
THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

♦ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ♦ President: Noah Kaufman ♦

April General Meeting:

Criminal Justice Reform in New York

*- where we are now,
how we got here, and
where we need to go -*

Invited Speakers:

State Senator Brian Benjamin
State Assemblyman Dan Quart

Thursday, April 11, 2019

7:45 p.m. registration

Meeting starts at 8:00 p.m. sharp!

Bank Street College

610 W. 112th Street (between Broadway and Riverside Drive)

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Volume 44, Issue 4

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Soap Box: *Room for Debate*



Note: in the spirit of open dialogue and discussion, we present the following piece from contributor James Behr and a response from District Leader Curtis Arluck. I hope this helps us all sharpen our own thoughts on these issues, and I hope we can continue to use this forum for productive, good-faith debate. If you've got a topic you'd like to discuss, please email me at palmonrode@gmail.com. Thanks.

Pat Almonrode, Editor.

Beware, Ambitious Progressive

James Behr

It's healthy to have ambitious plans. It is not healthy to have big plans without details. Beware; big things can lead to political disaster. You need pragmatism and the political center. Just ask George McGovern, Walter Mondale, Mike Dukakis, or Al Gore.

Take, for example, building a green economy and addressing our unhealthy addiction to oil. These are meritorious. Medicare for All and improving healthcare are very important. But what will it cost? What is the five or ten-year plan? We don't see that, do we? Hey, words are cheap.

When promoting the need to convert our economy to clean energy, do we get far demonizing the oil industry? Government oversaw an incredibly successful economic conversion, which helped us win World War II. It happened by enlisting industry. GM and Ford converted to building tanks and airplanes. Today, we must do the same. We need to enlist Exxon, Chevron, and the others. We need to study how things were done successfully in the past. Our politicians are not doing that ... yet.

If we want to emulate the giant achievements of the New Deal and that generation, we'll need leaders surrounded by intellects, solid legislation writers, accountants who accurately calculate costs, and government agencies that study topics carefully.

We Need MORE Progressives

Curtis Arluck

This will be a piece about how we should stop defining ourselves by ideological labels, but let me first label myself: I am neither the hard leftist that Mr. Behr chides, nor am I the timid centrist that he seems to think will somehow lead us out of the wilderness. I speak on behalf of what I believe is far and away the majority wing of the Democratic Party. We try to be as progressive we can be in the real world. We embrace exciting young progressives like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, but we also support moderates like Doug Jones, especially if their story and their words inspire us. We believe that the Democratic Party, as flawed as it is, is the best vehicle to bring about the changes we need while fighting the evil that we've got. We work with any Democrat who shares this belief. *We are Nancy Pelosi Democrats.*

My specific rebuttal to Mr. Behr's article comes both from the data and from the heart. First, the data. There is no evidence that either self-identified progressives Democrats or self-identified moderates run consistently better in November. It depends much more on the attractiveness of the candidates and the strength of their campaigns. The only two really bad Democratic losses last year were both in Florida, one by the progressive Gillum, one by the moderate Nelson. (If anything, you could

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Behr (from page 1)

If we are to convert to Medicare for All, we need to know what it will cost us personally: what's the difference between its cost and what we now pay, how will taxes fund it, and how will it be paid for? Will it bankrupt the health insurance industry? Many of us Democrats (and Republicans) own stock in CIGNA, United Health, and other healthcare companies and institutions. Are we stakeholders going to lose tens of thousands of dollars in our IRAs? We have a right to know.

Being on the right side of history does not relieve us of the obligation of due diligence. Important questions must be answered. Further, just how do we get enough Republicans in the Senate (they control) to pass such gargantuan legislation? How do you build support from people you continue to demonize? Isn't *that* a question we should answer?

The same can be said for free college tuition for all. Wonderful idea! But where will the money come from? It may cost hundreds of billions. Will it apply to private universities that charge up to \$50,000 tuition? Will earners above \$200,000 get free tuition? And what will it cost? Details, we need details! Do we borrow more from China? Tax the rich? (As if *that* would be enough to subsidize the cost)

Really ... it's all so vague. I like progressives. I agree with their noble intentions. But get to the program. The time comes when one must transition from slogans to legislation. We need cost analyses. We need to work with our political "foes" (who have a say in it all). As Adlai Stevenson quipped, you need a majority. By the way, he lost twice.

If you have big ideas, you're obliged to also have an economic study. Congress has the wonderful Congressional Research Service and CBO, with staffs to study such matters. Politicians need to use them and give us details. It's something to think about, progressives, else we could find ourselves again staring in from the outside in 2020. Good intentions are not enough; just ask Adlai.

Big dreams need feet firmly planted on the ground. You need to win the center. Beware, ambitious progressive – big dreams require details.

The author is a freelance writer and an Adjunct Professor at Manhattan College. His published work includes "America on the Verge," a book of political commentary.

RL

Arluck (from page 1)

say that Gillum's politics were better received, because he had some personal baggage but nearly won, while Nelson had no personal baggage but still lost.) On Long Island, progressive Liuba Gretchen Shirley ran as well as centrist Perry Gershon in a somewhat more Republican district – though they both lost. Fighting progressive Lucy McBath flipped a seat in Georgia that the cautious moderate Jon Ossoff had lost just the year before, but in Kansas moderate Sharice Davids beat a Berniecrat in the primary and went on to a general election victory that few believe her primary opponent would have been able to achieve. Were these results because of ideology, or because both McBath and Davids were extremely appealing people? Probably both, but the evidence is clear that we need strong, appealing candidates from both wings of the party, and that both factions need to stop sniping at each other.

Now we come to the issues. Mr. Behr talks about "demonizing." We've all read many articles about how we have about 10 years to try to cut down our carbon emissions before the earth is irrevocably damaged. None of them speaks well of the oil companies, but none spends a lot of time demonizing them, either; they focus instead on what desperate trouble we're in and what needs to be done about it. Every intelligent discussion about reducing greenhouse gases acknowledges that the last 30% or so of what we need to do will be a lot harder and more costly than the first 70%, but why chant "how are you going to pay for all of this?" as an excuse for doing nothing about any of it?

As for healthcare: I personally think that a Medicare buy in at age 50 or 55 and a state-sponsored public *option* are better first steps towards both funding affordable health coverage and convincing the public that this is the way to go, rather than forcing people off their employer plans and into Medicare for All. But once again, does Mr. Behr really believe that we will achieve anything on the healthcare front by "reasoning" with people like Mitch McConnell or even Lamar Alexander? Barack Obama was one of the most "reasonable" Presidents ever, and yet how many Republican votes did he get for any of his policies?

Our party is already far more "civil" than Trump and the Republicans, who are growing nastier and more dishonest by the day. As Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton (invoking Harriet Tubman) famously said, we should continue to go high when they go low. But this does not mean that

we should turn away from our progressive principles.

Of course our party needs moderate voices and candidates as well, but we must not forget that *progressives* drove the implementation of every great idea that the Democratic Party has put forth in the last hundred years: Social Security, Medicare, affordable health care, civil rights, voting rights, reproductive rights, the right to marry the person you want to, anti-discrimination, minimum and fair wages, clean air, clean water, aiding public education. I'm as unsure as the rest of you about who is the best presidential candidate to lead our party, but we already have our leader and role model in Congress – that strong, tough, effective *progressive*, Nancy Pelosi.

The author is a tax professional and has been the Democratic Male District Leader for the 69th Assembly District for the past 40 years.



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.

President's Column

Noah Kaufman

My Eyes Have Seen A New Spring.

Spring is in the air. Broadway Democrats and all our neighbors enjoy the milder weather. The early daffodils are seen in the sunny corners. The men and women of the NYC Department of Sanitation, "New York's Strongest" who work the early shifts collecting our trash three times a week, can do so in daylight, which is a much safer way to work (Thank you MW9 and MW7 Sanitation workers, for your work!)

In April we remember the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. We remember Rev. King's words, shortly before he was shot dead, on the struggle to get to the Promised Land. He said he might not get there with us. He told his audience about making it to the mountain top. He said he feared no man. He quoted "mine eyes have seen the glory of the Lord."

Fifty-one long years have past since Rev. Dr. King was killed. But the Dream lives on. The vision of a world marked by justice, not injustice. One of equity, not prejudice. A world of equal opportunity and a world of successful outcomes. The Dream lives still.

One critique of the capitalist society is that, based on (unfettered) consumption, it destroys the fragile webs which are our ecosystem. That the teaching "we don't own the land – we borrow it from our children" is often forgotten in the drive to extract more resources, and to manufacture and sell more things. The creation of new wants and needs is stoked by the fine art and science of advertisement. The fine science and art of technological advancements provides us with the "convenience" of disposable everything. Capitalism and markets and technology are drowning the planet in plastic garbage. The carbon fuels we use to power our lifestyle and market economies are creating global climate change. That change is melting the polar ice caps. A nightmare is barreling down upon us.

The Dream must outweigh the nightmare. As Democrats, as New Yorkers, we must work from the ground up to ensure a better tomorrow. Now that we see our neighbors on the sidewalk, emerging from the long winter, we can discuss ways to build on the ideas of the Dream, for all. We live in the richest city in the richest county in the world, and still there are people in our district who are hungry.

If you're interested in the discussion of reforming our judicial system, of the ways and means of the system of New York criminal justice, on the politics of crime and punishment, come to our Club Meeting on Thursday April 11 at 8 pm. All are welcome.

And if you're concerned about the plague of plastic overwhelming the web of life, learn more about recycling in NY and encourage your neighbors to recycle more. If you like the daffodils, join a community garden or your local Park Friends committee. And if you are committed to the Dream of a non-violent, just society, please keep the Dream alive. Fear no one because Truth Goes Marching On.

The author is an officer and delegate of Local 375 CSTG, AFSCME, a Delegate to District Council 37 AFSCME, and President of the Broadway Democrats.

In Support of ThriveNYC

Richard Siegel

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your emotional well-being right now?

Is there anyone who believes that there are *too many* services to address mental health issues facing New Yorkers?

Recently, the news has been filled with criticisms of ThriveNYC. Some politicians – most notably our Comptroller, Scott Stringer – and the New York Post have questioned the amount of money this program has dedicated to comprehensive mental health care. The critics have also demanded evidence that the program has been effective. These criticisms have continued while the news is filled with the horror of three separate suicides of survivors of school gun violence.

Many may not even be aware of the program. Its website states, *“ThriveNYC is an unprecedented commitment by the City of New York to create a mental health care system that works for everyone”*. It goes on to speak of changing the culture of care by eliminating the stigma of accepting help. It speaks of being proactive by investing in programs that provide early intervention to prevent the factors that cause mental illness in students and other New Yorkers.

These are incredibly ambitious goals for a program that was launched in 2015. The program looks to address mental health of school children. It looks to routinely identify and treat postpartum depression. It embeds counseling services into primary care. It seeks creative ways to enhance the treatment of those with serious mental illness. In all of these examples, it seeks to normalize the treatment of emotional health. It seeks to encourage people to accept treatment just as they would accept treatment for high blood pressure or diabetes.

The biggest criticism of this program is that – thus far – there is no series of outcome measures to demonstrate effectiveness for 29 of the 41 programs in this initiative.

Since you started reading this article, on a scale of 1 to ten, how would you rate your emotional well-being now?

As a social worker who has helped people for almost 40 years, I think I am successful when people feel better. That is not always possible to measure. Feeling better is a subjective experience. There are ways to quantify these changes in some

instances. For example, the PHQ-9 is a very effective measure of depression. Counseling and medications can be shown to lessen depression when the score on that scale decreases.

But how do you use measurements to show someone is no longer suicidal? How do you measure whether a child feels less isolated and is therefore more interactive in class? How do you measure that a person with severe mental illness is not hearing voices?

The point is that the Neoliberal concept that **things can be managed only if they can be measured is a flawed concept**. This concept has been used to criticize and cut fund for many social programs since the Reagan presidency. Effective counselling is a scientifically based profession that also includes the artistic ability of treating clinicians to connect with individuals and to help them improve the way they perceive their life. Not every action fits into the managerial paradigm of measuring with numbers. What’s wrong with enabling people to identify the things that are bothering them and seeking help without being labeled “crazy”?

We all want to make sure that money is being spent effectively for the common good. However we also must question the motivation of those going after these programs. One has to ask – why do powerful men (politicians and newspaper editors) single out women who happen to be married to elected men when they use their own training and expertise to affect public policy?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your emotional well-being right now?

The author is a longtime mental health professional and is currently Director of Social Work/Discharge Planning at Metropolitan Hospital.

RS

We want to hear what *you* have to say! Email submissions to the editor (in MS Word, please) at palmonrode@gmail.com.

Please note that we will consider all submissions, but we reserve the exclusive and final right to decide what to publish.



District Leader's Report

Curtis Arluck

Petitioning Ends: Thank You!

As this is being written, we have gathered most of our petitions; by the time you receive this, we will have filed them.

The final numbers are not yet in, but it looks like we will file more than 2,000 signatures, more than four times the required amount, qualifying all of our Judicial Convention Delegates/Alternates, and all or nearly all of our Democratic County Committee candidates. For an off-off year election at a new time, with most voters unaware that we are even in an election cycle (and with me in the throes of tax season), this is quite an impressive showing. Paula and I are grateful for the support we received from Broadway Democrats/community members old and new. It is especially heartening that of the 34 people we have collected petitions from so far, 14 had never before witnessed for us. We look forward to seeing you at the April 11 and future Club meetings, at our April 28 "Spring Fling" at 107 West—you can get in for the club rate!—and on the streets of our community. There is much work to be done.

Individual thanks to: our new petitioners Shelby Drescher, Yakira Kellman, Blake Harvey, Rafael Cortes, Elizabeth Felicella, Joseph and Justin Fox, Ann Linden, Matthew Camp, Alyssa Weinstein, Rebecca Saletan, Heather Ducharme, Lawrence Kingsley, and Julius Manigault; and to our old friends Dan Zweig, Zoila Marte, Luis Román, Joe Nunley, Gretchen Borges, Dan McGuire, Richard Siegel, Maxine Phillips, Susan Crawford, Gloria Allen, Dan Cohen, Katie Hanner, Barbara Trelstad, Noah Kaufman, Laura Friedman, Wendy Paster, Dan Lowenstein, Joyce Hopper, Lolita McCombs, and Mary Outlaw. We have not yet received the petitions from Norman Lafond and his group, but we know there will be many more witnesses old and new.

RL

RESOLUTION

*adopted by the Broadway Democrats
at the General Meeting, January 17, 2019*

WHEREAS, the Broadway Democrats, a dedicated, active Democratic club on the West Side of Manhattan in the 69th Assembly District of New York City, strongly opposes the Democratic National Committee's "welcoming" of contributions from the fossil fuel industry; and

WHEREAS, we believe that we are in an emergency in which our nation and planet must end the use of fossil fuels as rapidly as possible and that any contributions from this industry can only serve to compromise our political party's efforts to initiate a robust government response to this crisis;

NOW THEREFORE, we call upon the Democratic National Committee to renew and recommit to its earlier pledge not to accept contributions from the fossil fuel industry.

*drafted by Joe Nunley, member, Steering
Committee*

RL



Hold the Date!

Broadway Democrats'
Spring Fling

Sunday, April 28th,
3:00 - 6:00 pm

Honoring
Borough President Gale Brewer
&
The 113 Street Play Garden

107 West Restaurant,
2787 Broadway

Contact 609-751-3033 or email
fundraiser2019@broadwaydemocrats.org

