



## Local 1321 News

**DISTRICT COUNCIL 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO**  
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### President's Message—

## Employee Issues Under New Queens Library President and CEO



**John Hyslop**  
*Local 1321 President*

**T**HE approach of new Queens Library President and CEO Dennis Walcott to employee issues has been positive. Former library chief Thomas Galante's self-absorbed, counter-productive work at the library was destructive. He attacked the library's workforce constantly through layoffs; firings; creating mistrust with our funders; instituting arbitrary administrative decisions; moving people around; attempting to stretch the limits of the contract and library policy and procedures; sowing distrust among the staff; and fostering poor morale. He failed our library.

### A change of tone

Dennis Walcott, in his brief time, has made an effort to create better relations with the whole staff. He speaks cordially with staff; appropriately acknowledges staff at events; and engages with them. Importantly, he agreed to acknowledge the staff's right to join a union.

Of course the unionized workforce has issues, as you will read in this newsletter. One important article details a meeting Executive Vice President Margaret Gibson and I had with the administration. The issues we brought to his attention are the ones we hear constantly, and we hope Mr. Walcott addresses them. This includes creating

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## President's Message (continued from page 1)

a dialog with the workforce and hopefully avoiding the mistakes made by the previous administration.

Finally, Local 1321 has a new Executive Board for the 2016-19 term. I would like to thank all Local 1321 members for entrusting me to be the local's president. This past term was bizarre and thrilling, and I am very happy to have been a part of it. In the coming term, our Executive Board will serve you ably and ensure that Local 1321 members receive the

best possible service.

We all need to thank Nazima Mohamed who was unsuccessful in being reelected. She dedicated herself to supporting the local. She was a tireless union activist attending rallies, marches and meetings—sometimes three per month. We salute Nazima for being a champion cheerleader for Local 1321, and hope she will continue in all aspects of union activism.

*In solidarity,*  
**John Hyslop**  
*President*

## Office Associate Group Grievance

**T**HE local has been in discussion with the administration in the ongoing effort to amicably resolve the Office Associate group grievance. The grievance stems from administration's arbitrary decision to make the office associate the person in charge of the branch when the CLM and ACLM are out.



There are two potential resolutions to this grievance. The first is to rescind this decision and revert to the branches' past practices. The second is to properly compensate the office associates who have worked out of title since January 2015. We contacted all

of the office associates to compile evidence that this is happening.

This directive has had a large impact on the work-lives of a number of office associates. It has not had an impact on others. For those who are affected, the administration should fairly compensate them. It is not the staff's fault that they were forced to work out-of-title. This is the administration's responsibility.

## The Student Debt Crisis (continued from page 14)

ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service for details; also the DC 37 website has information at [http://www.dc37.net/benefits/health/pdf/Student\\_Loans\\_2014.pdf](http://www.dc37.net/benefits/health/pdf/Student_Loans_2014.pdf)).

Ultimately, the student loan crisis will only be solved by restoring funding for public higher education and making college debt-free. Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders has proposed legislation that would eliminate tuition at public colleges and universities by taxing Wall Street financial transactions.

Of course, there is no chance that Congress would pass such a bill in this current political environment.

But college costs are an issue in this year's election. Candidate Hillary Clinton supports debt forgiveness and tuition-free public colleges and universities.

Many other wealthy countries provide low- or no-cost public higher education to their young people, so there is no reason why the richest country in the world cannot do the same. It's not a question of resources—it's a question of priorities.

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*Chris Maisano is the former Research Librarian for the DC 37 Research and Negotiations Department. Reprinted from the July-August 2015 issue of Public Employee Press.*

## DC 37's Student Debt Program

**THE STUDENT DEBT CRISIS** affects DC 37 members and other workers, as well as our families, and threatens the very possibility of the American dream.

Student loans have surpassed credit cards and auto loans to become the second biggest source of personal debt in the United States, trailing only mortgages. Student loan debt is now 6 percent of the overall national debt.

Please join us as we:

- work to find new solutions and educate our communities about student loans,
- help DC 37 members and others in need find student debt relief, and
- support legislation and innovative ideas that will help make a college education more affordable for all.

Addressing student loan debt also offers an opportunity to build our union—DC 37—by engaging our members and retirees in a sustainable and positive manner through their faith and community relationships to help build a Better New York for All!

### Get involved/More information

**TO VOLUNTEER** for DC 37's Student Debt Program, host a workshop at your worksite or in your community, or just stay in touch, <https://docs.google.com/forms>.

**WOULD YOU** like to get more involved and become a more active member of your union—DC 37? To stay up-to-date on DC 37's new program to help you ease the burden of student debt, please join our activist list. We would be happy to bring the union to your worksite or your community to provide a workshop and share resources on how we can help.

➔ See more at: <http://www.dc37.net/studentdebt/index.html#sthash.OoPGhXKu.dpuf>.

# The Student Debt Crisis — Solutions Before Disaster Hits

By Chris Maisano

**I**N 2014, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York released a report showing that total outstanding student loan debt in the U.S. reached an astonishing \$1.16 trillion dollars by the end of the year. Yes, you read that right—that's trillion, with a T".

Student loans are the second-largest category of household debt in the country, behind only mortgages. Americans collectively owe more in student debt than they do in either auto loans or credit cards. Many borrowers have difficulty making their student loan repayments on time and in full, making it difficult for younger workers to establish strong credit scores and form their own households. This hurts more than just college graduates and their families. By acting as a drag on the overall economy, student loan debt hurts workers at all educational levels.

What drives this massive increase in student loan debt? The single biggest factor is a long-term decline in funding for public colleges and universities like SUNY and CUNY. According to a study by the think tank Demos, between 1990 and 2010 real funding per public full-time enrolled student declined by over 26 percent. At the same time, tuition and fees at four-year public colleges and universities rose by 112.5 percent while the price of public two-year colleges increased by 71 percent.

Because household incomes have stagnated over the previous two decades, students and their families have been compelled to turn to student loans to cover these costs. According to the U.S. Dept. of Educa-

tion, 45 percent of graduates in the 1992-93 academic year borrowed money from federal or private sources. Today, at least two-thirds of college graduates enter the workforce in debt.

Although college-educated workers tend, on average, to earn higher incomes than their less-educated counterparts, young college-educated workers have not escaped the pressures of wage stagnation. In the last decade, the average annual earnings of workers ages 25 to 34 with bachelor's degrees fell by 15 percent. New graduates, meanwhile, saw their debt load increase by an average of 24 percent.

Unlike most other forms of personal debt, student loans cannot be discharged through the standard bankruptcy process. In the event of default on a private or federal student loan, borrowers face a range of invasive measures: wage garnishment, the interception of tax refunds or lottery winnings, and the withholding of future Social Security payments.

Members struggling with student loan debt should learn more about the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) plan. Under this program, many types of full-time public service employees can get their loans forgiven after 120 monthly payments. Fortunately, the U.S. Dept. of Education also offers a number of income-driven repayment plans that can make it easier for PSLF participants to make their payments on time and in full (see <https://studentaid>).

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# Labor-Management Meeting on Staff Concerns

**O**N May 23, the local's Executive Vice President Margaret Gibson and President John Hyslop met with administration representatives Dennis Walcott, Nick Buron, Andy Wedmore, Jacqueline Martinez and Lewis Finkelman to discuss the issues below. These proposals were developed through a discussion among the Local's Executive Board members, who have heard complaints from all levels of staff throughout the system.

- **CREATE AN INCLUSIVE** library mission, with goals and objectives, which gives direction to all. This mission should provide a natural and rational flow of action that everyone at every level of the organization can understand and explain. Hopefully, this would eliminate the chaos and seemingly random actions that pervade our library (e.g., IMLS grant, UPK, apps, etc.)
- **OUTCOME:** Management will create a mission, goals and objectives. We had some discussion about some of the programs that seem unnecessary. Hopefully, the creation of the mission is an inclusive effort, reflecting the needs of all staff.
- **PROVIDE A CLEARER** understanding of the criteria, outcomes and measures used to create branch levels. Right now some branches experience chaos, demoralization and pressure. No one understands the consequences of not meeting goals, and some of the goals are untenable for many branches. Furthermore, CLS must provide more compassionate assistance to help branches that are not meeting these goals.
- **OUTCOME:** Management did not know about the consequences and will respond. The union's position

is that no current staff member should be harmed in any way.

- **EDUCATE EVERY** supervisor on the library's rules and regulations, policy and procedures and contract. They need to take responsibility for knowing the rules that govern our actions. And if they do not know the rules, management must ensure they have those resources handy.
- **OUTCOME:** Management was defensive and claimed that CLS staff are well versed on these. We encouraged Dennis Walcott to schedule a meeting with all of the staff members, excluding other administrators, so staff can feel comfortable relaying their complaints directly to him.
- **TRAIN CLS** supervisors on communication and compassion skills.
- **OUTCOME:** Management was defensive and incredulous that there is a problem.
- **CREATE A DIALOG** about branch construction between CFM, library designers and branch staff
- **OUTCOME:** Management agreed.

*(Continued on page 4)*



## Labor-Management Meeting (continued from page 3)

- **UPDATE THE** Time and Leave manual.
- **OUTCOME:** This will be updated when the new electronic time-keeping system is put in place. Margaret and John told management that on March 31, 2016, when the union first heard about this, they asked the administration to include staff at different levels to understand everyone's schedule, including staff who go to workshops; cover branches; go to meetings, and work in various locations. The union has also asked for a labor-management meeting, but has not heard back from administration on the local's requests.
- **THE HIRINGS** promotions, promotional panels are very disorganized.
- **OUTCOME:** They will look into this.
- **ALL PROMOTIONAL** panels must have a union representative
- **OUTCOME:** They will look into this.
- **THE CUSTODIAL** department needs to be run better. However, if management deems that it is running well, they need to create more transparency on its operation.
- **OUTCOME:** Labor and management will meet another time to discuss those issues.
- **REASSESS THE** mission of the Central Library. Understand what Central's mission is, and determine whether its current function is appropriate. The mission should be inclusive for all staff and attempt to gain their acceptance.
- **OUTCOME:** Management defended the current structure, claiming that Central's old structure was unwieldy. They stated that Central is not a Research library, and the only Research library is at NYPL. We encouraged Dennis Walcott to meet with the Central Library staff to understand the issue better and to fully understand that the staff know what Queens' Central Library is and what it could be.
- **EXAMINE CLOSELY** the operation of the Adult Learning Centers and create a mission that brings order and reasonable expectations. The ALC staff is very demoralized. Great potential is there with an exceptional frontline staff, but they are suffering and in turn so are the ALCs. The Elmhurst ALC has not had a Center Manager for two years. Why?
- **OUTCOME:** They will look into this.
- **WE RECOMMEND** every administrator work for a period of time at some of the more difficult branches (i.e., Queensboro Hill, Long Island City, South Jamaica, Far Rockaway, Jackson Heights, and Ridgewood).
- **OUTCOME:** They will not.

## Drivers Overtime Skip Grievance

IN April, the Shipping Dept. had voluntary overtime opportunities. However, the administrator in charge of shipping did not distribute this overtime on a rotating basis, as required by Article IV, Wages & Schedules, Section 7, of our contract. The drivers told their supervisor that he was violating the contract. Disregarding their observation, he did it again. So they contacted Thomas Wynn, their representative and vice president for blue collar, to file a grievance.

VP Wynn immediately filed grievances for all the affected drivers. Then, bizarrely, the supervisor did it two more times. The drivers contacted Wynn



and he immediately filed two more grievances. The drivers, with alert assistance from Wynn, stood up for their rights as outlined in our contract and will be paid their overtime that they were inexplicably skipped.

VP Wynn has been in contact with HR, circumventing the supervisor, to discuss a resolution to the drivers' grievances.

## Custodial Staffing Levels

AFTER HEARING about the woeful custodial staffing levels at Central Library, Local Vice President for Blue Collar Thomas Wynn and President John Hyslop met with the administration to explain how bad custodial staffing is at Central and around the system.

The union's representative explained that historically, Central had at least 18 custodians. However, we learned that Central now has only nine custodians for a building with a lot more space to clean, including the CLDC, office space on C1 and C2, and mandates to ensure certain public space is cleaned more frequently.

VP Wynn also explained that larger branches throughout the system need to have more permanent custodians. Branches that have one permanent custodian, with one rotating custodian, place a lot of stress on the custodians and do not have sufficient staff for the branch to be kept clean enough.

The administration was surprised to learn of Central's very low staffing levels and stated they will be looking at how to ameliorate the low staffing levels at Central and other branches.

Join Working Families for the 2016

## LABOR DAY PARADE



**Saturday, September 10, 2016**

**DC 37 will assemble at 8:30 a.m. — W. 44th Street**  
(Between 6th Ave. & 7th Ave.)

**DC 37 Executive Director Henry Garrido**  
**Is the 2016 Labor Day Parade Chair**

March with NYC's largest public employee union  
and join our DC 37/AFSCME Strong movement to build our  
communities and protect public services!

**DC 37 hats, T-shirts, snacks and thundersticks**  
**will be distributed at the site.**

**WEAR YOUR DC 37 GREEN TEE!**

For information, contact your Local 1321 representative or  
call the DC 37 Political Action Dept. at (212) 815-1550.

## Queens Library Staff Unionize

**A**S we know, Queens Library has had an odd collection of union and non-union staff.

For years, we have wondered how and why this came about, and we wondered how to rectify the issue. The last thought introduced the issue, and here is some context and an update.

This dichotomy has its roots in the beginning of our union. In our first contract, covering 1969-73, the administration and union agreed to exclude certain workers in classifications from joining Local 1321. The reasoning for that decision has been lost to time. Regardless, that contract language remains in place today, with some slight variations.

### **A changing workplace**

Two factors increased the ranks of non-union staff. As time went on, the library's functions changed and grew to include, for example, computers, networks, and the job and business academy. With these new functions came more classifications that the library declared non-union because they were not listed in the bargaining unit, such as Computer Programmer Analyst, Telecommunications Associate, and number of other titles.

In addition, the library's administration intentionally prevented people from joining the union by creating positions with classifications that were part of the exclusions in our contract. A great example of this is the Teen Center Site Coordinator, which was given

the classification Staff Analyst, not the more appropriate Community Coordinator designation. The local filed an improper practice charge accusing the library of intentionally prohibiting these new staffers from joining a union and won.

Finally, after years of the library's non-union staff feeling the brunt of previous director Thomas Galante's poor management, duplicity, arbitrariness and fractured finances — they were fed up.

They did not appreciate his demand that their terminal leave is 4-to-1, instead of the union members' 2-to-1 or 3-to-1 for people hired after July 1, 2004. They did not appreciate his creation of their overly cumbersome performance reviews. They did not appreciate that they could not carry over any annual leave days. They did not appreciate the fear they felt of offending their supervisors and losing their jobs. They did not appreciate that their workloads and assignments were changed arbitrarily. They did not appreciate the arbitrary raises. They did not appreciate seeing their friends and co-workers getting fired arbitrarily. Suffice it to say, morale among the non-union staff was abysmal.

### **Fairness for all**

Local 1321 heard grumblings from the non-union staff for years about how they were being treated, but we had no response for them. Finally, last year, Local 1321's leadership met with lawyers from DC 37's General

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# The Fight Against Contracting Out Library Services

By John Hyslop, Local 1321 President

Reprinted from the April 2016 edition of DC 37's Public Employee Press.

**A**T Queens Public Library, we responded to the administration's contracting out schemes in the union way by holding demonstrations, reaching out to the media and working with the community and public servants.

In addition to reflecting our commitment to protecting the livelihood of our fellow brothers and sisters, the campaigns show the important role public employee unions play as financial watchdogs.

The local has successfully ended or scaled back two contracts at

Queens Public Library that outsourced work ordinarily performed by union employees.

In 1999, the Queens Library administration made the unprecedented, yet legal, move to contract out its security.

The library for years employed its own guards, who provided security at Central Library, Flushing Branch and locations with public safety problems. The new contract eliminated the jobs of the union security guards, except for three Local 1321 members, who were restricted to serving at Central Library and Flushing.

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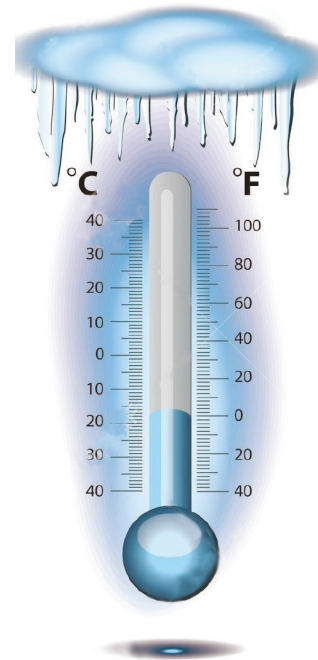
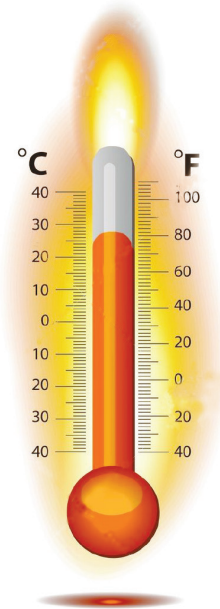
Local 1321 rallied against the contracting out of Queens Library custodial work in 2014.

## How to Handle Temperature Issues

**A**S we all know, an air conditioner keeps a room cool and a radiator warms it up. Both were created to make our rooms comfortable.

Unfortunately, sometimes those machines do not work the way we want them to and a room gets uncomfortable. You're minding your own business, enjoying the nice January day and then all of a sudden you start feeling warm. Customers start complaining about how hot it is.

You look at the thermometer and it reads 80 degrees. The branch's boiler is working overtime making the branch hotter than it should be. You turn the thermostat down but nothing happens. Everyone is uncomfortable. Since the boiler is not keeping the temperature at optimal levels, then a supervisor should do something. The same can happen with air conditioning in the summer months.



The union has spoken with the administration numerous times about this, and we have agreed to the following procedure to ensure every location is comfortable.

- 1 Enter a remedy request and save the receipt email.
- 2 If Maintenance does not respond within a day or two, call the Maintenance supervisor.
- 3 If the Maintenance supervisor does not respond, call the Nurse and your local representative.

If the temperature gets above 85 degrees or below 62 degrees, then the administration is required to follow the terms and conditions of the contract—**Article V: Operation of the Library in the Event of a Mechanical Breakdown of the Heating and Air-Conditioning Equipment.** If you are unfamiliar with this, please read it.

## Queens Library Staff Unionize (continued from page 5)

Counsel's office to find out how we can help the non-union staff. From our discussion, two salient points were made clear. First, and most importantly, no one can be prevented

from joining a union—Local 1321 or another union. Second, all we have to do is get 50% or more of the people in a classification to sign cards. Once we meet that threshold, we will notify the library's administration to ask them to voluntarily recognize these employee's desire to join a union. If they do, then they would become Local 1321 members. If they do not, then we would hold an election.

### Yes! For stability and security

In October 2015, the local created an Organizing Committee and began asking non-union staff to sign cards.

The response was overwhelming. The people who signed cards were anxious, nervous, yet appreciative that they may have a chance for security and stability at work. After receiving a majority of cards for nine titles, DC 37 Executive Director Henry Garrido and Local 1321 President John Hyslop sent a letter written by DC 37's general counsel, Robin Roach, to Interim Director Bridget Quinn-Carey asking her to voluntarily recognize the staff's desire to join the union. She refused.

In February 2016, the Organizing Committee met with people who signed cards to discuss how we should proceed. We had a choice



— call for an election or wait for a new president and CEO. We unanimously agreed to wait.

The Organizing Committee was cognizant that the non-union staff

took a big risk signing those cards and they were extremely anxious. Therefore, to ensure this issue was not dismissed or placed on hold by the new president and CEO, an attorney from DC 37 contacted Queens Library's attorney, Lewis Finkleman, asking him to inform President and CEO Dennis Walcott that this is the union's number one priority. The next day Local 1321 received an email from the administration requesting a meeting to resolve the issue amicably.

At that meeting, the administration agreed to recognize the staff's rights and desire to unionize. We discussed a number of issues that still have to be resolved, including confidential employees who cannot be unionized because their functions and overtime.

In the ensuing discussions, the union discovered that the library may have misclassified non-union staff as exempt from earning overtime, and we cannot proceed with any discussion until the library correctly classifies staff. That misclassification, intentional or not, is bizarre and demonstrates how poorly run this library was.

Eventually, these employees will be able to exercise their legal right to join a union.

## Fight Against Contracting Out Library Services (continued)

In the summer of 2013, the administration contracted out its custodial services, filling the positions of union custodians with contract custodians. Management justified this move by claiming it would save money. Yet, the Library refused to provide the union with evidence. The administration also ignored the extremely negative impact this would have on the staff's morale.

We informed Queens elected officials that the library was using our tax dollars to eliminate decent paying union jobs. We held rallies in protest, launched a petition drive and carried out a Twitter campaign. We received extensive press coverage and strong support from elected officials. Nevertheless, the administration refused to budge, ignoring the extremely negative attention.

### Legislature stands up for the union

In an important move, the local linked the misguided contracting out to President and CEO Thomas Galante's exorbitant and illicit spending, which was the subject of a series of Daily News exposes. The scandal led the New York State Legislature to modify the library's bylaws. Galante and half the trustees were fired.

The reforms introduced by the legislature include a requirement that the library follow freedom of information laws. That gave the local a powerful new tool for its work against contracting out.

The local filed a freedom of information request with the library to discover what the library spent on the custodial worker and security guard contracts.

The request exposed how our members do the custodial and security work more efficiently than contracted workers. The administration soon eliminated all custodial contract work.

Provided with five years of data, the local learned that library spent on average \$793,218 per year—out of a total of \$3,966,093—on contract security guards. Our analysis showed if the library hired 10 security guards (the number of security guards before contracting out), the cost would have been \$464,624 (including salary and benefits).

The union brought this information to the administration's attention. Both parties agreed the library would see significant saving by spending less on contracted guards and hiring union security guards. Everyone benefited from the union's oversight.

As more public services get contracted out, state and local governments must adopt transparency rules for contracts for all publicly funded institutions.

We must have strong unions and an independent press that are able to use freedom of information rules to ensure our government is spending our tax dollars wisely. We must be responsible government caretakers.



# Retirement Reception for Daily News' Juan Gonzalez

On May 10, 2016, DC 37 celebrated Juan Gonzalez's retirement with a reception. Gathered there were unionists, community organizers, WBAI staff, the people who benefitted from Juan's tireless pursuit for justice and honesty. A number of people testified how they and the city benefited from his work. They talked about how Juan broke the ironic story of CityTime, a Bloomberg boondoggle that was supposed to keep track of employees' time but instead resulted in thieves stealing hundreds of millions of our tax dollars.

They talked about his coverage of the Puerto Rican general strike that shut down the commonwealth. They talked about his coverage of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks and his efforts to expose the contention of the EPA, New York State, New York City and New Jersey that the Ground Zero air people were breathing was safe. Below, from Local 1321 President John Hyslop, is an expression of our thanks for Juan's work exposing Thomas Galante, the ousted president and CEO of Queens Library, and his real stupid greediness. All in all, it was a very nice event.

**S**TARTING with two photos and some innocent questions Juan Gonzalez took the Queens Library on a wild ride that exposed amazingly stupid, immoral and illegal spending by the library's then-President and CEO Thomas Galante and led the Albany Legislature to agree to legislation; got Galante fired and permanently changed Queens Library for the better.

The financial shenanigans and cozy relationship of Queens Library's directors and Board of Trustees went on for decades and no one bothered to explore

them. Maybe in the grand scheme of New York City life, a borough library's problems were considered quaint and minor.

However, Juan knows how important Queens Library is to millions of people. He knows how vital we are to the children, parents, adults and new immigrants who come through our doors every day. He knows that a library in Lefrak City is sometimes the only free after-school option for working parents. He knows how important the Baisley Park children's library-



Local 1321 Exec. Board members at Juan Gonzalez's retirement party. From left, Barbara Halloway, Margaret Gibson, Roma Ramdhan, John Hyslop, Juan Gonzalez, Mike Wong, Nazima Mohammed, Kerline Piedra, Pat Eshun, and Dorrett Hextall. Photo by Mike Lee.

ian toddler time programs are to new parents. He knows how important Glen Oaks' free space is to adults who want to engage with each other.

He also knows how useful Arverne's free adult education classes are to adults who don't know how to read English. He knows that every branch bridges the digital divide that is pervasive in our society. So when faced with such gross, immoral spending habits, he knew he had to take the time to investigate. Also, I'm sure, he was having so much fun, because Galante was so stupidly greedy. In talking with Juan, almost weekly, I could

hear the glee in voice as he followed through on one juicy tip after another.

## Ethical and caring

As any good investigative journalist, he was dogged, thorough, ethical and caring. Juan Gonzalez has an amazing career of investigative journalism, spanning decades. I am so honored to have played a small role in it. The local is so privileged to have benefitted from his work. The Queens Library and its users are indebted.

Thank you, Juan, for rescuing the library. You have made this a better place. I hope you can relax and enjoy your retirement.