

Report on NYSUT's 45th Annual Representative Assembly

Corita Kong, RC 39 Secretary and RA Delegate

Together with 2202 other delegates and alternates, President Peter Herron, Director-at-large James Brennan, and I attended the Assembly held on April 7-8, 2017, in Manhattan. There were three General Sessions and numerous committee and group meetings.

Among the prominent speakers were Mario Cilento, NYS AFL-CIO President, Randi Weingarten, AFT President, and Thomas DiNapoli, NYS Comptroller.

President Cilento thanked NYSUT members for their enthusiastic support for the Verizon workers and others who were on strike; he expressed pride for NYS having the largest and strongest union membership in the US and felt optimistic about a brighter future when we put our hearts above profits.

President Weingarten noted the unprecedented 5 million calls against the nomination of Betsy DeVos for Secretary of Education and the continuing need to monitor DeVos' policy or lack of policy for the Department of Education. She alerted us to the real and present danger engendered by the Trump extreme agenda to our democracy and urged all of us to fight for democracy and pluralism to reclaim our value and freedom.

Comptroller DiNapoli lauded the excellent preparation he had received from our public education for his career. He vowed to hold the charter schools' training and accountability like those of the other public schools. He assured us that the NYS pension is strong and well-funded and that he would never allow NYS to have any scheme other than a defined pension plan. He warned us of the risk of a Constitutional Convention nullifying the protection for our current benefits.

(This coming November, NYS voters will be asked to decide whether NY should hold a Constitutional Convention. NYSUT has a website: nonewyorkconvention.org encouraging members to educate themselves about the ramifications of holding such a convention.) Over two hundred awards were given out, celebrating excellence among our members. Forty-four resolutions were proposed and thirty-four were adopted for NYSUT to enact.

An election was held for NYSUT officers, at-large directors, election district directors, and AFT state delegates/alternates. Most of the candidates were unopposed. The incoming NYSUT officers are: President: Andy Pallotta, Executive VP: Jolene DiBrango, 1st VP: J. Phillippe Abraham, 2nd VP: Paul Pecorale, and Secretary-Treasurer: Martin Messner. (Please check NYSUT.org for the names of all the winners.)

The Assembly adjourned with the rousing singing of "Solidarity Forever" with all the attendees holding hands.

RC39 member, Shaun Gerien, volunteers to fill a vacancy

With the passing of George Wybenga, a very valued RC39 Director-at-large, a vacancy occurred in the RC39 Board of Directors. An appeal went out to all RC39 members for a volunteer to fill this vacancy. Shaun Gerien answered our appeal, and the RC39 Board of Directors unanimously elected Shaun to serve the remaining term of office vacated by the death of George Wybenga.

Shaun Gerien retired from Suffolk Community College in 2015 after serving the college for over thirty-six years. As a Specialist - SCCC Institutional Advancement, Gerien provided photographs and video production services for the administration and faculty. Shaun served as the Long Island Bureau Chief, NPR and WSHU/91.1 and The Associated Press, 1991-2015, and President, NYS Associated Press Broadcasters Association, 2010-2012.

RC39 is fortunate to have Shaun Gerien as a Director-at-large. Thanks Shaun for stepping forward to serve.

RC39 Newsletter Writers Awarded



Three RC39 newsletter contributing writers have received the NYSUT 2017 Communications Award, Best Writing Category.

William Powers won for his "On the Run" article. The judges commented, "An interesting and sincere personal narrative with a valuable takeaway message."

Fran Hilliard won for her "Why You Need the Shingles Vaccine." The judges commented, "A lot of good information here."

Peter Herron won for "If it is happening in Wisconsin it could happen in New York." The judges commented, "A lot of information to digest here."

Powers' and Hilliard's articles appeared in the September/October 2016 newsletter. Peter Herron's article was in the March/April 2016 newsletter. You can view these newsletters and many more recent RC39 newsletters by going to the RC39 website, <http://rc39.ny.aft.org/>.

Reason for Saying No to the New York State Constitutional Convention

Pete Herron

This November, as required by the NYS Constitution, voters will have an opportunity to vote yes or no on having a New York State Constitutional Convention. You will be told that this is “The People’s Convention” but do not be fooled. This will be the “Politician’s Convention.” Special interest groups with unlimited money will get their people elected.

The cost of the convention is estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars. Delegates are paid the equivalent of a legislator’s compensation. This means any legislator elected as a delegate doubles his or her salary during the time the convention is convened.

A constitutional convention has the power to change any part or all of the constitution. The convention’s final produce will be presented to voters as an up or down proposition. Voters either accept all the changes or reject the entire proposal.

Here are some of the issues at stake.

- The right to a free public education
- Public support for libraries and state universities
- Voter registration qualifications, the right to an absentee ballot, the manner of voting
- The right to unionize; job security, working conditions, and collective bargaining
- Workers’ compensation
- Public employee pension protection
- Protection against the development and exploitation of public lands and parks
- Protection of the state’s canals and waterways
- Protection of the environment
- Cap on state spending and debt limits
- The way judges are appointed or elected
- The rules for defining senate and assembly districts, terms of office
- Balance of power between the executive branch and the legislators
- Rules defining how a bill becomes law
- Rules that determine membership in both legislative bodies
- Social welfare needs
- “Blaine Amendment” which prohibits state monies to assist both religious and private schools
- Tenure and other due processing rights
- Anti-discrimination protection
- The expansion and location of casinos and gambling
- State finances: taxation, budgets, debt, fees, etc.
- Property tax caps
- Local finances: local governments, public school districts, fire departments, etc. (taxation, caps. debt)
- Housing and nursing accommodations for persons of low income
- Definition of and rights of corporations
- The privilege of a writ or order of habeas corpus
- The right to a jury trial
- Private property rights
- Freedom of the press
- Right to privacy
- Rules for amending the state constitution

Just think what it would be like to live in New York State with many of the above eliminated or changed. We cannot take that chance; we must prevent a New York State Constitutional Convention. Now that that you know the facts, you must convince your friends and relatives that a constitutional convention is a potential catastrophe.

RC39 Website

Check out RC39 website <http://rc39.ny.aft.org/> where you can read recent NYSUT RC39 newsletters, AFT and NYSUT news releases, and much more.



MOVIES NOW AND THEN

By Ann Fey



LA LA LAND (2016), directed by Damien Chazelle, opens with a traffic jam on a Los Angeles freeway, visible for miles. Background music blasts as awkwardly flailing millennials exit their singly occupied stalled cars, some climbing and leaping to their hoods and roofs, where they assume one classic ballet pose after another, others running and dancing between lanes. A young blond girl hops, jumps and climbs to down-screen center to face the camera singing, the distracting mayhem in the background rendering the lyrics somewhat incomprehensible; song over. Sequence ended. We never see that blonde girl again; the fun scene changes.

The film goes on to present Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling as Mia and Sebastian, "Seb," strangers who notice each other somewhat unfavorably from afar, later run into each other in a sort of chance encounter, then join in a friendship that becomes a glorious romantic, loving relationship. But further on, the story ultimately ends with situations,

moods, and feelings that are not objectively bad, but are quite sad.

A viewer may understandably rate this film YES or MEH, or even FORGET ABOUT IT. But it must be admitted that director Chazelle has used effective classic romantic props: a sweet sentimental background theme song, a long soft swirly waltz scene up in the blue sky, hours of hand-holding stargazing, lingering full screen images of big faces with big eyes and lips. But he creates a new ending to the romance, which deserves a close look.

As the story goes on, the couple's mutual commitment is gradually eroded by their intense individual life-wishes for personal fulfillment. They drift into their separate ways, and they part, each working to achieve individual excellence and make a mark in a noticeable public context. And they succeed.

Seb achieves his musical life-goal. After struggling through a job in the band of contemporary musical star Keith Legend, he gets to manage his own classic

jazz pub in an original classical jazz improve site downtown, where he eschews any modern variation, and any new music that may taint his atavistic obsession with the purity of the old improvisational style. He does it his way, heading towards reasonable success and acclaim. Mia emerges as a movie-industry star, and a famous script writer-actress who is chauffeured around movie lots. She fares somewhat better than Seb financially, and socially. Having earlier avoided having a family in pursuit of her career, she comes at last to Seb's pub, to see him. She is sporting a handsome husband of arm-candy charm, who speaks lovingly of their children. This is a moving scene: hyper sentimental, thought-provoking.

So what if Ryan Gosling's hands on the piano keyboard look like a learner, which he is. So what if he dances like Rick Perry on DANCING WITH THE STARS. This is not an unrewarding movie to watch. In LA LA LAND Director Chazelle has infused a schmaltzy romantic tale

with an interesting theme on a contemporary societal trend: the rise of intense desire for public recognition and reward along with the decline of an individual's enduring commitment to another person. The fame doesn't have to be achieved through innovation in Silicon Valley. MovieLand Los Angeles is close enough. Probably better.

In his previous film WHIPLASH (2014) Chazelle centers on a lonely bullied young man, a wannabe who seeks relief from his ordinariness. He fixates on setting the sheet music aside and becoming a great improvisational drummer. His mentor/ conductor, played by J. K. Simmons, virtually and possibly unintentionally, tortures him into achievement. His ultimate success is in a frenzied, crashing, splashing improvised drum performance, the achievement of his aim of excellence, looking so painful and destructive. These two films, so different, move towards a similar social theme, the later one packaging it more appealingly. Both deserve a look.

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Send your comments, suggestions, and inquiries to NYSUT RC39 Officers, 98 Rocky Point Landing Rd., Rocky Point, NY 11778 or rc39pete@optonline.net.

RC39 Newsletter is looking for comments, suggestions and articles from its members.



Send your comments, suggestions, or article to Peter Herron at rc39pete@optonline.net or mail to 98 Rocky Point Landing Road, Rocky Point, NY 11778. Your article will be published when space is available. RC39, NYSUT, and AFT news will be given priority.



Address Change

Do not let a new address keep you from receiving NYSUT RC39 newsletters. There are three ways to update your address. Contact NYSUT Member Records at 1-800-342-9810 ext. 6224. Send written changes to: NYSUT Member Records, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110, or e-mail changes to member@nysutmail.org. If you are a snowbird, give Member Records a few weeks notice to change its address records each way.

Have you paid your voluntary RC39 contribution for 2017?

If you have not sent in your voluntary NYSUT RC39 annual contribution, now is as good a time as ever. Just send your check along with the form below to the RC39 treasurer. It is your contributions that enable RC39 officers and delegates to represent you at NYSUT conferences and meetings.

Retiree Council 39 Voluntary 2017 Participation Fee form

Name _____ e-mail _____
 Address _____ Phone (____) _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip code _____
 College retired from _____ Year of Retirement _____
 Please check amount of your voluntary participation fee: \$25 _____ Other \$ _____
 Send your check, made out to NYSUT RC39, along with this completed form to:
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