

December
2018
Vol.26 No.10

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OSARC newsletter



Have Yourself A Merry Little OSARC Feast

For the 11th year, OSARC's December meeting will feature a holiday "feast" with extra-special, delicious "goodies," along with OSARC's own home-grown talent performing for us all. You'll have the opportunity to join your brothers and sisters in songs of the season. This year, we will be treated to the musical talents of several professional guest musicians, thanks to the New York Folk Music Society, in which OSARCer Eileen Pentel plays a major role. In the photo above from last year's holiday luncheon, Folk Music Society members Frank and Nancy Moccaldi entertained assembled OSARCers. Frank and Nancy will be back again this year, along with Clarice Kjerulff, Heather Wood and Rosalie Friend. If you have a special talent you wish to contribute to the program, give Eileen Pentel a call at 718-672-6399 and let her know. If you get her voicemail, leave a message and let her know it's about OSARC's holiday party. Play an instrument, sing, tell jokes, recite poetry? We need you. Step up to the mic. You'll have a good time and your brothers and sisters will be grateful. It is safe to say, if you don't come, why you'll never know what you're missing.

YOUR OSARC DUES FOR 2019 ARE DUE IN JANUARY

An early warning that next month's *Newsletter* will be accompanied by your annual membership renewal notice. When you receive the January *Newsletter*, we ask that you promptly mail a check or money order payable to "OSARC," along with the green membership form, back to the union, in the envelope provided. A team of agile OSARC volunteers, under the supervision of OSARC Treasurer Hattie Thomas, will be working to process your dues. It makes life a whole lot easier for them if you pay promptly. Meantime, best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season and new year to you and yours!

**Next Organization of Staff Analysts' Retirees Club Event
Wednesday • December 12, 2018 • 12:30pm - 2:30pm**

OSARC Holiday Extravaganza

Guest Performers: Members of the NY Folk Music Society and Talented OSARCers (including, hopefully, YOU) will share music and song. Food will be much more festive than usual.

OSA Union Office • 220 East 23rd Street • 7th Floor

OSARC Officers 2018-2019

Chairs.....Sybil Allen, Edmond Husbands
 Vice-Chairs..... Lillian Ngai
 Treasurer.....Hattie Thomas
 Secretary.....Theodore White
 COMRO Representatives.....Joan Garippa, Mark Lewis, Jay Warshofsky



Newsletter Editor/Writer/Photos.....Rob Spencer
 Reporter/Writer: Kathryn Nocerino

We'll Be Seeing You In All The Old Familiar Places

Seventy-two (72) OSARC members and friends attended the November meeting:



Amparo Irizarry-Meyers

Sybil Allen, Mike Barbarotto, Andrea Behrens, Judy Berg, Vidyadhar Bhide, Renee Boyce, Michael Cole, Maria Cordero, Pranab Das, Frances David, Elsie DeMattia, Ralph DeMattia, Bonnie Dermack, Beth Forrest, Adenago Galarza, Nancy Figueroa Galarza, Joan Garippa, Eli Gottlieb, Stan Granat, Stan Greenberg, Elizabeth Henderson, George Hoo, Ed Husbands, Ampario Irizarry-Meyers, Barbara Jones, Charles Kloth, Jules Kohn, Kaye Lee, Tony Lee, Joel Leichter, Mark Lewis, Carol Marker, Marshall Marroquin, John Mazzarella, Alan Naider,

Lillian Ngai, Olivia Parker, Bob Pfefferman, Ed Platt, Fred Ranzoni, Vera Reale, Robert Redmond, Margaret Rhoden, Nilsa Rios, Henry Rose, Cora Ross, Margarete Rousseau, Nancy Russell, Waguih Sabongui, Jhames Santori, Leslie Santori, Marc Sawyer, Michael Schady, Barbara Schwartz, John Scrofani, Lorraine Rose Scrofani, Carl Semper, Reasa Semper, Andrew Sessa, Velma Small, Bill Smarrito, Louis Starkey, Apinya Sukpanichnant, Hattie Thomas, Adelaide Verponi, Sarah Vilar, Herb Wasserman, Dorothy Weiss, Regina Weiss and guest, Eric Wollman, Linda Young

Amparo Irizarry-Meyers, who retired after 36 years with the NYPD, was attending her first meeting. Welcome, Amparo! We look forward to seeing *you* at our next event!

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In Memoriam

With sadness, we report the deaths of two retirees. **Shirley Gilliam** retired in 1994 as an Associate Staff Analyst at the Department of Probation. **Ira Schwartz** retired in 1992 as an Associate Staff Analyst at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

The Newsletter extends its condolences to their families and friends.

November Meeting Coverage Delayed to January

The topic of the November OSARC meeting was an overview of the benefits provided to retirees in vision, dental, superimposed major medical and related areas. As you can see from the list of attendees in the left-hand column on this page, it was a subject of some interest to OSARC members. We anticipate an article covering the meeting and the presentations made by OSA staffers Pam Kolpan (vision), Michelle Rivas (dental/SMMP) and Vojna Stanic-Geraghty (Medicare drug reimbursement) will be ready for the January edition of this *Newsletter*. Look for it.

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Welcome: Recent OSA Retirees

We welcome the following recent retirees to the post-employment world and encourage them all to join the OSA Retirees Club, if they have not done so already.

Attend our upcoming meetings and events and please consider becoming active in your Club. The meetings are fun and informative and a way to stay in touch with your union brothers and sisters.

| | | |
|---------|--------------------|---|
| ACS | Betty Cartwright | Associate Staff Analyst |
| DCAS | Maryleida Mendez | Associate Staff Analyst |
| DEP | Florencio Inosanto | Associate Staff Analyst |
| DFTA | Gail Evans | Administrative Staff Analyst |
| DHS | Vernon Tappin | Staff Analyst |
| DOB | Jaqueline Williams | Administrative Community Relations Specialist |
| DOS | Matthew Malloy | Sanitation Chief |
| Finance | Michael King | Administrative Staff Analyst |
| HRA | Johnny Bon | Administrative Staff Analyst |
| HRA | Jonathan Hatcher | Staff Analyst |
| HRA | Arthur Lesser | Associate Staff Analyst |
| NYCHA | Byron Cave | Administrative Community Relations Specialist |
| NYPD | Monte Lavner | Administrative Staff Analyst |
| Parks | Deborah Kuha | Administrative Community Relations Specialist |

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New York Medicare By The Numbers

The New York Alliance for Retired Americans recently published some interesting statistics on Medicare in New York State. In 2016, 57% of the state's Medicare beneficiaries had incomes below \$25,000 per person, and more than a third had incomes below \$15,000. People of color had even lower incomes: 45% of black beneficiaries and 54% of Hispanic beneficiaries had incomes below \$15,000. Older people of color are more likely to live in poverty. In the US as a whole, the poverty rate is 18.8% for black adults over 65, 20% for Hispanic adults over 65, and 7% for white adults over 65. People with Medicare already pay a significant amount for health care. In 2016, they paid 14% of household expenses toward health care.

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COMRO Report - November Meeting

The Coalition of Municipal Retiree Organizations (COMRO) meets monthly and brings together representatives of the retiree sections of municipal unions, including OSA. The following coverage is based on minutes provided by COMRO Secretary Stu Eber. Mark Lewis and Joan Garippa attended the November meeting for OSARC.

Jim Perlstein shared a “Picket the Profiteers” flyer for a demonstration in Troy, NY on November 15. The flyer said in part, “Powered by the grassroots efforts of thousands of progressive activists, the incoming New York State Senate includes a solid majority who say they support universal healthcare. So this is a crucial moment to crank up the public awareness of this issue by taking action. This can set the stage for our increased efforts next year to pass the New York Health Act, which would provide high quality publicly-funded healthcare for all New York residents, regardless of employment or immigration status.”

The group is partnering with the longstanding universal healthcare advocacy group Physicians for a National Health Program and chapters of the Democratic Socialists of America to begin a campaign exposing to the public who is making huge profits from their health. The kickoff action was a picket at the annual conference of the New York Health Plan Association, a trade association for the private health insurance industry in New York State.

The targeted trade association has joined a coalition of industry groups who are working to defeat the Gottfried/Rivera bill, the New York Health Act, which has been passed by the Assembly several years in a row but which has died in a Republican controlled State Senate. According to the flyer, “the trade association campaign heavily employs distortions and scare tactics to preserve industry profits, which would largely be dismantled if this bill passed.” The pro-universal single payer coalition plans a similar demonstration in New York City at a later date. (*See NY Health Act article, page 9.*)

The 2018 Social Security Administration fact sheet documents the state of the system. According to SSA, in 1940, the life expectancy of a 65-year-old was about 14 years; today it is just over 20 years. By 2035, the number of Americans 65 and older will increase from approximately 49 million to over 79 million. There are currently 2.8 workers for each Social Security beneficiary. By 2035, there will be 2.2 covered workers for each beneficiary.



Charles Kloth and Bob Redmond



Adenago and Nancy Figueroa Galarza

COMRO’s November guest speaker was Ed Ott, a Distinguished Lecturer at the CUNY Murphy Institute. He has been active in the labor movement for 50 years, including a period as the Executive Director of the NYC Central Labor Council. He said that while labor did well this year in the midterm elections, we need to look back a couple of years. There was a thorough trashing of the labor movement that started in 2015. Union leaders did not understand why their members were supporting Trump or Sanders. Hillary Clinton had done a fairly good job as New York’s Senator, said Ott, and was accessible to the unions.

He pointed out that more than a million women marched in Washington DC and all around the country at the time of Trump’s inauguration. He said labor needs to work with the movement in opposition to Trump and asked if unions really represent their members’ political views.

He argued that President Obama wanted to push right-to-organize legislation, but there was no support from any other community. Health issues were addressed by the Obama administration because health professionals spoke about patient issues. This is similar to the recent teacher strikes across the nation, where salary issues for teachers were only part of a broader agenda addressing parents’ and students’ concerns with educational quality.

Ott claimed that the GOP is in its own identity crisis. They’re either the Party of Trump or right wing ideologues, as demonstrated by Mitch McConnell’s attacks on Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Some of the centrist Democrats who won this year, said Ott, like Mikie Sherrill in New Jersey, are neither pro nor anti-labor. They are not in favor of single payer healthcare or the reelection of Nancy Pelosi as speaker of the House.

In the Senate, Kyrsten Sinema won in Arizona and Jackie Rosen in Nevada because they had ground games to attract Hispanic and female voters. Also, many Midwesterners retire to the Southwest and bring their Democratic pro-union politics with them.

Ott added that there were progressive women, particularly Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in NYC, who won seats in Congress running on a Democratic Socialist platform. Ocasio had 100,000 votes, primarily because of a massive volunteer effort that knocked on doors, made phone



Margaret Rhoden

calls and handed out leaflets at bus stops and subway stations. This volunteer effort was true in several House and State Senate races in New York City and State.

Ott observed that the net result is that, in the short run, “we are in good shape.” In addition to defending the social safety net programs, we need to develop ways to improve them for more Americans, such as Medicare for All. Infrastructure can be a good issue for labor, but the question of how it gets paid for must be answered.

Here in the City, said Ott, the infrastructure problem goes back to the day of Mayor Koch, who let the bridges rot. Now it’s the subway system. Who is going to pay for the necessary repairs and upgrades? We need upstate allies to provide the funds.

Ott said the Working Families Party was established in the late 1990s to put pressure on Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver as a counterbalance to Albany’s corrupt lobbying environment. The recent election for State Senate changes the dynamic, but Cuomo’s interests are different from the legislature’s interests. He said, labor needs the Governor to pass any legislation, including single payer healthcare. The state GOP is in trouble. They even lost in Delaware County where Delgado beat Faso. But labor should not take anything for granted over the next two years.

When several COMRO delegates spoke about their positive experiences campaigning during the recent elections, Ott noted that Johnson was elected by a landslide in 1964 and only four years later, Nixon changed the agenda completely.

Ott said we need to give new State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins six months to organize her Senate majority and begin to move her agenda.

In reference to term limits, Ed said he believed in them for executive level jobs but not for legislative positions.

He described Ocasio-Cortez’s win over Queens Democratic Party powerhouse Crowley as an example of the voters removing an unresponsive legislative leader.

Ott said unions need to work with the legislature to pass a NY Health Care Act that does not harm the unions’ financially but provides universal coverage for all New Yorkers. National unions have historically opposed Single Payer, he said, as socialism.

Ott said union members need to be more involved in their locals to ensure they are more in tune with the wishes of the rank and file.

He said there are corrupt

politicians and there are corrupt labor leaders. Congressman Jerry Nadler, for example, won’t let you buy him a cup of coffee. Then, there are labor leaders earning hundreds of thousands of dollars a year while their members fall behind financially.

He urged labor to train people who volunteered in recent electoral campaigns to work on issues of interest not only to labor but to them and other communities. We need to coalesce around issues we can win.

He argued that Social Security should be a good issue, but unions are frequently more concerned with pensions. Infrastructure is an important issue for unions that should also appeal to others, but unions are often more concerned with jobs and not how the projects are paid for.

Race continues to be an issue in our elections, concluded Ott, with 42% of white women in Georgia voting for a white man rather than a black woman for governor.

He said retirees need to fight for respect from their unions.

Earlier this year, COMRO established three committees to work on its 2018-19 agenda. Neal Frumkin reported that, on health care/drug costs, “we are pushing the rock uphill.” Even though DC 37 and AFSCME passed the COMRO resolution on drug prices, they are not willing at this time to spend the political capital to translate the resolution into action.

It was noted that State Senator Gustavo Rivera, co-sponsor of the NY Health Act, will probably be the chair of the State Senate Health Committee in 2019. If so, he will immediately schedule hearings with the Finance Committee on the NY Health Act. It won’t be in the Governor’s budget; therefore a separate funding budget resolution will be required. The City Council will also likely hold hearings.

It was agreed that discussions with the unions and other stakeholders are necessary, particularly regarding the Health Act’s impact on union welfare funds.

It was suggested that COMRO consider working with “Picket the Profiteers” described earlier, because it does not talk about the New York Health Act, only exorbitant drug prices.

On pensions/pension counseling/related benefits, Stu Eber said COMRO will contact the Senate and Assembly Pension Committee chairs early next year to schedule a meeting.

It was mentioned again that Medicare is mailing new Medicare cards to beneficiaries now. If you haven’t gotten yours, you can call 1-800-772-1213 or contact your local Social Security office.

COMRO’s annual Analysis and Abstract of the Comptroller’s report on the Five Public Pension Funds of the City of New York should be ready for the December 12



OSARC delegate to COMRO Mark Lewis reports to the November meeting.



George Hoo

COMRO meeting. Warren Lewis observed that the net assets for the five City pension funds exceeded the 7% growth rate for FY 2018. This target is expected to be missed in FY 19 because the federal tax decreases will not be as big a factor. The funds are currently 79% funded, higher than most government pension funds.

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An Essay on Totalitarianism in the Form of a Book Review: Jason Stanley's "How Fascism Works"

By OSARCCer Kathryn Nocerino

I readily admit to being a serial borrower. However, having taken this one out of the library, I now intend to buy a copy; it's that good. Those of you in the habit of actually leaving the house in bad weather can put *How Fascism Works* in your coat pocket. It's small, about 2/3 the physical size of an ordinary hardcover, and at 207 pages, lightweight. When you take this little beauty out in the subway, bus, or elevator and hold it up with the cover facing outward, you can practically hear minds blowing all around you.

Stanley's book might well have been titled "How the Hell We Got Where We Are Today."

It lays out the features of a fascist regime: strongman at the helm, strict top-down hierarchical organization, few or denatured checks and balances on the executive, the press and universities transformed into house-organs for the regime, labor unions either crippled by legal strictures or prohibited outright, weak or nonexistent social safety net programs, displays of free speech and free assembly silenced by police and/or military action.

Hierarchy, with Big Brother at the helm, is an analog of the corporate structure which has a colossally powerful (and colossally remunerated) CEO in control, gazing down from his office on the top floor at the disgusting microbes who work for him.

As one of Ayn Rand's characters said, looking down at pedestrians from his skyscraper, "Shee-it, all of them look like insects from up here!"

While clamping down on dissent, such regimes actively encourage and fund public displays of support for the ruler and his party. The fascist system may also be understood as a symbiotic arrangement mutually benefitting the ruling party, big business, and the super-rich.

How do such repulsive governments come into being? Do we have one now? (Scratch that. Oh, what the heck: leave it in.) Stanley, who has previously generated analyses of the mechanics of propaganda says that, at the very beginning, the strongman must convince the least among us, or those within the middle class fearing loss of status, to support him.

Calls for "nationalism" and for action to reduce or

prohibit immigration (i.e., the negative inducement or dog-whistle of xenophobia) have ended in repeated instances of genocide within fascist regimes. Think Nazi Germany, Serbia and Rwanda/Burundi.

If you will recall, the Nazi party's full name began with the word "National." Consider also the far right/anti-immigrant National Front (Jean and Marine Le Pen) in France. French President Emmanuel Macron, who is not married to a Slovenian model, recently gave a speech denouncing nationalism.

Per Stanley, Socrates, in Book 8 of *The Republic*, theorizes that people "are not naturally led to self-government but rather seek a strong leader to follow." Socrates is, in essence, admitting that democracies contain the seeds of their own destruction.

Stanley explains that, along with calls for violence against immigrants and the magnification of fear of the "Other" (indigenous peoples, leftists, feminists, gays, Blacks, Jews, Muslims, intellectuals, dissenters in general), the fascist propaganda engine simultaneously glorifies a mythic past and a pure, mythic heartland. This heartland or unspoiled interior is or is pictured as a racially homogenous paradise characterized by hard-working, generally agri-cultural workers and "pure," patriarchal family structures. We call things "myths" when they are too good or simply too irrational to be true.

Stanley notes that, in 2012, Paul Ryan, former Republican House Speaker, said that American society is divided into "makers" and "takers." I don't have to tell you who he was referring to in each instance.

Fascist propaganda actively encourages feelings of victimhood, whether real or imagined. I'm behind the eight-ball because "they" are stealing our jobs. The Other may also be stealing one's women and/or subverting family structures (Mexican "rapists and murderers"; gays; transsexuals; feminists; and people like Fitty Cent and Childish Gambino).

Of course, Roy Moore, who was banned from his local YMCA for harassing teenage girls, is distinctly NOT a threat. That guy who described himself as a "pussy-grabber" is also Not a Threat.

In this worldview, Black Lives Matter becomes an anti-White conspiracy; peaceful demonstrations become "riots."

The nationalist saying "America First" was coined by the aviator Charles Lindbergh in 1939. Lindbergh railed against the threat of immigrants, believed



Renee Boyce



Carl Semper



Reasa Semper



Mike Barbarotto

in white supremacy, and praised Adolf Hitler.

Stanley quotes former Trump strategist Steve Bannon as saying, on November 18, 2016 to *The Hollywood Reporter*, that the coming era will be “as exciting as the 1930s.” Golly gee, what did he mean by that?

Stanley cites Frantz Fanon’s *White Skin, Black Masks* (1952) where Fanon explains that colonialist discrimination against indigenous peoples reinforces the stereotype of nonwhite inferiority.

One may understand the first 300 years of American history as a

prolonged Us/Them campaign of degradation and suppression of indigenous peoples. Think “reservation.” Think “Trail of Tears.”

A further example of Us/Them thinking is the differential treatment of disaster relief in, say, Texas and Puerto Rico. Here, we get money; in Puerto Rico a guy with an immense blond comb-over throws paper towels at you. (Here, you dirty savages, take that!)

The word “entitlement” used to describe safety net programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, public assistance, national health insurance and, ultimately, even education, is a pejorative coined by extreme conservatives. “Takers” sit on their fat asses and expect the rest of us to provide them with “entitlements.” The truth is, we contribute to Social Security and Medicare. They are, in fact, earned benefits. Pensions, another element of the safety net, come under attack by fascist regimes and big business in order to increase the dependence of wage earners on the regime/mega-corporation itself. A desperate population is expected to be a compliant population. Until the Revolution, of course.

“Political Correctness,” another neo-con meme, was popularized by the ultra-conservative theorists Roger Kimball and Dinesh D’Souza in the 1990s. (Are you tough enough for the nineties? Eh?)

Look what Vladimir Putin did to Pussy Riot (a feminist, pro-democracy, all-female rap group, an example of The Other). Why is the Russian

journalist Masha Gessen (a triple Other threat: gay, feminist, and dissenter) now living here? Where are journalists such as Anna Politovskaya buried? Sometimes the free press is a little too free. Freedom is for fries, not journalists.

Here, it’s people like Jim Acosta, networks like CNN, papers like the *Washington Post* and the “failing *New York Times*.”

Our president is demanding “decorum.” The Roman poet Horace said, in around 20 B.C.,

“Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori!” (How sweet and honorable it is to die for one’s country!)

The Saudi Arabian rulers, friends of Jared, also do not take kindly to a free press. As far as dissent is concerned, you need an iron hand. And lots of cleaning products.

Academic freedom, in fascist regimes, does not exist. Fascist regimes choose academics for their solidarity with the ruling party’s theories and practices, and purge those who differ from the party line. Again, freedom is for fries, not for college professors.

When you were a kid, did anyone ever tell you that you were “too smart for your own good?” It occurs to me that the high cost of college is itself ensuring an ignorant, compliant, non-thinking populace.

In *Mein Kampf*, cited by Stanley, Hitler attacked labor unions as a “Jewish/Marxist plot” designed to foment class warfare. Fascism flourishes under stark economic inequality.

Stanley says “... a proliferation of labor unions is the best antidote to [inequality].”

Stanley also summarizes the 2013 findings of Harvard political scientist Archon Fung who measured inequality and labor union density in various countries. Fung discovered that nations with high labor union density (e.g., Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland) have low income inequality. Conversely, nations with low union density (e.g., Mexico, Turkey, and our very own United States) have high income inequality. If you can put food on your table, you are less likely to swallow B.S. As we know, more and more money is sticking to the ceiling here in the U.S. In a situation of historically high corporate profits, a compliant U.S. Congress recently awarded our largest corporations and the top one percent of the income distribution a colossal tax giveback.



Ralph DeMattia

One of the key techniques fascism uses to break labor unions is the so-called “right to work” law. Advertised as a call to rugged individualism and heartland values, RTW laws, according to Stanley, came into being here in the 1940s, promoted by a group called “the Christian American Association,” which was in fact a lobby for oil firms. The CAA was “racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic” [as is the Ku Klux Klan, as are the Proud Boys, as is the patriarchal and White Power group The Shield, the Hammer and the Sword of the Lord] and cranked up “panic about communists seeking racial equality to overthrow white domination.”

We can understand Libertarianism and its so-called “free market” as a fascist meme. I can’t help quoting Stanley here. He says, deliciously, that “Economic libertarianism is, after all, the Manhattan dinner party face of social Darwinism.”

It occurs to me that this glorification of wealth is nothing new. John Calvin (1540) formulated the doctrine of the Elect, which essentially claimed that the possession of wealth, in and of itself, is proof that the rich are going straight to



Joel Leichter

heaven. Those who are poor, however, bear the mark of Satan. They will be sent straight back to Honduras.

“Meritocracy” may, alas, be understood as another fascist dog-whistle, exhorting the people to achieve wealth through “struggle.” Without struggle, it just ain’t right. Poverty and illness are good because they make people struggle. Some of them die in the process, but who cares. Privilege is for our ruling class, but “meritocracy” is for immigrants.

Our Prez has gotten Congress to severely restrict immigration and is urging that meritocracy be the sole criterion for admission to the U.S. Melania Trump got in on a “genius waiver.” Let me have a show of hands: how many of you think Melania Trump is a genius? Multiple choice: a) Nope; b) Yup, gimme her phone number; c) I DON’T CARE.

It started in Italy with the Brown Shirts clobbering communists, in Germany with the breaking of windows in Jewish-owned stores. And then it got worse. Much worse.

Here, we have “spontaneous” atrocities committed with automatic weapons against the following targets: Blacks; women; Jews. A whole bunch of people says this happens straight out of the blue, but others blame our president for cranking up hatred. Remember that guy who mailed letter bombs to each and every public figure Dear Leader targeted in a tweet? Pure coincidence. Nothing to see here: move along.

Trump denies responsibility, but he is still giving out what look very much like coded messages. In November of this year, discussing the [small, atypical] group that calls itself Antifa (an abbreviation for “anti-fascist”), he told *The Daily Caller* in an Oval Office interview, “these people, like the Antifa, they better hope that the opposition decides not to mobilize. Because if they do, they’re much tougher. Much stronger. Potentially much more violent.” Sounds like “go get ‘em, boys!” to me, but I am a well-known paranoid. Also a feminist.

The question boils down to: is Donald Trump not only a fascist but a White Supremacist to boot? Is he, in addition, a covert Neo-Nazi? I am about 50/50 on this. Our Commander in Chief could be cozying up to the Klan, the Proud Boys, Vladimir Putin, the Saudis, Rodrigo Duterte, ad nauseam, merely to make more and more money for his conglomerate, with the Presidency itself a means to this end. I say, where is the Emoluments Clause when we really need it? [Stanley says corruption is a key component of



**OSARC Co-Chair
Ed Husbands**



**OSARC Co-Chair
Sybil Allen**

fascist regimes. Go, Stanley!]

Or does The Donald actually believe his own bullshit? This is a truly hair-raising (excuse the pun) possibility, but we have to take a hard look at it.

Perhaps, if it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, it IS a duck or, let’s say, a fascist strongman.

Whether or not D.T. is the Real Thing, he seems to have let the genie, the bottle imp, or whatever, the shrieking winged multitude of humanity’s ills, loose upon society. We need to get ahold of ourselves and stop what now threatens to be our inexorable process toward fascism.

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The Drug Pushers Boost Their Lobbying

According to the AFL-CIO-affiliated Alliance for Retired Americans, a new report from *Axios* examining IRS tax filings, demonstrated that the main pharmaceutical industry trade association, PhRMA, increased its lobbying in 2017 by 126% from 2016.

PhRMA spent \$8.6 million on registered state and federal lobbying, \$17 million on advertising and public relations (10 times what it spent in 2016); and \$3.1 million on its CEO’s salary alone, up 9% from 2016.

The report notes that PhrMA’s “primary goal was to demonstrate to the public that other forces are to blame for skyrocketing prescription drug prices.” The association also attempted to whitewash its profiteering with significant contributions to patient advocacy groups like the Addiction Policy Forum and the AIDS Institute.

Pharmaceutical profits are at record highs at present, with prices for 12 of the 20 drugs that are most commonly prescribed under Medicare Part D growing in price at 10 times the rate of inflation. This year, the drug industry implemented 4,412 brand-name price hikes by July.

The Alliance For Retired Americans observed “Congress and the Trump administration must take action to lower prescription drug prices so that seniors no longer have to choose between paying for medicine or paying for rent and food.”



Bill Smaritto

Newsletter Submissions Welcome

OSARCer Kathryn Nocerino’s essay/review of academic Jason Stanley’s *How Fascism Works* appears in this issue of the *Newsletter*. If you, too, have an essay, article or review on a subject of retiree interest from health to politics to investments to culture that you’d like to submit for publication consideration, please contact editor Rob Spencer at robspencer@osaunion.org or 212-686-1229.

More Tax Cuts For The 1%?



Hattie Thomas

Despite the seemingly positive results of the midterm elections, present GOP House leadership spent November unveiling a new tax “cut” proposal which would make some aspects of the 2017 Trump administration tax cuts for business and the wealthy permanent. The proposed legislation also included new gifts to corporations and the wealthy. The House Ways and Means Committee passed the legislation out of committee on a purely party-line vote without holding any hearings. It is not clear if the bill will be moved to the floor for

a full House vote before the lame duck session ends. Given Democratic control of the new House in January, the bill will probably not move forward. Nevertheless, it is clear the GOP continues to do all it can to aid the wealthy and corporate interests.

Since the passage of the original “tax cut” bill in the fall of 2017, companies have seen much higher profits, thanks to the reduction in the corporate tax rate from 35% to 20%. Meantime, most workers saw no major change in their paychecks, with some seeing tax increases.

If approved, the new bill would increase incentives for companies to move more of their business overseas, as was announced in November by General Motors.

The new bill would also boost the federal deficit, which the last round of tax cuts already raised by \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years. As GOP leadership announced in the fall, before the midterms, they see the deficit as an excuse to push for cuts to Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare.

While the new round of tax cuts may be dead on arrival in a Democratic-controlled House, repeal of last year’s cuts also would appear to be going nowhere in a Senate in which the GOP increased its margin of control.

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Can Medicare Part B Problems Be Corrected By Legislation?

The Medicare Rights Center, which advocates on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries, has announced an effort (whose success is anything but certain) in December’s lame duck Congress to pass the Beneficiary Enrollment Notification and Eligibility Simplification (BENES) Act (S.1909; H.R. 2575), which would make changes in the enrollment process for Medicare Part B covering doctor, lab, physical therapy and other non-hospital services.

The BENES Act would attempt to correct current rules that penalize enrollees for honest errors. For many new Medicare Part B enrollees, the enrollment rules are cumbersome and confusing, leading to mistakes on when they enroll. As a result, enrollees can face a lifetime of higher

premiums, gaps in coverage, and barriers to accessing needed services, all because the enrollee missed the optimal enrollment period.

The Act aims to prevent these mistakes by empowering beneficiaries to make timely, well-informed enrollment decisions, and by streamlining the Medicare Part B enrollment process.

Another piece of legislation drawing the Medicare Rights Center’s support are the Medicare Part D reforms in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018. With drug costs a major impediment for Medicare recipients, the reforms would close the donut hole for brand name drugs a year earlier than presently scheduled and provide a larger discount for those in the donut hole, allowing beneficiaries to move through the donut hole more quickly while lowering out-of-pocket costs.

The Medicare Rights Center urges individuals to contact their federal legislators to express support for the BENES Act and the donut hole reforms in the Bipartisan Budget Act.

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Identifying Discounts For Seniors

Senior discounts are available in a wide range of retail establishments from restaurants to movie theaters to grocery stores, department stores and drugstores.

Some are available at 65 years of age, others at 60, still others at ages as young as 50 or 55.

Some discounts are available to members of the senior advocacy group American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) only; others are available to all seniors.

So how do you know if the business you are dealing with offers a discount? Well, you can and should ask! However, it also helps to have information on a senior discount policy before you go. Knowledge is power.

So here are a few online sources which feature lists of discounts for seniors:

www.aarp.org/benefits-discounts

(discounts for AARP members)

www.seniorcitizendiscountlist.org

www.nyconthecheap.com

www.theseniorlist.com

www.after55.com

Senior discounts are not limited to retail businesses. Museums and cultural institutions also offer discounts. So, check the lists before you go and ask for the discount when you go.

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New York Health Act Gets New Lease On Life — And Provokes Labor Union Concerns

For nearly a quarter of a century, New York State Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard Gottfried has been trying to move legislation that would bring a single payer universal coverage healthcare system to New York State. The bill would end private health insurance as we know it and fashion a version of Medicare For All covering all residents of New York State from cradle to grave.

According to the sponsors, among the comprehensive health services covered would be hospitalization, doctor services, lab work, testing, dental coverage, vision coverage, audiology and prescription drugs. The new system would abolish copays, deductibles and bar restrictive networks of participating physicians and hospitals. All providers would be included in the plan.

Health coverage would no longer be tied to your current or former employment. The act would incorporate those presently on Medicaid, Medicare, Child Health Plus, NYSHIP, the myriad commercial insurance plans and those not presently insured.

Long term care in nursing facilities and the home would also be included.

Payment and financing would occur through a progressive payroll tax on employers, employees and the self-employed, as well as a tax on non-wage income such as interest, dividends and capital gains. Federal Affordable Care Act waivers would likely be needed and various forms of current public health spending would be redirected into the plan. The progressive nature of the taxes underlying the plan would shift costs to wealthier New Yorkers.

A RAND Corporation analysis of the plan earlier this year projected a significant savings over the current costs for healthcare delivery, in part due to the reduced costs of administration. RAND said about \$139 billion in new taxes would be needed to fund the proposal. One unknown cited by the RAND report is how high-income New Yorkers would react to significant tax increases. Should they move out of state to avoid increased taxes, the assumptions of plan funding adequacy might be affected.

For the past four years, the New York Health Act has been introduced and passed by the Democratic Party-controlled New York State Assembly. It has died in the GOP-controlled Senate in each of those years.

With the midterm elections delivering the State Senate to the control of the Democrats, the prospects for passage of the bill in the Senate would seem to have improved. Support for the bill in the Senate had grown even under GOP leadership.

However, it remains less than clear whether the Democrats will prioritize the legislation in the new session,



Louis Starkey

given the backlog of issues that have been blocked by Republican control of the Senate over the past several decades.

Gottfried and his Senate co-sponsor Gustavo Rivera intend to introduce the bill again early next year.

Newly-appointed State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins was quoted in *Politico* in late November as saying, “It’s a conversation we have yet to have in the Senate. I can certainly commit to having it heard, having it talked about.”

It is also not clear whether the legislation would enjoy the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo, a significant player in the game.

As would be expected, opposition is already being organized by representatives of the health insurance and pharmaceutical industries who see universal government-insured healthcare as a significant threat to their businesses. Under the rubric “Realities of Single Payer” they are lining up a coalition of plan opponents, emphasizing the failure of other state-based single payer proposals to gain traction, promoting polls they argue show opposition by New Yorkers to the plan and contending that having government replace myriad private insurers as plan administrators will somehow raise system complexity.

Some within labor, particularly the New York State Building and Construction Trades Council, has aligned itself with the health insurance industry forces in the “Realities of Single Payer” coalition, which is led by the Business Council of New York State.

Perhaps a little more unexpectedly, many within public sector labor are raising concerns about the legislation. In a late November meeting between public sector union leaders and Gottfried and Rivera, a range of questions were raised about the bill and its impact on existing healthcare won through years of collective bargaining for City workers.

Union leaders outlined several areas of concern, including:

- How can the plan make sure current benefit levels are maintained or exceeded by the new system?
- How can City workers, who enjoy health coverage completely or nearly completely paid for by the public employer, be assured they will not face increased costs under the new system?
- Since unions gave up wage increases over the years to maintain health benefits, how can they be assured that any



Pranab Das



Barbara Schwartz

employer savings under the New York Health Act would go to the covered workers and not the employer?

- Since existing union Welfare Fund benefits are folded into basic healthcare under the plan and many members identify with their union because of the benefits provided through their Welfare Fund, how can the value of union membership be reinforced under the new system without the benefits originating from the union? What will happen to those funds?
- How will those who live out-of-state or retire out-of-state be covered?

Gottfried and Rivera told the assembled labor leaders that they took all of their concerns seriously and saw labor as an important ally in the successful implementation of the plan. Revisions to the legislation in its present draft form were promised. One hopes that the dialogue opened between labor and the bill's sponsors continues as the new legislative session arrives.

In his December 3 hotline message to Organization of Staff Analysts members, union chair Bob Croghan said "We applaud the bill's sponsors for their good intentions, but the proposed changes are quite dramatic and we can too easily imagine unintended consequences that would hurt our members... In any case, the bill has to go through Albany and, if and when it gets to a vote, it will probably look very different from its current version."

Meantime, some unions, especially those in healthcare, such as the New York State Nurses Association and 1199



SEIU have reaffirmed their support for the legislation, while calling on the sponsors to address public sector labor's concerns with the bill.

Private healthcare interests have latched on to labor's reservations to justify calls for opposition to single payer healthcare entirely. A December 2nd editorial in the reliably right-wing *New York Post* suggested that the concerns voiced by labor indicate that a single payer system would be worse for all New Yorkers than the present system.

So, we have an attempt to transform healthcare in New York State met by an organized opposition by industry and a divided labor movement trying to assess the potential gains and pitfalls of the new system. Stay tuned, we will keep you posted on developments.

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Happy Birthday to OSA Retirees Born in December

Raphael Agbune, Mary E. Akalski, Mahmoud Sami Ali, William Allen, Tiva Amaritnant, Michael Ambrosia, Elliot Ames, Thomas Andrews, Francisco Arcentales, Kwame Asante, Sharon P. Austin, Joyce P. Badawy, Thomas Baldwin, Judith Balos, Ruthena Barcus, Mary Bardy, Edith Joan Barrow, Richard Barth, Eileen Bartky, James A. Beavan, Yolanda Beckett, Carolyn Bennett, Raymond Benz, Richard N. Bernard, Edward Bianchi, Haripal Bisnath, Kevin Blanchard, Shirley Bonadie, Joseph Bonelli, Cheryl A. Boyce, Edward Bradley, Harry G. Bragg, Connie Bray, Joyce B. Bronstorph, Denise Brown, Robert L. Brown, Antoinette Buckley, Brian J. Burke, Michael Calabrese, Denise A. Campbell, Michelle A. Carlos, Ann Marie Caso, Joseph Castagna, Gerard E. Castagna, Lana Cherry, Ida Chin, Anthony Cirigliano, Irwin M. Cohen, Orphia E. Crump, Benjamin Dairo, Richard M. Dalrymple, Pratip K. Dasgupta, Christopher F. Davis, Anthony J. DeGennaro, Arsenia Delgado, Patrick H. Dennis, Immanuel Desai, Zoraida Diaz, Charles DiGiacomo, Munir U. Din, Ellen Diner, Ronald Dobson, Anna Donovan, John G. Duarte Jr., Vincent Dufour, Philip C. Eisman, Madeline Escamille, Bruce Farbowitz, Joseph Faure, Jane Ferner, Charles Fitzpatrick, John Francis, Seth Frankel, Marion E. Franklin, Marcus Freeman, Barry Gabriel, Adenago Galarza, Ted Gallagher, Cynthia F. Gilliam, Shirley O. Gilliam, Mary A. Giraldi, Tatyana Gitis, Edwina H. Glasco, Marianne Gluck, Neil Godden, Irwin J. Goldberg, Tatyana Golovitser, Renee Gonzalez, Mary C. Gorman, Arlene T. Gray, James Green Jr., Fay D. Grey, Josefino D. Gumpeng, Noela Haddock, Edmund Hall, Helen Hanigan-Kosuda, Sharon Harris, Valencia Haughton, James Hazley, Harvey W. Hecht, Gwendolyn L. Henderson, Dorothy Henry, Arnold Herskovitz, Veronica Hill-Lewis, Francis X. Hillis, Thomas Hotz, David Hyde, Margarete Jabouin, Daniel J. Jacobson, Elsie T. James, Anna M. James, Colleen Jinks, William Jones, Elizabeth Jones, Peter Kanakaris, Philippa Karteron, Daniel Katz, George R. Keenan, Kevin M. Kelly, Marina Khasileva, Mavis P. King, Harriet L.C. King, Alfred Klein, Eric H. Klein, John Klumpp, Diane M. Koehler, Ronald Komer, Leon Komondorea, Henry L. Korobelnik, Edward S. Lakner, Saundra Lamb, George A. Lang, firstname lastname dob, Robert S. Lawrence, Tony Lee, Ling Lee, Richard Leonard, Thomas W. Leonard, Alex K. Lukose, Mary Lynch, Shafia Mamun, Richard Matarangelo, Carmen Matias, John R. Mauldin, Michael E. McCray, Maria L. McGhee, Thomas McNulty, Bruce Mednick, Neil Mendelsohn, Joseph Miller, Michael Minis, Maggie Moats, Sadad Morcos, Liza Morcos, James M. Moss Jr., Patricianne Murnane, Virginia A. Murphy, T. Rasul Murray, Marilyn E. Ng-A-Qui, Edward A. Nicastro, Jon Norville, Joyce O'Connor, Cathyanne Obidienzo, Rockie Ojomu-Kayoes, Daniel Orlando, Gloria Page, Larry M. Pappert, Ronald A. Parente, Bertdella Patterson, Robert Pellicci, Jack Pitlon, Anita Pittas, Phyllis Pittinsky, Janetta Praileau, Peter A. Prestia, Helene A. Price, Daniel A. Puiatti, Risa Puld, Harris M. Rachlin, Lawrence Racioppo, Ruth Reinecke, Joseph Reklis, Harold Rhodes Jr, Joyce L. Rice, Dorothy Rick, Martin L. Ricketts, Shirley B. Ricks, Patricia Robinson, Christine Robinson, Frances Roker, Margarete Rousseau, Robert H. Ruger, Claire R. Samuel, Susan Scheer, Rekha D. Schoumaker, Maria Segarra, Abdus Shahid, Naresh Sharma, Gail Siegal, Susan Silvestro, Valeria Singletary, Elaine A. Smith, Thomas Smith, Kalman Soloway, Larry Stevens, Ekram Tadros, Gloria Tapper, Leonie Taylor, Agnes Thanjan, Bridget Thomas, Debra A. Thomas, Michael C. Tomlinson, Rosemarie Torres, Bethzaida Vazquez, Sarah R. Vilar, Gregory Vilchitski, Michael J. Vincent, Karmelita L. Walker, Jeffrey F. White, Joe D. Williams, Darrell A. Williams, Bassanio Wong, Judith Woods, Simeon D. Wright, Anita B. Yurman-King, Margie D. Zinzi



OSARC MEMBERS FOR 2018 [continued from page 12]

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Alfred Murphy
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Gwendolyn Murray
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Gloria Samuel
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Helen Samuels
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Gaye F. Snyder-Inkeles
Georgette Soliman
Stewart Solomon
Maureen L. Somma
Iris Solo
William Soto
Stanley Spector
Pauline Spencer
Christine Spencer
Claudia I. Spielman
William H. Spong
Nikki B. Springer
Janette M. Springle
Gerard Spoforago
Edmund M. Squire
Wardson D. Squire
Adrienne Staley
Josef Stampfel
Louis C. Starkey
Roschel Holland Stearns
Darryl S. Steckler
Julian A. Stein
Fred Steinberg
Ava N. Sterling
Edythe Sternberg
Larry Stevens
Betty A. Stewart
Harriet C. Story
Phyllis Stothers
Brenda Y. Stoute
Sallie M. Stroman
Kathleen A. Sturgis
Catherine Sturm
Chun-Hwai Su
Frances D. Suddreth-Hart
Margaret A. Suite
Apinya Sukpannichant
Morimer Sullivan
Bharat Surujnarine
David Sussman
Elliott Sussman
Andrew Sutton
Elaine Suva-Bongiovi
Michael P. Swann
John Swierczewski
Deborah Sykes
Dorothy A. Szorc
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Thomas V. Tallarico
Alfredo L. Tan
Eleanor Tannenholz-Sobel
Susan A. Tappin
Vernon Tappin
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Nelva E. Taub
Madeline Taylor
Mary D. Taylor
Grace Taylor
Timothy Taylor
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Kirsten Telemaque
Edward B. Tennant
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Juanita Terry-Thompson
Deloris L. Thomas
Preston E. Thomas
Bridget Thomas
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Brant C. Thomas
Cindy K. Thomas
Hattie Thomas
Harriet Thrower
Willie Mae Timothy
Nora Irene Tinsley
Stephen Tisdale
Nicholas Titakis
Winston Todman
Joel E. Tolchinsky
Irene Toler
Vivienne Tollin
John M. Toman
Norman Toombs
Rosemarie Torres
Lorraine A. Tolo
Mark Travitsky
Luzviminda A. Tuazon
Michael Tuccio
Bernard D. Tuchman
Shirley E. Tucker
Patricia Tucker
James Tumia
Elaine Turkel
John Turley
Emma Turner
Carol A. Twomey
Elouise Tyson
Eihel Tyus
Juliana C. Uchendu
Barbara Udell
Felix Ugboide
Charles P. Underwood
Dorothy Urbanski
Linda Urbanski
Valentina Urinseva
F. Eke Urum-Eke
Christina Vadala

William Vadola Jr.
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Alfredo E. Valencia
Josephine Valentin
Marjorie A. Valleau
Francis P. Vardy
Nelly Varnyan
Alan Vengersky
Annie Vento
Edelmira Ventura
Ruth Verbit
Eliose Vergara Jr.
Adelaida Verponi
Leonor A. Vibar
Carlos M. Viguera
Sarah R. Vilar
Gregory Vilchitski
Narciso Villafuerte
Michael J. Vincent
Rev. Edgar J. Vinces
Ana T. Vives
Jacob N. Vogel
Nona Volk
Vida Wagner
Sally Rafolsky Waldman
Jay Walla
Perry R. Walker
Linda Walker
Karmelita L. Walker
Dorothy Wallace
Rita P. Walsh
Thomas M. Walsh
William Walsh
Thomas M. Walsh
Carolyn Walton
Arinda Walton
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Yih-Lu Charlie Wang
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Christine Ward-McKee
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Amos Williams
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Herbert Williams
Lyndon H. Williams
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Isza Williams-Darlington
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Aaron Wilner
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Diana M. Wilson
Francis Wilson
Dolores Wilson
Kay A. Wilson Bigelow
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Bassanio Wong
Spencer L. Wong
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Judith Woods
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Sybil M. Allen
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Jo-Ann L. Banks
Yvette Banks
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Mary Bardy
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Ted Barra
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Edith Joan Barrow
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Barbara J. Elstein (katz)
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Larry Goldsmith
Jeffrey Goldstein
Jeffrey Goldstein
Alyana Galoviter
Jorge G. Gomez
Evelyn Gomez
Myrna Gonzalez
Renee Gonzalez
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Stanley Granat
Jacqueline Grant-Lucas
Sebastian M. Grasso
Sally Graudons
Robert G. Graves
Alonzo Graves
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Arlene T. Gray
Kathleen Gray
Brenda Gray
Michael C. Graziano
Peggy Jackson
Maureen Greenley
Estelle R. Green
Stanley Greenberg
Elaine L. Greene
Richard M. Greene
Gary Greene
Denise W. Greene
Bruce Greengart
Susan Greenhouse
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Stephen H. Greer
Aida Gress
Fay D. Grey
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James Griffin
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Monica Grima
Howard L. Gross
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Muriel A. Gumbs
Joseph D. Gumpeng
Albert Gundersheimer
Bhagwati P. Gupta
Estelle Gutthinder
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Melvin Hadley
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Ushah Hamid
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Brenda A. Hamilton
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George T. Hansen
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Frances N. Hapaz
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Barbara Henderickson
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Norma Henderson
Robert C. Henke Jr
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