
THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

◆ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ◆ President: Gretchen Borges ◆

Annual Town Hall Meeting: Manhattan Valley

Speakers

- 🔊 State Senator Adriano Espaillat (31st)
- 🔊 State Senator Bill Perkins (30th)
- 🔊 Assemblymember Danny O'Donnell (69th)
- 🔊 Peter Arndtsen, Columbus-Amsterdam BID
 - 🔊 Borough President's Office
 - 🔊 D.A.'s Office
 - 🔊 Department of Sanitation
 - 🔊 Police Department (24th)

Thursday, February 21, 2013

7:45pm Sign-in * 8:00pm Town Hall

Speakers will make brief presentations, followed by a question and answer session.

**Church of the Ascension (Lower Room)
221 West 107th Street
(between Broadway and Amsterdam)**

THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

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Volume 38, Issue 2

February 2013

President's Corner

Gretchen Borges

Jefferson in 2013

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness--

Since the President's Second Inaugural, in which he considered Jefferson's stirring words from the Declaration of Independence, I have been mulling over those phrases and considering them in light of today's America. What would Thomas Jefferson think of us today? How well have we met the challenge of his bold assertion to King George III? Our recent past has made me question whether we are going in the right direction, embracing those Jeffersonian ideals, or whether we are heading towards a more Georgian future. In our capital city, taxes are imposed without representation or consent; the victims of our drone attacks are deprived of the benefits of trial by jury; and with imposed embargoes we deprive states of trade with other parts of the world. All were accusations made against King George III. Are Mr. Jefferson's truths: equality, life, liberty, pursuit of happiness eluding the majority of Americans today?

Equality To understand equality in its current guise, one can take the theoretical leap from Jefferson's "all men are created equal", which of course did not mean they lived as equals in the eighteenth-century colonies, to considering the current circumstances of the economy. Economic inequality is now at its greatest level since before the Great Depression. The effect has been to drive very slow growth; the majority of people do not have much to spend. The solution is not clear.

Previously, when we have experienced extremes of inequality, we have escaped through the massive influx of government spending necessitated by World Wars. Such is unlikely to occur again. Thankfully. Even the drop in spending caused by the defense department's anticipation of the sequester cuts caused the economy to dip. We have not heeded Eisenhower's advice as he left office, "Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together." And now it is hard even to imagine an era when a Republican would fashion a sentence like that one.

Life The right to life. The phrase has unfortunately been co-opted by the anti-abortion establishment, but it should belong to the gun control contingent. I am quite certain

that the second amendment was never meant to trump the unalienable right to life, yet the unstoppable proliferation of handguns has led to unacceptable rates of gun deaths in our cities for years. And the horrible concurrence of mentally unstable individuals with assault weapons and enormous clips of ammunition, though rare, has occurred much too often, with horrific consequences. In 2010, 14,043 lost their right to life prematurely by homicide in the United States.

The gun control discussion illustrates the divides in the country. Geographic divides. Economic divides. Cultural divides. Urban-suburban-rural divides. In 2010, 152 juvenile gang-related deaths by firearms were recorded in Illinois alone. 152 juveniles. The nation did not erupt in protest. The deaths were attributed to many people and occurred over a year, in a variety of locations. Different circumstances. But 152 juveniles died by gunfire. Fifty different state laws for gun control will never control guns or protect the right to life.

Liberty Liberty is available to more of us today than in Jefferson's day, but vigilance will always be required to ensure we do not lose it. The last presidential election brought out disgraceful attempts at vote manipulation and revealed shamelessly gerrymandered districts. Considering this situation and the resulting impasse in Washington, the quickest solution (one that admittedly will never be taken) would be the imposition of term limits. The continual campaigning by congressmen and congresswomen creates an incessant race for campaign dollars; it has led to the undue influence of powerful interests; and it has meant that our crumbling infrastructure is now considered only as a target of pork barrel legislation and/or appropriation.

Pursuit of Happiness A thornier phrase. Did Jefferson mean property or well-being? We don't know for sure, but we do know that for a significant portion of its history America has been, at least for some, the land of opportunity. But now, more so than in most other developed countries, families' wealth and education levels pretty much determine the fate of their children. And considering our porous safety net, weakening educational system, and high incarceration rate, this situation is unlikely to improve. But happiness can still be pursued. We are fortunate to live in a glorious city in what is still a wondrous country, and despite its serious problems, we can be very happy we do.



District Leader's Report

Curtis Arluck

Council Redistricting Update

As it is tax season, I must be brief. The latest and probably final City Council lines have been released, and they are easily the best, though nothing in this life is ever perfect. All of Morningside Heights and Manhattan Valley are together in the 7th District, which will run essentially 110th-165th west of the parks, until Washington Heights, where there are no more parks to the east. It's from 96th to 110th where there is some disappointment. There, the dividing line is Broadway, where everything east of Broadway to Central Park is in the 7th District, and everything west of Broadway is in the 6th District, now represented by the term-limited Gale Brewer. This may mean that Broadway Democrats will endorse in two Council races, both of them "donnybrooks." We were really hoping that all of our area would be in the 7th, but at least there are no squiggly, gerrymandered lines in the new districts, and the Broadway-Riverside 96th-110th area is a much better fit for the 6th District than the Harlem-based 9th CD, where it now sits.

District Leader Part lines will be decided shortly. The six 69th AD District Leaders have a major say in this. The lines are not yet set, but it looks like we will move south to 106th St. The attached chart (*see p. 7*) describes the EDs that are likely to be in our new part. (You have to live in the Part to vote for District Leader in the election, but club membership is open to all eligible Registered Democrats in the area who choose Broadway Democrats as their "home club.") To make up for the 7 EDs we are losing to the 70th AD—ED 68 hasn't been ours since the 1970's—we are gaining EDs 73, 74 and 75, plus all of EDs 76, 80 and 81 which contain blocks currently in the Three Parks district. The chart shows the shape of our new district, and also reminds us of what a wonderfully Democratic District we have: 92% for Obama!



District Leader's Report

Paula Diamond Román

As I was writing my newsletter article, I heard the news that Pope Benedict XVI was resigning, less than eight years after becoming pope. He is the first pope to resign in six centuries. I was struck by the political significance of this event.

Vatican City measures the equivalent of thirty-eight blocks and has a population of just 832, but over one hundred countries have ambassadors to the Holy See, including China, Iran, Israel, and the United States. The Pope is the infallible leader of more than one billion Catholics worldwide, including 77.7 billion in the United States, almost a quarter of the country.

In the 1980s, I had great admiration for then-Governor Mario Cuomo, who would not support a legal ban on abortion; as a result, he was banned from speaking in diocesan institutions. Cuomo's principle, echoed most notably by John Kerry during his run for president, was that it's possible to agree personally with Church doctrine without forcing the public to follow it. On the other hand, we have Rick Santorum and Paul Ryan, who espouse political positions more centered in conservative theology.

Before ascending to the papacy, Benedict was the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which oversees the integrity of the traditional doctrine of the Catholic Church. He felt very deeply about what he saw as the decline in religious belief in the West. His views sometimes went beyond even the conservative theology of his predecessor. His selection as successor to Pope John Paul II was seen as a nod to traditionalism.

Beginning in 2001, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was also responsible for handling clerical abuse cases. Two years ago, when the clerical abuse crisis reached its apex, it was revealed that, as Cardinal, Benedict had protected a convicted child-molesting priest from being defrocked, in order to protect the church. As pope, he apologized for the abuse and met with victims; however, he seemed unable to take action against the cardinals and bishops who protected "predator priests," moving them from one parish to another.

Pope Benedict XVI approved an investigation of nuns who were accused of straying from doctrine. He opposed the distribution of condoms in Africa to slow the spread of AIDS. He reversed the excommunication of four bishops from an arch-traditionalist group which didn't recognize the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), granting a greater role for women in the church and absolving Jews for the death of Jesus. It is difficult to fix the number of people who have died of AIDS because their pope told them it would be a sin to protect themselves with condoms. The position of the new pope towards birth control and the role of women in the church will have an immense impact on the role of women in the greater world, including women's ability to control their own reproduction and to participate in the workplace.

As the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Benedict worked to suppress liberation theology in Latin America and to counteract liberal theologians in general. The Catholic Church is run by a largely European hierarchy administering to Catholics primarily in the developing nations of Latin America, Africa and Asia. The position of the new pope towards these developing nations has immense political ramifications. Pope Benedict's work to get rid of barriers between nations and religions is touted as one of the major accomplishments of his papacy. However, soon after becoming pope, he publicly criticized the teachings of the prophet Muhammad, infuriating Muslim leaders and

resulting in riots across the Middle East. In addition, there have been suggestions that Benedict has shown support for “holocaust deniers.” The position of the new pope towards Judaism and Islam also has immense political ramifications for the tinderbox that is the Middle East and whether the new pope will help light a match or help bring peace to the region.

The favorite to replace Benedict as pope is Cardinal Angelo Scola of Milan, with Cardinal Marc Ouellet of Montreal a distant second. Benedict’s traditionalist and conservative type of Catholicism is likely to continue because he has appointed sixty-seven of the current one hundred and eighteen electors. Hopefully, before Easter, we will know who will be the leader of this tiny state of 1.2 billion people.



Assembly Member’s Report

Daniel O’Donnell

I would like to share an update regarding the drilling practice of hydraulic fracturing or “hydrofracking” in New York State. Since the Assembly reconvened in January, I have continued my long-standing advocacy in the fight against this dangerous drilling technique.

As a member of the Environmental Conservation Committee, I attended a hydrofracking hearing on January 10th, where I was able to question economists, scientists, and other industry experts. The number of comments and amount of research indicating that hydrofracking cannot be safely done was staggering. Most notably, when I asked a former Mobil Oil executive, Louis Allstadt, whether or not he could promise that the hydrofracking gas wells would not leak, he responded that he was unable to do so. I believe this was a striking admission that points directly to the significant risks and dangers inherent in the drilling practice.

Most recently, on February 5th I spoke at Assembly Member Barbara Lifton’s press conference calling for a thorough, transparent health study of the hydrofracking health process. This information, which we deserve, has not been made available up to this point. It must be.



State Committeeman

Daniel Marks Cohen, 69th AD

Due to some shenanigans in Brooklyn that would have given accused sexual harasser Assemblyman Vito Lopez a clear shot at a council seat, the redistricting lines were rejected by the city council and new hearings were called. While I was originally dubious that our lines will be revised to be more logical and compact, I testified before the City Redistricting Commission on January 7th at Hunter College. I was pleasantly surprised that just

before this column went to press that the new lines were released and they in fact ARE more logical and compact. We now split Manhattan Valley between the 6th district, currently represented by Gale Brewer, and the 7th, represented by Robert Jackson. We are totally out of the 8th, and the 9th districts, which makes sense for our community, and we should celebrate the positive change. The line between the 6th and 7th is a little askew, but small beans to complain about in light of the overall good news. My comments before the panel are reprinted below:

“My name is Daniel Marks Cohen, and I am the New York State Democratic Committeeman representing the 69th Assembly District of Manhattan’s Upper West Side in the New York State Democratic Committee. The part of the Upper West Side I live in—between 96th Street and 125th Street, is according to the latest Census the poorest portion of the 69th Assembly District, it is the least served in terms of services and transportation in a survey conducted by the Straphangers Campaign, and NYPD data indicates that it has more crime than the rest of the district.

I believe at least one reason for its consistent and uneven status is that fact that the 69th is cut up into multiple pieces. There are now three councilmembers—the 6th, 7th and 9th—who have different pieces of this neighborhood. This is not to the benefit of anyone, and it hurts Manhattan Valley residents by dividing the community into pieces preventing them from having a unified voice, and an impact, in any one council district.

This is my fourth time testifying about redistricting, the third before this panel, and I am disappointed to be here again—stating once more my dissatisfaction with the Commission’s results. My colleagues in the 69th AD and several legislators have testified that the Upper West Side, and in particular, the northern part of the district known as Manhattan Valley and Morningside Heights, would be best served if kept unified into one district and not sliced up in to multiple pieces.

Even the representative with the majority of the Manhattan Valley neighborhood, Councilmember Inez Dickens, has testified before this body that she would like the 9th to end at 110th Street, and not sneak down to 100th Street, a long politically meaningless finger that splits my neighborhood in two. There is still time to rectify this situation, and I plead with the panel, to see the wisdom of keeping a community together rather than tearing it apart.

The easiest solution is to move the border so that everything west of Central Park and Morningside Park is in the 7th. If this causes the 7th to exceed its capacity, move the line of the 6th district north to pick up some additional voters. I propose that the Commission redraw the lines more naturally, to keep Manhattan Valley’s representation on the West Side, where it belongs, rather than as an appendage to another district for incumbency or demographic reasons.

I implore you to reconsider your lines, while there is still time to make changes, and not leave our community stuck with an intractable situation for the next decade.”

Changing subjects, by now I am sure you have heard that after a short battle with cancer my father died at the beginning of December, I am grateful for the many calls, emails, and cards I received. The death of my father is heartbreaking, but having my west side family support me has made the loss a little easier to accept.

✎

From the Steering Committee

Richard A. Siegel

Hurting the Working Class

Mayor Bloomberg’s proposed budget did not include a raise for city employees. Most of us have not seen a raise for several years. This fact is in direct conflict with the decision of this mayor to approve an increase in the cost of a taxi. He also supports an increase in the cost of public transportation.

The mayor is also going after the salaries of the bus drivers and bus matrons. Under the guise of saving money he has put the bus contracts out to bid. He is refusing to guarantee the union contract, meaning that the winning bidders will probably cut salaries in order to maintain profits. The mayor has stated he cannot protect the salaries in the RFP. As Danny O’Donnell explained at our last meeting, the law was changed. He, in fact, can make sure hard working, skilled people don’t have to take a pay cut so the Board of Education can save money,

The two actions described above are part of a larger effort to squeeze the working class and especially working class people who are public employees. The governor passed a budget last year that also froze wages for state employees. In the private sector, in many companies, even when employees get a raise (many are lucky to get 3%), the senior managers get a much larger raise (10-20%). As a result, most of us are working harder and yet still falling behind.

This city will thrive the most when working class people have enough income to spend at local businesses. As we look to the elections this fall, let’s keep this issue in front of all who want to become an elected official.

✎

From the Steering Committee

Ed Sullivan

Licensed to Kill?

In the midst of all the battles for noble causes—gun control, immigration reform, progressive economics—suddenly, it has turned into a bad week.

President Barack Obama’s Administration has come down on the wrong side of an issue that goes to the roots of our United States Constitution, and to the core of our beliefs as a nation.

They assert that the President, or one of his aides, has the right to summarily kill American citizens who, they say, are living overseas and participating in terrorist activities against the United States of America.

It turns out that there is even an administrative memo on the subject, which NBC News obtained. The document is undated and unsigned, but the New York Times wrote about it and quoted from it in Tuesday’s newspaper. And the President’s people have defended their unbelievable assertion.

The first problem that leaps out of the discussion on this subject is the distinction that is made, by both pros and antis in this controversy. Killing Americans is bad; killing other people, not so much. This cheesy, jingoistic notion has taken root here in the land of the free; we Americans have rights that others do not.

Never mind that the Declaration of Independence holds it “self-evident” that all men are created equal. Never mind that the Declaration says human rights derive from the “Creator,” that they are “unalienable,” and that they apply universally.

Are we nevertheless to suppose that these rights only came into existence in 1776? Or perhaps with the ratification of the Constitution, thirteen years later? And that the Founding Fathers created our rights?

What nonsense! What philosophical junk! The writers of the Declaration and the Constitution did not create these rights. Nor did they claim to. They recognized them! Human rights pre-existed those worthy documents.

Human rights existed even when not recognized by the parade of tyrants, great and small, who have marched through history. And they exist today even if not recognized by the appointees of President Obama.

Further, a person’s rights exist whether or not he or she is in the territory of the United States. What does being in the United States have to do with possessing human rights? Do I as an American lose my rights as a human being when I travel to Canada or France? Who would say something so absurd?

So right off the bat, questions have been raised that shouldn’t even be raised, before we get to the legitimacy of the actual killing itself.

Do human rights apply only to Americans? No. Do they apply only in the geographic United States? No.

Now let’s look at the denial of the primary right, the right to life. Our Constitution, that is supposed to guide the behavior of our public officers, indicates that the right to

life can only be taken away after “due process of law.” But no process of law has been put in play here. Not only that, the Attorney General of the United States has indicated that “due process of law,” in the killing of someone the President wants killed, need not be judicial in nature.

Oh, really? Well, it can't be legislative because bills of attainder are specifically forbidden in the Constitution. So that leaves it to the executive branch of the government, where every major officer serves at the pleasure of the President, to come up with their own “process,” not written down on paper and not ratified by the people or their representatives. Convenient, eh?

The President decides that someone, Mr. X, is acting to the detriment of the United States, and that this Mr. X should be killed to end this activity—for the good of the country, as the President interprets that.

But is Mr. X really a terrorist? Who knows?

Mr. X is not charged with anything, no court indicts him, no jury is called to hear evidence, no rules of procedure are applied. Mr. X is not even informed that he is under sentence of death. There is no defense permitted, and no appeal.

There is only the executive's word that Mr. X has forfeited his life, and BANG, he is killed.

There is no process or court to stop it. Possibly, the President has his own secret process. But it is to justify his actions, not to stop them. The process is not public, and his aides within that process can be summarily fired if they contradict the President's wishes.

And who will even know?

If you were to ask someone to construct a tyrannical form of government, where the decisions of the leader could never be questioned without fear of death, this license to kill would certainly be a part of it.

A good week has been turned into a bad week.



Letter to the Editor

Christopher McGuire

A Democratic Celebration

On January 21st, 2013, the country celebrated the second inauguration of President Barack Obama. I was lucky enough to be in Washington for the festivities, and the sense of festivity that descended upon the city was remarkable. Vendors lined the streets, selling all varieties of Obama-branded clothing and paraphernalia. Chants of “four more years” would break out in crowds and bars. During the ceremony itself, hundreds of thousands of people packed as closely together as

possible in order to get a better look at their newly reelected leader, craning their necks with the hope that the next four years would be better than the last (not to mention the eight before that). For one weekend the struggles of politics were forgotten and the city seemingly resembled a Democratic fantasyland.

Despite this, the enduring message that I received from this ceremony did not come from the President, or, for that matter, from any other Democrat. Rather, it came from Republican Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee. Senator Alexander reminded those in attendance that what we were commemorating was not a partisan victory, but the peaceful transfer or reaffirmation of power within our country. The fact that this has happened fifty seven times throughout our history, across forty four administrations, is a cause for celebration in and of itself.

Consider that a majority of the world population has never lived to see the successful, peaceful transfer of power between democratically elected administrations in the country in which they live. Of the nine states that have nuclear weapons, only five have ever had a peaceful, democratic transfer of power. Pakistan has elections scheduled for this coming year, but there are serious international concerns about if they will be free and fair.

The events of the Arab Spring, in particular the ongoing struggles in Egypt and Tunisia, highlight how difficult democracy is. Even after holding elections, the governments of these countries are struggling to maintain internal legitimacy. Other attempts to peacefully transfer power—such as in Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Iran—were met with bloodshed from the onset.

Senator Alexander highlighted this contrast, observing that our transfer of power featured, “no mob, no coup, and no insurrection.” The only gunfire heard that day was from the cannonade firing a 21-gun salute to the new President. Although security was omnipresent in the capital, its presence was due to potential external threats, rather than internal rebellions.

What we celebrated on January 21st was our enduring ability to vote for the leaders we prefer, and, in the words of Senator Alexander, formerly the third-ranking Republican in the United States Senate, “the restraint to respect the results.” The historical rarity of this event is worth commemorating; only the United Kingdom has had more consecutive peaceful transitions than the United States. As much energy and breath as we devote to exacerbating and complaining about our partisan trials and tribulations, few see that streak stopping anytime soon. As the ceremonies ended and hundreds of thousands of people filed out of the National Mall, I realized I was in a democratic fantasyland, albeit one with a lowercase letter “d”.



November 2012 Presidential ED Results

ED	Area	Total Vote	Obama	Romney	Others	Obama %	Romney %
69 AD - 72	105-107, WEA-Bway	823	733	74	16	89	9
73	106-107, AMS-Bway	814	720	76	18	88	9
74	106-107, Man-Amst	746	699	39	8	94	5
75	106-108, CPW-Man.	649	609	26	14	94	4
76	107-108, Man-Amst	363	340	15	8	94	4
77	107-108, Amst-Bway	659	606	42	11	92	6
78	107-109, Bway-RSD	571	514	48	9	90	8
79	108-109, Amst-Bway	494	462	28	4	94	6
80	107-109, Man-Amst	589	555	27	7	94	5
81	108-110, CPW-Man.	610	563	43	4	92	7
82	110-111, Doug-Man.	280	262	14	4	94	5
83	109-110, Man-Amst	761	719	36	6	94	5
84	109-110, Amst-Bway	570	504	55	11	88	10
85	109-110, Bway-RSD	354	307	32	15	87	9
86	110-112, Bway-RSD	764	682	69	13	89	9
87	110-111, Amst-Bway	675	600	58	17	89	9
88	500 West 111 St.	57	49	8	0	86	14
89	110-113, MSD-Amst.	151	134	16	1	89	11
90	111-112, Amst-Bway	523	453	46	24	87	9
91	112-114, Amst-Bway	528	469	42	17	89	8
92	112-114, Bway-RSD	594	545	38	11	92	6
93	114-116, Bway-RSD	814	730	63	21	90	8
94	114/5-15/20,MD-Bwy	477	421	41	15	88	9
95	116-19/20, Bway-RSD	685	613	58	14	89	8
96	119-122, Clare-RSD	47	45	1	1	96	2
97	120/1-122, MSD-Bway	542	497	30	15	92	6
98	122-23/LaS,Ams-Clar	651	588	49	14	90	8
99	M.Gardens 1-4, 6	826	756	52	18	92	6
100	Gdns 5,Grant 1295-05	580	559	15	6	96	3
101	Grant 1315,430,55	780	771	7	2	99	1
102	Grant 75, 550, 3170	782	775	6	1	99	1
103	Grant 3150	275	269	6	0	98	2
	TOTAL 69TH	18034	16549	1160	325	92	6
70AD- 3	111-113, Doug-Manh	706	684	17	5	97	2
5	112-113, Doug-Manh	736	709	16	11	96	2
6	113-116, Doug-MSA	811	780	22	9	96	3
64	114-115, MSD-Amst	29	26	3	0	90	10
65	118-121,MSD-Amst	671	599	47	25	89	7
67	LaSal/122-Tiemann	742	685	39	18	92	5
68	Tiem-125, Bway-RSD	530	479	39	12	90	7
70	125-129, Amst-Bway	396	387	8	1	98	2
	TOTAL 70TH	4621	4349	191	81	94	4
	TOTAL, OUR AREA	22655	20898	1351	406	92	6

We were saddened to learn of the death of District Leader Mark Levine's father, Marshal Levine, on January 29, 2013 and offer sincere condolences to Mark and his family.

Membership

In order to vote in club elections (endorsements, elections of officers, judicial convention, amendments), you must be an eligible, voting member of the Broadway Democrats. You must have attended at least one of the previous nine monthly public meetings and you must pay your dues. Dues partially defray the costs of presenting forums and putting out this newsletter. Dues are \$20; senior dues are \$5.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Special Interests: _____

The Broadway Democrats
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FIRST
CLASS

Assemblymember: Daniel O'Donnell
District Leaders: Curtis Arluck,
Paula Diamond Román
President: Gretchen Borges
Newsletter Editor: Gretchen Borges

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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(221 West 107th Street (between Broadway and Amsterdam))