

# MTA ~~REPORTER~~

**RETIREED** *The Voice of MTA Retired Members*

## RETIRES CALLED 'THE FIRST ORGANIZERS AND ACTIVISTS'

Jonathan Ng



The 2021 Virtual Retired Members Gathering offered a mix of socializing, activism, education, and celebration.

The program, held Oct. 19-20, featured workshops on topics ranging from teachers' strikes over the decades to climate change. MTA leaders spoke about issues of concern to educators, and two dedicated unionists were recognized for decades of service.

In her welcoming address, MTA President Merrie Najimy praised retired members for their years of service to public education and their continued activism in the union.

Najimy said retirees are reliable activists through their involvement in advancing the MTA's legislative priorities. They can and will be counted on to step up again, she said, for initiatives ranging from the campaign for the Fair Share Amendment to the battle for more resources for retirees. Najimy also urged participants to share their experiences with others.

"I love listening to Anne Wass tell the stories that she tells me of what it was like in the 1960s when we first earned our rights to collective bargaining and what the first MTA strike wave was about, and how it was mostly women on the front lines," Najimy said, reflecting on the experiences shared by the former MTA president. "That's a history that our members don't necessarily know.

"And so you, as the keepers of institutional knowledge and the first organizers and activists to be on the front lines, have a really crucial role in building the relationships with the local – either from the union that you retired from or the local in the town where you live," she continued. "Help them really understand what union power can be, what union power is, how the MTA started off by building union power – and give them the support that they need, with the expectation that they also show up for the specific retiree issues that you will need."

MTA Vice President Max Page offered an overview of the Fair Share Amendment, saying retired members have an influential voice in their communities.

» *continued on PG 2*

## RETIREED MEMBERS COMMITTEE 2021-2022

### CHAIR

Patrick Patterson, *Ipswich*

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mary Cowhey, *Florence*

Seth Evans, *Brookline*

Kip Fonsh, *Leverett*

\* Sonia Fortin, *Framingham*

\* Silvia Golijov, *Ashland*

\*\* Jacqueline Gorrie, *Randolph*

\*\* Andrei Joseph, *Chestnut Hill*

\* Jen Meagher, *Ashland*

Dale Melcher, *Northampton*

Rafael Moure-Eraso, *Medford*

Phyllis Neufeld, *Burlington*

Bonnie Page, *Tewksbury*

\*\*\* Robin Smith, *Springfield*

\*\* Anne Wass, *Carver*

### RETIRED MEMBERS ORGANIZER

Robert Whalen

[rwhalen@massteacher.org](mailto:rwhalen@massteacher.org)

617.878.8206 ■ 800.392.6175, ext. 8206

### AFFILIATE SERVICES COORDINATOR

Renee Gatewood

[rgatewood@massteacher.org](mailto:rgatewood@massteacher.org)

617.878.8208 ■ 800.392.6175, ext. 8208

### MASSACHUSETTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor

Quincy, MA 02171-2119

800.392.6175 ■ [www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org)

### MTA MEMBER BENEFITS, INC.

800.336.0990 ■ [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com)

### MTA MEMBERSHIP DIVISION

617.878.8118 ■ 800.392.6175, ext. 8118

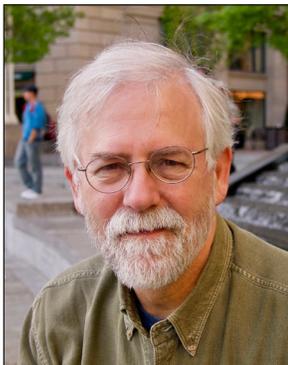
\* Appointed Active Member

\*\* MTA Board of Directors

\*\*\* President's Designee

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Patrick Patterson



MTA RMC Chair Patrick Patterson

**O**n behalf of the Retired Members Committee, I want to thank all the presenters and those who attended the annual Retired Members Gathering, who made it such a success. I also want to thank Robert Whalen, our retired member organizer. But I especially want to thank Sarah Ibanez and Kristen Halbert and all other staff members at the

MTA Division of Training and Professional Learning who worked behind the scenes to coordinate the event. And for those who missed it, you will find a summary of the different workshops in this issue of the *Reporter*.

So much was covered, but for me, one presentation stood out in its elaboration on a theme that all the presentations shared. The opening plenary presentation by Dean Robinson talked about a ‘dual agenda’ of universal social welfare that benefited all equally and anti-discrimination laws whose aim was to extend the benefits of society to everyone equally. This was implicit in the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 60s. The principle of universality that was intrinsic to

the agenda provided much of the energy behind later social movements. All of that was brought to a screeching halt with the introduction of neoliberalism. President Reagan, a Republican, was the most identifiable marker of that shift, although the basic direction was accepted by both major political parties. The different workshops can be understood as returning to the promise of the dual agenda outlined by Robinson, an associate professor of political science at UMass Amherst and the interim chair of the W.E.B. Du Bois Afro-American Studies Department.

At the committee’s meeting earlier this month we started tentatively planning the ‘brunches’ for this spring. Because of the continuing pandemic, the committee decided that the brunches will not be held in person, but online, as was the case last year. The committee also agreed to take the first steps to support the Fair Share Amendment. Our efforts will start by conducting phone banks and asking our retired members to support the amendment. There will be training for those who want it and short phone bank sessions broken up with lunch at MTA headquarters in Quincy. If interested in taking part in a retiree phone bank, go to <https://www.mobilize.us/massteacher/event/422466/> ■

## RETIREES CALLED ‘THE FIRST ORGANIZERS AND ACTIVISTS’ *Continued*

“The key to victory is us, as educators, speaking our truth to our fellow members in our community, to our family and friends and to the broader community, because people trust MTA members on public education policy,” Page said.

“You are the people who helped build these schools and colleges,” he added. “You can say, ‘I want to defend what we helped build over these many years.’”

The “Honor Our Own” award, a highlight of the Gathering each year, is decided on by the Retired Members Committee, which evaluates materials that outline the accomplishments of nominees who are put forward by fellow educators.

The Retired Members Committee found two nominees to be especially deserving of such recognition this year, said member Jackie Gorrie.

“The committee did something that Congress doesn’t seem to have the courage to do: We compromised for the group as a whole, and we named two honorees,” Gorrie said.

Two distinguished recipients, Richard Liston and Craig

Slatin, were recognized, a first in the Gathering’s history.

Liston, a retired special education teacher and former president of the Everett Teachers Association, said that retirees continue to make a difference and will keep up their advocacy. But he credited others for their persistence.

“I would not be here if not for those who led the charge to make our voices heard,” Liston said.

Slatin, a retired professor of public health at UMass Lowell, thanked the Retired Members Committee for the honor. In accepting the award, Slatin said retired members remain active in their advocacy for their communities and their students.

“Though our members have been battered by the pandemic, in their personal lives as well as in their schools, I believe that they are ready for action,” he said. “The MTA is not a sleeping giant. It is awake and dynamic, and its influence can grow exponentially as we continue to create strategies that move us to greater social justice action. It’s been a wonderful ride. I’m touched deeply by receiving an award from my union.” ■

# 2021 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING: AN INSIDER VIEW

## Rafael Moure-Eraso and the MTA RMC Members share their experiences of the Gathering

The second virtual Annual Retired Members Gathering was a very well-attended and lively meeting. Participants at the 2021 Gathering filled workshops for a number of sessions relevant to retired members, including on the proposed Fair Share Amendment, on MTA retiree benefits, technology issues in the classroom (including screen time and its discontents), as well as a spotlight on climate change and voting rights.

The second day had a plenary session on COVID-19 updates followed by concurrent sessions on critical race theory, the rise of white nationalism, a historical perspective on teacher strikes in Massachusetts and a discussion of neoliberalism, inequality and race.

### OPENING SESSION

Almost 150 delegates registered for the Gathering, who were welcomed by MTA Retired Members Committee Chair Patrick Patterson. The chair informed the Gathering of the legislative activities in which the Retired Committee has been active, including providing testimony in state legislative hearings on the early retirement bill, as well as COVID-19 and school issues.

MTA President Merrie Najimy welcomed participants and updated the group on the MTA plans to advocate for approval of the Fair Share Amendment. The amendment is a proposed change to the state Constitution. It will appear on the Nov. 8, 2022, statewide ballot, and would add a 4

percent tax to income over \$1 million. The existing state income tax is a flat 5 percent. Najimy focused on the possibilities to apply the revenue to public education needs and to create a more-just taxation system that doesn't favor billionaires. Additional resources generated by the increase will improve opportunities for quality education in Massachusetts by strengthening educators' resources and reversing a policy of continuously diminishing education funds for preK-12 through higher education.

MTA Vice President Max Page addressed the Gathering on the extended activities of the MTA on the Fair Share Amendment campaign. He was emphatic that a "better world is possible," with the new, annual revenues projected at \$2 billion for public education and transportation. Page urged retirees to engage in the ongoing campaign by signing a pledge to support the amendment and sharing those pledges with all of our contacts. A range of activities to support the amendment are in place or being developed.

Page pointed out that Massachusetts is indeed one of the wealthiest states in the union (ranked #4) and can afford a fairer tax system as an alternative to the current, regressive flat tax. He pointed out that polls indicate 74 percent of Massachusetts residents support the Fair Share Amendment.

Information can be obtained by visiting [massteacher.org/fairshare](https://www.massteacher.org/fairshare). MTA staff member Paul McClory can be contacted to obtain pledge forms by emailing [pmclory@massteacher.org](mailto:pmclory@massteacher.org).

» continued on PG 4

## 2021 'HONOR OUR OWN' AWARD WINNERS



Richard Liston



Craig Slatin



## 2021 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING *Continued*

### 2021 'HONOR OUR OWN' AWARD

The recipients were: Richard Liston, a former special education teacher and former Everett Teachers Association president, and Craig Slatin, professor emeritus of public health at UMass Lowell.

Liston has been an MTA activist for decades. He was an officer of the MTA for many years and has been known as a dedicated unionist and busy activist in his retirement. He was nominated by Kimberly Auger, the current Everett Teachers Association president. The award was presented by Jackie Gorrie, the former RMC Chair, who described Liston as the leader of two strikes in the late 1980s, which won fair and equitable working conditions for present and future educators. In his retirement, Liston regularly works to mentor fellow educators and raise the standards of public education. In the nomination, Auger wrote: "The impact he made on his students still resonates today, as many reach out to express their appreciation for all of his encouragement and support, long after they were students in his classroom."

Slatin has worked for the duration of his professional life to stop the trend of austerity that has harmed the state's public colleges and universities, as well as preK-12 schools. The award was presented by Rafael Moure-Eraso, an MTA RMC member, who praised Slatin's advocacy as an organizer for public education.

Moure-Eraso wrote in his nomination: "Craig Slatin is an example of the political engaged educator who can show

results for his years of organizing and advocating for an effective public education. Slatin has educated a generation of students to address overwhelming challenges and is recognized as an effective activist in public education policy."

In accepting the award, Slatin pointed out the continuous existential challenges educators face including constant attacks in the public sector, the crisis of climate change, public health crises, and the ongoing threat of white supremacy. He observed that educators and the MTA are not sleeping giants and are ready for action to meet these challenges.

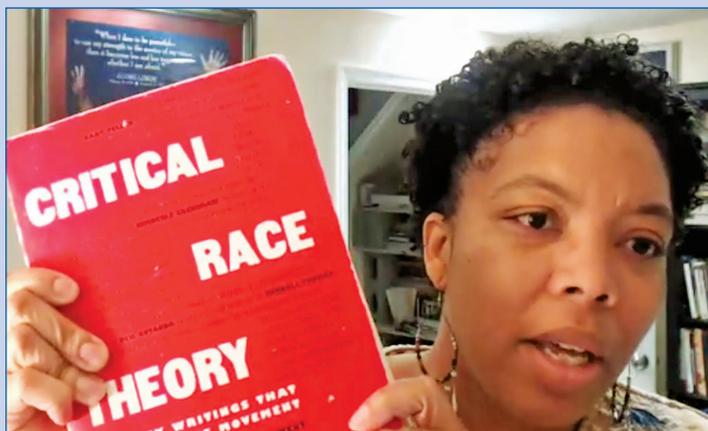
### DAY 1

#### PLENARY SESSION

#### **The Fair Share Amendment in Service to Racial Justice**

*Dean Robinson PhD, Interim Chair W.E.B. Du Bois Afro-American Studies Department, UMass Amherst*

Andrei Joseph, from the MTA Executive Committee representing Retired members, introduced Dean Robinson, interim chair of the W.E.B. Du Bois Afro-American Studies Department at UMass Amherst, as one of the most active MTA educators in the political arena. Robinson, an associate professor of political science, is recognized



Left: Alan Geller, senior lecturer, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, and presenter of the day 2 plenary session of the Gathering, entitled "Promise and Challenge of Returning Children to School during the COVID Pandemic."

Right: Sheri Davis-Faulkner, Ph.D., presenting her workshop, "Critical Race Theory."

## 2021 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING *Continued*

as an activist and a scholar on racial justice issues. He has published scholarship including two books on black nationalism.

Robinson, an immigrant from Dominica, presented himself as a product of public education, and focused his presentation on the need to address the dual agenda of racial justice and anti-discrimination. He presented a historical review of the views of W.E.B. Du Bois in public higher education from Du Bois's perspective of Pan-Africanism and democratic socialism. The political achievements of other social justice and civil rights leaders, such as A. Philip Randolph and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., were discussed. It was remarkable that Randolph in 1966 presented "A Freedom Budget for All Americans" to address racial inequalities that in seven points addressed the same demands we are fighting for in 2021. His demands included pure air and water, full employment, adequate wages and the wiping out of substandard housing with a just, anti-racist housing policy. Robinson presented and discussed data from his research on the excess deaths from 1960 to 2020 of people of color who were older than 55, as compared with white people. He discussed the public policies that are associated with the trends from different periods of excess deaths and examined the possible causes. It is not only excess death that affects Black Americans. The list of historical inequities is long and includes the slow suffocation of public education. There was a common denominator of austerity, initiated by President Reagan — and embraced by President Clinton — which normalized the neoliberal ideology of the "Reagan Revolution." The strangulation of financial support for public education had damaging consequences for ethnic and racial minorities and working-class students. We are living the consequences of diminishing public support for education under constant austerity budgets. Public education in Massachusetts received in the 1970s as much as 50 percent of its budget from the state, compared with 18 percent support so far in the 2020s. The underfunding of public education can be remedied by resources generated by the Fair Share Amendment that — according to Robinson — will benefit all sectors of society. The lack of full resources diminishes everybody's educational experience. An agenda of social and economic equality and the systematic dismantling of discrimination are the elements of justice that we can advocate for in the future.

### WORKSHOPS

#### Screen Time and its Discontents

*Presenters: Lisa Cline, Emily Cherkin and Seth Evans*

This content-filled workshop featured speakers Lisa Cline, a writer and parent advocate; Emily Cherkin, a screen time consultant; and Seth Evans, who is chair of the Screens in Schools Work Group for the Children's Screen Time Action Network. Evans is also an RMC member. The explosion of cell phone use, beginning in 2007, changed most of our lives, especially those of children. Five to seven hours per day of screen time is the average for children, according to several studies. We have experienced predators preying on children and higher incidences of depression. Research shows that even if your phone is near you during an exam, your score decreases by 6 percent. Persuasive app design seeks to get your information and get you hooked. Too often, we give screens to children before teaching them proper usage. The trick is to be tech-intentional, not tech-overkill. Technology can hijack children's neuropathways. Now nearly two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have spent so much money on education technology for remote learning, and don't want to walk away from that. This only makes the landscape harder to navigate. We need to advocate for district-wide student device policies, engage the media, align with parent volunteers to submit requests to keep student education records private, and testify at school board meetings. We need to define where tech is a tool and where it is a distraction, and then make sure it's used as a tool. One last thought: grandparents are in a unique position to teach their grandchildren the benefits of less screen time and advocate for public education policies.

#### Why and how classroom gathering must change?

*Presenter: Angele Goss*

The presenter for this workshop was Angele Goss, an adult education instructor at Mount Wachusett Community College, as well as a diversity, equity and inclusion facilitator.

Goss, also an MTA Retired Member, said relationships need to be built between the host (educator) and the guest list (students) for any gathering to be successful. We all need to develop a sense of community for everyone to feel respected and acknowledged. Educators must support learning for all students, so the format is very important.

» *continued on PG 6*

## 2021 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING *Continued*

Goss posed questions to the group, and we went into breakout rooms to discuss. It was very interesting to hear other educators talk about their experiences in the classroom, especially when we taught at all different levels. Everyone agreed that this is the best way to conduct our classrooms. Unfortunately, that is not the way the powers-that-be want it. A quote sums it up: “A student who feels respected, cared for, and connected to their teacher has increased motivation to listen, learn, and achieve.” Goss also talked about culturally responsive teaching, having a sense of belonging, community, and having students see themselves reflected positively. As an educator for more than 30 years, I believed it was vitally important to build relationships with my students before I could expect anything from them. Hopefully, school administrators, school committees and governmental agencies will finally see the light and allow educators to teach the correct way so their students can thrive.

### Voting Rights and the 2022 Election

*Presenter: Paul Dryfoos*

Paul Dryfoos, a national co-leader of Elders Action Network, ran this workshop, designed to educate members about the 2022 election. New research shows that 83 percent of Americans believe there should be national standards for voting access and fair elections. Swing voters have sided with fair elections. The *Freedom to Vote Act* would give us equal access to the ballot, combat election sabotage, and empower voters. The *John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act* would restore key voting rights established under the *1965 Voting Rights Act*, which were limited in a 2013 Supreme Court decision. We need to flood our U.S. Congressional offices with our support for these two bills. The way to fight is to lead with values – tie this issue back to the other top issues of the day, including climate change and anti-racism efforts.

### Climate Change in the Spotlight

*Presenters: Craig Slatin and Ferd Wulkan*

Climate change was once again a topic in a presentation led by Craig Slatin and Ferd Wulkan, both MTA Climate Action Network Steering Committee members, and Seth Evans, an elected RMC member and member of the leadership team at Elders Climate Action Massachusetts.

After an introduction to the work and goals of the MTA Climate Action Network, the workshop began with an informal discussion of how the climate emergency was

affecting workshop participants. This was followed by brief presentations about the recently released report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and how its dire warnings were manifesting in intensified wildfires, floods, hurricanes and other weather-related events.

State and local legislative efforts to combat climate change also were discussed.

The workshop concluded with an informal discussion of what one person could do to help combat climate change. Not surprisingly, the conclusion was that while individual actions to reduce a “carbon footprint” were important, the more effective strategy is political action – a collective effort – to influence government policies aimed at replacing fossil fuels with renewables.

## DAY 2

### PLENARY SESSION

#### Promise and Challenge of Returning Children to School during the COVID Pandemic

*Presenter: Alan Geller*

Alan Geller, a senior lecturer at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, summarized the state of the state in relation to cases of COVID-19 and the vaccination of children in the Commonwealth. He prefaced the data with a summary of the key mitigation actions that have decreased the COVID infection risk, including adolescent vaccination, educator vaccination, maintaining some hybrid learning and some (although very few) improvements in air quality. Challenges that remain include inequalities among school systems based on socioeconomic status, better use of rapid testing to identify cases of the disease and the still enormous need to improve air quality in schools through more ventilation. Geller described the data regarding coronavirus cases among children aged 12 to 15, who were able to receive vaccinations in the state as of mid-October. Rates of COVID cases in elementary, middle, and high schools ranged from 7 percent to 9 percent, he reported, which is comparable to the general population of the state. He pointed out, however, that clearly children can be infected by coronavirus and could spread the disease. He presented data on cases and vaccinations of adolescents, between ages 12 and 15, for several communities, while pointing out that the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s data last year undercounted

## 2021 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING *Continued*

cases. Geller recommended several necessary steps to further reduce COVID risk for children and communities this school year. They included vaccination of all children, improving air quality in schools through ventilation using federal and state resources and continued masking policies. In addition, he said, schools should share their success stories about lunch and sports programs that have decreased exposure to the virus and schools should establish a practice of having dashboards that report the number of cases and test results. In addition, data collection on cases and contact tracing by DESE needs to be improved. The simultaneous implementation of all interventions must be accomplished to decrease risk of infection at schools. Geller also reported on a pilot program by the MTA and the state’s Department of Public Health, which will coordinate children’s vaccinations at 21 school sites. He also addressed the tremendous emotional impact of the pandemic on children and recommended practical interventions. More than 50 people attended the session and Geller answered dozens of questions.

### WORKSHOPS

#### Critical Race Theory

*Presenter: Sheri Davis-Faulkner*

The critical race theory workshop was a wonderful introduction to what critical race theory is about. The presentation was both informative and thought-provoking. Presenter Sheri Davis-Faulkner, associate director of the Center for Innovation in Worker Organization at Rutgers University, described ways to think about race, equity, and inclusion. She brought forth that it is the exclusion of people and perspectives that contributes to the need for our discussions on equity and inclusion. It was made clear that we must understand the system of exclusion to be able to achieve full inclusion and equity. Davis-Faulkner showed that the struggle is not a single issue, but one with more complexity.

The presentation cited works, among others, by Cheryl Harris, who served as faculty director for the Critical Race Studies Program at the UCLA Law School and Kimberlé Crenshaw, a law professor, who coined the term intersectionality. One of the take-aways is that getting everyone to the table is inclusion, however transformation is the work needed to prevent exclusion from reoccurring. By the end of the presentation, participants had resources that they could refer to for additional information.

*» continued on PG 8*



Panelists of the workshop “A Perspective on Teacher Strikes at MTA Over the Decades!” sharing their experiences as former educators in their locals amidst a strike.

Top: Phyllis Neufeld; Middle: Tim Dwyer; Bottom: Anne Wass

## 2021 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING *Continued*

### The Rise of White Nationalism

*Presenter: Cedric de Leon*

Cedric de Leon, a professor of sociology at UMass Amherst, and director of its Labor Center, began his presentation with the presidential election of 2016. That ‘white nationalism’ was a major issue goes without saying. One of the successes of President Trump was to address the grievances of portions of the white population within the United States. He won the 2016 election and almost won in 2020 because he made it the focus of his campaign.

But it wasn’t only Trump’s success at winning this element within the American population. It was also the Democratic Party’s failure. One can see in the shift in support of this element from President Obama to Trump an indication of a failure to address the interests of this part of the population.

Obama won the presidential election in 2008 by addressing these issues. But once in power, Obama failed to follow through on his promises. De Leon pointed to the choices made at the cabinet level for this failure. Most had been part of the earlier Clinton administration and advocated for austerity and a lack of concern about racial divides. Obama bailed out the banks, but not homeowners, following the financial crisis of 2007-2008. This resulted in the largest loss of wealth through home foreclosures. This was especially true of the Black American population. De Leon made the point that Clinton ‘corporate Democrats’ sabotaged Obama. And so, when the election came in 2016, the Democratic candidate was handicapped by the party’s failure to address issues that were of concern to portions of the white community. But that wasn’t the only problem. Progressives who were a large force in getting Obama elected didn’t vote because many felt the Democratic Party had failed to offer a candidate who responded to their issues.

### A Perspective on Teacher Strikes at MTA Over the Decades!

*Panelists: Mary Beth Carlson Cook (Franklin - 1977); Phyllis Neufeld (Lexington - 1987); Anne Wass (Hanover - 1988); Paul Phillips (Quincy - 2007); Tim Dwyer (Dedham - 2019).*

More and more, teacher strikes across the country are in the news. In Massachusetts, we do not have the legal right to strike. Yet despite the prohibition, MTA locals have experienced strikes over the years. In this workshop, attendees heard five local leaders talk about what led up to their strikes, what tactics were used, and the aftermath for the local.

Though it is scary for some members to strike, most felt their local was stronger afterwards for having done so. It was a buildup of many years of disrespect that made members get to the point where they were ready to strike, despite the consequences. It is interesting that while achieving better salaries was cited many times as an issue, there were just as many times where the major issues were better conditions for students and better working conditions for teachers.

Participants had an opportunity to talk about their own strike experiences and other actions in their locals. The history of strikes within the MTA is full of golden nuggets for those locals finding themselves in difficult circumstances. This year, a bill was filed in the Legislature to make teacher strikes legal in Massachusetts. As the old saying goes, better teacher working conditions are better student learning conditions.

### Neoliberalism, Inequality and Racism

*Presenter: Boone Shear*

Boone Shear, a lecturer in the Anthropology Department at UMass Amherst, began the presentation with a brief history of the origin of racism within the U.S. The institution of slavery in the U.S. emerged out of a series of historical events in the 17th Century. Prominent among them was Bacon’s Rebellion (1675-76) that occurred in Jamestown, Virginia, where the poor rebelled against the colonial elite, a nascent capitalist class. Prior to the rebellion, European, African and Indigenous people had intermingled. In the wake of the rebellion, laws were passed which instituted racial distinctions.

Later the Civil War may have ended slavery in the United States, but it did not end racial distinctions. Even during the ‘progressive’ era of the New Deal, the Black American population was not included in steps taken to address inequality. It was only later, during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, that racial inequality began to be addressed in large part because of the Civil Rights movement.

It was against this backdrop that neoliberalism was directed. Like classical liberalism, neoliberalism saw the resolution of social problems as an individual matter and the way to resolve social problems was through the market. But the market leads to a growing inequity and so to address the issue one needs to move to the larger social level. Universal social welfare provides benefits to all and this can only be provided through social legislation. This would create the condition for what Boone termed a social economy that would address the issue of inequality and racism. ■

# ELECTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR MTA RETIRED MEMBERS

## An overview

Our union's strength comes from full participation of all members, including retirees, in MTA and NEA election processes at the local, state and national levels. Please consider the following opportunities to engage the democratic processes of our union. Share with other retirees, and let's grow union power.

The election and nomination process for the seats described here are subject to MTA Bylaws and to MTA Policy/Procedures for Nominations and Elections, all of which are available upon request from the MTA Division of Governance.

### Statewide Retired District Directors on the MTA Board of Directors

There will be two seats up for election for Statewide Retired District Director on the MTA Board of Directors. The Board is the governing body of MTA, with various duties including full control of the affairs of the association, except when the delegates are in session. The Board terms are for three years beginning July 1, 2022. Candidates must be members of the Statewide Retired District. There is a self-nomination process, with a deadline of March 4, 2022 at 5 PM. The election will take place at the 2022 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates, voted on by delegates representing the Retired District.

Those wishing to run for these Board seats should submit a self-nominating letter no later than 5 PM on the first Friday in March, specifying the candidate's name and address and the office being sought. The letter should be addressed to Executive Director-Treasurer, MTA, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119, or attached to an email directed to [MTAGovernance@massteacher.org](mailto:MTAGovernance@massteacher.org).

### MTA Retired Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly

The 2022 NEA Representative Assembly (NEA-RA) is scheduled for July 2 through July 6. This is the meeting of representatives from all NEA state associations. At this meeting, policies are voted on and set regarding a range of issues critical to educators from testing to economic and racial justice, to national political initiatives, and more. It is an opportunity for democratic engagement and making national connections to build our movement and strength.

Elected NEA-RA retired delegates are always strongly encouraged to attend the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, typically held immediately before the NEA-RA. Information will be sent to all the elected delegates, and MTA will reimburse additional hotel and meal expenses for attending this meeting.

### Available Opportunities for MTA Retired Members:

- *Statewide Retired District Directors on the MTA Board of Directors*
- *MTA Retired Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly\**
- *Statewide Retired District Delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting\**
- *MTA Retired Members Committee\**

*\*Nomination forms available online at [www.massteacher.org/nomform](http://www.massteacher.org/nomform)*

NEA will allocate the number of retired delegate seats to the NEA-RA for Massachusetts based on membership figures in January. MTA/NEA retired members are eligible to run in the NEA Retired category for the seats allocated by NEA. Nominations are open to all eligible MTA/NEA retired members through a self-nomination process. These delegates will be elected by ballots provided to retired members in February.

MTA provides funding for travel expenses to the winners of the MTA Statewide, Regional, and Retired elections to the NEA-RA, up to \$1600 per delegate, subject to accountability requirements and reimbursement guidelines.

Those interested can access the online nomination form at [www.massteacher.org/nomform](http://www.massteacher.org/nomform). The nomination deadline is Friday, January 14, 2022, at 5 pm.

### Statewide Retired District Delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting

The 2022 Annual Meeting of Delegates is scheduled for May 20 and 21 at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston. In this meeting, delegates from across the state gather to vote on policies and set the direction for the MTA in the year ahead. Your voice matters.

The Statewide Retired District Delegates will be elected by ballot provided to the retired membership in conjunction with the NEA delegate elections in February. Nominations are open to all eligible MTA/NEA retired members through a self-nomination process. The 2022 allocation of retired delegates seats will be based on the number of MTA/NEA retired members as of January 15.

» continued on PG 10

## ELECTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR MTA RETIRED MEMBERS *Continued*

Retired delegates to the Annual Meeting may apply for reimbursement of certain travel expenses incurred to attend Annual Meeting, up to \$450.

Those interested can access the online nomination form at [www.massteacher.org/nomform](http://www.massteacher.org/nomform). The nomination deadline is Friday, January 14, 2022, at 5 pm.

### MTA Retired Members Committee

Four members of the Retired Members Committee will be elected by the Statewide Retired District Delegates at the 2022 Annual Meeting. This committee plans the statewide retiree conference and serves as an important voice of retirees within the MTA. The committee seats have terms of two years, starting July 1, 2022.

Those interested can access the online nomination form at [www.massteacher.org/nomform](http://www.massteacher.org/nomform). The nomination deadline is Friday, March 4, 2022, at 5 pm.

### Election Waiver

MTA's election waiver policy applies to the elections described in this issue. If the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of positions to be filled, the election(s) may be waived and the candidates

*Please note that paper forms are available in this issue of the MTA Reporter, but we strongly encourage you to use the online nomination forms at [www.massteacher.org/nomform](http://www.massteacher.org/nomform)*

declared elected to the position(s) in question.

### Nomination and Election Details Now on the MTA Website

In addition to the information published here and in the Fall issue of MTA Today, all MTA and NEA election information may be accessed at the MTA website: [www.massteacher.org/2022Governance](http://www.massteacher.org/2022Governance).

### MTA Retired Elections Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding the nomination or election process, please feel free to contact Governance Specialist John Connelly at [jconnelly@massteacher.org](mailto:jconnelly@massteacher.org).

The chair of the Retired Members Committee is also available to assist you with information on election opportunities available to retired members and the election process. Chair Patrick Patterson can be reached at [ppattmwilk@mac.com](mailto:ppattmwilk@mac.com). ■

## AN OPEN INVITATION

### Jackie Gorrie



MTA RMC Member Jackie Gorrie

Traveling from Everett to Attleboro to Norton to Tewksbury to Fall River to Brockton to Quincy, and more, my traveling picket sign and I supported my MTA striking colleagues across the Commonwealth.

The message on my sign – “The Issue is Respect” – said it all and summarily speaks the truth of all strikes.

This was never more evident than during the workshop, *A Perspective on Teachers' Strikes at MTA Over the Decades!* presented at our 2021 Virtual Retired Members Gathering, held in October. At the core of the presentation by each panelist, coupled with the contributions of the participants, was their stories and lived history.

**Mary Beth Carlson Cook**, one of those panelists who

spoke to the extreme circumstances of the Franklin strike, said she believed the stories from this workshop should not be lost but instead supplemented. Her suggestion to preserve this history has led to my invitation to you.

Would you contribute to this project on the history of strikes in our MTA locals?

You simply need to provide the name of your local, the date of your strike, the name of the local president at the time, the size of the local (small, midsize, large) and the main issues or circumstances which led to your strike.

Please send the information about your local, your strike and circumstances to Bob Whalen at [rwhalen@massteacher.org](mailto:rwhalen@massteacher.org).

We will chronicle and archive the information we receive into a Legacy Project that will highlight this history while putting into perspective how issues have changed and how far we have come.

As MTA Retired members we proudly hold the history of MTA in our hearts and our memories. Let's memorialize that history for ourselves and for those who follow us. ■



**ONLINE NOMINATION FORMS  
AVAILABLE AT**

**[WWW.MASSTEACHER.ORG/NOMFORM](http://WWW.MASSTEACHER.ORG/NOMFORM)**



**ONLINE NOMINATION FORMS  
AVAILABLE AT**

**[WWW.MASSTEACHER.ORG/NOMFORM](http://WWW.MASSTEACHER.ORG/NOMFORM)**

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### Updates on MTA Priority Legislation

Legislative committees continue to hold public hearings to solicit testimony on legislative proposals under their jurisdiction. As *The Reporter* went to press, all but two of the MTA's priority bills have received a hearing. On October 19, the Joint Committee on Public Service held a hearing on S.1683/H.2623, *An Act to provide fair and affordable public retiree benefits* and S.1732/H.2723, *An Act to provide fair working conditions for public higher education adjunct faculty*.

As a reminder, S.1683/H.2623 was filed by state Sen. Julian Cyr (D-Truro) and state Rep. Dan Donahue (D-Worcester). It would immediately increase the COLA base from \$13,000 to \$18,000 and over time would raise the base to align with Social Security's maximum allowable benefit for an individual worker, which is \$37,776 in 2021. The legislation would also freeze the health insurance premium contribution share for current municipal retirees at the percentage they are paying upon the effective date of the bill, while also locking in the percentage for future retirees based on their retirement date. Lastly, this bill would cap out-of-pocket expenses for public-sector retirees over the age of 65 who are not Medicare-eligible.

MTA leadership and two members testified in support of S.1683/H.2623 at the October 19 hearing. In addition, Government Relations worked with the Retired Members Committee to email the retired membership with instructions and a template on how to submit written testimony in support of the bill. To learn more about this legislation and to write your legislators in support of it, please visit [massteacher.org/legislation](https://massteacher.org/legislation).



Additionally, on October 18, the Joint Committee on Education held a hearing on S.338/H.583, *An Act ensuring diversity in public education*. This legislation would allow the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to authorize alternatives to the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensures (MTEL). The Commonwealth's current educator licensure process is excluding talented and qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds by requiring that they pass the MTEL. This is a significant barrier to creating a more diverse educator workforce, which benefits all students, especially students of color. ■

► For a full listing of MTA legislative priorities, go to [massteacher.org/legislation](https://massteacher.org/legislation)



**UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION TODAY TO**

**Get an MTA Retired  
face mask**

email your updated mailing address, email address and preferred phone number to

**RETIRED@MASSTEACHER.ORG**

## CAP IS RAISED ON ALLOWABLE WORK HOURS

Mary MacDonald

For the first time in decades, Massachusetts has increased the annual limit on work hours for public-sector retirees with pensions who want — or need — to continue working.

In September, the Legislature overrode a veto by Governor Charlie Baker and approved a new yearly cap of 1,200 hours.

The action is expected to open more opportunities for affected retirees.

Many people work in retirement out of necessity.

Even as the pandemic has resulted in inflation, the state budget provided only a 3 percent cost-of-living increase for public-sector retirees, which is limited to the first \$13,000

of their pension — a maximum of \$390 per year.

Retired public-sector employees, including city and state retirees, for years were restricted to working 960 hours a year in public-sector jobs.

Baker wanted to increase that limit by 15 hours.

The new flexibility, retroactive to July 1, will not affect previously earned pensions. And no cap applies to retirees who go on to work for a private employer. ■

► For more information, members are advised to read the notice at <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-state-retirement-board>. Further information on the changes is also available at <https://mtrs.state.ma.us>.



MTA Retired members, from left, Phil Chassler, Craig Slatin and Richard Goldberg carry a banner in a march up Beacon Hill, as part of the Massachusetts Youth Climate Coalition strike plan. The event on Sept. 24 featured a call for immediate action to avert the climate crisis, and was endorsed by the MTA Executive Committee. It included MTA educators, environmental justice allies and students.

Photo by Jonathan Ng

### **UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION TODAY:**

The MTA communicates via e-mail regularly with our retired members about topics and issues of importance, including “Save the Date” notices for retired programs, legislative updates and calls to action on issues important to public-sector retirees. It is important that the MTA have an updated e-mail for you to keep you informed.

**UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION NOW BY SENDING AN E-MAIL TO  
[RETIRED@MASSTEACHER.ORG](mailto:RETIRED@MASSTEACHER.ORG).**

## REPORT FROM THE BOARD – NOVEMBER 2021

### Andrei Joseph



MTA RMC Member Andrei Joseph

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to occupy center stage in the deliberations and decisions of the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors. The primacy of safety – especially for retirees – manifests itself in several different ways. There has been a careful, moderated return to live board meetings with vaccinations required and

board members widely spaced and masked. Right now, the plan is to hold our May Annual Meeting in person as well, but that decision is being constantly monitored pending the latest developments with infection rates. I have repeatedly expressed the particular concerns that retirees have as an older age group with inherent health challenges.

On the national front, there was a dramatic development regarding the NEA Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly, which had been scheduled to take place in Dallas in July 2022. The board had an extensive debate about whether we should attend. Several other states had already decided to boycott the meeting in Texas. Some at the board meeting argued we should show up and support the progressive forces that stand too lonely in the Lone Star state. Others noted the severe repression of reproductive rights, the assault on voting rights, and the astonishing state laws that allow guns at public meetings. But it was the unwillingness of Texas to vaccinate and address the pandemic in a rational, safe fashion that carried the day. I joined the vote to move out of Texas.

About a week later, the NEA Board voted to move the national RA meeting out of Texas! Originally, we were told that meant the national meeting would be virtual. Now we learn they are considering other locations, including Chicago and Orlando, Florida.

The invigorated national struggle for racial justice has infused MTA in a number of ways. Our board meeting was graced with a Friday evening devoted to having board members of color share their experiences as educators so we could all gain a better understanding of the challenges that they face. One board member after another offering brave, moving testimony documenting their determination to move forward in the face of ignorance and hostility.

The board voted to place land acknowledgment plaques at the entrance of every MTA office across the state. This is an attempt to remind everyone that we live and work on Native American land. Indigenous people occupied this land long before it was seized by European colonists.

Several book groups centered on race continue to exist within MTA. The titles read so far indicate our interest: Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Antiracist*; Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility*; Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* and Michael K. Honey's *To The Promised Land – Martin Luther King and the Fight for Economic Justice*. Reading and avid discussion continues. If you are interested in joining a book group, please contact our Vice President, Max Page.

An issue has arisen regarding member access to transcripts of the MTA Annual Meeting. Some members made passionate arguments that they should be entitled to detailed transcripts of every meeting. But we are not a public body and are not subject to open meeting rules. In the past, these types of records have fallen into anti-union hands and were used in a distorted fashion to attack us. Our Executive Director-Treasurer, Lisa Gallatin, and the head of our Legal Services, General Counsel Rebecca Yee, both cautioned against making the transcripts widely available. A motion from the floor supported their position. While acknowledging the risk of malfeasance, I opposed the motion wanting to emphasize transparency and accountability. My side lost.

The finances of the MTA remain strong. Independent audits confirm that we are a rare organization that has planned responsibly for the future. While it is important to note that investment markets are volatile and the performance we have enjoyed is not guaranteed, we have benefitted from a robust return on our investments and been able to grow our reserves. This is a wise approach as we will face both pension obligations to our employees and the need to fund expensive upcoming campaigns. An ad-hoc investment committee of wise, dedicated members interviewed different firms to find one with lower fees and better services willing to follow our guidelines and values. We voted to move our money from Morgan Stanley to Prime Buchholz. I supported the shift. ■

## SAVINGS AND SECURITY WHILE TRAVELING

### A message from MTA Benefits

**W**e know travel can be hectic, especially around the holiday season. Take some of the stress out of travel planning by using programs offered through MTA Benefits.

Get cash back when you travel using **Access**. Book a hotel with **Access** and get up to 60 percent cash back deposited directly to your card within 48 hours of booking. That kind of immediacy is truly rewarding. Looking for a rental car? We have you covered. Save up to 25 percent off your rental from **Avis** or **Budget** in addition to complimentary upgrades or a free weekend day.

Save time and money shopping for travel insurance. From unpredictable New England weather to last-minute cancellations, make sure that your trip is protected. Browse travel insurance plans on our website to choose the best plan for you.

*As an MTA member, you are entitled to the discounts and programs offered by MTA Benefits.*

**[www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com)**

Be prepared for the worst, even on vacation. **MASA Medical Transport Solutions** provides members with worldwide air and ground ambulance transportation services whether you're at home, at work or traveling. For a single member the cost is \$27 per month or \$324 per year. For a family plan the price is \$35 per month or \$420 per year.

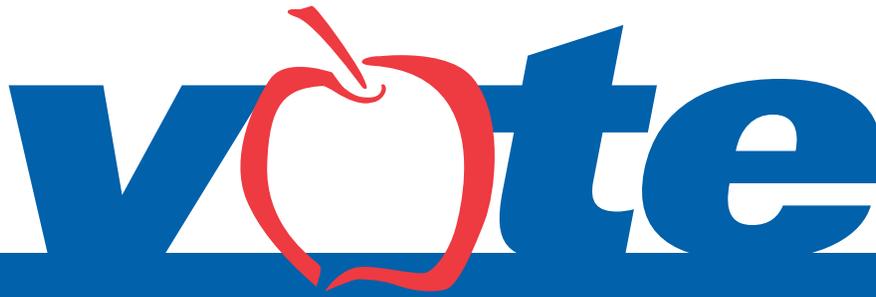
For information on all of these programs and more, visit [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com). ■

*If you have some news from your local retired group that you wish to share, please send it to Robert Whalen at [rwhalen@massteacher.org](mailto:rwhalen@massteacher.org).*

## FREQUENTLY REQUESTED CONTACT INFORMATION

<b>Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System (MTRS)</b> <a href="http://www.mass.gov/mtrs">www.mass.gov/mtrs</a>	<b>State Board of Retirement</b> <a href="http://www.mass.gov/treasury/retirement/state-board-of-retire">www.mass.gov/treasury/retirement/state-board-of-retire</a>
<b>MTRS Headquarters</b> 617.679.6877 500 Rutherford Avenue, Suite 210 Charlestown, MA 02129-1628	<b>SBR Boston Office</b> 617.367.7770 One Winter Street, 8th Floor Boston, MA 02108
<b>MTRS Western Office</b> 413.784.1711 One Monarch Place, Suite 510 Springfield, MA 01144-4028	<b>SBR Springfield Office</b> 413.730.6135 463 Dwight Street, Room 109 Springfield, MA 01103

Questions regarding your MTA Member ID Card or Calendar can be directed to:  
Renee Gatewood – [rgatewood@massteacher.org](mailto:rgatewood@massteacher.org) – 617.878.8000, ext. 8208



## VOICE OF TEACHERS FOR EDUCATION

# Elections matter. *They also cost money.*

The MTA's **VOTE Political Action Committee (PAC)** contributes to candidates for statewide and legislative offices who demonstrate committed support for issues important to active and retired educators, students and public education.

By pooling the contributions of MTA members, the VOTE PAC gives educators a stronger voice in helping to elect candidates who will champion the MTA's priorities on Beacon Hill and fight against anti-public employee and anti-public education proposals.

**Please consider making  
a contribution to the  
VOTE PAC today.**

*Your generous contribution to the  
VOTE PAC will help us stand with  
elected officials who will stand with us.*

Contributions can be made in any amount up to \$500 annually. You may contribute online by visiting [massteacher.org/votepac](https://massteacher.org/votepac).

Contributions may also be mailed to:  
**MTA VOTE PAC, 2 Heritage Dr., 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171.**

When making a contribution, please be sure to provide your name and address, as well as your occupation and employer, if applicable.

MTA's VOTE (Voice of Teachers for Education) and the National Education Association's Fund for Children and Public Education collect voluntary contributions from members for political purposes including, but not limited to, making contributions to and expenditures on behalf of friends of education who are candidates for state and federal office. Seventy percent of contributions will be given to MTA's VOTE PAC and 30 percent will be given to the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. Contributions are not a condition of membership or employment and are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education from receiving donations from persons other than members of NEA and its affiliates, and their immediate families. All donations from persons other than members of NEA and MTA, and their immediate families, will be returned forthwith.

[massteacher.org/votepac](https://massteacher.org/votepac)



2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor  
Quincy, MA 02171-2119

FIRST CLASS MAIL  
PRESORTED  
U.S POSTAGE  
PAID  
BOSTON, MA  
PERMIT NO. 59604

# MTA **REPORTER**

**RETIRED** *The Voice of MTA Retired Members*

## INSIDE THE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER ISSUE

<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>Page</b>
RETIREES CALLED 'THE FIRST ORGANIZERS AND ACTIVISTS' . . . . .	1-2	2022 NOMINATION FORM FOR THE MTA ANNUAL MEETING OF DELEGATES/NEA-RA . . . . .	13
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR . . . . .	2	LEGISLATIVE UPDATE . . . . .	15
2021 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING: AN INSIDER VIEW . . . . .	3-8	CAP IS RAISED ON ALLOWABLE WORK HOURS . . . . .	16
ELECTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR MTA RETIRED MEMBERS. . . . .	9-10	REPORT FROM THE BOARD — NOVEMBER 2021 . . . . .	17
AN OPEN INVITATION . . . . .	10	SAVINGS AND SECURITY WHILE TRAVELING . . . . .	18
2022 NOMINATION FORM FOR THE RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE . . . . .	11		