

President's Column

By Lynn Kotler, CRDC President

The arrival of spring promises warm breezes, sunshine, blooming flowers and the Chelsea Reform Democratic Spring Fundraiser. It has been the tradition of this Club to honor an individual and an organization at our fundraiser, as well as announce the annual recipient of the Esther Smith Award. This year our Executive Board selected two highly deserving honorees: **Paul Groncki**, and **Chelsea Neighbors United to End the War**. I would like to tell you a little bit about them.

Paul Groncki

Paul has been active in local political and community work since 1983. Over the past 25 years, Paul has served as a member of the County Committee, District Leader, Club President, Campaign Manager, Judicial Delegate, Election Inspector, Community Board Representative and is currently our Club Treasurer.

He has organized voter registration campaigns, raised money for and managed political campaigns, and has been an advocate for human rights, including, but not limited to, housing, senior, sexual preference and education rights. He has extensive volunteer leadership experience both in and out of our community. Paul has been a Board of Trustees member of Hudson Guild since 1997, assisting them with their \$12 million building renovation campaign, and has helped to strengthen their image and recognition in the community and also served as a board liaison to their arts program. He is also a docent for the Rubin Museum on 17th Street and 7th Avenue and a founder and current treasurer of Save Chelsea.

I asked myself, so when does he have time to work? With a doctorate in economics, Paul's professional experience is focused in marketing financial services. He has worked for giants such as Citicorp, JP Morgan Chase & Co., Bankers Trust Co. and Novantas. He is presently involved with a Toronto-based company Think-x Intellectual Capital, Inc. assisting clients raise the power of their thinking by generating more and better ideas than they dreamed possible.

I have worked closely with Paul for almost a year and a half as President of this organization, and I cannot think of a more deserving individual.

Chelsea Neighbors United to End the War

Many of you have seen them standing on the corner of 8th Avenue and 24th Street every Tuesday night from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., rain or shine, the Chelsea Neighbors United to End the War. So, who are they? They are Chelsea residents who formed this organization in early 2005. The common thread among these residents: working to end the war in Iraq. This organization has pledged to be on that street corner until the war ends and the troops come home safely.

I have witnessed Chelsea Neighbors carrying signs, banners, and candles on the street corner, making their voice heard and reminding us that we are still involved in an unnecessary and costly war. The organization distributes a newsletter, peace buttons, collects signatures on petitions and speaks with our neighbors about the importance of ending, and need to end, the war. By the time you receive this

GENERAL MEETING

THURSDAY, APRIL 16
7:00 P.M.

Hudson Guild, 441 West 26th St.
(btwn 9th & 10th Aves)

ON THE AGENDA:

Club will hear from candidates for District Attorney, Manhattan Borough President, and City Council in the 2nd and 3rd Districts, as well as for male and female District Leaders, 75 AD and the 12 candidates for Judicial Delegates. After taking questions from the audience the club will vote to endorse for all offices except District Attorney, which will be voted on at our May meeting.

Please Note:

In order to vote, you must have paid your 2009 dues. If you have not, you may pay at the meeting. Also, in order to vote you must be a member in good standing for 30 days.

newsletter, members of this group will have stood on this corner for over 204 consecutive weeks. I recently spoke with co-founder Chuck Zlatkin, who was honored that the organization is receiving recognition and the honor.

Esther Smith Award to Florence Dent-Hunter

Since 2002, our club has given a third award — the Esther Smith Award. Esther Smith was a long-time club member and community activist in Chelsea until she passed away in 2001. The criteria for this award are being a Chelsea female resident activist. It is

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with great pleasure that we honor **Florence Dent-Hunter** with this award.

Florence is a long-time resident of Elliott-Chelsea Houses. Initially, Florence was connected to the community through her activities at St. Columbia Catholic Church and the Elliott-Chelsea Association. After her retirement as a certified nurse's aide at the Jewish Home and Hospital, Florence got involved in Hudson Guild's Early Childhood Programs, then the Adult Services Program.

In 2007, Florence became the President of the Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) and a member of the Hudson Guild's Board of Trustees. She has been the Chair of HG's Senior Advocacy Committee, and as part of the HG Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC), she has been providing peer support and training in health issues. Florence received a certificate from the Institute for Senior Action of Joint Public Affairs Committee (JPAC) and is always busy attending community meetings, hearings, demonstrations and writing letters to our elected officials on various issues. She is also involved with the HG Community Theatre Company, where she has appeared as an actor in their production of "Civil Sex," and was the stage manager in "Color Girls who Consider Suicide."

Please join us to celebrate the contributions of Paul, Florence and Chelsea Neighbors United to End the War on Saturday, May 16, 2009 from 12 noon to 3 p.m. I look forward to seeing you.

A Rather Unfortunate Tendency

By Steve Skyles-Mulligan, Former CRDC President

A rather unfortunate tendency runs in my family: when something good happens or something new is purchased, the immediate impulse is to find the flaws with it.

If someone got a new car and received a compliment on it, the response would be along the lines of, "well, yes, it's nice now, but it will be scratched up pretty soon." Or if someone finally found a new coat they had been searching for over a period of months, it would hang in the closet unworn for some weeks "just in case it had to go back to the store." Or if a family member's business was doing well enough that they felt comfortable buying a big new house or taking a vacation, the remark would be passed, "I just don't know how he/she is going to pay for all of that."

My family is probably not alone in this. It is human nature to seek disappointment before it seeks us. And so we look at our bright, shiny, new president and we imagine that we are seeing scratches on his surface. We leave our hard-won congressional majorities hanging in our psychological closets, terrified that they are not really ours after all. And we worry about doing anything at all lest some aunt in the corner — or Harry and Louise in Peoria — ask how we are going to be able to afford it.

Each of these things, while apparently different, comes from the same place of over-caution, fear and bitter expectation of disappointment. My Democratic family, just like my biological family, is all too prone to this kind of attempt to short-circuit disappointment. Unlike the late, not-so-great Ronald Reagan, we do look at the world through rose-colored glasses.

We fret, we worry, and we complain that things are not the way we thought they would be. We pride ourselves on being able to see things as they "really are," to know wherein lies the rub and what catastrophe awaits around the next corner. We also strive to beat the Republicans at one of their tedious games, either through our own thoughtful, droning version of excoriating those with whom we disagree or through a hearty embrace of some false version of "prudence."

In my opinion, we are lucky in our national leaders. Our president looks us in the eye and tells the truth. He is not afraid to admit mistakes and not so arrogant that he must dwell in an echo-chamber of yes people. His cabinet secretaries are not sycophantic non-entities, but powerful players in their own right, with real expertise in the areas they have been called to direct.

Our congressional leaders, too, are bright, articulate people (has anyone heard Barney Frank chairing a committee hearing?). While it is much harder to see how effective they are being, one evident measure is how much the Republicans are trying to stir up hatred against them. Would they really be making a target of Nancy Pelosi if she were not doing a reasonably good job of steering our side's agenda through the tangled halls of the Capitol?

There will be times when we wonder why things were done a certain way and times we don't agree. We are so starved for change that we are tempted to gobble it up before it has finished baking — and then to blame the cooks for our own intemperance. President Roosevelt was famous for receiving people, hearing their cases and letting them know he agreed with their positions. But the clincher always came at the end of the meeting

when the President would say, “now make me do it.” Our job is not to stand around wringing our hands like the family members I mentioned in the first paragraph; it is to find constructive ways to make President Obama and our Congress do what we want them to do.

This is a tough challenge, but it is one that we, as a nation of citizens — not mere “taxpayers” as the Republicans would have us — can meet head-on. We are not used to hope; we spent the past 8 years with hardly any at all and the previous 6 with numerous real disappointments.

But now we have a new car, and just because is going to suffer a few dings and scratches doesn't mean we shouldn't have fun riding in it.

Steven Skyles-Mulligan was president of the Chelsea Reform Democratic Club for five terms, from 2003 – 2007.

David Smith Passes Away at 90 Years

By Maarten deKadt, CRDC Member

My father-in-law, David L. Smith, died on March 14, after a year of declining health. Karen and I were with him. He had lived in our apartment for slightly more than a year. Dave was a long time member of the Chelsea Reform Democratic Club (more than 40 years). After he started to live at our house, I could not go to a CRDC meeting without telling Dave how the meeting had gone. “What was the issue?” and “How many people attended?,” he would always ask. Even though he could not attend recent CRDC meetings, Dave remained an active member, so much so that he played an important part in selecting this year's Esther Smith Award recipient. During their life together, Dave and Esther played important coordinated roles in Chelsea, New York City and New York State politics.

Dave was a visionary leader, president and chairman of the board for over 20 years of Penn South, where he led the successful fight to maintain it as a limited equity housing cooperative in Chelsea, and thus maintain it as affordable housing, one of the last of its kind. He was the innovator behind the building of the cogeneration plant, helped organize a senior center, promoted a naturally occurring retirement community within the complex, and was instrumental in organizing the Coordinating Council of Cooperatives, a meeting ground for cooperative housing leaders citywide.

He fought against racial discrimination in housing in Stuyvesant Town in the late 1940s/early 1950s. He was active in the nation's cooperative movement, for which

he was inducted into the National Cooperative Business Association Hall of Fame in 1995 and honored by the National Association of Housing Cooperatives in 2008. In his younger years, Dave was a union organizer, a jeweler, a vacuum cleaner salesman, and an insurance man. He was happy to give up these tasks to become a full-time volunteer for the causes dear to his heart.

Dave and Esther were married for 56 years prior to her death in 2001. He is survived by his two daughters Karen and Abby Smith, son-in-law Maarten de Kadt, grandchildren Jesse Campoamor and Sonja de Kadt, sister-in-law Elleanor Tilson, the Tilson family and his companion from 2002 to his death Tess Sacher.

Dave spent his entire life fighting for social justice. He was an innovator, a leader and a kind and generous man. Karen and I already miss him tremendously. A memorial to be held on Saturday, May 9, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., at the Haft Auditorium at the Fashion Institute of Technology, on 27 Street near 7th Avenue. Donations may be given in his name to:

Penn South Social Services, Inc.
NORC Supportive Services, Inc.
c/o Mutual Redevelopment Houses, Inc.
321 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10001

Mayor Bloomberg and the Financial Collapse

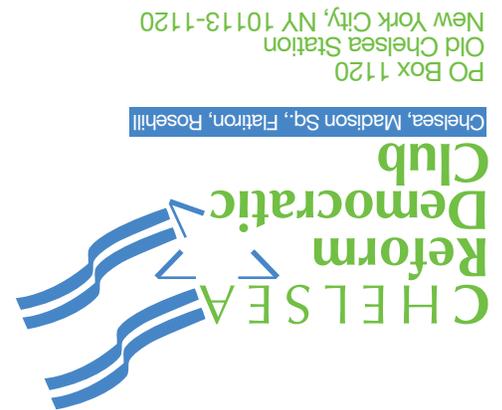
by Andrew Berman, CRDC Member

As recently as January of 2007, Mayor Bloomberg and Senator Schumer issued a report urging less stringent regulation of the financial industry in the U.S. and in N.Y. in particular, saying such changes were necessary for our city and country to maintain their status as financial capitols of the world.

The financial industry, unsurprisingly, was ecstatic about the recommendations; the Managed Funds Association, which calls itself “the trade association and global voice for the hedge fund industry” applauded the report, while business law writers noted this was “traditionally a Republican position on regulations... which echoes themes in a report issued... by the Committee on Capital Markets Regulation, led by former Bush administration officials.”

After the collapse of the financial industry this winter due to risky behaviors stemming from a lack of appropriate regulation and oversight, Senator Schumer at least did a 180, and called for a stronger regulatory

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environment to guarantee stability in the financial sector. The Mayor did not join the Senator in this call. Mayor Bloomberg has also consistently opposed increasing taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers, even in these tough economic times, and has spoken out against the government having any say over bonuses paid out to publicly rescued businesses like AIG.

The Mayor is clearly a big fan of the free market, and the freer the better apparently. In fact, if one thing can sum up Mayor Bloomberg's philosophy, it seems to be a great faith in big business' ability to address virtually all the needs of our city and country.

Looking at what led to the nearly unprecedented financial collapse of the last several months, what can be learned from it, and how the mistakes of the recent past can be undone is a high priority for many in government and the civic sphere right now. But unfortunately these recent pronouncements by Mayor Bloomberg seem to give absolutely no indication that he is engaging in any such reflection whatsoever.

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It is time to pay your 2009 dues, and remain a member of CRDC, New York City's most progressive Democratic Club. Please fill out the coupon below and mail to our postal box, or you may renew by going to our website www.crdcnyc.org.

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