prisoners?"

I'm a big basketball fan. Brittany Griner, the center for the Phoenix Mercury and seven-time WNBA All-Star, has been imprisoned by Russia for allegedly carrying vape cartridges containing cannabis oil. She's been playing for a Russian team for seven years in her off seasons. She was suspiciously arrested on February 17, one week before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. She faces a five-year sentence.

Griner is a Black lesbian. She's 6 foot 9. She has tattoos all over her arm. She is outspoken, being proud of her sexuality. She breaks gender rules. We know that this represents an intersection of ideas that Putin has a history of really targeting with both rhetoric and in action.

We know what Russia has done to its citizens who protested the invasion of Ukraine. They have all been arrested. Russia has made it a crime to call the invasion anything but "a special military operation". All of the non-state news outlets have been shut down. Russia has more political prisoners than the USSR did when Andrei Sakharov began called attention to them in the USSR in 1976. There are more than 300 known prisoners of conscience in

Russia such as the prominent Ukrainian film director Oleh Sentsov, who protested Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and is serving a 20 year sentence.

Alaa Abd El-Fattah was a leading figure in the 2011 peaceful uprising that resulted in the fall of Egypt's longtime dictator, Hosni Mubarak. He was imprisoned in 2019, just six months after completing a five-year sentence. He's just been sentenced to five more years for "spreading fake news undermining national security."

Human rights groups estimate that 60,000 political prisoners are being held in Egyptian jails, mostly for peaceful protests against the dictatorship. In the Egypt of Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, enforced disappearance, detention without trial, police torture (including torture of children) and mass death sentences have become commonplace. Yet Egypt remains one of the largest recipients of US military aid, with \$1.2 billion in annual military assistance.

Let's turn to Turkey. When President Erdogan came to power in 2002 there were some 60,000 prisoners in Turkey. That number has quintupled. Virtually all of the leading opposition leaders have been imprisoned. So have thousands of activists and dozens of elected mayors. Over 110 journalists are imprisoned. More than 150,000 public servants have been jailed since the 2010 failed coup attempt.

Mumia Abu-Jamal and 18 other Black radicals are still in prison after four decades for their actions during the 1970's Black liberation struggle. Abu-Jamal, 68, has been incarcerated since 1981. Mumia is a former Black Panther and radio journalist who was framed by the Philadelphia police, railroaded in the courts and I believe wrongfully convicted of killing Daniel Faulkner, a white police officer.

Because they speak uncomfortable truths, Black prophetic voices, while they are alive, are vilified and violently persecuted by repressive aspects of the state. They are swept under the rug by those who, in Cornell West's words, are "well-adjusted to injustice." This was true for Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Leonard Peltier, the Native American activist, has been imprisoned for nearly half a century for complicity in the murder of two FBI agents. He has

always maintained his innocence and is seeking the chance to clear his name before he dies. Peltier, 77, wants President Biden to review his case and grant him clemency so he won't die in prison. He's not looking for a presidential pardon because it would be granted for a crime that he insists he's innocent of. Instead, he wants a new trial.

It's now known that a great deal of evidence was withheld from Peltier's 1977 prosecution. Even the US Attorney who helped put Peltier in prison now says federal officers never had evidence that Peltier committed a crime.

We know that there are people in prison who have done very bad things, but we also know that some of the very best people that we have on this planet are currently in prison. We observe nations everywhere in their treatment of fighters for freedom and justice and their treatment of minorities whose very existence challenges their dominance. These people are forced to take on the immense power of the state. This holds true in democracies as well as in dictatorships. They must take on the pernicious practices of extraordinarily corrupt judicial systems.

In the United States federal courts, for cases that go to trial, there's a 99 percent conviction rate. I repeat: in the United States of America, in federal criminal trials, there's a 99 percent conviction rate. That's exactly the same as in Russia. It's something to ponder, isn't it?



District Leaders' Reports

Paula Diamond Román

I have a hormonal condition called PCOS. That means that from the time that I became able to get pregnant until I was diagnosed and treated, I had irregular periods. When I first became sexually active, I just had pregnancy scares all the time.

It isn't as if I wasn't educated about birth control. I had a diaphragm, obtained through campus health services. (Diaphragms can slip. Spermicide can be kept somewhere too hot or too cold.) Girls didn't carry condoms back then, pre-AIDS, but we assumed that guys would have condoms. (Condoms can tear, especially if kept in a wallet for too long.) Occasionally, drunk or just young-n-stupid, I had unprotected sex.

There is no birth control that's 100% effective. Abstinence, you say? I had a number of friends who didn't have pre-marital sex, including one with a health issue that would need careful medical monitoring if she chose to get pregnant. However, every girl I knew had at least one story, at a party or

in a dark corner of campus, where she thought she was in danger of being raped. Every year, a few classmates were raped, usually on campus.

Every couple of months, I would be "late" and have to face the prospect of perhaps being pregnant. I used to joke that I should own stock in a pregnancy test company. I was raised in a politically active Jewish family that supported birth control and abortion access for all but it still wasn't a pleasant situation to contemplate. Ironically, in the end, it seemed like I was one of the only sexually active women I knew that didn't find themselves faced with the abortion decision.

We were girls, young women just being preparing for our lives as adults. We were working on getting an education that would make possible our adult careers. Some of us had parents who would disown us if we got pregnant. Some of us were on financial aid, from backgrounds where education made all the difference, the only difference. Some of us happily made the decision to have sex, some were pressured by boyfriends we feared would leave us, and some of us had the decision taken from us.

In just a few months, it will be fifty years since the Supreme Court issued the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision, 410 U.S. 113, protecting a pregnant woman's liberty to choose to have an abortion without excessive government restriction. Right now, it doesn't look like we will make it to that golden anniversary of women's control over their own bodies. I can only hope that, between the time I write this and the time you read this, the Supreme Court hasn't doomed generations of girls and women to a tentative future. I hope the protests and the attention and whatever else we can do changes the future from the one I see now.

* * *

In other legal news, the New York Court of Appeals upheld the lower court decision throwing out the redistricting lines for the House of Representatives and the New York State Senate. A Special Master has been appointed to draw up new lines; those lines don't need to be voted on and there are very few circumstances under which anyone can sue. The new lines should be ready in a week or so.

At last report, the statewide districts (Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Comptroller), the county-wide districts (Civil Court judges, Surrogate Court judges, Judicial delegates/alternates), and the Assembly districts (Member of the Assembly, State Committee members) will still be voted on in the primary on Tuesday, June 28.

House of Representatives and the New York State Senate will be voted on Tuesday, August 23. In the meantime, the New York State Board of Elections is working on a new political calendar for petitioning, etc. We hope/believe that the Assembly lines and Election Districts (EDs) will stay the same. We also hope the State Legislature will shorten the period and number of signatures for petitioning as they did during the pandemic.

If you have any questions, please email us at districtleaders@broadwaydemocrats.org.



Curtis Arluck

Attack on Democracy and Decency

Assuming that the disgusting Alito draft that we woke up to on Tuesday morning is in fact what the Supreme Court decides, this is a dark day for our county. It is bad enough for most people, but it is even worse for those women who are poor or working class, Black or Brown, or who live in one of the backward red states. Once again, they have been told by a mostly male ruling class that they have no control over their own bodies and lives, and little or no access to abortion, contraception, counseling, compassion or decency. Nearly three quarters of the county wants *Roe v. Wade* to remain the law of the land, and it is about to be overturned. The people who are forcing this decision on us are the same people who are trying to kill Obamacare, gut Medicare and Social Security, and make millions poorer and hungrier while cutting taxes for the rich. And they're also trying to steal our democracy. We know what we have to do between now and November. Let's do it.

Congratulations to our new Lt. Governor, Antonio Delgado.

The events leading up to Congress Member Delgado's selection were discouraging. At the very least, Brian Benjamin owed it to Governor Hochul to be honest about the investigations he was facing. He let our state down by not doing so. But Antonio Delgado is a superb replacement with a great personal story, a solid record of achievement, and ideal political positioning between the far too left-wing for the State Ana Maria Archila and the far too right-wing for the Democratic Party Diana Reyna. Many of us got to know Antonio Delgado during his successful 2018 campaign against right-wing Congressman John Faso. My fervent hope is that the Broadway Democrats and Democrats throughout New York will get to know him in time to elect him in the Democratic primary, whenever that may be. We really could lose the Governorship in

November. Antonio Delgado is the best candidate to join Gov. Hochul in seeing that this doesn't happen.

Primary Election: Who, What When, Where, Why, How?

The Where? in this headline is a bit of a stretch. It refers to the fact that we have lost our main Early Voting site at 112th and Broadway, because Columbia is putting in another store there (does anyone know what it will be?). So, many of us don't know yet where our Early Voting site will be. But everything else about this/these primary/ies is an avoidable political disaster. We don't know whether there will be one primary or two, though we are pretty sure that they will be held June 28, August 23, or both. Even what seemed certain a week ago, which is that the Assembly (and therefore State Committee, Judicial Convention and County Committee) Districts would be upheld, is now uncertain, as the Republicans are again challenging those, before the same Republican Judge, even though the Court of Appeals upheld them. The Democrats in Albany who drew the Congressional lines did us a disservice by creating some ridiculously contorted districts. That fact that many Republican districts in other states are even worse is no excuse. Had they not overreached, and drew lines similar to what the Democrats on the Redistricting Commission came up with, we probably wouldn't be in this mess. How will all this end? We'll let you know when we know.



Still No Word From Chase Bank

Noah Kaufman

The April issue of this newsletter contained an open letter to Chase Bank about its unilateral shutdown of the ATMs at 2829 Broadway (at the SE corner of W.113 St.) – a bank facility we have used for more than 23 years. Three things have happened since that open letter was published:

First, regarding any discussion with JPMorgan Chase to restore our cash machines ATMs – nothing. Zero comment from the bank, although they did remove our messages of complaint;

Second, we did get a return phone call from the office of our new City Councilmember Shaun Abreu. It was very nice to speak with the Councilmember's deputy director of constituent services. We asked the Councilmember to please reach out to the Chase Bank governmental affairs liaisons and plead for this bank service. We have not seen nor heard any communique from Council District 7 – yet (there is always hope).

And third, Chase had a PR blitz to tout the “progress” of the 1,200 foot tall “global bank headquarters” going up at 270 Park Avenue. The global HQ has an estimated construction cost of \$3 billion (that is billion, with a B). Perhaps that is why they have to shut down our ATM branch – so they can build a supertall office for the Bank President?

Maybe so. We hear TD bank is much nicer. How big is TD Bank’s “global headquarters” we wonder?

Readers and neighbors who would like to lend a hand and/or share an opinion can reach 113ABC at 113abc.atms@gmail.com.



Help Pass the NYC Domestic Worker & Employer Empowerment Initiative

Meika A. Mustrangi

Please support better conditions for Domestic Workers in NYC. Add your name to the online petition below asking the City Council to approve the *NYC Domestic Worker & Employer Empowerment Initiative*, introduced in the 2023 NYC Discretionary Budget. This initiative will provide much needed funding to support outreach education to domestic workers and employers to promote greater compliance with the law.

Add your name to the petition here: bit.ly/NYCCoalition4DWInitiative.

There are 200,000 domestic workers in New York City. 94 percent are women, 81 percent are immigrants and 32 percent are Black. These are the workers who care for those we love most – our children, our elders, our families. They care for our most personal possessions – our homes. An estimated one million New Yorkers employ domestic workers, making them one of the most important providers of employment in our city. The actions of domestic employers are intrinsically connected to the wellbeing of domestic workers, and therefore they need the guidance and support of the government and local organizations to become educated about the laws that apply to them as employers.

The City and State have passed a number of laws expanding rights and protections to domestic workers, most recently Intro 339 (Protections for Domestic Workers Under the NYC Human Rights Law). Yet many workers and employers alike remain unaware of their legal rights and responsibilities, and relatively few domestic workers are empowered and have the support to assert their rights. Now is the time for our city government to support a community-

based infrastructure to improve the lives of domestic workers and employers. We need your support to help us win this budget initiative and set a precedent in city government about the need for robust investment in the care sector!

<http://www.broadwaydemocrats.org>

facebook.com/groups/BroadwayDemocrats

Clean Streets, Not More Pollution

Daniel Zweig

There’s a better way ... and hopefully our new Sanitation Commissioner will find it.

Prior to the pandemic, sweepers were scheduled to sweep each side of residential streets on the Upper West Side and Morningside Heights twice weekly. But the sweeper only arrived where we live half the time – cleaning each side on average only once per week. Even so, our streets were kept reasonably clean.

But this means that half the time, people moved their vehicles to make way for the sweeper only to have a no-show – a complete waste of time and effort for car owners, and increased pollution as people moved their vehicles unnecessarily.

The pandemic brought an unexpected but worthwhile change. The sweeping schedule was cut in half – reduced to once per week on each side of the street. Had the sweepers arrived reliably as scheduled, the streets would have been cleaned just as much as they were prior to the pandemic when sweepers scheduled for twice each week arrived only half the time.

But the sweepers *didn't* arrive once a week as scheduled. They came to our street only once out of every three or four scheduled times. Each side of the street could go two, three or four weeks without being cleaned.

If the new commissioner could improve the department and just get the sweepers to arrive as scheduled, once a week for each side of the street would be enough for most of the west side. Once a week works well in many parts of the city, including many parts of Manhattan. If sweepers would just meet their scheduled times once a week in our area, we would have clean streets, reduced pollution, and not waste the good efforts of our citizens who faithfully turn out to clear the way for the sweeper.

Once a week with the sweepers arriving reliably would be enough. And there is no reason to return to the wasteful pre-pandemic twice a week schedule that only really cleaned once a week in practice. And the money saved by sticking with once-a-week cleaning could instead support compost pickup or some other critical city need.

So Commissioner – don't go back to same-old same-old; do it better. Clean the streets. Less inconvenience for everyone. Less pollution in the air we breathe. Save money for composting or the like. We will all help you and support your efforts to make things better. And readers, call your Borough President, call your City Council Representative, call the Mayor. Tell them what you think.



Disclaimer: unless otherwise indicated, items herein reflect the views of their authors only. They are published as a part of our club's commitment to the free and open exchange of ideas on topics of interest, but their publication should not be construed as an endorsement by the editor, the Steering Committee, or the Broadway Democrats club.



Parole Reform & Public Safety

Meika A. Mustrangi

Current parole reform bills and their role in increasing public safety

Elder Parole (S15A Hoylman/ A8855A Davila)

- People in prison age approximately twice as fast as people in the general population. Every year spent in prison is two years less of a person's life expectancy. Incarcerated people aged 55 are more like 65 or 70 years old.
- The Federal Bureau of Prisons and most states define incarcerated people as "older" beginning at age 50. In New York, DOCCS classifies a person as "older" when they reach 55.
- People age out of crime. Older people, especially those who have been convicted of serious crimes, have the lowest recidivism rates of any age cohort, posing little, if any risk to public safety.
- In the past 20 years we have successfully reduced our state prison population, from a maximum of around 70,000 people to currently a little over 30,000 - without an increase in crime.

- But despite the overall reduction, the older prison population continues to grow. Elders now comprise almost 25% of New York State's prison population, from only 12% in 2008.
- The vast majority of elders are in prison because of extremely long sentences.
- These sentences are equivalent to death by incarceration. In the last 10 years alone, more people have died in prison than the *total number of people executed in all 364 years when New York had the death penalty*.
- With the **Elder Parole** bill, individuals 55 or older who have served at least 15 years of their sentences will be allowed to appear before the Parole Board to make their case for release.
- The bill does not automatically grant parole to anyone.

Fair and Timely Parole (S7514 Salazar/ A4231 Weprin)

- Parole hearings currently focus on the seriousness of the original crime, which no one can change and which has already informed the individual's sentence.
- The **Fair and Timely Parole** bill will shift the focus of hearings from the original crime to the individual's rehabilitation and plans for reentry.
- This will restore the original purpose of parole hearings: to evaluate people's readiness for release, rather than denying people based solely on their conviction.
- The **Fair and Timely Parole** bill only benefits those who can show that they are rehabilitated.
- The bill does not remove the authority of the Parole Board in deciding to grant parole or not.

Parole Reform & Public Safety

A number of people in prison have completed their education and have gone on to earn college and even graduate degrees.

Many people serving time in prison have already been giving back, mentoring and guiding younger people towards educational and rehabilitative programs and away from bad habits. Some have even created entirely new programs in prison.

These transformed individuals could be making a difference back in their home communities. Formerly incarcerated people can be the credible messengers many of our communities need, to connect with youth and break historic cycles of crime and violence.

In New York, as in many states, it is very costly to incarcerate an older person. New York spends between \$100,000 and \$240,000 annually on this group, compared to \$60,000 for other prisoners.

Passage of **Elder Parole** and **Fair & Timely Parole** will save over \$500 million dollars annually, money that can be invested in expanding community-based, public health-centered violence prevention programs.

More than 60% of survivors favor shorter prison sentences and more spending on prevention and rehabilitation programs. In fact, many victims' rights groups in New York support **Elder Parole** and **Fair & Timely Parole**.

Take Action Now!

- Watch the short documentary "[The Interview](#)" to learn more about parole hearings from those who were eventually released after being denied parole multiple times, and about the need for these two bills.
- [Sign up with RAPP](#) (Release Aging People in Prison) for updates and volunteering opportunities.
- Join us in Albany for the next **Advocacy Day, Tuesday, May 10**. Everything is provided: transportation, meals, training, and lots of great energy. This is a full-day event. [RSVP HERE](#)

The Legislature has only until June 2 to vote on bills in this session. The Broadway Democrats supports these two important bills and hopes they'll be brought to a vote this year. Please thank our Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell and State Senators Cordell Cleare and Robert Jackson for supporting these bills and pushing for a vote in 2022.

If you have questions, please email me at meika@centerforcommonground.org.



Go Blue Takes On Pennsylvania!

The Go Blue Committee

The battle to save the Senate and the House in 2022 runs straight through Pennsylvania. It's a Triple Word Score State, in play for the Senate, House, and down-ballot too, including the Governor's Race.

Go Blue is working hard to win this battle. Our members are continuing to take on various activities from postcard writing to voter registration to aligning ourselves with various on-the-ground organizations. But our work is just starting and we would love volunteers to join us in our efforts.

Go Blue committee members recently made two very successful trips to Philadelphia to volunteer with the [New Pennsylvania Project](#) at the [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services](#) (USCIS). The New PA Project, a non-partisan group modeled on [The New Georgia Project](#), has created a program to register newly naturalized citizens as soon as they are sworn in. The project is described as "a voting rights organization with a primary purpose to expand the electorate by civically engaging, registering, mobilizing and empowering youth and especially communities of color to vote in every election – twice a year."

Go Blue committee members registered over 125 newly sworn-in citizens during their assigned shifts recently. Being a part of new citizens' journeys and sharing this special and proud moment is exhilarating.

We are also working with a group based in Brooklyn, [Red2Blue](#). They are working with The New Pennsylvania Project in a pilot program to follow up with PA voters registered at their naturalization ceremonies. Did you know that only one in three voters who register actually gets to the polls? We are furiously making phone calls to make sure that we stay in contact with the newly registered voters to encourage them to vote and that they have received their voter registration cards and know how to find their polling place – all the important information they need to cast their votes for the very first time in an election!

Go Blue has had a major presence on the ground in Philadelphia working through the NW Philly Voter Engagement Project – from canvassing at Temple University to engaging with voters at local Shop Rites throughout the county for the last three months. We have had thousands of conversations about the important issues on the primary ballot and have registered over 100 new voters.

Go Blue started The Go Blue Postcard Project this spring. In our first initiative, we partnered with [Turn PA Blue](#) and ordered 500 pre-addressed postcards. Well, that bunch was gone in a week and we had to order 300 more. We sent 800 postcards to remind potential voters that mail-in ballots are available and that they need to head to the polls.

* * *

If you're interested in joining [Go Blue](#) on a future trip to Philadelphia, phone banking, or postcard writing, please email us at goblueuws@gmail.com and we'll add you to our volunteer email list. Come join the fight!





Save the Date!

**The Broadway Democrats
Invite You to a
Sunny Summer Soirée**

Sunday, June 12, 2022

3pm- 6pm

The Ellington, 2745 Broadway

**Honoring Manhattan Borough President
Mark Levine and Invisible Hands**

For more info & to purchase tickets:

www.broadwaydemocrats.org

bwaydemsfundraiser2022@gmail.com

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