

NEA-Alaska/Retired

Summer 2022 • Volume XXXIII No. 3

RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

I have always felt that our association is an advocacy group of/for people. Recently I found that to be not only true in advocacy for bargaining a contract and legislation for positive conditions for retirees, current educational employees, and of course our students and their families, but also in additional issues in our everyday lives.

I was fortunate to be part of this year's NEA-Alaska Spring Event, *Racial and Social Justice Training*, April 22-24, in Anchorage. We met, dined, and learned from each other at the Captain Cook Hotel, filling rooms with smaller sessions and being together as our own diverse community in the ballroom.

Thinking about the training as a whole, I came away with some new information/thinking as well as reinforcing what I have learned through our NEA over the years. Part of the "lenses" I look at life through are that I grew up in the 1950s and 60s, in Southern California, in a newly-built and basically white, middle-class neighborhood, with a stay-at-home mom, male, English-only speaking family... and on the side, gay.

Some of my takeaways from the weekend's training?

- Honor, celebrate, and respect the differences every one of us has, acceptance (and not just tolerance) of differences, seek and work towards real "liberty and justice for all."
- Look for what we have in common (much more than one may think) and build from there.
- Share accurate information and often personal stories with others who may have no real idea that there are differences from their understanding of issues, and know that sharing/educating may take a lot of personal courage.
- Personally resolve to take action - the future can be better than the present.
- A major goal of public education is to prepare every student for a bright future.
- Lean in, listen, and learn.

Understanding the present is to understand the past, and what that past has "caused" over time. Make the connection between the now and the past, and then see how we can move into the future. So many of our current issues are not new but often variations from the past.

The focus of the training was on race and racism, but social justice includes many more people beyond race - it includes people of different religions and differences in beliefs, ageism, differing social/economic groups, the LGBTQ community, English as a second language speakers, people with disabilities, etc.

From a handout, some basic foundational kinds of racism (but these can also describe the above 'isms):

Structural racism is racial bias across institutions and society. It is cumulative and compounded by the effects of an array of factors that systemically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.

Interpersonal racism occurs between individuals, sharing our personal (private?) beliefs about race with others.

Institutional racism occurs within institutions, e.g., a school system, that involve discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, and inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race.

Racism can manifest in several main ways - *malicious* that is ugly, violent and socially destructive; *strategic* with a decision to manipulate the racial fears and hatreds of others for "selfish" ends. Racism can also be *coded* by

Cont. on pg 3

In This Issue

Racial and Social Justice	1
President's Message	2
Retired Annual Meeting	4
Representative Assembly 2022	5
NEA-Retired Membership Conference	6
Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board	6
Sarah Says	6
Delegate Assembly 2023 Nominations	7
Books By Karen White	
– A Surprise Find for Me	8
Calendar of Events	8

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Roxanne Abajian | Barbara Stek

President's Message

Delegate Assembly! I know it's August. Flowers and fishing are on my mind. But now is also the time to consider whether you want to be an NEA-Alaska/Retired delegate to the 2023 NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly (DA). If you are interested in being a delegate, you can complete and submit the nomination form included in this issue. The electronic election will be in early October. For the past few years we have had about 30 to 35 elected delegates in the retired group attend Delegate Assembly. The number of allotted delegates in each local is based on membership.

Prior to 2019, NEA-Alaska/Retired had a non-mandatory Thursday afternoon caucus. Starting in 2019 our retired local required that delegates attend a mandatory business meeting the Thursday of Delegate Assembly week. In 2020, Covid spread its ugly tentacles. Delegate Assembly 2021 was virtual. Delegate Assembly 2022 was our first with a hybrid option. Delegates could choose to attend DA in person or virtually. The NEA-Alaska/Retired delegates had a very productive meeting during our Thursday caucus. Matt Moser, NEA-Alaska Government Relations and Community Outreach Director, presented a thorough and substantive overview of a potential Constitutional Convention and what it could mean for Alaska's TRS and PERS retirees. At our Thursday meeting, retired delegates also discussed and supported the idea of organizing a Policy Assembly Meeting. The NEA-Alaska/Retired Board of Directors met and approved the organization of a Policy Assembly Meeting scheduled for the Thursday prior to the 2023 Delegate Assembly.

Opportunity to get involved! NEA-Retired President Sarah Borgman is asking retired members from each state to step up and serve on one of the following NEA-Retired virtual committees: **Communication, Membership, Legislative, or Political Action (PAC)**. Thank you to Annie Baker who serves on the NEA-Retired Communications Committee and to Barb George who serves on the NEA-Retired Membership Committee.

The four NEA-Retired committees meet via Zoom three or four times a year. If you are interested and willing to serve on the Legislative Committee or PAC please contact me.

NEA-Alaska/Retired Leadership! Thank you to the members who are active on our NEA-Alaska/Retired Board and who serve on our special committees: Membership, Communications, Health Insurance, and Investment. Many hands make quick work. Many minds lead to better decisions.

Terms for NEA-Alaska/Retired elected officers and board members began at the end of NEA Representative Assembly, July 7, 2022.

Officers

President: Roxanne Abajian • **Vice President:** Trena Richardson
Secretary: Barbara Stek • **Treasurer:** Gayle Harbo

Directors-at-Large

Pamela Lloyd • Marilyn Pillifant • Susan Stitham

Editor: Barbara Stek

This newsletter is the official publication of NEA-Alaska/Retired, printed three times a year. Retired members are encouraged to submit articles, as well as voice comments and concerns. Articles should be sent in Word via email to bwstekak@yahoo.com no later than the 1st of the publication month.

Cont. on pg 3

“President’s Message” Cont.

NEA-Alaska Region R Board of Directors

Barbara Stek and Christine Villano join Roxanne Abajian and Judy Salo on the NEA-Alaska state board. NEA-Alaska Region R Board of Directors also serve as voting members on the NEA-Alaska/Retired Board of Directors.

2022 NEA Representative Assembly Delegates

Pamela Lloyd and Howard Maxwell.

Thank you to outgoing Board Member Cindy Aillaud for her years of service.

Uniting for a better future! In March I attended the 2022 NEA-Retired Conference along with our Membership Chair Barb George and our NEA-Alaska/Retired staff liaison, Val Baffone. The conference was in Baltimore, Md. The theme was *“Uniting for a better future for our students, our educators, and our communities: Retired ready for action.”*

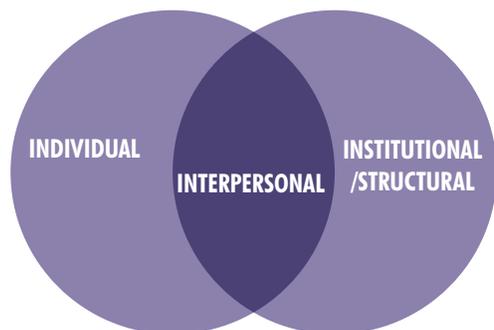
Breakout sessions included training for leaders; growing our membership; engaging members; hosting in-person and virtual pre-retirement seminars; using social media platforms as productive and useful tools; and organizing and getting out the vote. Among others, keynote speakers included NEA President Becky Pringle; Vice President Princess Moss; NEA Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria; and former NEA President Reggie Weaver.

The conference provided an opportunity to network and learn from other state leaders and to plan ways to enhance our organization. I took note of Reggie’s statement:

“Racial and Social Justice” Cont.

invoking racial stereotypes (e.g., whites are hardworking, innocent, “real” Americans, while people of color are lazy, dangerous, or perpetually considered as “foreign”), and racism may be *routine/cultural* in thinking and actions forming our everyday understanding of the world, even for people who mean well. And, racism can be *systemic/institutional*, meaning working together in ways that contribute to and reinforce racist systems (for example-school to prison pipeline).

Think of a Venn diagram, where do the different parts of the issue intersect?



“If your mind can conceive it, and you believe it, you can achieve it.”

Elections! In about three months we will vote for local, state, and federal positions. I’ll state the obvious: elections have consequences. Public school educators are facing very real challenges. Political, economic, and social divisions persist in our country. Attacks on unions, public education and educators, and retirees and pensions aren’t new, but they are thrown with new fire and focus. Retired educators: We must stay united and energized. We must continue to stay informed and work to elect people who support public education; who support safe, just, and fair schools; who support professional wages for educators; and who support and will protect a secure retirement. It’s not too early to roll up our sleeves and help to ensure the election of education-friendly candidates.

Back to my early summer flowers... in a matter of days, they were decimated by aphids and deer before the slugs could get to them. And fishing? The kings have thus far eluded me. But as cohos arrive, I’m hoping my luck will change. I’ll have to be patient, though, and wait out torrential rain, strong wind, and high seas.

It’s a good day to write GOTV postcards.

Until next time.

– Roxanne Abajian

What can we as individuals do? How can you take your good intentions with you into the world? Once you know your “issue,” educate yourself so you can educate others. Be ready and be prepared. Are there indirect institutions/ groups of people that need to be challenged to get social justice for the issue?

Personal/community engagement needs to be ongoing and not episodic. Build community support by finding the stakeholders of the issue, make community connections by finding other people and groups that have similar goals in social justice - support those people/groups when you can and they may support you when you need it. Find allies in strategic areas in our community.

Normalize the issue by talking about it. Think about the 10 second spots on TV –*The More You Know...*

Together We Are Stronger...

– Reflections by Steve Click

Retired Annual Meeting

June 29-30

Howard Maxwell and I attended in-person the combined in-person and virtual Retired Meeting. There were 334 in-person and 298 virtual delegates. There are 324,000 NEA retirees. We are quite the group. A “call to action” was the main theme this year and Retired President Sarah Borgman is all in.

NEA President Becky Pringle spoke, as only Becky can, of justice and called all educators to get and be involved. In the next four months we need to elect candidates who care about kids and elect people who dedicate their lives to public education. We cannot just accept the banning of books, gun violence, voting rights injustices, and the disrespect of educators. “We will not give up and we will continue to show up.”

President Borgman is asking every state to have workers on one of four committees: Communications, Membership, Legislative Affairs, and PAC. (A PAC captain would establish fundraising goals throughout the year.)

Jean Dobashi gave us an overview of the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. This included the PAC program itself, gift card drawings, and a live auction.

Communication awards were given in five areas.

There was an overview of the Jack Kinnaman scholarship program, with an increase to five scholarships of \$3500 each. President Borgman called on us to raise more money for the Kinnaman Memorial Scholarship Fund and suggested we collect PAC money at our leadership trainings and other meetings, etc. For more information or to give donations go to donatekinnaman.com.

Meg Gruber, NEA-Retired Executive Council, VA, gave us a legislative update on the WEP/GPO Committee of which there are 21 members. On May 24, 2022, advocates made 486 phone calls, sent 6,219 emails, and attended 50 meetings with members of Congress and their staffs to urge Speaker Pelosi to move a vote to the floor ASAP. NEA supports the following bills:

HR 5723/S 3071 and HR 82/S 1302, the Social Security Fairness Act.

We voted on four proposed by-law amendments; all four did pass.

- **Amendment 1: Article III, Objectives, H (new)**
Inform NEA of the challenges faced by its retired members and the resources needed to meet these challenges.

- **Amendment 2: Article VII-Current Version NEA-RETIRED EXECUTIVE OFFICERS.** New language added that the president, vice president, and secretary shall be elected at the NEA-Retired annual meeting for three-year staggered terms of office through an open nomination process and secret ballot election. Only NEA-Retired members shall be eligible to be candidates. Voting shall be restricted to the retired delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly. If there is only one candidate for the position, the presiding officer shall declare such candidate elected. There is more language on duties and vacancies.
- **Amendment 3. Article X (NEW-subsequent articles require renumbering)** Dealing with alternates to the NEA Board of Directors meetings.
- **Amendment 4. Article XII. Section 4.** Language changed to state that NEA retired members who are not delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly cannot vote or make second motions but may otherwise participate in the proceedings.

The GPO/WEP task force will focus on the repeal of this egregious federal legislation and bring it to the forefront as one of NEA’s legislative priorities. It is hoped that NEA will develop a media campaign to more fully educate and inform members about the importance of a defined benefit pension which provides financial security and allows our retired members to live with dignity.

If you would like to receive emails regarding legislative updates or other NEA issues, please go to: Nea.org/signup. We were encouraged to become Ed Activists by downloading the Ed Activist App from NEA.

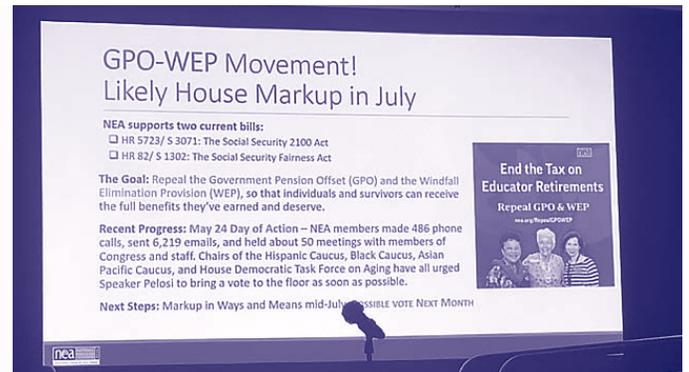
The meeting concluded with candidate speeches and points of personal privilege.

– *Pamela Lloyd*

In Memoriam Correction

Autumn Rue, Northwest Arctic ESPA, wants to let everyone know that she is alive and well. Apparently someone with a similar name had passed and Autumn’s name was inadvertently added to the Memoriam at DA 2022.

Howard Maxwell and Pamela Lloyd represented NEA-Alaska/Retired members by attending the summer 2022 Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) and the NEA Representative Assembly (RA) in Chicago, Illinois. Both meetings were conducted under Covid protocols requiring frequent testing and mandatory masking, and were also conducted in a hybrid fashion with both in-person and virtual attendees. Both meetings also used digital voting and debate technologies which had some hiccups but functioned adequately in the hybrid environments.



Representative Assembly 2022

July 2 through July 6

The NEA-Alaska delegation held daily caucus meetings at 7am. I served on the daily preview committee which met at 6am to review official RA business and to make recommendations regarding caucus positions on NBIs, Standing Rules, and Resolutions that were coming to the RA floor.

During the daily caucus meetings our 45+ Alaska delegates heard from candidates and other visitors and worked hard on raising money for the NEA PAC fund. Retired members are encouraged to give generously to the NEAFund.org and if possible make monthly contributions. Pam and I also spent time each day discussing the merits of joining our retired local via the pre-retired process. We were successful in boosting our membership by at least three new members while several delegates took home the paperwork and said they would consider it! Most importantly, our caucus spent many hours considering, debating, and contemplating the many NBIs that were to be considered thereby arriving at caucus positions to take to the floor each day.

The floor sessions of RA were impressive as always. Being there with over 4000 educators and like-minded pro-labor individuals is always very exciting and exhilarating. Much time was spent in debate and doing the members' business (aka sausage making). Delegates also heard from several very significant speakers including the National Teacher of the Year, Kurt Russell, Oberlin High School, the Aspiring Educator of the Year, Dolly Parton (National Friend of Education 2022), and most exciting, Vice President Kamala Harris! Our NEA President Becky Pringle also gave an inspiring call to action in her keynote that had delegates on the edge of their seats.

Debra Ward-Mitchell is the 2022 Education Support Professional of the Year and is the Assistant Director at the Infant Care Center, Illinois Education Association. Higher

Educator of the Year was awarded to BonnieJean Alford, College of DuPage, Illinois Education Association.

On the floor, most significantly, **NBI-2** was adopted. It will create a lobbying cadre (one retired and one active member from each impacted state) focused solely on the repeal of GPO-WEP! Significant financial resources will be directed towards this effort (over \$130,000). The other major NBI that was adopted was **NBI-A** which will cost nearly one half million dollars to implement. It directs the NEA to issue a national call to action to ensure that all students, educators, schools, campuses, and communities are safe from gun violence!

Because there were nearly 90 NBIs to consider, by the final two days there were multiple bundling actions that resulted in issues being addressed by referring them to the appropriate committees for consideration after RA. Several NBIs that addressed additional GPO-WEP issues were included in this process and were sent to committee. Since there was quality attention given to the issue of GPO-WEP and since actual legislation in the House and Senate is getting some traction and attention, we are closer than ever to actually having the issue debated on the floors of Congress. Keep up the great work lobbying your legislators on this issue!

NBI-41 directs NEA to take steps to defeat and overturn the "don't say gay" law in Florida and other homophobic and/or anti-transgender laws across the country. NBI-10 supports states adding or amending special education caseload/workload caps in their state education code.

If any retired member would like more information on any of the RA happenings, feel free to reach out to me or Pam.

– Howard Maxwell

NEA-Retired Membership Conference

As the NEA-Alaska/Retired membership chair, I was privileged to go to Baltimore, Maryland in March to attend the NEA-Retired Membership Conference with President Roxanne Abajian and our staff liaison, Val Baffone. It was amazing to be at a conference where every breakout session focused on recruiting and organizing and growing the retired association. Nationally NEA-Retired has close to 337,000 members.

The sessions included lots of sharing from the different states on ideas for member recruitment. I shared our themed pre-retired and retired table that we have during Delegate Assembly.

The last session I attended was presented by high school teacher, Susan Downey, who is a certified Live Mindful trainer. The session was “Moving Forward with

Mindfulness.” This idea was created for high school students and teachers but can be used by anyone or any organization. As Susan says “transform yourself from inside out. Learn and participate in mindfulness micro practices.” These practices only take minutes to cultivate peace, resilience, and happiness.

I think it is important for us to take care of ourselves so we can be ready to help others. In today’s world we are met with challenges, stress, and anxiety. We need to be in the moment and proceed with purpose.

Please proceed with civility and with kindness, and stay healthy!!

– Barb George, NEA/Retired Membership Committee

Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board

The Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board last met on May 5th and will meet again on September 27th. This is a change from the normal schedule necessitated by public notice requirements for significant by-law and regulation changes. The settlement of litigation and the issuing of a new Administrative Order for the Board are positive developments that allow the Department of Retirement and Benefits Health Team and the Board to address some issues regarding modernization of our health plans.

The implementation of Prior Authorization for certain specialty medications brings us in line with most medical insurance plans nation-wide. The DRB Health Team, the Board, and the plan administrators are attempting to make this process workable for our members who require specialty medications. If you are experiencing any problems with prior authorization call the concierge number on the back of

your insurance card or call the Division of Retirement and Benefits to receive assistance.

The RHPAB Modernization committee will meet in July to continue work on the issues of prior authorization and gene therapy.

Medical advancement in the area of genetics and emerging treatments for rare debilitating conditions are exciting but will require insurance plans to be ready to process claims for very expensive treatments.

To stay informed on issues regarding your health coverage go to the new website for the Alaska Division of Retirement and Benefits and become familiar with the vast amount of information available to you. We are fortunate in Alaska to have health benefits that are extensive and well managed.

– Judy Salo, RHPAB Chairperson

Sarah Says

August, 2022

Commitment is **the** word! We say it as part of our theme: “NEA Retired---our commitment continues.” Does yours? The only way to show and/or prove our commitment is through actions.

“Words are dead once they are said, but actions thrive once they’re alive!”

What have you committed to this new Association year? Are you willing to chair a committee, work on fund-raising, do membership outreach? There’s a place for everyone, but you must step forward and volunteer or say yes when asked. Surprise your state or local president and ask what needs to be done. There is joy in serving and once you are working together you might just have a little fun. Volunteer, help, get involved! Together we’ll get more done!

– Sarah Bergman, NEA-Retired President

Delegate Assembly 2023 Nominations

To be nominated for Delegate Assembly (DA), **January 19-21, 2023**, please complete this form and submit a brief biography. An on-line election will be held in October. You will be notified of the results as early as possible. Nominations for elected office as well as nominations for two-year appointments to NEA-Alaska PACE Committee will be made during the caucus at DA.

The retired local will follow these reimbursement policies:

- **NEA-Alaska will reimburse costs associated with transportation:** airfare, mileage, and cab fare between airport and hotel. Airfare will be reimbursed up to \$600 for out-of-state transportation based on coach class airfare. If traveling to Anchorage from within the state, NEA-Alaska will reimburse the full transportation cost based on coach class airfare.
- **NEA-Alaska/Retired will reimburse lodging and meals:** Lodging expenses are for hotel room and tax at the NEA-Alaska negotiated room rate based on double occupancy. Delegates will be reimbursed up to \$70 per diem for each day in travel status *less* any meals provided during DA. *(To be eligible for meal allowance, the traveler must be in travel status for three consecutive hours during these periods: midnight to 10:00am for breakfast, 10:00am to 3:00pm for lunch, and 3:00pm to midnight for dinner.)*

****Delegates must attend all caucus meetings including the Thursday, January 19, meeting as well as all sessions of DA to receive full reimbursement.****

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY NOMINATION FORM

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY: (Limit: 25 words)



To submit your nomination by email: send it to Associate Staff Makana Bender at makana.bender@neaalaska.org and CC the president of NEA-Alaska/Retired at roxanne.abajian@gmail.com. Be sure to include 'DA 2023 Retired Nomination' in the subject line along with the information asked for on the form.

Emailed nominations must be received **no later than September 21, 2022**. If you mail the form, it must be received in the Anchorage office (at the address below) postmarked **no later than September 16, 2022**. Makana will send you a confirmation email upon receipt of your nomination form. Be sure to check all your email folders, including your spam folder. It is your responsibility to ensure that your nomination form was received. Feel free to email Makana or call the NEA-Alaska office at 907-274-0536 to doublecheck.

USPS mail to: NEA-Alaska/Retired
Attn. Makana Bender
4100 Spenard Road
Anchorage, AK 99517





4100 Spenard Road
Anchorage, AK 99517

www.neaalaska.org or
email: info@neaalaska.org

Delegate Assembly Nomination Form Inside!



Books by Karen White – *A Surprise Find for Me*

Most times I return again and again to familiar authors and don't take the time to explore, but when I take

a cruise the first thing I do is visit the ship's library and see what people have left behind. Recently I picked up an interesting book because of the intriguing title *The House on Tradd Street*. The author is Karen White.

I was most interested because Tradd is a famous street, as is Broad, in historic Charleston, South Carolina. You may have read Pat Conroy's books, *South of Broad*, *Beach Music*, and the *Prince of Tides* among others which all take place in Charleston. I also wrote, at one time, about a charming mystery series by Laura Childs which revolves around a tea shop in historic Charleston. Because

I am heading to Charleston this fall and staying in the historic district, this new find appealed to me.

Karen White has written several books called the Tradd Street Series, as well as many others. I recently read *The Beach Trees* which takes place in Biloxi, Mississippi and New Orleans. I enjoy her character development and the way she weaves the past with the present day. Her books are semi-mystery and contain great description and detail.

As you see I am not spoiling this by revealing the plot in either book but rather giving kudos to the author for well written and well researched novels. I will continue to explore her other novels as she is definitely on my list of favorites. Enjoy your reading and your summer.

– *Gayle Harbo*

Calendar of Events

September

30 NEA-Alaska Board Meeting

October

1 NEA-Alaska Board Meeting

14-16 Fall Event

November

11-12 NEA-Alaska Board Meeting

January

17-18 NEA-Alaska Board Meeting

19-21 67th Delegate Assembly

22 NEA-Alaska/Retired Board Meeting