

Network Report

Winter 2004-05



New York Gray Panthers
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*Welcome to all old, new and prospective Gray Panthers and friends! After a hiatus of two years our network began meeting again during 2003 under new Convener **Judy Lear**. In 2004 we held six membership meetings, formed a temporary board of directors meeting monthly, marched and demonstrated, and honored veteran members of 20 years or more. We now have 50 dues-paying members and continue to grow. Housing and Media Watch committees have formed, and we hope to begin committees for other issues like health, education, peace, and Social Security during 2005. Your voice, ideas, spirit, support, and 2005 dues are needed!*

Upcoming Gray Panther Meetings in 2005:

- January 12** “New York Gray Panther Issues & Plans for 2005, plus
Report on National GP Convention in Seattle”--
1-2:45 p.m.
- February 9** “Social Security: No Crisis, But Plenty to Worry About,”
Roger Sanjek, New York Gray Panthers -- 1-2:45 p.m.
- March 9** We hope to organize a program on “Violence in Video
Games & other ‘Entertainment.’” Send suggestions & ideas
for possible speakers; details to follow -- 1-2:45 p.m.

These Wednesday afternoon meetings will be held at Penn South Program for Seniors, Room 1, 290 Ninth Avenue at 27th Street. For more information call Mary Springer at 212 243 3670, or the New York Gray Panthers at 212 799 7572.

- April 20** “Sex, Seniors and the HIV/AIDS Epidemic”
Cosponsored with the Caring Committee of the New York
Society for Ethical Culture

Note location and time: Society for Ethical Culture, 2 West 64th Street,
Wednesday evening, 7-9 p.m.

Gray Panther dues for 2005 will be **\$30 for individual members, and \$50 for families**. Half of these dues will go to support our national office and activities, and half to the New York Gray Panthers. All who want to be part of Gray Panther activities should join us as members; if the official dues amount is a hardship, please send what you can. Use the enclosed membership form to return your 2005 dues, and indicate whether you wish to receive meeting notices and NETWORK REPORT by email or U.S. mail.

New York Gray Panthers -- 2004 in Review

January 13 -- Meeting at Penn South: “Campaign for a National Health Program--NOW” with **Marilyn Clement**.

February 13 -- First NYGP board meeting; Network officers agreed to serve.

March 1 -- 17 Gray Panthers attend Committee on the Status of Women conference at the **United Nations**, including **Judy Lear, Joan Davis, Naomi Dagen Bloom, Marie Maher**, national Gray Panther executive director **Susan Murany** and board president **Tim Allison**.

March 20 -- NYGPs with Network banner join massive march to protest the Iraq war.

March 23 -- Meeting at Penn South on **Media Watch** plans.

June 1 -- NYGPs join **NYCAAD**/New York Campaign for Access to Affordable Drugs to protest the new Medicare law and “discount drug cards” at the CMS/Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services office.

June 8 -- Meeting at Penn South: “The New Medicare Law” with **Jim Collins** of the **Citizens Committee on Aging, JPAC & NY Statewide Senior Action Council**; 32 sign the NYSWSAC petition to “repeal & replace” the new Medicare law, allow prescription drug importation, and eliminate new subsidies to HMOs. **Edna Graig** urges people to write City Councilmembers and Mayor Bloomberg to “Save Five-Day Library Service.”

June 19 -- NYGPs join national “Bridgewalk” day of action for “Health Care For All” in march across Brooklyn Bridge and rally in Foley Square.

August 28-September 2 -- NYGPs join the “March for Women’s Lives” and “Pink Slip” events to protest Republican Party national convention policies. **Judy Lear** interviewed by WNBC television news for national broadcast.

Judy Lear is also featured in a story about the Gray Panthers in the September 2-8 issue of *The Westsider*.

September 3 -- GPs and friends attend opening of **Joan Davis'** peace and non-violence exhibit at the Epiphany Branch Library.

During September NYGP **Media Watch** and New York **OWL/Older Women's League** send letters commending **Eileen Fisher** and **Columbia Sportswear** clothing companies for positive portrayals of older people in their advertisements.

September 28 -- Meeting at Penn South: "Where are the Major Parties on OUR Issues?" with Republican Congressional candidate **Peter Hort** and Democratic John Kerry campaign representative **Seth Gladstone**, moderated by **Donald Singer** of the ARA/Alliance for Retired Americans.

October 30 -- 32 NYGPS and friends attend luncheon at Sichuan Palace to honor a dozen members of 20 years or more: **Lillian Sarno, Stella Murphy, Leonore Fine, Marie Maher, David Brown, Hazel Sawyer, Mildred and Raphael Blechman, Roger and Lani Sanjek, Glenn and Ruby Sills Miller**. Roger spoke about the NYGPs history since 1972, Mildred about the GPs at the U.N., and Lillian about the importance of the GPs for the future (see Page 4). Special recognition was also given to veteran NYGPs **Joan Davis, Martha Frankel, and Edna Graig**. Thanks to **Judy Lear, Joan Davis, and Shiuho Lin** for planning this event.

November 10 -- Meeting at Penn South: "How About Housing in New York City: Developing an Agenda for 2005" with NYGP Housing Committee members **Marie Maher, Jill Gerson, Gloria Rich, and Michael Texeira**.

November 12-14 -- **Judy Lear, Roger Sanjek, and Lani Sanjek** attend the Gray Panther National Convention in Seattle.

December 3 -- NYGPs endorse the **EPIC WORKS: Seniors & Disabled United for EPIC** campaign to maintain and expand New York State's EPIC prescription drug program as the new Medicare Part D benefit begins in 2006.

December 8 -- Holiday Party and speak-out at Penn South.

All through 2004 NYGPs **Blanche Saia, Weishan Huang, Mary Shoiket, Joan Davis, and Judy Lear** represented the national Gray Panthers as a Non-Governmental Organization at the **United Nations**.

<p><u>Participating at NYGP board meetings during 2004: Convener, Judy Lear; Co-Convener, Naomi Dagen Bloom; Treasurer, Bob Wesner; Recording Secretary/NETWORK REPORT, Roger Sanjek; Corresponding Secretary, Shiuho Lin; and Joan Davis, Mary Springer, Jill Gerson, Michael Texeira, Gloria Rich, Edna Graig, Marilyn Blanchard, Marie Maher.</u></p>

Lillian Sarno, 95, joined the New York Gray Panthers in the mid-1970s; since 1980 she has provided leadership and wisdom as Convener, speaker, or active member. On October 30, 2004, she reflected on the future of the Gray Panthers.

"I want to add ... my welcome to all.... Now I'm going to talk a little more seriously about the Gray Panthers because while I had a lot of fun with them, I don't think they're funny. I think they're very serious.

After 9.11 as a lot of non-profits did we suffered a sudden loss of people. All of a sudden nobody could come to meetings; we couldn't find anybody. We felt so dispirited that they didn't want to do anything. However a small cadre got together and we continued to work as Gray Panthers. We moved our office from the Jewish Guild [for the Blind] to [West Park Presbyterian] church on 86th Street and we continued working there. So we have maintained ourselves through these years and now that Judy with her youth and her energy has taken over, we certainly expect to get back to at least what we had and maybe more if we're lucky.

I want to say something about the society in which we operate. Every empire has the seeds of destruction within it when it starts ... and we have them too. The seed of our destruction is greed; greed is what has brought down this country today. We have to recognize that and see that if we're going to continue to exist ... we'll do it differently and we'll do it better, and we won't be greedy. We'll control ourselves.

That is where the Gray Panthers fit in perfectly, because we believe in social justice, that's our main concern. Social justice means what [John] Edwards has been saying. That you don't have a country where people can work a regular job and not make enough to live. We don't have a country where people work and still have to go to a food bank to finish out the month. We don't have a country where people who can't do what they need to do don't get help to do it. We don't want that kind of country ... and we've got to make sure that everybody doesn't. That's a big job.

But we started with a very big job ... to stop people from forcing people to retire. There was a time when everybody had to retire, whether they wanted to or not, whether they could do the work or not. Maggie Kuhn made that her first and most ambitious project. And she succeeded. Now we have age discrimination ... we have to keep fighting that. We have to keep fighting it by supporting Social Security. We have to keep fighting it by supporting affordable housing. It's a disgrace in a country like this that people who can't find housing, that the homeless, go to shelters. It's disgusting. We have a right not to allow it. We've got to stand up for our rights and we've got to teach other people to do it.

We're for peace and disarmament--of course. We're for Social Security ... for Medicare, of course. And ... we do try to help the poor; we don't do a good job of it but we do try. The rich don't need our help; they do very well without it. They get all sorts of extra goodies, like tax deductions. But the middle class is really lost. If you're middle class you have a lot of trouble finding services, and when you find them they are very expensive.... For some reason they think middle class means you have a lot of money. A lot of us don't have a lot of money. We're living on the results of our earnings, our Social Security, and if you're lucky, our pension....

We're going to have to work very hard. Unfortunately I'm not like Hazel Sawyer who is still running around at 95. My running around days are over, and believe me I miss them. But you have to live with what you've got.... With what I've got I still can think, thank God, and I still can influence ... people I meet [and] know. I'm continuing to do that and I hope we all will. And then we'll have a successful Gray Panthers, and make some changes in the world."