

Who Was Susan Cohen?

The date is December 24th ... Christmas Eve, an icy cold, early winter morning ... but astounding numbers of people were streaming into the doorway of the Plaza Funeral Home. They were all turning out to honor the life and recognize the endless hours and the years Susan Cohen had devoted to seeing that justice for her fellow human beings could become a reality.

Susan was there ... for tenants struggling to attain, or to continue to occupy, homes ... she was there advocating for survivors to have a seat at the research table to defeat breast cancer. She was there well into the night working to achieve some justice for those who have seen little of it in their lives.

Who was Susan M. Cohen? A poor person's lawyer who was inspired to go to law school by the work of the Chelsea Coalition on Housing. Susan was an organizer, one of the founders of Chelsea Coalition on Housing working side-by-side with Jane Wood.

Susan M. Cohen was a person with vision. As a member of the Chelsea Reform Democratic Club she had a vision that the face of the judiciary could be changed. The fact that judges had been hand-picked by old-time party leaders (behind closed doors) was changed to a system where candidates were chosen for endorsement by screening panels made up of representatives of progressive community organizations. Hence, the large attendance of scores of this city's most progressive judges, many of our elected officials as well as the multitude of folks whose lives have been touched and made better because Susan was there.

*By Roberta Gelb and Gloria Sukenick
CRDC Members and Dear Friends of Susan*

Susan M. Cohen was the Chair of the New York State Breast Cancer Network. Susan co-founded the Network with a small group of other New York State breast cancer survivor power-houses in 1998. Susan had the foresight to realize that a network could be stronger than any one organization and helped to design a structure that was just loosely knit enough to encompass the differences of the 20+ organizations, but tight enough to be a unified, strong voice in public policy decisions in Albany.

Susan loved classical music and spent much time attending concerts. She loved Alaska and spent numerous vacations there. She loved to see animals in the wild and visited Africa and Antarctica. Her last vacation was to Yellowstone National Park to see the wolves in winter.

We were both privileged to know her. In her words "I've had a good run." Susan Cohen indeed had a good run and a multitude of those whose lives she touched want to thank her. It was "a good run" indeed.

UPCOMING AGENDA

Thursday, January 27
7-9 pm *Fulton Center*
**Dr. Marilyn Fahs
on Health Aging**

Thursday, February 3
9 pm, *Elliot Center*
CRDC Executive Committee

Thursday February 17
7-9 pm, *Elliot Center*
**CRDC Annual Meeting,
Club Elections,
Mix and Mingle**

Thursday March 3
7-9pm *Elliot Center*
CRDC Executive Committee

Thursday March 17
7-9 pm, *Elliot Center*
**Local: The Importance of
Judicial Delegates and
County Committee**

CRDC 2011 Club Election Information

It is the time of the year to nominate members to serve the Club as Officers or Members at Large on our Executive Committee.

To that end, Members Mary D. Dorman (mdd2@juno.com), Paul Groncki (paul@groncki.com) and David Warren (oumpeace@aol.com) will serve on the Nominating Committee and make

recommendations to the membership for a slate of Officers and members at large.

If you are interested in being nominated for the coming year, please let Mary, Paul, or David know by email at one of the above addresses. Please keep in mind that any office or membership on the Executive Committee requires a commitment of time and service.

Comment on Economics:
**Unacceptable Redistribution
 by President Obama**

By Maarten de Kadt, CRDC Vice President

Reverend Thomas Malthus, in the early 1800s declared the earth to be in great distress: population would increase faster than the food supply could increase. Moral restraint was required to slow down population growth, but if that did not work “epidemics, wars, famine, and the diseases arising from extreme poverty” would take over.

Malthus did not consider how badly the wealth of the nation was distributed even then. Nor could he know how much more productive people would become as science and technology progressed. Even with progress, however, the distribution of income and wealth is severely unbalanced.

The result of two areas of the present lame duck Congress’s deliberation work to worsen the distribution of income and wealth: the tax bill and unemployment levels. Inequality in the distribution of wealth has clearly become more extreme during the Bush years, but, unfortunately President Obama, who promised “change we can believe in,” continues to worsen that inequality. If the tax cuts for the very wealthy remain in the current tax bill, the government’s policy to transfer billions of dollars to the wealthy continues both in the form of lower income taxes for the rich (promising a cumulative \$40 billion tax saving for the rich next year) and lower estate taxes (estates under \$5 million would be tax exempt). These are policies we cannot support even as part of a compromise package that includes an extension of unemployment insurance.

Given the high rate of unemployment, officially at 9.8 percent of the labor force in November, a 13 month extension of unemployment compensation is a good thing. Americans who are being threatened with the expiration of their unemployment benefit after 99 weeks of unemployment will have those benefits extended. Official numbers tell us that more than 15 million people are out of work. Among them, 6.3 million people have been out of work for at least six months. Yet, at the same time, third quarter 2010 corporate profits shot up to \$1,659 trillion, the highest they have ever been. That so many people are unemployed at the same time as corporate profits are again soaring is outrageous. With

the official unemployment rate hovering at about one in every ten workers, continued unemployment support is essential. Decreased wages because of unemployment at one end and increased profits at the other only worsen this country’s income gap. A united nation is becoming more divided.

These income shifts to the rich are result of government policy and are not natural laws of nature as Malthus and his followers would have us believe. Income and wealth distribution are in small part a product of individual effort and good luck. In large part, however, they result from specific government policies that favor the already wealthy—oil depletion allowances, favorable contracts to military suppliers, political favors to real estate interests and more. Change we can believe in does not include a tax package compromise that further redistributes income from the poor to the rich. It is too bad that our President has lost his way.

Republicans Get Sick, Too!

By Donathan Salkaln, CRDC Member

As a treasurer of a two-building Co-op, I am never more sympathetic to the Republican way of thinking than when showing the city’s water bill to Marie, our Co-op’s President. She always says the ‘uncomplicated truth’: “It rains up north, fills up some lakes, then flows down through pipes until it’s underneath Chelsea and then pours out of the faucet and down the drain. Why are we paying thousands of dollars in water bills?” I, the liberal, tell her the ‘complicated truth,’ that the mayor has been siphoning off millions of dollars to help pay for all the city’s important social programs. She responds: “Sounds like a tax! Can’t we write it off?”

Marie and I have had many such discussions over the years. She lives in the adjacent building, has always worked her butt off, paid all her taxes and loves New York no less than anyone, Democratic or Republican. She was even crowned MTA’s ‘Miss Subway’ in 1956.

This past fall, Marie became ill. I found her sitting at the bus stop outside of Chase Bank, complaining of dizziness. I helped her home. She had trouble walking. In between the visits from her therapist, I bought her groceries (while I shop at Western Beef, she demanded Gristedes). The other day, she called me. She had just called 911 and felt like she was dying. It took twenty-five minutes for the EMS to arrive. Enough time for a

sit down lunch. There was no snow or other excuse. EMS apologized, they were coming from Lenox Hill (77th St & Lex), traffic was bad, they weren't familiar with the Chelsea area, and added that the Fire Department wasn't responding. They put Marie in an emergency wheelchair. While they tried to find Marie's pulse (there was none), vein (took fifteen minutes) and administer an IV, they dismissed the two officers from our Tenth Precinct.

When it was time to bring Marie up the five steps to the front door of our building, EMS balked—it wasn't part of their job. They wanted to call the fire department again. Thinking of more lost time, I urged them to take her, even mentioning that Marie's late husband, Harry, flew B-25 missions in WWII and was never a moaner of hard work. They continued to balk, although one said his name was Harry too. Exasperated, I volunteered to be the bottom guy, lifting her up the steps. They bit, but complained the whole way. She finally got to Beth Israel (16th St. & 1st.) where it was crazier than an elementary school's lunch period.

Based on what happened, I can only conclude that the closing of St Vincent's has been devastating to our community. Health care, the only social program in this city of which Marie has ever had to lean on, should be the most sacred of social programs, yet it is not. The closing of St. Vincent's isn't the tip of the iceberg. It's part of the massive cold depth of human unreason. There have been over a hundred NYC hospitals that have already closed.

Both parties, Democrats and Republicans are victims in Chelsea, this day, and on forward.

— Pot Luck Holiday Party —



The holiday season was kicked off with a cascade of cheers, toasts, and culinary treats at our annual CRDC party, held December 5th at The Dusk Lounge. Food was hardly the no show, with Steven Skyles-Mulligan's veggie & cheese platters, Paul Gruncki's giant spread of cold cuts, Tom Shuler's ham and quiche, Doris Corrigan's birthday cake, John Johnson's fried chicken and all the other treats brought by everyone.



Our comrades in office were also in attendance. The set up crew was joined by the very elegant, Congressman Carolyn Maloney. City Council President, Christine Quinn, always a party sparkplug, came and spent time with us, spreading lots of cheer, as did City Controller John Liu. Assemblyman Richard Gottfried was ill, but sent his best wishes.



And, while the prepared food was democratically devoured by the many guests, the club also raised over 200 lbs of canned and packaged food that was donated to St. Peters Food Pantry. — *Donathan Salkaln*



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Chelsea, Madison Sq., Flatiron, Rosehill



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*A cascade of cheers, toasts, and
culinary treats*

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