

BEACON



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Upcoming Events

- ♦ Office Closed May 12-23
- ♦ Employee Appreciation Day May 24th.
- ♦ Executive Board Meeting September 6th

Have a great summer!

President's Message

Joe Torre, President
Brockport Chapter UUP



To Know What it is to Know

In a recent article published in 450 newspapers across the United States, long-time conservative syndicated columnist, George Will, laments President Trump's seeming immunity to what we might call traditional forms of knowledge: "This president does not know what it is to know," Will decries. Further, he notes that Trump "lacks what T.S. Eliot called a sense "not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence."" Having just returned from the UUP Spring DA at Albany, Will's column highlighted the curious nature of our current predicament. UUP President Fred Kowal in his formal address to the delegates had also spent much of this time outlining the many shortcomings of our nation's 45th president and the great threat he posed to the union - not just the UUP, but the country overall. What a wondrous world it is, I reflected as I drove home on the thruway, where Will, a Pulitzer prize winning columnist *The Wall Street Journal* once referred to as "perhaps the most powerful journalist in the country," can find common ground with the UUP, the most *progressive* of institutions.

Fred Kowal, our current UUP President, re-elected at the spring DA by popular acclamation for another 4-year term, focused his critique of Trump on a number of specific presidential agenda items. Unions across the country are of course to be soon affected by the looming *Janus* decision (*Mark Janus et al v. AFSCME et al*), or what we are referring to as simply the "son of *Friedrichs*." You might recall that *Friedrichs* was a court case emanating from California that threatened the agency fee payer system long legitimized in series of Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) decisions dating to the 1970s. Specifically, what *Friedrichs* threatened to do was create a system where individual members of the contractual bargaining unit could opt out of paying union fees even as they benefitted from the union's representation. Unions were saved from *Friedrichs* by Justice Antonin Scalia's timely death, as a court suddenly made up of eight justices divided by ideology necessarily tied. Now with the SCOTUS unjustly packed with

conservatives by GOP senators' machinations, we face the same threat again in *Janus*, a case with the same potential outcome.

Supreme Court Justice Gorsuch's appointment was, until the House's repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Trump's sole achievement as President, and one achieved only at the cost of senate traditions dating to the middle of the nineteenth century. UUP President Kowal noted the threat that Gorsuch and *Janus* pose but spent still more time discussing the repeal of the ACA and its implications for Americans. As any significant analysis demonstrates, the repeal of the ACA and its replacement by *Trumpcare* is really about a massive tax cut for the very wealthy and will effectively destroy health care insurance for millions of Americans currently covered

(https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/06/opinion/sunday/the-house-health-care-disaster-is-really-about-taxes.html?_r=0). Buried within the bowels of the legislation are devastating long-term cuts of 25% to Medicaid. Also a part of the health plan to "make American great again," are cuts to mental health care and opioid treatment that, according to Rep. Joe Kennedy, have the potential to affect as much as 20% of the population ([https://www.statnews.com/2017/05/03/mental-health-care-trump-medicaid/.](https://www.statnews.com/2017/05/03/mental-health-care-trump-medicaid/)) Put simply, as a nation we are already supremely indifferent to mental health and addiction as a public health crisis. The plan the House of Representatives just passed and the many other cuts Trump has proposed will set us back even further. No other developed nation in the world is as hostile to its neediest citizens as the United States.

As horrifying as the above initiatives are, what concerns me (and perhaps Will) more is the fundamental challenge Trump poses to an even greater good than health care or union representation, *knowledge*.

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Brockport Chapter Election Results

“Thank you to all who took time to complete their ballots.”

The Brockport Chapter of UUP would like to thank all of those who took time to send nominations as well as whom completed their ballot for the 2017-2019 chapter election.

The election results are as follows:

President: Joe Torre
 Vice President for Academics: Susan Orr
 Vice President for Professionals: Sharon Belle-Render
 Treasurer: Danny Too
 Officer for Contingents: Paul Schreiner
 Officer for Retiree: Herb Fink

Academic Delegates:

Danny Too	Chris Williams
Charles Callahan	Robert Schneider
Herb Fink	Tamala David
Sara DiDonato	Paul Schreiner
Naomi Williams	Charles Cowling

Professional Delegates:

Gary Owens
 Ben Wineburg
 Julie Caswell
 Craig Ross
 Janet Roy

The term of office for each position is June 1, 2017-May 31, 2019.

UUP in Action

Sara DiDonato, VP for Membership

Our chapter has been busy with various social justice activities since the last newsletter! UUP had a team of 10 participate in the Brockport Water Walk for Uganda, with the goal of raising money to build a water collection system for a school in a Ugandan community where children and families have to walk miles daily to access clean drinking water. Our team walked during the event at the SERC on April 2nd, and also collected donations from other chapter members for the fundraiser. In all, our team was able to raise \$345 dollars toward the goal of constructing a rainwater collection system for clean drinking water, which will be installed this summer. Along with all the other clubs, teams, and individuals, more than 100% of the cost of the project was raised!

The walk/fundraiser was organized by Honors Program Art student Kate Hochbrueckner, who has been working on this project in conjunction with her Honors Thesis. Our UUP Brockport Chapter was happy to help one of our Brockport

students in her goal to raise social awareness about access to clean drinking water, and to be involved in helping the children and families that will benefit from the installation of this water tank at their school!

Brockport’s UUP chapter also had a group of members participate in the March for Science in Rochester on April 22nd. Our VP for Academics, Susan Orr, was a speaker for the Earth Day activities in conjunction with the march. The Rochester satellite march was part of the national March for Science in Washington, DC. We were proud to represent our union and to show its commitment to science, to facts, and to scientific research. Our chapter is planning on more participatory actions in the coming months. Stay tuned for details. Hope you’ll join us!



Members of the Brockport Chapter Action Team, and their families, at the March for Science in Rochester, NY.

President's Message cont'd

As a historian and educator, I am inclined to value knowledge and its pursuit or creation as virtues and, put simply, the President does not. But what does it mean to not value knowledge? Is it true, as Will put it, that the “president does not know what it is to know”? Or is there something else at work? Another conservative columnist Bill Kristol (son of historian Gertrude Himmelfarb and long-time neoconservative intellectual Irving Kristol) recently asked a question closer to my inquiry. Looking at recent “tweets” by President Trump, Kristol asked, and I paraphrase, - which is more dangerous, that Trump believes what he says or that he knows he is lying, but knows it makes great propaganda? Trump’s “rape” of knowledge, to use one of his violent metaphors, is legend to most thinking Americans. He started his political career by trafficking the lie about Obama’s birthplace. We all stood back and chuckled in bemusement as a man educated at Fordham University and the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania led a movement that catered to the most ignorant, racist and bewildered amongst us. Candidate Trump’s supportive appearance on *Infowars.com* founder Alex Jones’s radio show was equally quixotic. Alex Jones and *Infowars* are famous for spreading the theory that the “Sandy Hook” mass murder of 27 people, including 20 kindergarten-aged children, was a hoax designed to undermine the Second Amendment to the Constitution. As *The Guardian* recently noted, families of these dead children are hounded by *Infowars* followers who harass and threaten them with physical harm (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/may/02/sandy-hook-school-hoax-massacre-conspiracists-victim-father>). A Florida woman was recently arrested for threatening these families. *Infowars* also spread the hoax that a Washington D.C. pizzeria was really a front for some sort of pedophile sex-trafficking “center” where Hillary Clinton abused children. This led a crazed man from North Carolina to ruin his life by making his way to DC to free the children. He took his rifle, opened fire in the family restaurant and was thankfully arrested before he hurt someone. Jones is the ringmaster of a lunatic fringe that, amongst other fantasies, characterizes the horrible events of 9/11 and Oklahoma as inside jobs carried out by the government. He has also suggested without humor that both Obama and Hillary Clinton are known to “smell like sulfur” because they are “demons.” Trump the candidate spent a half an hour on the show and referred to Alex Jones as “amazing” and promised “I will not let you down.” *Bloomberg News* finds the relationship continues with President Trump repeating Alex Jones’s wild claims in speeches and *Twitter* (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2017-03-14/alex-jones-is-a-conspiracy-theorist-trump-s-a-fan-video>).

Since becoming President, Trump has elevated his “lying” game - he started out with a blatant and insistent lie about his inauguration crowd that left people with eyes bewildered; he continued in speeches where the America we live in was not recognizable; he extended his assault on reality to wild and dangerous accusations that former

President Obama “tapped” his phones; in what might be seen as a particularly Freudian slip, he referred to the 44th President of the United States as “sick (or worse).” He lies about any and all manner of events, his policies, existing government policy, science, etc. His bottomless appetite for lying is well documented by numerous new outlets, including the Pulitzer Prize winning website, *Politifact*, (<http://www.politifact.com/personalities/donald-trump/>). Put simply, lying is the dark heart that beats at the center of Donald Trump’s administration; it is the animating force of his presidency. The question is why does he lie?

In a recent blog entry reprinted in *Newsweek* and elsewhere, Tobias Stone explored this issue, comparing it to Soviet-era and modern Russia’s use of lying as propaganda (<https://medium.com/@theonlytoby/why-trump-lies-7489e35997e6>). Stone examined the various possibilities as to “Why Trump Lies.” In the end he sees Trump’s lies as strategic and quotes the great chess champion Kasparov: “*The point of modern propaganda isn’t only to misinform or push an agenda. It is to exhaust your critical thinking, to annihilate truth.*” This has proven a successful strategy for a long list of totalitarian figures who have preyed on the intellectual shortcomings of the most vulnerable citizens. It seems to be a working strategy for the President *The Los Angeles Times* referred to variously as the “liar-in-chief” and “conspiracy-theorist-in-chief” and who, according to the *LA Times* editorial board, “targets the darkness, anger and insecurity that hide in each of us and harnesses them for his own purposes” (<http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-ed-why-trump-lies/>).

Lying is the most dangerous threat a Trump administration poses for Americans. Health care and union representation are very important. Both, however, are solutions to problems created by educated people using reason. Both the ACA and collective bargaining rights are the result of a system of knowledge best described as critical thinking or rational thought: the capacity to form an analysis and thus say one thing or outcome is better than another; the capacity to formulate solutions to problems; the capacity to discuss, debate, weigh a variety of perspectives, to understand the premises and assumptions that shape your own thought as well as the ideas of others; the capacity to understand the “presence” of “the past”; the capacity to “know what it is to know.” Trump’s lies are to knowledge and reason what antimatter is to matter; they pose a greater threat to Americans and university professionals than any other of his many vicious efforts. As United University Professionals we have a fiduciary responsibility for the sanctity of knowledge to Americans; we *must* preserve it.

A Heartfelt Thank You

Joe Torre, President

As the 2016-2017 academic year comes to a close I'd like to take a moment to thank all of those who have worked so diligently to continue to make the UUP Brockport chapter a success.

First, let me start by thanking our fantastic slate of officers and Executive Board members who work behind the scenes, often unrecognized, to continue to move our chapter in a forward motion. I'd also like to thank all of those who serve on countless committees, especially those on the Chapter Action Project, College Review Panel, the College Committee for Professional Evaluations, and the Promotions and Salary Appeal Committee. Finally, I'd like to thank those who serve as reviewers on the Individual Development Award Committee.

Without each and every one of these dedicated individuals our chapter would not function in the productive manner in which it does.

Thank you to (in no particular order):

Seth Johnston
Heather Packer
Naomi Williams
Neal Keating
Sara DiDonato
Ben Wineburg
Bernardo Ortega
Mike Ziolkowski
Charles Callahan III
Kim Haines
Alex Alexandrov
Marsha Ducey
Sandeep Mitra
Sharon Belle-Render
Ingrid McGuffog
Emma Scholl
Juanita Suarez
Nancy Washer
Thomas McDermott
Dawn Jones
Alissa Karl
Gary Owens
Nora Bell
Joe Balog
Gary Metz
Alicia Girvin
Pam O'Sullivan
Pierangela Veneziani
Tamala David
Johnna Frosini
Danny Too

Rob Schneider
Chris Williams
Mohammed Tahar
Susan Orr
Stacie Treahy
Linda Balog
Herb Fink
Joel Agate
Lynda Cochran
Janice Stewart
Katiuzca Loaiza
Trevor Gates
Tristan Bridges
Teresa Major
Michael Dentino
Josh Hine
Paul Schreiner
Tate Shaw
Barb LeSavoy
Tasneem Zaihra
Ji Zhang
Kim Myers
Patricia Williams
Reddy Anugu
Donna Napier

If you are interested in volunteering with UUP please contact Brittany via email at bprofitr@brockport.edu

“Thank you to all who have worked so diligently to continue to make the UUP Brockport Chapter a success.”

Brockport Chapter Receives UUP Journalism Awards

At the May 5-6, 2017 Spring Delegate Assembly in Albany, Joe Torre accepted two UUP Journalism Awards on behalf of the Brockport Chapter.

The first award was Best Original Article awarded to Joe Torre for his article *Herrenvolk* published in the December 2016 Beacon. The second award was for Best Website and went to Webmaster, Brittany Profit-Rheinwald.

Congratulations to Joe and Brittany and the rest of the Brockport Chapter.



Brockport Chapter President, Joe Torre accepts UUP Journalism Awards on behalf of the Chapter.

The Labor and Equity Forum, and What Comes Next

Alissa Karl, English Department

The Labor and Equity Forum brought together faculty and staff from across Brockport's campus on May 1, 2017. Across two panels and a lunchtime presentation from UUP Vice President for Academic Jamie Dangler, we discussed labor inequities and threats to our rights and protections as workers, and began to strategize how we can be organizing more actively to address these matters. The Forum thus commemorated International Worker's Day by analyzing the state of labor on campus and beyond, and to interrogating ongoing labor injustices.

Our first panel, "Labor at Brockport: Making our Work Visible," discussed the trends and structural features associated with the increased reliance on contingent faculty (Chris Pedersen, History) and the day-to-day challenges and conflicts created by such insecure and low-wage work (Barbi Clifton, English). The panel also addressed how institutions like unions and professional organizations are implicated in the move to contingent employment: Joe Torre (History and UUP Brockport Chapter President) highlighted the tensions faced by labor unions like UUP that represent both contingent and more secure workers, while Naomi Williams offered examples set by the Labor and Working Class History Association (LAWCHA) for making scholarly and professional development more accessible for contingent faculty.

The second panel, "Labor and Organizing in the US and Beyond" contextualized and offered analysis of the tensions and problems discussed in the first. Sara DiDonato's (Art) discussion of the threats facing K-12 educators contextualized the worrisome trends in Higher Ed within a broader frame of the precaritization of labor, while Susan Orr (Political Science and International Studies) positioned us within union membership trends in New York State and Higher Ed. And where

Barb LeSavoy (Women and Gender Studies) explored the ways in which the historical linkage of women's and worker activism have given way to a lack of visibility of women in the labor force, Milo Obourn (Diversity Office and English) offered concrete strategies for organizing today.

The Forum emphasized thus identified key areas where our local experiences meet national and even global trends, and emphasized the need for both analysis and action. For instance, if it is clear the Higher Ed is part of a pervasive trend toward the casualization of employment, is it perilous for academic and teaching staff to consider their relative cultural capital (as educators and often advanced degree holders) as something that ought to set us apart from other sectors of labor? In so doing, are we embracing a rationale for low pay and benefits while also missing the opportunity to organize around the making precarious of all labor that workers are experiencing worldwide?

Furthermore, it seems that there are distinct downsides and risks of the cultural capital associated with Higher Ed employment that contribute to an individualization of the Higher Ed worker (as creative, independent, self-starting and so forth): the singling out of workers as isolated decision-makers who are solely responsible for their choices (Don't like adjunct pay? Choose a new job!), or the exposure of workers to the perils of the labor markets as individuals rather than collective units. Jamie Dangler's presentation on the risks to labor rights posed by the upcoming New York State Constitutional Convention vote indeed made it clear that corporate interests are eager to dismantle our mechanisms for collective action.

While the Labor and Equity Forum met its aim of generating dialogue about the labor issues that concern us all, it also made clear how much work we have to do.



Attendees listen attentively at the Labor & Equity Forum in the Eagles Lookout.

Legal Challenges to Unions Coming Back for Yet Another Round

Sara DiDonato, VP for Membership

“Last year, union members all breathed a collective sigh of relief when, because of the death of Antonin Scalia, the *Freidrichs vs. California Teachers Association* lawsuit that came before the Supreme Court tied in a 4-4 deadlock. The failure of the court to come to a decision on *Freidrichs* resulted in the current policy remaining in place, which allows unions the right to collect mandatory “agency fees” from the people it represents, and avoiding “free riders”, people who would benefit from the union’s negotiations over salary and benefits, but would not pay any dues. At that time, it was thought that President Obama would name a justice to replace Scalia, so that were a similar case to come before the Court, our union rights would remain safe.

Well, as we all know, it didn’t work out quite that way. In an unprecedented obstruction, a Republican-controlled Congress denied then President Obama the right to name a new justice, and now the new president has appointed strict constitutionalist and Heritage Foundation darling Neil Gorsuch to the Court. Gorsuch has shown himself to be clearly no friend of working people, and would be likely inclined to rule in such a way that would target the key funding source for unions, effectively crippling them and squelching the voices of the workers represented.

Enter the new plaintiff in what is essentially the same case under a different name—*Yohn vs. CTA*. The complaint, filed in Santa Ana federal court, asserts (just like *Friedrichs* did) that most union activities, even salary and benefits negotiations, are “inherently political”, and thus infringe on First Amendment rights. Agency fees, which are employed by unions in 23 states including New York, are meant to

cover the cost of representing bargaining members in things such as salary and benefit negotiations. Teachers can opt out of the membership dues for activities labeled political, but they still are on the hook for their share of the fees. This lawsuit, like *Freidrichs* suit before it, is the brainchild of the Center For Individual Rights. In a classic case of calling something by the opposite what it is, CIR is a right wing legal organization that is known for its opposition to affirmative action, civil and voting rights, and other equity policies that impact minorities and other groups who have been traditionally discriminated against.

And the *Yohn* case is not the only one targeting agency fees that is coming down the pipe. In Pennsylvania, there has been a very similar case filed by teachers. Backed by the National Education Work Foundation, the Pennsylvania teachers union joined by state-employed pharmacists from California and school workers from New York filed similar lawsuits in different federal courts, saying their First Amendment rights are violated when they have to pay a portion of union dues, or “fair share fees” - when they disagree with union policies, representation, and politics. Major mistake. There are some figures with very deep pockets that have a vested interest in weakening unions. The barrage of cases is just beginning and if any of them will make it to the Supreme Court when it does, we all have to be prepared to stand up and fight with our union.

For more info on pending anti-union legislation in Pennsylvania, please see Peter Greene’s education blog, “Curmudgucation” - <http://curmudgucation.blogspot.com/2017/07/another-attack-on-unions.html>

“Gorsuch has shown himself to be clearly no friend of working people, and would be likely inclined to rule in such a way that would target the key funding source for unions, effectively crippling them and squelching the voices of the workers”



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We're on the Web!
<http://www.uuphast.org/brockport/>

Kowal Blasts NY House Reps for Backing Health Care Bill

UUP President Fred Kowal slammed seven New York House Republicans May 5 for voting for a bill to repeal Obamacare and vowed to hold them accountable for their decision to deprive working families of affordable health care.

He also urged UUP members to call the seven House representatives—Elise Stefanik, John Faso, Claudia Tenney, Peter King, Chris Collins, Tom Reed and Lee Zeldin—and express the union’s outrage over their support for the rushed, politically motivated bill.

“By voting yes, they have turned their backs on New Yorkers by severing their access to decent, affordable health care coverage,” Kowal said in a May 5 media release. “We will not forget.”

Reps. John Katko and Daniel Donovan voted against the bill, which passed by a vote of 217 to 213. You can read more about the bill’s specifics in this story by [Politico](#).

UUP members can contact their representatives via the phone numbers listed below:

Chris Collins
Washington, D.C.: 202-225-5265; Geneseo: 585-519-4002; Lancaster: 716-634-2324

John Faso
Washington, D.C.: 202-225-5614; Delhi: 607-746-9537; Kinderhook: 518-610-8133; Kingston 845-514-2322

Peter King
Washington, D.C.: 202-225-7896; Massapequa: 516-541-4225

Tom Reed
Washington, D.C.: 202-225-3161; Corning: 607-654-7566; Geneva: 315-759-5229; Ithaca: 607-222-2027; Olean: 716-379-8434

Elise Stefanik
Washington, D.C.: 202-225-4611; Glens Falls: 518-743-0964; Plattsburgh: 518-561-2324; Watertown: 315-782-3150

Claudia Tenney
Washington, D.C.: 202-225-3665; Binghamton: 607-376-6002; New Hartford: 315-732-0713

Lee Zeldin
Washington, D.C.: 202-225-3826; Pachogue: 631-289-1097; Riverhead: 631-209-4235

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Check twitter for parking & bus updates:

@bportparking

And sign up for text alerts:
www.brockport.edu/parking

BROCKPORT CHAPTER OFFICERS 2015-2017

- President.....Joe Torre
- VP Academics.....Susan Orr
- VP Professionals.....Gary Owens
- VP Membership.....Sara DiDonato
- VP Retiree Concerns.....Herb Fink
- VP Part-time Concerns.....Vacant
- VP Publishing.....Brittany Profit-Rheinwald
- VP REOC (Academics).....Diana Wong
- VP REOC (Professionals).....Lisa Gerst
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- Life Insurance
- Vision Plan
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- Car & Truck Rentals
- Wyndham Hotels
- TripBeat by Endless Vacation
- Premier World Discovery



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