



*A Letter from*  
**Barbara Bowen**

# Introducing the NEW CAUCUS Slate

February 2009

Dear Friends,

I am proud to announce the New Caucus slate of candidates for election to union office this April. This union election comes at a watershed moment—a time of growing economic crisis but also of new potential for unions. During the next three years, the PSC may be tested in ways we have never been tested before, with both the City and State seeking to balance their budgets on the backs of public employees and the millions of New Yorkers we serve. To steer the PSC in such a moment, we need a leadership with the backbone to resist concessions and budget cuts—and the capacity to build the labor movement the current moment demands. We need a leadership that has both the will and the ability to fight. The New Caucus is that leadership—capable, honest, imaginative and unafraid.

## EXPERIENCE AND INNOVATION

Of the 27 New Caucus nominees, eleven would be new to the Executive Council. Some longtime leaders of the PSC are stepping down from the Executive Council, consciously making space for the next generation. Others, including the four principal officers—**Steve London, Mike Fabricant, Arthurine DeSola and I**—would like to continue to serve, bringing crucial leadership experience to this tough economic moment. The four of us work well as a team, and will be able to draw on the trust we have built within the labor movement, the legislature and the academic community as we face the challenges of the next three years. To take just one example: last September, when the \$700 billion bail-out for Wall Street was first contemplated, my position on the board of the city's labor union council allowed me to galvanize a protest that called for investment in jobs, education, housing and healthcare. The result was a mass labor demonstration on Wall Street and a message sent to Washington that turned out to be an important part of the public discussion on how to stimulate the economy.

I am on the English faculty at Queens College and the Graduate Center, and have been union president and the PSC's chief negotiator and leader since 2000. I am joined at the top of the New Caucus ticket by **Steve London**, a member of the political science faculty at Brooklyn College, who is the union's legislative representative and chair of its committee for enforcement of the contract; under Steve's guidance, the PSC has initiated several pieces of litigation that have won significant new rights for faculty and staff. **Mike Fabricant**, a professor at Hunter and chair of the Ph.D. program in social welfare at the Graduate Center, is a widely published scholar on community organizing, and has done a masterful job as the PSC's treasurer and organizing strategist. And **Arthurine DeSola**, from Queensborough Community College, is the first member of the professional staff to be a PSC principal officer; she brings a counselor's heart to her work with members and serves on the national union's civil and human rights committee.

## NEXT GENERATION

I am delighted to say that the New Caucus slate also includes several leading members of the new generation of CUNY full-time faculty, colleagues who have begun to revitalize the University after years of hiring droughts. **Alex Vitale**, a current member of the Executive Council and a professor of sociology at Brooklyn College, has provided energetic leadership in the union's legislative campaigns in Albany, inviting legislators to see the real conditions on the campus. **Costas Panayotakis**, of New York City College of Technology, is emerging as an influential scholar on issues of economic scarcity in capitalist economies, and gave a memorable speech on his vision for CUNY at the union's 2007 mass meeting. **Felipe Pimentel**, a sociologist at Hostos, is a leader on that campus and has published studies of the demographics of CUNY faculty that have been cited by the state legislature. **Nikki McDaniel**, who teaches biology at Bronx Community College, is the union chapter chair and was an important advocate in the PSC's successful campaign for paid parental leave. **Penny Lewis**, of Borough of Manhattan Community College, has been an activist with the union since she was a graduate student, and has just completed an important study of the relation between organized labor and the antiwar movement.

Our slate also features faculty and staff who will be new to the Executive Council but who have had long and distinguished careers at CUNY. **George Brandon**, who has directed sociomedical sciences at the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education at City College, teaches medical anthropology—and is a professional musician. **Andrea Vasquez** is the managing director of the Graduate Center's New Media Lab; a union officer in the HEO chapter, she has worked for 19 years in the American Social History Project. **Bill Friedheim** taught history for 41 years at Borough of Manhattan Community College, continues to design many of the union's web-based political advocacy tools, and now is active in the retirees' chapter. In 2005 the New Caucus leadership of the union expanded the Executive Council to include two retiree representatives; our other candidate for this role is **Eileen Moran**, who was a research associate at the Michael Harrington Center at Queens College, and is the strategist behind several of the union's successful campaigns to build relationships with the local legislators who vote on the CUNY budget.

## STRONGER TOGETHER

We are also proud to include three new members from the part-time and hourly faculty, the group that now teaches a majority of CUNY courses. Like the entire New Caucus slate, they recognize that the whole union is stronger when part-timers and full-timers stand together. Improvements in working conditions for any of us improve the University for all of us—and our students. **Carl Lindskoog**, who is currently earning his Ph.D. at the Graduate Center, was the leader of the doctoral students' organization that worked with the PSC on the successful campaign to win health insurance for graduate employees; he is now a Writing Fellow at Queensborough Community College. **Michael Batson**, who teaches history at the College of Staten Island, has been successful in deepening the cooperation between full-time and part-time faculty. And **Steve Weisblatt** is a longtime union activist who teaches in the Continuing Education program at York College; he has earned the respect of both full-time and part-time colleagues, who elected him Acting Chair of the union chapter.

The New Caucus slate also offers a deep bench of experienced union leadership, starting with the four vice presidents. **Anne Friedman**, a professor at Borough of Manhattan Community College and longtime leader in faculty governance as well as the union, is one of CUNY's most respected voices on the needs of community colleges. **Iris DeLutro**, who runs a successful program to enable teachers' assistants in the public schools to attain bachelor's degrees, is also a director of the statewide teachers' union, NYSUT. **Marcia Newfield**, a member of several national boards of part-time faculty, has an impressive track record of defending the rights of individual PSC members in grievances while pressing for transformation in the working conditions of adjuncts in the University as a whole. And **Bob Cermele**, a professor of mathematics at City Tech and longtime chapter chair, has led the campaign for an equitable teaching load on his campus and is a guiding force on the union's finance committee.

## SCHOLARS AND ACTIVISTS

Several other established PSC leaders are enthusiastically proposed for reelection: among them are **Jonathan Buchsbaum** of Queens and **Lorraine Cohen** of LaGuardia—both experienced chapter chairs and major contributors to the union as a whole. Buchsbaum, an important scholar of contemporary cinema, is the organizer of the union's labor film series. Cohen is active in the union's Women's Committee and was a leader in the campaign to reinstate thousands of public-assistance recipients as CUNY students. **Diane Menna** and **Susan DiRaimo** are both adjunct faculty leaders who have spearheaded union-wide initiatives, Menna chairing the committee that updated the union constitution and DiRaimo organizing the union's campaign to inform members with lower incomes about the tax credits for which they were eligible. **Steve Trimboli** of Lehman College, the representative of college laboratory technicians, has been a linchpin of the union's negotiating team and has guided the committees that select recipients of the professional development grants. **Donna Gill**, from Hunter College, played a major role in developing the grievance that led to the union's breakthrough settlement on overtime pay and comp time for higher education officers. And **Kathleen Barker**, professor of psychology at Medgar Evers College, is known inside the PSC for her courageous defense of members' rights, and nationally for her scholarship on contingent employment.

This is an impressive group of people—scholars, activists, intellectuals—faculty and staff who have helped to shape what's best about CUNY and who have deep commitments both to the University and to social justice. Our slate features members from almost every college; it includes a range of part-time and full-time employees; it represents the diversity of race, age and ethnicity of our membership. Most important, it is a team that will fight for you – and with you – in the demanding years ahead. A strong union leadership for the PSC may never be as needed as it is now; during almost nine years in office, the New Caucus has shown that unions win by being both smart and strong, both meticulous and bold. That's the leadership I have the pleasure of introducing here. I wish you knew them as well as I do; you would share my confidence that they are a leadership worthy of your ambitions for the University, the labor movement and your own professional life.

In solidarity,

Barbara Bowen  
President, PSC



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