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# THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

◆ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ◆ President: Luis Román ◆

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# HOUSING AND RENT REGULATION IN NEW YORK CITY

*with*

## DELSENIA GLOVER

Campaign Manager, Alliance for Tenant Power, and  
Rent Regulation Lead Organizer, Tenant and Neighbors Alliance for  
Tenant Power

## KENNY SCHAEFFER

Vice-Chair, Metropolitan Council on Housing  
and Housing Attorney, Legal Aid Society

**Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Meeting starts at 8:00 PM**

**Bank Street College of Education**

**610 West 112<sup>th</sup> Street (between Broadway and Riverside Drive)**

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## President's Corner

Luis Román

I hope you will join us this month as we discuss the current state of housing and rent regulations in New York City. The regulations which maintain our system of rent control and rent stabilization are set to expire in June, which means the state legislature must renew them, or it could have disastrous consequences for residents of New York City. We have all seen the construction zones around the city, as seemingly more and more "market rate" apartments are being built. Developers continue to entice the super-rich into the city. In the meantime, the poor, working class and middle class are struggling to maintain, much less improve our standing of living. Rent regulations have been key in keeping New York, particularly Manhattan, affordable for people and we cannot afford to lose those regulations now.

There had been hope among some that the legislature might be able to strengthen rent laws this year, perhaps by eliminating vacancy decontrol, which allows landlords to begin charging higher rents after an apartment reaches a certain rent level. After Republicans retook control of the State Senate in November, however, hopes for any improvements dimmed substantially. Maintaining the current laws will be a serious struggle now and real estate and landlord lobbyists are geared up to fight.

Fortunately, there are groups organized on our side who are already actively engaged. Tenant and Neighbors is an activist group who has been fighting to protect and strengthen rent regulations in New York for years. Delsinia Glover, who is the lead organizer for Rent Regulations with the group, will speak to us about the campaign currently going on to preserve rent regulations and direct actions in which he can be involved. Kenneth Schaefer is an attorney with the Metropolitan Council on Housing, an organization that has been representing the interests of tenants in New York for more than fifty years. Ken is also an attorney with the Legal Aid Society, where he has represented thousands of New York City tenants in Housing Court. Ken will give us some of the history surrounding rent regulations as well as talking about the current fight and how the Met Council is working to preserve rent regulations in New York.

Housing is one of the most basic rights we enjoy, and one of the most fundamental to enjoying the Declaration of Independence's promise of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Rent regulations have insured that

millions of New Yorkers are able to pursue their share of the promise New York holds. We must do everything we can to make sure future generations can also enjoy that promise by preserving rent regulations. I look forward to seeing you at our meeting on March 19.



## Steering Committee

Pat Almonrode

### Environmental News: Global to Local

Here's a roundup of some important environmental items for March:

- **The Keystone XL Pipeline: *Not Dead Yet*** – The proposed Keystone XL pipeline (or KXL) has been called "the fuse to the biggest carbon bomb on the planet," because if built it would ramp up oil extraction from the Tar Sands in Alberta, Canada. Building KXL would be "game over for the climate," according to respected climate scientists. In February, President Obama vetoed a Republican attempt to force construction of the pipeline – but that's not the end of the story. Republicans in Congress have already promised to attach KXL to some upcoming legislation that will be much harder for the President to veto – like a funding bill. Want to be part of an NYC "rapid response" if this happens? Go to <http://tinyurl.com/KXL-rapid-response> and sign up!
- **Port Ambrose: *The Environmental Threat You Probably Haven't Heard Of*** – While Governor Cuomo has banned fracking in our State, the build-out of pipelines and other infrastructure for natural gas continues – leading to *increased* fracking in neighboring Pennsylvania and elsewhere, and delaying the desperately needed development of clean, renewable energy sources. One such project is the Port Ambrose deepwater liquefied natural gas facility, proposed for a site off Long Beach. This project comes with many serious environmental risks – but, most galling, if built it would *prevent* the construction of an offshore windfarm planned for the same site! Governor Cuomo can kill this dangerous and destructive project. Learn more about it – and make your voice heard – at <http://tinyurl.com/stop-port-ambrose>.
- **March 12 –The TPP: *How Would It Impact Our Community?*** – A community meeting to learn about the threats posed by the Trans-Pacific Partnership – a proposed trade deal that's been described as "NAFTA on steroids." Participants will discuss how

the TPP risks our jobs, health, communities, and the environment – and how this dangerous agreement can still be stopped. Sponsored by the Broadway Democrats and many other organizations. Thursday, March 12, 7pm, at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 521 West 126th St. Free – more information at <http://tinyurl.com/TPP-community-meeting>.

- **March 16 – Our City, Our Climate: A Forum on NYC Climate and Environmental Legislation** – The People's Climate Movement NY presents a forum on pending local climate and environmental legislation. Learn about what's been introduced, the strengths and weaknesses of these bills, and how you can help ensure the passage of legislation that can have the strongest impact. Monday, March 16th, 6 pm, at DC37, AFSCME (125 Barclay St.). Free – RSVP at <http://tinyurl.com/our-city-our-climate-rsvp>.
- **March 19 – Countdown to Paris: Update on Global Climate Treaty Negotiations** – In the six months since the People's Climate March, UN negotiators have been working on proposals for the global climate conference in Paris in December 2015. At this event we'll hear from climate leaders who attended the preliminary talks in Lima and Geneva about the progress they've made, and the challenges that remain, in reaching an effective global climate treaty. We'll also hear about plans for grassroots action, here and around the world, as the Paris conference approaches. Thursday, March 19th, 7-9pm, at the NY Society for Ethical Culture. Tickets \$5, available at <http://countdown-paris.eventbrite.com>.
- **March 22 – Confronting the Carbon Pharaohs: A Pre-Passover / Pre-Holy Week Action** – People of all faiths (and none) will gather near the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center to challenge the domination of the Pharaohs and Caesars of our day – those who perpetuate and profit from the fossil-fuel economy and from the modern-day Plagues that it visits upon our Mother Earth. We'll begin with a ritual/liturgy/gathering and end with some creative, fun, and thought-provoking street theater. Don't miss it! Sunday, March 22 (a week before Palm Sunday and Passover), 1pm. Free – exact location and more information at <http://tinyurl.com/carbon-pharaohs>.

**And finally** – the Broadway Democrats' April Forum will be on an environmental topic, to mark Earth Day 2015. More details in the next newsletter, but for now, save the date – Thursday, April 16 at 8pm.



## Steering Committee

Linda Sayre

**The Casualties and Cost of the War on Drugs:** *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander.

Unfortunately it often takes events such as those in Ferguson and Staten Island to make race and justice a central subject of national discussion. In terms of ongoing conditions of race and justice, did you know that:

- The US has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, even higher than Russia, China and Iran;
- The US has more of our black population in prison than South Africa under apartheid;
- In many states, 90% of those in prison on drug charges are black and Latino;
- And thanks to John Legend mentioning it on the Oscars, many people now know that more African American men are in prison today than were slaves in 1850.

I did not know any of these facts before I read Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. She has written a brilliant and comprehensive study of the nature and development of "a second coming" of Jim Crow.

In India part of the caste system includes people, the Dalits, who are not included in the traditional four castes. The former name "the Untouchables" (the name is now legally banned but no doubt in use by some) reflects the fact that they were outside the main stream of society. The Dalits have suffered atrocities beyond our original Jim Crow and even slavery. But what they share with them is marginalization. One social scientist in the book said it can be better to be exploited than marginalized. The two million people in America warehoused in prisons, often far from their communities, are close to invisible to many in the larger society.

Alexander sees the effects of the War on Drugs creating a system of social control, which results in a new caste. She argues that felons and former felons suffer myriad forms of discrimination that last well beyond their prison sentence or time in the criminal justice system. In essence, for many whatever the length of their sentence, it becomes a life sentence in a different form.

The War on Drugs officially began with the Reagan Administration's law in 1982. Via the administration and the media it seemed that the law was in response to a plague of crack cocaine use in the intercity. In fact crime was relative low then, as was the use of crack cocaine. Later the crime rate and drug sales and use did rise. However, the War on Drug did not target the "Kingspins" and many fewer whites than blacks, even though more whites were involved in drug crimes. Another irony is that although primarily aimed at the use and sale of

cocaine, many arrests and imprisonments were for the sale or use of marijuana. This substantially increased those placed in the criminal justice system, including prison.

In 2010 there were more than 2 million people warehoused in prisons as opposed to 350,000 in 1972, the majority directly attributable to the War on Drugs. The War on Drug grew via legislation and court decisions which continued in administrations during and after Reagan's. This expansion includes the Obama administration, one tool being continued grants to law enforcement. Alexander states that the War on Drugs has eroded many of the gains of the Civil Rights Movement and destroying the New Jim Crow requires a similar broad social movement.

Just as importantly as the evolution of the War on Drugs is the description Alexander gives of the lives of prisoners after prison. They face discrimination in both housing and employment, and are not able to receive public benefits such as food stamps and welfare. They are discriminated against in employment. From working in human resources I know very well the "Catch 22" of admitting you were imprisoned or not saying so and risking being fired for lying. And it is easy to be discovered given the background checks that are now the norm.

And finally, in all but two states, former prisoners cannot vote. While not as basic as housing, food, and making a living, voting is critical to active citizenship. And of course, full and guaranteed voting rights were one of the goals of the Civil Rights Movement. One commentator in the book says that if the 600,000 former prisoners in Florida had been allowed to vote in 2000, Gore would have won Florida and the election. In a pluralist political system it is the only way that this "caste" can enter the electoral system and become a block able to work with allies on reforming the penal system.



## Guest Column

Christopher W. LaBarge  
Legislative Director | Senator Bill Perkins

### Taking Action on Criminal Justice Reform Priorities: Videotaped Interrogations & HALT-ing Solitary Confinement

It was my honor to participate in the recent conversation "Race and Justice—with Jonathan Moore" that was organized by the Broadway Democrats. This very important meeting brought out a number of pressing criminal justice reform initiatives and I focused on two that we are working very closely on: establishing a statewide law on Videotaped Interrogations and HALT-ing Solitary Confinement.

**Videotaped Interrogations:** It has been over 25 years since the Central Park Five were subjected to illegal and

patently offensive interrogation techniques that elicited false confessions. Amazingly, a quarter of a century later we still are without a statewide law mandating the videotaping of interrogations in felony investigations. Right now, we have two standards of justice—with certain jurisdictions who videotape interrogations and others that do not. You would think that the decades of freedom that we took away from Antron McCray, Kevin Richardson, Yusef Salaam, Raymond Santana and Korey Wise would have been enough to demonstrate why we need the highest standard of justice in our State. Astonishingly, this has not been the case, but the fight continues. I carry legislation (Senate Bill 2419) will make videotaped interrogations the official law of the land in New York State, by requiring the creation of an electronic record of an entire custodial interrogation in felony cases. Electronic records will eliminate disputes in court as to what actually occurred during the interrogation, thereby improving effective prosecution of the guilty while affording essential protection to the innocent. I urge you to visit my website at <http://www.nysenate.gov/senator/bill-perkins> to download, sign and send a petition to Governor Cuomo on this essential matter; we encourage you to send a copy to our office as well.

**Solitary Confinement:** Inconceivably, we have a human rights crisis here in New York State, as over 4,000 individuals—many of the most vulnerable and defenseless among us—are subject to state-sanctioned torture, in the form of solitary confinement. This is an unacceptable situation and thus we continue the fight that Martin Sostre—a political prisoner and revolutionary born and raised in Harlem—commenced over forty five years ago when he first legally and successfully challenged the practice of solitary confinement as cruel and inhuman punishment. In 2011, the United Nations Special Rapporteur agreed with this assessment, calling solitary confinement "torture"—plain and simple.

It is a clear fact that isolated confinement is an inhumane, dehumanizing and counterproductive practice from which nothing positive can follow—individuals who need intense intervention are cut off from all resources but underlying issues remain entrenched—and the goals of public safety, human dignity and rehabilitation are fundamentally sacrificed. That is why I carry **The HALT Solitary Confinement Act** (Senate Bill 2659) which recognizes the hallmark principle that isolated confinement is effectively torture in practice and serves no useful or beneficial purpose whatsoever. This public safety legislation—which will benefit everyone involved in the public protection system—wisely substitutes a rehabilitative and therapeutic model in place of isolation so that individuals can receive the programming, support and interventions needed to help them rehabilitate and grow. I urge you to visit my website at <http://www.nysenate.gov/senator/bill-perkins> to download, sign and send a petition to Governor Cuomo on this essential matter; we encourage you to send a copy to our office as well.

Furthermore, I urge members to participate in two key HALT Solitary Confinement Albany lobby days on this matter: Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>—organized by the New York Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement and Tuesday, May 5<sup>th</sup>—organized by Community Service Society.

To sign up for these HALT Solitary Confinement Lobby Days, or get more information, contact Agata via e-mail at [ADera@urbanjustice.org](mailto:ADera@urbanjustice.org) or call 646-459-3048. Please provide your name, cell phone number, email address, mailing address, and which day(s) you are interested in attending. Please note that there are free buses leaving from New York City.



## How Would the TPP Impact Our Community?

### A public forum

Thursday, March 12, 2015 7:00 pm  
St. Mary's Episcopal Church  
521 West 126th Street, Manhattan

- Join us for a community meeting to learn about the threats posed by the Trans-Pacific Partnership and how efforts to fast track this dangerous trade agreement can be stopped.
- We'll highlight how the TPP risks our jobs, health, communities, and environment.
- Fortunately, Congressman Charles Rangel can play a key role in stopping the fast tracking of the TPP!

Sponsors include the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, Food & Water Watch, the Communications Workers of America, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, and Three Parks Independent Democrats, Sierra Club New York City Group, Broadway Democrats

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1557408207847906>

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## In Memoriam: Helen Perkins

The Broadway Democrats wishes to extend our heartfelt condolences to State Senator Bill Perkins and his family on the passing of his mother, Helen Perkins. She was 88 years old.

Born during the Harlem Renaissance, Helen Perkins grew up in a home where jazz artists, including Lester Young and Thelonious Monk, would come by to play. When she was just thirteen years old, Helen's father passed away and in the decades that followed, she aided her mother and her nine siblings through unrelenting support of her family members.

For over thirty years, Helen served as a site coordinator and poll inspector for the Board of Elections, and was considered "one of the best" by her peers.

Helen was a founding member of The Sojourner Truth Democratic Club, which was one of the first political organizations in New York State to endorse Barack Obama for Presidency. She would later celebrate Obama's victory right alongside him at the Apollo Theater.

She will always be remembered and admired for her generous spirit and boundless capacity for service to her community, her family, and her faith.

*Luis Román and Richard Siegel*

## Award Goes to Congressman Rangel

We congratulate Congressman Charles B. Rangel for recently being honored with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's (CBCF) Elder Statesperson AVOICE Heritage, Distinguished Pioneer Award at the sixth annual AVOICE Heritage Celebration held on February 24, 2015.

## 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 \$25; senior dues are \$10.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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FIRST  
CLASS

Assemblymember: Daniel O'Donnell  
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Paula Diamond Román  
President: Luis Román  
Newsletter Editor: Gretchen Borges

## Housing and Rent Regulation in New York City

with speakers Delsenia Glover and Kenny Schaeffer

Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup> 8:00 p.m.

Bank Street College of Education

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