



The Sentinel

UUP — Oneonta Local 2190
A Revived Sentinel!

September 14, 2026

Article 1:

Return of *The Sentinel*

by Bill Simons- Editor, The Sentinel, and Secretary

The UUP Oneonta newsletter, *The Sentinel*, was founded in 1983 and remained an important voice of the Chapter for two generations. The masthead of that first *Sentinel* appears below.



Across the decades, *The Sentinel* received multiple journalism prizes, built wide readership within and beyond the Chapter, and attracted writers who subsequently emerged as union leaders. In 2024, three special editions *The Sentinel* concerned “Advocating for a 3-3 Teaching Load,” “UUP Quality of Professional Life and Administrative Survey- Part 1,” and “Dialogue on the Future of Higher Education.” While numerous newspapers have sadly died, this publication marks revival of *The Sentinel* after a two-year hiatus—along with enhanced access to its archives.

UUP Oneonta Chapter President Shirley Clark explains the rationale for the rebirth of *The Sentinel*.

Bill Simons, Chapter Secretary, will return as Sentinel editor with initial publication scheduled for September 2026. CWA assistant Teresa DeSantis will assist him with copyediting, formatting, and distribution. In addition to serving as Chapter president for 16 years, Bill was the longtime editor of our newsletter. During that period, The Sentinel won several awards for excellence. Bill has an extensive record of journalism and academic publication, including the editing of 12 books. His most recent journalism recognition came in April 2026 from the Syracuse Press Club - First Place Sports Story Print/Digital News. The goal of the revived Sentinel would be to increase the number of newsletter contributors, enlarge UUP presence amongst members/management/community, and provide a spur to activists.

Featuring one click access and/or PDF distribution, the revived Sentinel will have autonomy. The Sentinel will welcome all articles except those that are slanderous, ad hominem attacks on members, or factually false. In addition, The Sentinel will refrain from publishing individual names attached to title and salary. Divergent viewpoints will be welcome. During this critical American passage, unions need to up their media ante.

Reclaiming its legacy, *The Sentinel* will encourage discussion, debate, decision, and advocacy in pursuit of labor's agenda. As it grows anew, encouraging multiple voices, and rebuilding circulation, *The Sentinel* will once more become a publication that is read and its articles talked about. Democratic institutions are most successful externally when most vibrant internally. *The Sentinel* provides a trajectory for emerging activism and leadership.

If you have a different take on a topic covered in *The Sentinel* or concerns about an issue not addressed, submit an article to the newsletter editor at SimonsWM32@gmail.com. Consider, for example, writing a profile of a UUPer—perhaps yourself—encompassing work and personal interests, since familiarity with one another augments union cohesion. Likewise, a tribute to a departed member provides support when most needed and knits together the family of UUP.

As a practical matter, the table of contents will feature links to specific articles, expediting proximity to your priority reading.

Let the dialogue begin.

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Article 2:

A Strong Agreement That Advances Equity, Stability, and Long-Term Growth for UUP Members

by Shirley A. Clark, Oneonta UUP Chapter President



Shirley A. Clark

As we begin implementing the provisions of the newly ratified **2026–2031 UUP Agreement**, it is important for our members to understand the full scope of the gains secured through collective bargaining. This contract delivers meaningful salary growth, expanded retention tools, improved health benefits, and new protections for part-time and contingent

employees. These improvements reflect our union's commitment to fairness, equity, and long-term stability across all divisions of our diverse bargaining unit.

One of the most significant structural changes in this Agreement is the sequencing of salary programs. **Minimum Salary Increases will be applied *before* Across-the-Board (ATB) increases**, while **Discretionary Salary Increases (DSI) and Retention Awards will be applied *after* ATBs**. This sequencing ensures that the lowest-paid members receive equitable gains up front, while all employees benefit from consistent annual growth.

Across-the-Board (ATB) Increases

Annual ATBs provide predictable salary growth for all members:

- 2026: **4.5%**
- 2027: **4%**
- 2028: **3.5%**
- 2029: **3%**
- 2030: **3%**

These increases form the foundation of long-term salary progression and apply before DSIs and Retention Awards.

Discretionary Salary Increases (DSI)

All DSIs are **on base**, strengthening long-term earnings:

- 2027: **0.5%** (distributed as a flat ATB: \$450 for full-time on base; \$225 lump-sum for part-time not on base)
- 2028: **0.5% on base**
- 2029: **0.5% on base**
- 2030: **0.5% on base**

- **2031: 0.5% on base**

These annual DSIs reinforce equitable recognition of member contributions across all titles.

Retention Awards

Retention Awards receive substantial increases over the life of the Agreement, adding **\$2,200 in new money** across the three steps:

- **7-year Award:** increases from \$1,000 → \$1,750
- **12-year Award:** increases from \$800 → \$1,500
- **17-year Award:** newly established at \$750

These increases escalate over time:

- Adds **\$250** to the 7-year award in 2027, 2028, 2029
- Adds **\$350** to the 12-year award in 2027 and 2028
- Adds **\$750** to establish the 17-year award in 2029

Importantly, **time on Paid Family Leave counts toward Retention Award eligibility**, ensuring members are not penalized for taking essential leave.

New Part-Time Retention Awards

The Agreement replaces the old one-time service awards with a more equitable annual structure:

- Effective April 1, 2027: **\$500 annual bonus** for PT employees with **12 consecutive years**
- Effective April 1, 2029: **\$500 annual bonus** for PT employees with **7 consecutive years**

This shift provides ongoing recognition rather than infrequent one-time payments.

Higher Education Stipend

Beginning July 1, 2027, members with a Master's degree or higher will receive:

- **\$600 annual stipend** for full-time employees
- **\$300 annual stipend** for part-time employees at 0.5 FTE or higher

This new stipend acknowledges the educational credentials that strengthen SUNY's academic and professional workforce.

Cost of Living Differential (2027–2030)

To supplement the 2030 ATB:

- Full-time employees receive **\$500 added to base**
- Part-time employees receive a **\$250 lump-sum payment**

This differential helps offset rising living costs in the final year of the Agreement.

Part-Time Academic Faculty Per-Course Minima

Per-course minima increase steadily across the Agreement:

- **University Centers & HSCs:** \$6,250 → \$6,500 → \$6,750 → \$7,000
- **Comprehensive & Tech Campuses:** \$5,750 → \$6,000 → \$6,250 → \$6,500

These increases strengthen compensation for adjunct faculty across SUNY.

Living Wage Increases for Lowest-Paid Members

Beginning in 2026, an additional **\$500 added to base** applies to:

- Professionals in **SL1, SL2, SL3**
- Academics in **Assistant Librarian, Instructor, Senior Assistant Librarian, Lecturer, Assistant Professor**

All minimum salaries escalate with ATBs, making these gains more equitable over time.

Extra Service Cap Adjustment

An exception to the 20% cap ensures **all employees can teach at least two 3-credit courses per year**, regardless of salary level.

Employee Share of Premium Shift (Effective 1/1/27)

The income threshold for lower premium contributions increases:

- Employees earning **below \$67,989** pay **12% (individual)** or **27% (family)**
- Employees earning **above \$67,989** continue paying **16% (individual)** and **31% (family)**

This shift protects more members from higher premium costs.

Stacked Co-Pay Eliminations (Effective 1/1/27)

Key improvements include:

- Eliminating the **\$25 lab co-pay** at national network labs (Quest, Labcorp, etc.)
- Eliminating the **\$50 hospital extension clinic co-pay** when billed as a physician office visit
- Eliminating co-pay stacking at Urgent Care Centers → **single \$30 co-pay per visit**

These changes reduce out-of-pocket costs for routine and urgent care.

Additional Health Benefit Gains

- Premium contributions for PT academics spread across semester pay periods
- Vaccine coverage aligned with state and federal guidance
- JCHB charged to explore improvements such as:
 - Mental Health Center of Excellence
 - Reduced waiting periods for new employees
 - IVF/embryo preservation coverage

Minimizing Empire Plan Costs

There are **no increases** in:

- Employee premium shares
- Co-pays
- Prescription co-pays
- Deductibles
- Co-insurance maximums

This stability protects members from rising healthcare costs.

Out-of-Network (OON) Care Adjustments

To contain long-term premium increases, OON reimbursement shifts:

- Provider reimbursement moves from **275% → 150% of Medicare**
- Hospital/facility reimbursement moves to a percentage of NY County in-network rates:
 - 2027: 135%
 - 2028: 130%
 - 2029: 125%
- Mental Health/Substance Use rates:
 - 2027: 600%
 - 2028: 500%
 - 2029: 400%

Massage and acupuncture OON visits reduce from 20 → 15 (in-network acupuncture remains unlimited).

These changes incentivize providers to join the network and help stabilize future premium costs.

Article 3:**On Compensation, the 3/3 Teaching Load, and Grow-Thrive-Live Days**

by Mark S. Ferrara, UUP Oneonta Lead Negotiator and
Melissa F. Lavin, UUP Oneonta Contingent Officer



Mark S. Ferrara



Melissa F. Lavin

We return to campus this fall to more obligations than ever, including submitting early alerts (in advance of midterm grades) to flag struggling students for Academic Success & Retention counselors, tracking students through Navigate, providing remedial instruction for a generation of students less prepared for university, innovating new pedagogies in the wake of artificial intelligence, and completing college assessments that do little to advance quality teaching. All these activities, and many more like them, take place on top of the substantial teaching, service, and scholarly / creative activities required for renewal, tenure, and promotion.

We persist in this constantly shifting higher educational landscape because we have dedicated our occupational lives to teaching and care deeply about student success. At SUNY Oneonta, we give our all despite being paid demonstrably less in comparison to our colleagues at peer SUNY universities, including Cortland, our twin dragon. And, as our salaries have stagnated in past years, our 3/4 (21-credit) teaching load is higher than most other SUNY comprehensives. To address that imbalance, UUP began conversations with Management in 2022. Four years later, our efforts have yielded a scant 1 percent across-the-board salary increase for full-time faculty and a pilot 3/3 program that begins this year (in Psychology; Communication and Media; Sociology,

Human Services, and Crime Studies; and Fashion and Textiles). Faculty members in these four departments will enjoy the full benefit of a return to the 3/3 (18 credit-hour) teaching load that was standard at Oneonta until the 1990s. While we remain encouraged by the implementation of the 3/3 pilot in these four departments, evaluating its success, and rolling it out to the rest of campus, will require transparency.

Given the workload creep that Oneonta faculty already face, the administrative decision to essentially extend the academic year by adding 3-to-5 so-called “Growth, Thrive, Live” (GTL) days each semester, and to schedule Institutional Success Day on August 13th (in the second week of August), mean that, for the next two years, Oneonta students and faculty will arrive on campus earlier and finish later. UUP Oneonta has understood from Labor-Management meetings that faculty participation in Institutional Success Day, and presence on campus on non-teaching GTL days, to be *voluntary*. The Provost, in a May 21st email to faculty, makes that point clear (the bold font is for emphasis):

“As indicated above, different groups/departments/units will **volunteer** to host activities or events on the different GTL Days. Employees will not be expected to plan and host GTL-themed events individually (but can do so if you wish). For example, **you may** assist your department in planning and hosting an activity for one GTL Day – next time, **you might** engage by attending the events planned by another area or by offering individual appointment times for students to meet with you.

All faculty and staff **are encouraged** to participate in the engagement opportunities offered on each GTL Day in support of our shared academic community and student success.”

Even so, concerns remain that some faculty members, particularly junior and contingent faculty, might feel pressure to attend or participate in department and schoolwide events on GTL days. A recent UUP Oneonta email to faculty members asks: “If you find that the administration’s expectations for these days seem to exceed standard professional norms, or if you are directed to participate in ways that create a conflict with your other responsibilities, we encourage you to reach out to the UUP office.”

Management has described GTL Days as one way to show “commitment to student belonging, retention, wellbeing, equity, academic and co-curricular outcomes, inclusion, and coordinated care.” One can hope that GTL Days will have a positive impact by building into the semester “mental health days” for students. Oneonta faculty broadly support efforts to address

student mental health, especially at a time when suicide and self-harm rates are rising among young people, but the majority of faculty members are not trained counselors or therapeutic workers. Full-time teaching at an institution with a 3/4 (21 credit hour) load already requires intensive work every semester (including on evenings, weekends, holidays, and many non-teaching days), and so most of us will work on GTL days—whether we volunteer on campus or not.

In pushing faculty to participate in campus events on non-teaching days and extending the academic calendar, Management is demonstrating that it is out-of-touch with the needs of faculty. Indeed, they risk turning a well-meaning initiative aimed at student success into “Exhaust, Wither, and Die” days for an overstretched professoriate. An extended academic calendar eats into time for class preparation—and for completing the scholarly research and creative activities that make us better teachers. Such initiatives also contribute to low morale and burnout.

Although our newly ratified contract provides a short-term hedge against inflation, the cost of living and housing has continued to rise, making Oneonta less affordable than ever. This contract offers the President the possibility of distributing the discretionary salary increases (DSI) across-the-board and to address cases of salary compression and inversion. We also call on Management to return us to a 16-week academic calendar, knowing that the Oneonta professoriate already faces persistent pressure to do more with less, to be in more places at once, to engage with more students who have more needs—all while maintaining the active research and service that, together with quality teaching, are required for continuing appointment and promotion.

So, when you see the President and Provost, or one of our many Deans and Associate Deans, please ask how they plan to address 1) salary, 2) teaching load, 3) the extended academic calendar, and 4) faculty work-life balance. Remember that you may also join UUP chapter meetings, share concerns with your Chair, and report to UUP any explicit or tacit compulsion to get you to appear on campus during non-teaching GTL days, or to work while off obligation.



Article 4:**UUP and Academic Issues**

by Dr. Achim Koeddermann, Academic Delegate, UUP Oneonta



Achim Koeddermann, first row, far left

A rift has come to the fore between the interests of teaching faculty and professionals. Core issues that are concerns of teaching faculty need to get back into the focus.

- Avoiding establishing fixed dates re. beginning and end of terms: research and creativity define us as university scholars, not bureaucrats.
- Curtail the increase of workload for assessment without prior notice
- We Endorse 3 - 3 teaching load for all
- We value Respect for past officers
- Academic freedom is our core value.

- We need planning security for the Annual report format
- Systemic discrimination: Our leadership needs to Lobby for salary adjustments for the comprehensive sector

Academic freedom is cumbersome; one has to allow people with whom one does not agree to publicly take a stance: free speech is The pillar of American democracy. It's a combination of both that strengthens democratic society. Only if we practice those principles, can we defend against censorship or retaliation.

In doing so we also have to be able to criticize our union which just held elections for chief officers at the Delegate Assembly without a choice: That is what dictatorships do when they don't accept democratic principles.

Paradoxically it is the current form of our Statewide union contract which prevents our University president locally to address inequities in a systematic fashion! We need to change that by urging our own organization to see and address our needs.

We cannot afford being divisive.

Article 5:

CAMPUS GRADE INFLATION: Should we ignore or confront the issue?

by Paul Conway, former UUP Oneonta Grievance Officer and Emeritus Professor,
Political Science



Paul Conway, second from left, hoisting UUP banner

The nationwide issue of grade inflation on college and university campuses has long been ignored, albeit quietly acknowledged. Prior to this year as many as 70% of student course grades at Harvard and Yale were A's. As author/professor Steven Pinker stated in an email, "grade inflation has turned universities into a national laughingstock." Finally, within the last year, Ivy League universities have confronted the problem. Harvard University, in particular, recently resolved to gently "deflate" grading practices in the years ahead. The recent Harvard faculty resolution will limit the percentage of straight A's in most courses to 20% in the next academic year. It does not limit the percentage of A minus grades that can be awarded.) This 'reform' is presumably a small step, the beginning of subsequent efforts to reduce grade inflation in the years ahead.

Although college catalogs here, as well as elsewhere, consistently assert that A's indicate excellent grades, B's indicate good performances, and C's are "average" or acceptable, passing grades, those standards have long been ignored. Some believe that grade inflation on campuses began during the Vietnam War. Professors then realized male students who received bad grades would be vulnerable to the military draft system and thus have to serve in a foolish and very dangerous war. Since then, there have been many explanations – and good reasons – for grade inflation: With student course and teaching evaluations published online there is much pressure - especially on increasing numbers of untenured faculty – to give good grades to students. Students who worry about their grade point average – as most of them do – can "cherry pick" courses and professors to get easy A's. Teachers who worry about their popularity or support from administrators are inclined to award good grades that are undeserved. There are few incentives for faculty to resist inflated, misleading grading standards, among other reasons why teachers grade carelessly.

The ongoing discussions at Harvard acknowledge that percentage reductions of high grades are somewhat arbitrary and risk faculty opponents who argue for academic freedom. Certainly seminar courses and others with small numbers of students are more likely to include a higher number who do excellent work. Nonetheless the recent initiative at Harvard was widely supported by faculty there and endorsed by Yale University faculty as well. However modest it may be, it can and should lead to stronger measures that may encourage similar efforts at schools throughout the country. Granted, students may resist such efforts but they should be involved in

the debates and reforms that might be forthcoming elsewhere. (After Harvard's 2025 resolution, students polled there and at Yale expressed strong opposition to that effort.)

If the issue of grade inflation is to be confronted here at Oneonta State it must begin with transparency: the publishing of relevant campus grading data that the UUP can facilitate. Thereafter a UUP resolution could encourage the Faculty Senate to discuss and take a definitive position on the issue. Otherwise, it may take a Faculty resolution that will facilitate debate that will inevitably be contentious. If Oneonta State is the first among SUNY colleges and universities to do so, it might generate much respect for this institution and maybe set a good example that could be followed throughout the system. A bottom line is that grade inflation is about dishonest evaluations of students who deserve honesty. Higher education is presumably about the pursuit of truth, is it not?

Article 6:

Building a New American Exceptionalism

by Ron Bishop, UUP Oneonta Health/Safety Officer



Ron Bishop

American exceptionalism is not what it used to be. Although never perfect, we were once the envy of the world with one of the most vibrant democracies, the largest economy, the premier healthcare system, the most advanced science & technology complexes, preeminent education systems, mightiest industrial base, strongest alliances, most powerful military, and the greatest number of immigrants. From 1946 to 2000, the national debt was a fraction of our Gross

Domestic Output, and the US president was credibly considered “the leader of the free world.” That was then.

Now, depending on the sources consulted, our democracy ranks between 28th and 51st globally, with the most favorable rating (from the *Economist Intelligence Unit*) describing ours as a “flawed democracy”. Our economy, in terms of purchasing power parity, is second to the People’s Republic of China. Our healthcare system ranking varies from 7th to 40th place, depending on the metrics applied. Our science & technology sector ranks no. 2 (*Nature Index*), while our K-12 student assessments in science fall between 12th and 16th in the world. (Overall, our K-12 education system is ranked 31st by *World Population Review*.) Our industrial base has slipped to second place globally. The BRICS alliance eclipses NATO in financial clout, and many historic partners now regard us an “ally of last resort.” Of the parameters listed above, only our tertiary education systems, military status and immigrant population remain at the top despite recent declines. The national debt far outweighs our Gross Domestic Product (GDP), we’re rated 134th out of 163 countries by the *Global Peace Index* for personal safety and societal stability, and 65th out of 67 countries graded by the *Climate Change Performance Index*.

Such is the state of the nation we’re leaving to our children and grandchildren. My early training was to always leave a place I’d been better than I found it. We as a generation are failing this basic test of character. If we can muster the courage and collective will to build a new American exceptionalism, we must soberly acknowledge how we got here, build consensus about what our country should be like, and work together to turn that vision into reality for our progeny.

I believe part of our undoing stemmed from our widespread failures to listen to people with varying perspectives, to the point that folks with differing opinions are regarded as enemies rather than neighbors. The resulting distrust hinders our efforts toward a more perfect union. An outgrowth of this malady is that, despite ample available evidence, we struggle to agree about what is real and what is fantasy.

For example, wealthy Americans fund most of government. The richest half of us earned 89% of the income and paid 97% of the taxes in 2022 (*Tax Foundation*) – and that’s not yet down to my family’s tax bracket. This Robin Hood nature of our progressive tax system far outweighs individual administrations’ policy goals. A contrasting example is trickle-down economics, the notion that since corporations and the richest Americans create the most jobs for

others, cutting their taxes should benefit everyone in society. This approach never delivered results for anyone but tax cut recipients: In 18 countries where it was tried across 50 years, income inequality grew, with no significant changes to economic growth, GDP, wages, or unemployment rates (Hope & Limberg (2020), *Socio-Economic Review* **20**(2): 539-559).

Attempts to skirt the obvious fairness principle that those who contribute the most money to government should have the most say about where it goes, often center on morality, another pitfall as some groups try to impose their moral codes on others who do not hold the same values. I believe that by this means, Christian nationalists have relegated themselves to a narrow special interest group – and the same can be said of the LGBTQ+ community. (This is not an exhaustive list.) There may be some values most people share, *e.g.*, honesty is good, and corruption is bad. But if we are to build more bridges than we burn, we must build coalitions in morality-agnostic ways, convincing people with different views that proposed courses of action are in their best interests. This is, arguably, the kind of work that union people are best suited for.

A third drag on American exceptionalism is our increasingly prodigal disregard of available resources. When development of a proprietary US large language model (LLM) for artificial intelligence requires \$600 million *per iteration*, while development of a somewhat less comprehensive open-source LLM elsewhere burns through \$6 million, our ability to compete long-term is questionable. The same reasoning applies to the military strategy of shooting down \$30 thousand drones with \$5 million (or more) interceptor missiles. Factor in as well the bloated costs of our for-profit healthcare, pharmaceutical, and insurance systems, and you begin to grasp the scope of our economic asymmetries with the rest of the world.

To spur progress toward a more perfect union, I propose that in our public advocacy, we should focus on major policy issues that emphasize interests common to many people. These might include (not an exhaustive list):

- Whether and how to restore the separation of powers delineated in our Constitution
- Whether and when to abolish the Electoral College in favor of more democratic federal elections
- Whether and how to further decentralize election systems while applying national standards for fairness and security
- Whether and when to admit Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and other territories as states
- How to equitably adapt to increasingly hostile environmental conditions on Earth

- How to increase and expand public health and safety throughout the U.S.
- How to optimize our collective strengths in higher education and cultural diversity
- How to increase and expand collective bargaining rights for government workers at every level
- How to incentivize expertise and professionalism – and disincentivize cronyism and corruption – in public service

I believe focusing on such projects can help union members like us lead the way toward solving problems, uniting people in common causes, and leaving our beloved country better than we received it.

Article 7:

AFT 2026 National Convention

by Ed Wesnofske, UUP Delegate / AFT Credentials & Elections Committee



Ed Wesnofske, right center, registering delegates
assisted by Eileen Landy, left center.
(Photo credit: Jeri O'Bryan-Losee)

More than 3,000 delegates from AFT Locals (like UUP Local #2190 with 52 delegates from statewide campuses in attendance) and an additional 700 individual AFT members, staff, guests and vendors were registered and assembled in the Walter Washington Convention Center

in downtown Washington DC for the national AFT Convention held every two years. The AFT now has grown to 1.8 million members nationwide and overseas and encompasses employees in education, a rapidly growing healthcare sector and public services.

Attendees to the July 15-19th meeting were greeted by an oppressive atmosphere in Washington:

five days of nearly 100 degree humid heat and one day of choking smoke from Canadian wildfires causing respiratory stress for some attendees. Also visible to attendees and tourists alike was a large portrait banner of President Trump draped on the Department of Labor building above the slogan “American Workers First”. Some attendees expressed finding irony in the display. The President fired a Democrat National Labor Relations Board member early in 2025 creating a non functioning NLRB for almost a year and a backlog of 500+ cases involving petitions for union recognition and review of improper labor practice complaints and wrongful firings. The 2025 DOGE inspired mass firings of 1000's of federal employees and removal of federal recognition of existing bargaining and representational rights also harmed many workers. The recently announced OSHA undoing of Biden era OSHA standards for worker protection against excessive heat mandating rest and hydration breaks at extreme temperatures also seemed ironic after the national heat wave episodes in terms of “American Workers First” slogan.

Among the high profile policy issues, the AFT adopted resolutions critical of ICE impacts on communities, and advocating making schools and hospitals safe from immigration enforcement practices since education and healthcare workers are heavily involved with immigrant communities particularly in urban centers.

Artificial intelligence and its double edged impacts as a threat to workers and as an opportunity in education was also a matter of focus. Resolutions on limiting job displacement

from AI, restricting its place in professional decision making, asserting AI use as a negotiable condition in contracts, and creating a National Academy for AI Instruction for educators were approved.

Healthcare as a human right, opposition to the financial costs associated with for profit private equity investment in ownership, consolidation and integration of hospitals and medical practices was expressed and reconnecting with the World Health Organization was also approved by the convention. Also a “Code Red” campaign for safe staffing levels in hospitals was endorsed following the successful model in Oregon statutes providing for ratio based staffing of nurses to patients.

For higher education, UUP submitted a Resolution called “Saving Lives, Building Futures, Powering the Economy: A Blueprint for Strengthening and Transforming Higher Education”. Fred Kowal, UUP President and also an AFT Vice-President, spoke to its passage and was backed by two dozen of UUP delegates at the microphone. Among the commitments called for in the lengthy resolution was combating the attacks on academic freedom, increased public funding, making campuses safe and welcoming by combating racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia and LGBTQ+ hate, condemning the use of the visa process as an attack and harassment of foreign students and families under threat from ICE. Reaffirmation of the fight to end contingency employment and provide for improved economic security for all academic workers was also made.

On the clouds of war hanging over the United States, Lebanon, Israel and Iran, the Convention called for the United States and Israel to end the use of military force against Iran, the blockade of Iranian ports, for Iran to end its blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, and a negotiated agreement with a verifiable guarantee that Iran will not develop nuclear weapons.

Additionally, the AFT resolution calls for an end to Israel's bombing and invasion of Lebanon, and forced evacuation of Shia Muslims from southern Lebanon. It also calls upon the Congress to act on its constitutional authority to declare war, as elaborated in the War Powers Act of 1973.

In domestic electoral affairs, the AFT by resolutions committed itself to protecting voter rights in the fall elections, recruiting AFT members to engage with partners in monitoring activity for free, fair and transparent elections, to mobilize members for voter engagement and working with the AFL-CIO to elect in those competitive races candidates for Congress, Senate and Governors who are favorable to labor, education and healthcare interests.

The resolutions that come to the Conventions are from AFT Locals and are first vetted at the Convention by a subject matter Committee of 30-60 delegates. There they are debated, possibly consolidated with other similar submissions and amended as according to the sentiment of Committee members. They are then submitted as recommended to the plenary Convention where all delegates have the opportunity to debate and amend the various Committees' recommendations before any approval.

AFT 2026 Convention approved Resolutions can be found at:
<https://www.aft.org/resolutions-adopted-convention-2026>.

In AFT governance, delegates overwhelmingly reelected 18 year incumbent Randi Weingarten as AFT President along with officer colleagues on the Progressive Caucus slate. UUP Fred Kowal was reelected as one of 43 AFT Vice-Presidents on the same slate. A competing caucus slate led by a Berkeley Federation of Teachers leader failed to elect any of its candidates. The Progressive Caucus heavily supported by New York delegates has dominated AFT governance after it defeated in the 1960's the National Caucus centered around AFT Local

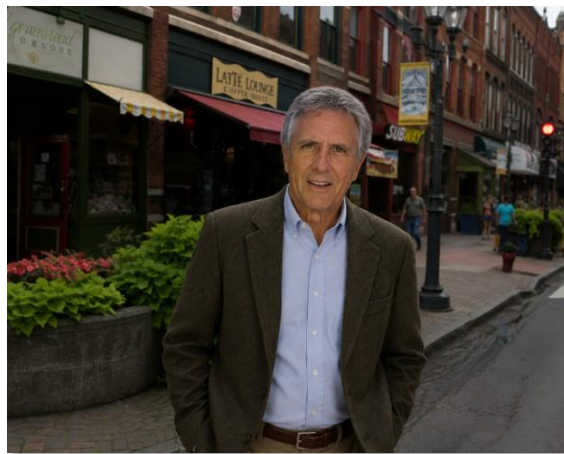
#1, the Chicago Teachers Union. Other political caucuses like the New Caucus and Reform Caucus have come and gone in AFT's history of contested elections.

As a personal and historical note from this reporter, my earliest AFT Convention was in 1969 at the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans. I was a delegate for the Oneonta State University Federation of Teachers Local #1910, a precursor to a merged statewide AFT Local #2190, later named United University Professions in 1973. In 1969, AFT membership was about 180,000 about 10% of today's membership. Collective bargaining and contractual rights for professional and academic employees in 1969 for higher education was in its nascent stage.

Article 8:

Downtown Oneonta and SUNY Oneonta: An Essential Relationship

by Alex Thomas, Executive Director, Places Institute, and Professor, Sociology, Human Services, and Crime Studies



Alex Thomas downtown

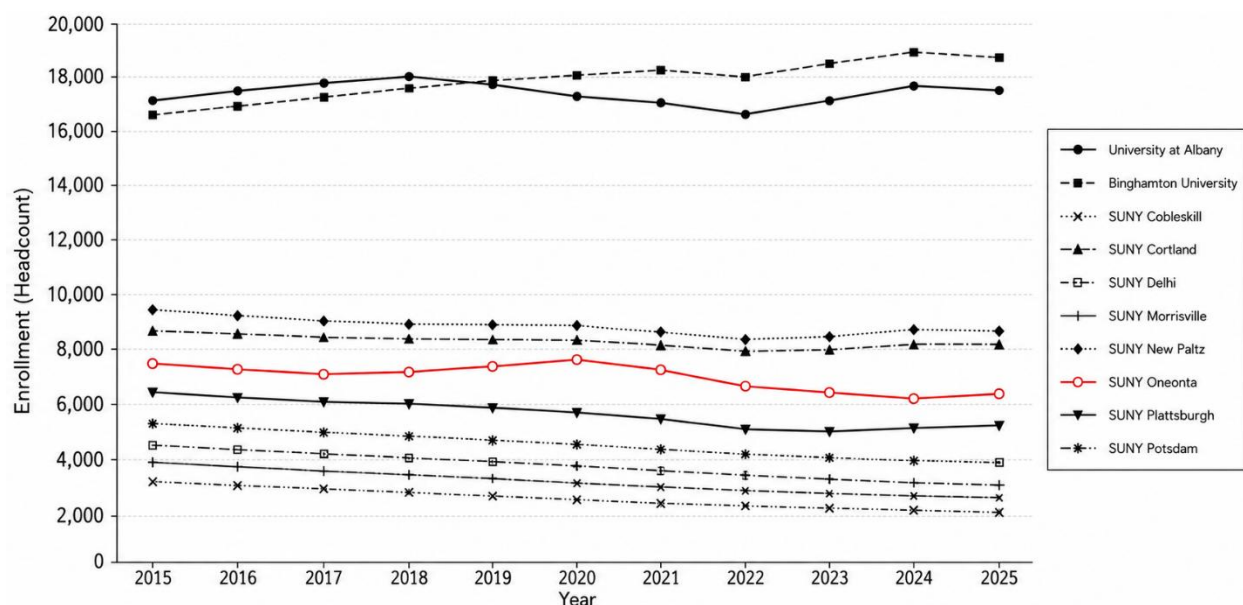
For a crusty old professor like yours truly, taking one's children on college visits is an illuminating experience. On one such visit a few years ago, my daughter and I admired what other campuses do so well: fire pits to make being outdoors on a cold winter day enjoyable, open

spaces to throw a ball, and even playground equipment to recall memories of childhood and make new memories of college life. Walking back to the car, she commented that she could see herself there, and then we tried to go to dinner. The town was a little run down, with some empty storefronts countenanced by tattoo parlors, but the only restaurant that would be open that day—a pizza pub—would not open until later in the afternoon. As she strapped her hungry self into the driver's seat, she turned to me and said, “well, that's that.” A year later, she chose a college in the Capital District instead.

Almost twenty years ago, in this very publication for this very editor, I wrote what became known as the University of the Catskills series. The central theme was that our own region could be an organizing principle for our identity and our programming, and I cited a growing research literature in community development that showed that colleges that were engaged in their local communities typically performed better over time. For example, Colgate University formed a set of partnerships that bought and renovated properties throughout downtown Hamilton, thereby promoting a vibrant downtown with diverse offerings. Union College bought neighboring homes, renovated them, and sold them to employees at favorable terms. This not only stabilized this portion of Schenectady's inner city, but it also allayed the fears of prospective students and their parents. Other campuses have built off-campus student housing, thereby improving surrounding neighborhoods and downtowns while recouping the revenues from students seeking their own kitchens and bathrooms not shared with an entire floor. And, of course, my own Alma Mater advertises that the entire City of Boston is its campus. And so, in the spirit of Sisyphus, I'll say it again: SUNY Oneonta not only has a responsibility to be a good neighbor to the city and surrounding region, but it can benefit from being a good neighbor as well.

We have known about the “demographic cliff” for nearly two decades, and so our current problems should really be no surprise. Simply stated, the number of high school graduates is falling from previous levels and, given low birth rates and assaults on immigration, is not likely to improve anytime soon. The effects of this can be seen on campus and at our peers.

Figure 1: SUNY Fall Headcount Enrollment, Selected Schools, 2015-2025



The local pattern reveals itself in Figure 1. Both university centers have grown since 2015, thus explaining fairly recent peak enrollments. One can infer a sequence of events independent of the demographic cliff: university centers, particularly Binghamton, expand and put enrollment pressure on the regional universities. Our colleagues in Cortland are fortunate to have grown during this period, but the rest of us are not so fortunate. Cobleskill, Delhi, and Morrisville have all declined significantly. Our fellow regional universities to the north, far away from the New York Metropolitan Area, witnessed the worst declines in our sector, further exacerbated by being in areas of population decline even without the demographic cliff. And then there is us, dropping 17.6 percent from our peak enrollment just before COVID from 6,718 (which was well above the period average) to only 5,533 last fall (see Table 1).

Table 1: Peak and Current Enrollment, by Year, 2015-2025

Institution	Peak Year	Peak Enrollment	2025 Enrollment	Difference (%)
University at Albany	2018	17,944	17,426	-518 (-2.9)
Binghamton University	2024	18,815	18,652	-163 (-0.9)

SUNY Cobleskill	2015	2,441	1,824	-617 (-25.3)
SUNY Cortland	2025	6,981	6,981	0 (0)
SUNY Delhi	2016 (<i>tied with 2017</i>)	3,509	3,061	-448 (-12.8)
SUNY Morrisville	2017	3,063	2,060	-1,003 (-32.7)
SUNY New Paltz	2019	7,757	7,147	-610 (-7.9)
SUNY Oneonta	2020	6,718	5,533	-1,185 (-17.8)
SUNY Plattsburgh	2017	5,719	4,561	-1,158 (-20.2)
SUNY Potsdam	2015	3,904	2,519	-1,385 (-35.5)

Demographic trends and enrollment are the results of the operation of complex systems, and in complex systems we cannot point to one variable for blame; the results are the end point of how the system itself is evolving. We are, for the most part, the same faculty and professionals and staff we were before. It is fair to suggest that our famed Covid outbreak may have damaged our reputation in some quarters, although the evidence is anecdotal. The type of students seeking college are somewhat different from those applying a decade ago, this being a fairly well documented phenomenon. But for those of us who have been here a while, another factor has been evident since the pandemic: a fairly dramatic shift in the vitality downtown. In 2005, myself and students Peter Dai, Suzanne Coletti, and Veronica Coletti published a study (Adjusting to change: the face of downtown Oneonta, 1945-2005) in which we documented a shift from basic retail to a niche economy around entertainment and specialty retail (as well as a run up in tattoo parlors and adult entertainment). Overall, the changes were considered positive as we concluded:

It is notable that change in downtown Oneonta has stabilized. In 1963, 28.7 percent of storefronts had changed business in the previous five years; in 1983, that figure was 32.6 percent. In contrast, the percent of storefronts changing businesses between 1998 and 2003 was 17.7 percent. Such stability implies that Oneonta has transitioned through the rough times of the last century and is well poised for the future.

Although we do not have numbers to illustrate the point, even a casual walk downtown today displays a number of vacant storefronts and comparatively fewer people. When the daughters of other college's professors drive through town, what are they thinking? That's a question we need to answer, not only for Oneonta but for our university as well.

In the short term, there is little we can do. In the long term, however, I believe President Cardelle is on the right track when he argues for the university to be involved in addressing issues facing Oneonta and the wider region. The region has an accommodations shortage that translates into a housing shortage, and while we cannot build a resort, we can use our expertise to help local officials address this and other issues. We have many students who move downtown in search of housing with their own kitchens and bathrooms not shared with an entire floor, and that we can build (in time, but we can keep the revenue if we do). And the very things that we do as faculty—as researchers and educators—can be turned to help our neighbors secure in the knowledge that by doing so we can also help ourselves.

Article 9:

Formulating Reliable, Affordable, and Environmentally Sound Energy Policy

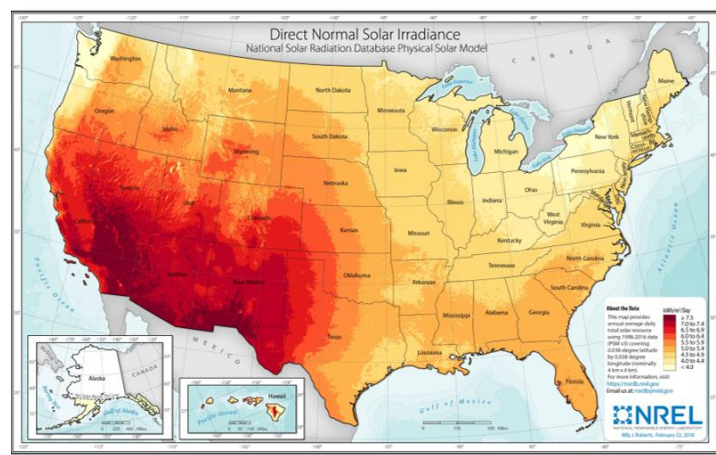
by Dennis Higgins, Emeritus Faculty, SUNY Oneonta, Mathematics, Computer Science, and Statistics Department

New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA 2019) legislates emissions reduction and a "decarbonized" grid, but we are learning that thermodynamics does not follow state law. Since CLCPA passage, a biennial review has acknowledged that carbon reductions required by the law won't happen, even as a recent challenge and court order demanded that the state meet CLCPA targets. The development picture has been complicated by – among other things -- increasing local opposition to projects, a constrained supply chain for projects already contracted and forced to rebid, rising consumer energy costs, the federal government's efforts to throttle offshore construction, but, more than anything else, by the properties of the energy choices selected by the CLCPA scoping plan.

A fabulous amount of land is needed to site 55 gigawatts of solar and over 10 GW of onshore wind in NY's Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) projections: About a million acres would be bulldozed; about 70% of it, farmland. Those turbines and panels might last 20 years, and then would require replacement. They need backup generation -- like peaker plants. Also, batteries, and a whole new transmission structure. To understand the issues, we need to consider energy density and capacity factors.

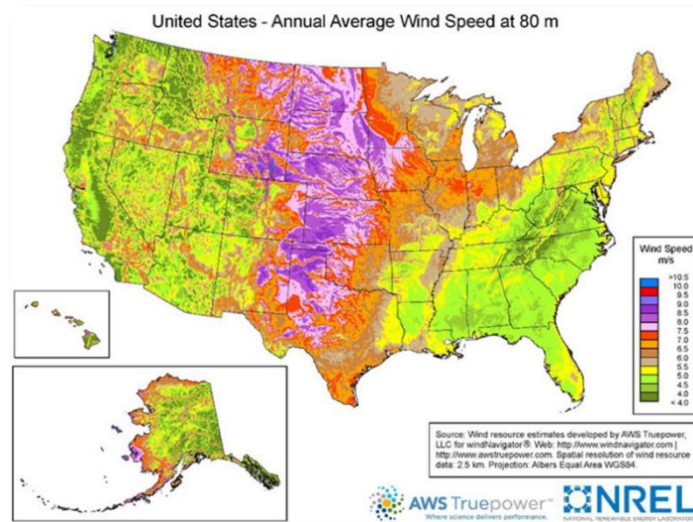
A resource's **capacity factor** tells you what percent of the installation nameplate capacity you will get over the course of a year, so seasonal and diurnal variations have been averaged out. For nuclear resources, the capacity factor is 95%. Since a facility generating 2 GW could be sited on 250 acres, nuclear is energy dense—very little land and material are needed to make a lot of energy.

The National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) charts provide a good visual for capacity factors. For solar, NY's capacity factor is in the mid to upper teens. Thanks to color coding, a child can decipher the map. New York is one of the worst places in the US to put solar. It may require eight acres for a megawatt (MW) of capacity. Of course, most of the time, that installation produces nothing at all.



In New York, wind capacity factor is about 25%. Nebraska has twice the wind capacity factor that New York has. Here, wind installations typically take over 50 acres per MW. In

some cases, like the Alle-Catt wind farm in western New York, the installation has gobbled up almost 100 acres per MW.



Both the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO), and the Public Service Commission (PSC) have had to watch their language, perhaps faking optimism when filing reports on the state's failing plan. Maybe that is changing. Rising costs, bad press, and pressure from the state Business Council and many chambers of commerce, pushed Governor Hochul to find a new direction. The governor has called for construction of five gigawatts (GW) of new nuclear capacity, in addition to relicensing existing facilities at Genna, Fitzpatrick, and Nine Mile.

From the PSC and Governor Hochul's website
(<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-major-milestone-facilitate-new-advanced-nuclear-development>):

[T]he deployment of 5 GW of new nuclear power in New York could eliminate the need to overbuild the quantity of new renewable resources to meet the State's clean energy goals by approximately 20 GW, while eliminating the need for 3 GW of transmission investments.

These savings result in a lower total cost of policy achievement, while lowering statewide emissions and dramatically reducing fossil fuel use. A reduction in total capacity needs also reduces the total energy-specific land-use requirements by over 200,000 acres (not including energy storage or transmission siting), which is an area larger than the footprint of the five boroughs of New York City.

The NYISO released its 20-year “Outlook” (<https://www.nyiso.com/documents/d/guest/2025-2044-system-resource-outlook>) in July. The NYISO writes, (page 11)

In zero-emissions futures, [reliable dispatchable fossil fuels] must be replaced by ... renewables, nuclear, and hydrogen-based generation. Renewable resources ... are limited in how much they can be relied upon during peak conditions. Nuclear resources, by contrast, provide both substantial energy production and high firm capacity value, supporting both energy needs and capacity contributions.... In futures that allow limited emissions[our] aging fossil fleet is replaced with new, more efficient generation, less emissions (e.g., carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide) are created for each unit of electricity produced. Adding new and repowered fossil units, in addition to retiring a portion of the existing fossil fleet, leads to reduction in the realized emissions rate of the fleet in aggregate.

The NYISO speaks to how much new nuclear the state should consider on page 50,

Limits on new nuclear capacity and siting increase both the scale and concentration of alternative resource development. [Constrained nuclear deployment] ... increases the total amount of new resource capacity needed and shifts development toward greater reliance on renewables, storage, and other dispatchable generation. The Policy Case scenarios show that absent these limitations, upwards of 8 GW of new nuclear was selected to be added to supply zero-emissions energy and offset the need for as much total new resource capacity.

As the NYISO seems to realize, and as many have pointed out, a grid with new nuclear – at least 8 GW but probably more -- a more modest solar and wind buildout, and upgrades or replacement of aging fossil fuel power plants would decrease state emissions and prove both reliable and affordable. In contrast, the renewable-intensive path we are currently on has not worked to decarbonize California or Germany which both have unreliable expensive electricity. New York's current plan still denies upstate communities home rule, environmental protection, and even fair tax revenue for industrial energy projects they are forced to host.

Article 10:

"I am an activist"

by Virginia Kennedy, Adjunct, Lecturer, English Department; Group Leader,
Cooperstown/Oneonta Indivisible



Virginia Kennedy, second from left, with far left, Kerri Lincoln, Veterans Support Services Case Manager, and from right to center UUP activists Joe Ingassia, Bill Simons, and Ethan Fox

I pinpoint the start of my activism in my twenties with a high school sophomore English class reading Henry David Thoreau. Before I continue, let me define what “activism” is to me. Activism in a democracy is civics; civics is to remain solidly educated and active in politics and policymaking around issues that are important to the civic and societal structure of a democracy. Back to Thoreau. In 1988, I was teaching sophomore English at Lakeland Regional High School in NJ. We were reading Thoreau’s *Walden*. Simultaneously, I’d read that Don Henley, of the mega-band, The Eagles, was fighting a condo development on historic parcels close to Walden Pond. I brought this situation to my students who were incensed about that type of building on those particular acres. They seemed to understand some things need to be sacred and protected. They wanted to participate in the fight. So, we educated the school about what was happening. After bake sales and fundraising, we sent a good amount of money to help save Walden Pond to the Thoreau Society in Concord, Mass.

Eventually, the land was protected. Don Henley himself called to thank us for our donation!

My students and I learned together how passion for an issue plus active hard work compels change.

Conservation became my passion. I grew well-versed in the ultimate dangers and damage of climate change as the overarching challenge for humans. Without a livable planet, nothing else matters. I worked with the Sierra Club fighting drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and led a sit down in the Senate Hart Office building when PA senators Spector and Santorum refused to meet with us. I worked for local conservation organizations in PA and NY that were leading the charge against fracking. When writer, activist, and educator extraordinaire Bill McKibben called for a civil disobedience action against the Keystone XL Pipeline that would carry dangerous tarsands oil from Canada through the middle of the U.S., I made the decision to take my activism one step further. Afterall, it was Thoreau who wrote the profoundly important essay, “Civil Disobedience,” in reference to American imperialism and slavery. “Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison.”

Our civil disobedience sent us to jail for standing in front of the White House gate. People are not permitted to linger there (in the same spot where the suffragettes stood to demand votes for women). When asked to leave, we were to peacefully stay put demanding that Barak

Obama and Hillary Clinton not give permission to Transcanada Corporation to build a pipeline for moving Canadian Tarsands oil across the border. We were to be arrested, taken to the National Park Service jail, pay a fine, and then get released.

That's not what happened. We were incarcerated for three days in three different jails – the last a federal prison in which we were shackled hands and feet inside the prison cell. We were never charged with a crime; when the attorney for our group got in front of a judge, the judge was incensed we were in jail in the first place. Our three days were not fun, but not nearly what others have suffered fighting for our rights through history. They did teach me courage, though, to step out of my comfort zone; to try my best to do what's needed.

Now I lead a local Indivisible group resisting the authoritarian assault of the Trump administration on our democracy. I miss my focus on climate activism, but it's easily argued this president is one of the most dangerous people to the planet's health who ever lived. The goal for our group? A huge tent open to anyone who wants a government truly and actively of, by, and for the people. A government that welcomes immigrants who arrive, as millions have before them, to build a life of possibility, rather than detaining them in for-profit prisons. A government not intent on silencing debate and dissent, not engaged in using citizens as an ungoverned police force that kills other citizens, not spending billions of our dollars on vanity projects and illegal wars rather than healthcare, childcare, clean energy, our children's futures.

Activism – civics – is harder now. Our youth spend too much time passively on screens trapped by social media influencers. Too many Americans, many of whom are overworked and underpaid, have forgotten that civics needs to be active, and that activity demands sacrifice, passion, and courage even in times of exhaustion; not just at big rallies or on election days. Civics matters everyday from the local, to the state, to the national. Without the work of civics, the Trumps of the world will always triumph, and we – the citizens – will always pay the price.

Article 11:

Declaring Independence

by Timothy Knight, Adjunct Lecturer, Communication & Media and
Mayor, Village of Middleburgh, NY



Mayor Knight marching in Middleburgh's Oktoberfest Festival promo

[Editor's Note: Reprinted by Permission of Timothy Knight and *The Mountain Eagle*]

I know this is unlikely to surprise anyone...but I have been deeply interested and involved in politics since I was fifteen years old.

Over the past seventeen years, I have worked on and supported many political campaigns - Democratic, Independent, Libertarian, and Republican - with offices ranging from Schoharie County Coroner to United States President. I have also been a registered member of both the Republican and Democratic Parties.

As of today, that affiliation is now officially past-tense as I am enrolled with "No Party" and my registration formally reflects my beliefs: Independent.

Here is a secret: I have been a terrible member of both the Democratic and Republican Parties because I have always voted my conscience, especially in local elections. Not one of my ballots has ever been a party-line vote, as neither Republicans nor Democrats have a monopoly on competence or effectiveness in office.

Furthermore, as a Village Mayor, I work regularly with both Democrats and Republicans in both Albany and Washington, D.C. on behalf of my constituents. And when these officials accomplish something to our benefit, I will vote for them regardless of their party because constituent service can be very instrumental for us.

In a sense this feels freeing, as I have deeply resented the polarization that has come to define party politics throughout my adult life. I do not understand the mentality that leads someone to support unqualified candidates - such as Ken Paxton in Texas or Graham Platner in Maine - just because of a letter next to their name.

It has also led me to the conclusion that more elected offices should be non-partisan. There is no Republican nor Democratic position on most local issues, especially as it relates to funding public infrastructure, supporting local fire departments, and providing services. It comes down to your competency and your resources.

This is a topic that I could go on for some time, so I will digress while I am ahead and simply conclude by declaring: it feels good to be Independent.

Article 12:

“Sail on, O ship of state! / Sail on, O Union, strong and great.”

by Lawrence S. DiCara, attorney: former Acting Mayor, Boston, MA;
and past President Boston City Council



Lawrence S. DiCara

“Sail on, O ship of state! / Sail on, O Union, strong and great.”

Those words from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s 1849 poem have served as a positive message to generations of Americans.

1849 was not a good time in this country. Divisions were even more stark than they are today. There was no easy answer as to what would happen next.

Soon thereafter, we endured a Civil War; the nation had many other challenges in the decades to follow. Most all of us know of Franklin Roosevelt who convinced the American people that we would defeat the forces of tyranny and bigotry, and we did. Most of my generation understand that a Congress with backbone and a Supreme Court that could not be bullied resulted in Richard Nixon's escaping to his Elba by the Pacific.

For the ship of state to sail on strong and great, we need to make a number of changes, quickly.

We need to install character as an important qualification for those who seek public office.

We need to have faith act as a unifier rather than a divider of our people.

We need to have a tax system which does not give away billions to the very rich through loopholes created by lawyers and lobbyists. We pay farmers not to grow crops which keep the price of food artificially high. We subsidize the oil industry through the depletion allowance. The list is a long one. Common men and women are prepared to pay their fair share. We all should.

We also need to do some hard thinking about our economy. An hourly worker or even a teacher, perhaps even at the college level, finds it difficult to make ends meet when the price of hamburger and gasoline skyrocket in front of our very eyes.

We should look to other advanced societies such as Canada which appears to have a tax system which results in a much more level playing field. Income equality in America improved from 1947-1974, only to retreat in the last fifty years, as magnified by the Trump tax bill.

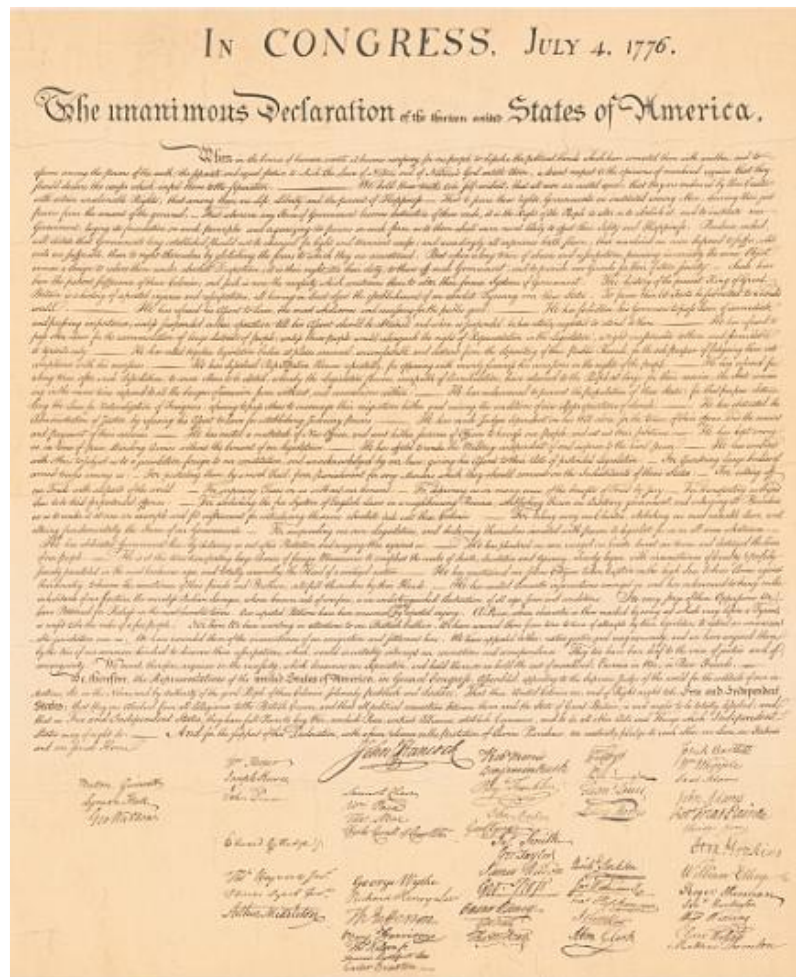
It is important for us to keep in mind the common good, not the good of one family or a handful of oligarchs, most of whom have become rich from getting contracts from the federal government. We need to be sure that our elected officials do not involve themselves in the self-dealing of the current era, to an extent not seen since Teapot Dome over 100 years ago.

Article 13:

Where are the Adults? The American Semiquincentennial

by Denis Brennan, former UUP Oneonta Vote-COPE Officer, columnist, *The Daily Gazette* (Schenectady), and Emeritus Lecture (History Department),

Union College



My earliest recollection of celebrating Independence Day dates from about twenty years before the Bicentennial in 1976. At age 10 or 12, celebrating the July 4th holiday was highlighted by the opportunity to lay on a blanket on the west side bank of the Bronx River and watch the annual fireworks extravaganza light up the sky above the Parkway Casino in Tuckahoe on the east side of the river. As a child, the spectacle and the “rockets’ red glare” was the essence of the holiday for me.

School had ended a few weeks earlier and July 4th was the first major event in a summer that promised nearly two more months of adventure and freedom. Likely not the freedom the founders endeavored to establish in 1776, but the freedom enjoyed by myself, my brother, and

our friends playing pickup baseball, or exploring the woods and hills of a yet to be fully suburbanized northeast corner of Yonkers, NY called Crestwood.

In my youth, the realities of the world largely eluded my child-like attention. My parents and my friends' parents celebrated July 4th with full knowledge of having endured the Great Depression, World War II, and the Korean War. The costs were substantial, but hard-won victories justified their faith in the strength and endurance of the United States and its promise of freedom.

Furthermore, in the early 1950s, the idea/ideals that defined the United States (i.e., equality and inalienable rights for all) resonated widely as new challenges emerged. Internationally, the Cold War created a permanent, powerful U.S. military and threatened nuclear annihilation; domestically, the modern Civil Rights Movement, yet in its infancy, was just beginning the struggle to make the rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence an experience for all to share.

My childlike exuberance and pleasure found in the spectacle of Independence Day fireworks in the mid-1950s was understandable and appropriate – for a child; furthermore, it was tempered and balanced by adults' recognition of the real-world substance in a nation struggling to become a “more perfect union” and a dangerous world where we children “ducked and covered” under the desks in our classrooms.

Sadly, during this Semiquincentennial year, especially in our nation's capital, spectacle has replaced substance. Adults and reasoned thoughtful analysis and reflection seem in short supply. Local events organized by municipalities and historical societies (including in Schenectady County) honoring individual and distinctive contributions to the nation's history were certainly found in abundance.

But it is difficult to see any substantively similar events at a national level. In Washington, it seems to me, spectacle and bombast have silenced meaningful attention to and recognition of equality and inalienable rights.

National celebrations of the Semiquincentennial included: a caged UFC wrestling contest on the White House lawn, the Great American State Fair on the National Mall, a July 4th fireworks display that was required to be the largest and longest fireworks event in history, a so-called Patriot Game competition between high school students from every state and territory, and

finally the Washington Grand Prix race – an IndyCar style race of 147 loops on a 1.7 mile track (totaling 250 miles) around the National Mall in late August.

While the ideology that defined the United States 250 years ago barely received lip service, patriotism was saturated in sport, competition, spectacle and a political philosophy deeply rooted in personality. We are being subjected to government by diversion and distraction, which seeks to turn a democratic nation of free people into submissive childlike subjects – no longer citizens.

If our nation is to endure, our adult selves must step forward. We cannot allow spectacle and celebration to overlook or obscure either the struggle that was endured on the road to independence in the 18th century, nor the persistent struggle of the 21st century to make the Declaration’s flowery rhetoric genuine and universal.

The most significant aspect of our Semiquincentennial may be found in building the path to our Tricentennial and in the obligation to rededicate ourselves to “equality” and “unalienable rights” ... for all.

Article 14:

America at 250: Reflections on the Semiquincentennial—and our Future

by Bill Simons, *Sentinel* Editor and Chapter Secretary



Bill Simons, right, at May Day Rally with Matt Avitabile, left, editor/publisher The Mountain Eagle, Adjunct Assistant Professor (History), and former mayor, Middleburgh, NY

During the 250th year of American independence, the incumbent president has celebrated his own birthday with an Ultimate Fighting Championship on the White House lawn— a spectacle reminiscent of gladiatorial games presided over by Roman emperors, proceeded with plans to build a lavish ballroom where once stood the East Wing of the White House, fixated on a triumphal arch, mused about carving his own his image on Mount Rushmore, attacked the Smithsonian museums, sought to discredit the ballot box, weaponized the Department of Justice against critics, denounced independent journalism as “fake news,” waged war without Congressional consent, introduced name calling and canards into presidential rhetoric, demanded cult-like obeisance from MAGA partisans, fanned historical distortion of the 2020 presidential election and the January 2021 criminal attack on the Congress, dismantled environmental protections, endangered public health, failed to stem the emptying out of small towns and the agricultural heartland, spiked inflation to a level that challenges affordability, proclaimed himself the most powerful leader in human history, may have permitted China to assume the lead in space and green energy technology, and added billions to his family fortune. If silversmith and equestrian Paul Revere returned, he would use his engraving of the Boston Massacre as a template for the Minneapolis slayings of Alex Prettie and Renée Good. America’s Semiquincentennial deserves better.

The United States is a great nation with a proud history, strong enough to address its triumphs and failings on the path to an ever “more perfect union.” American democracy allows for correction of policy. Our Semiquincentennial is not over, and perhaps we should revisit words that shaped our national character. Amongst the documents worth revisiting as we reclaim our America at 250 milestone are those that follow. Certainly, this list is neither complete nor inviolable, but it may spur critical and civil discussion as well as debate concerning American exceptionalism:

1. The **Declaration of Independence** (1776), our founding document whose boldest and most noble aspiration, albeit still evolving, has grown more inclusive over time: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.-

-That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed..”

2. The **Constitution**, as ratified in 1787 and the result of compromise, left the resolution of slavery to a future generation. But it brilliantly navigated between the rising voice of the people and checks and balances, buttressed by separation of powers, designed to deter tyrannies of either majorities or minorities.

3. The **Bill of Rights** (1791), the first ten amendments to the Constitution, proclaims protection of the fundamental rights of a free people, with the first asserting: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

4. **President Thomas Jefferson’s First Inaugural Address** (1801) placed common commitment to American ideals above loyalty to competing political parties: “But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists”.

5. Runaway slave Sojourner Truth’s **Ain’t I A Woman? Address** to an 1851 women’s rights convention demanded gender equality: “If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.”

6. **President Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address** (1863) enlarged the meaning of American democracy, encouraging “a new birth of freedom” so that “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

7. Its words attached to the base of the Statue of Liberty, **The New Colossus** (1883), the stirring poem by Jewish American activist Emma Lazarus, affirms that ours is a nation of immigrants: “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”

8. **President Franklin Roosevelt’s January 6, 1941, State of the Union Address** translated into the American vernacular the global imperatives of freedom: “In the future days...we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms...freedom of speech and expression--everywhere in the world...freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world...freedom from want... (and) freedom from fear.”

9. Following his call for Congress to authorize U.S. entry into World War II, the **December 9, 1941, Fireside Chat of President Franklin Roosevelt** affirmed commitments to defeat totalitarian aggressors and to never again retreat into isolationism: “Together with other free peoples, we are now fighting to maintain our right to live among our world neighbors in freedom and in common decency, without fear of assault...in these past few years- and, most violently, in the past three days—we have learned a terrible lesson... that we cannot measure our safety in terms of miles on any map anymore.”

10. The **1947 Harvard University Commencement Address of Secretary of State George C. Marshall**, formerly wartime Army Chief of Staff, advocated U.S. aid to enable our devastated European allies and adversaries to rebuild their nations: “The United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace. Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos.”

11. The July 1960 “**New Frontier**” **Speech of future President John F. Kennedy** connected the generations of America to an enduring national mission: “[T]he New Frontier of which I speak is not a set of promises—it is a set of challenges...uncharted areas of science and space, unsolved problems of peace end war, unconquered pockets of ignorance and prejudice, unanswered questions of poverty and surplus.”

12. On the steps of the Lincoln Monument, the 1963 “**I Have a Dream Speech**” of **civil rights Leader Martin Luther King, Jr.** foresaw an America fulfilling its ideals: “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed...I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

13. **Former President Ronald Reagan’s August 17, 1992, Address** articulated the perennial American themes of confidence and optimism in an ascending American future: “America’s best days are yet to come. Our proudest moments are yet to be. Our most glorious achievements are just ahead. America remains what Emerson called her 150 years ago, ‘the country of tomorrow.’”

So, instead of allowing our public discourse to devolve into accusations of conspiracy and demonization, perhaps Americans can discuss and debate real issues centered on the common good. Might we, for example, consider mandatory national service for those between

the years 18 and 21, not excluding the military component but leaning more to such programs as revived CCC, WPA, War on Poverty, Teacher Corps, AmeriCorps, and Peace Corps, followed by post-service benefits comparable to those received by veterans of World War II, as a means of affirming shared obligation, leveling opportunities, and spurring the economy? Is it time to physically rebuild America—our roads, airports, trains, dams, flood controls, and housing? Should we prioritize the development of new clean sources of energy and technologies to clean the air, water, and soil—and confront climate change? Might we respond to the dearth of primary care physicians nationally, with special attention to the crisis of medical accessibility in rural areas? Ought a private individual, soon expected to be a trillionaire, receive government largess facilitating his stockpiling of missiles, rockets, satellites, and space vehicles on American soil? Let's move beyond the rhetoric of divisive fear to bring forth substantive proposals to consider.

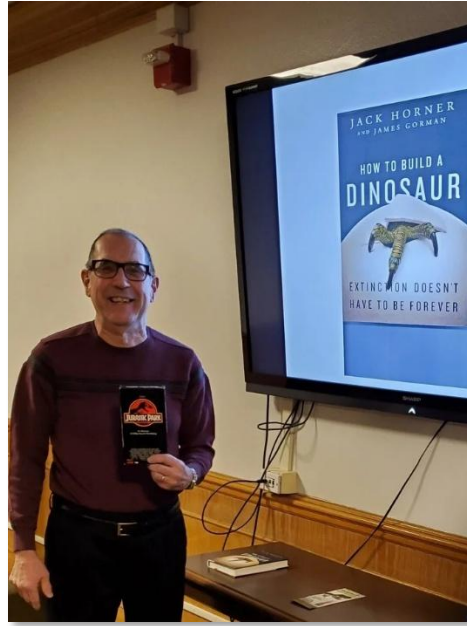
The upcoming Fall 2026 elections are critical to the preservation of American democracy. Higher education faces attacks from the current president and his disciples undercutting grants, research, curriculum, and personnel. Stay informed, remain active, enlist others in the process, oppose demagogic polarization, remember participation in local campaigns impacts national results, and vote your conscience. To combat inevitable—and nefarious—attempts to delegitimize election results, let's work for majorities so overwhelming that they cannot be denied. Through VOTE-COPE (the AFT/NYSUT/UUP political contributions fund), NYSUT endorsements, rallies, phone banks, and door-to-door canvassing, our UUP union, with your participation, will voice American, labor, and higher education concerns. Count on it.

Article 15:

The Center for Continuing Adult Learning and the Life of the Mind after Retirement

by Marilyn Helterline, Professor Emeritus, Sociology

[Editor's Note: Employed and retired UUPers constitute a significant component of The Center for Continuing Adult Learning teachers and students. Past and present UUP Oneonta officers who have taught CCAL courses include Todd Jones, Mark Ferrara, Nancy Simons, Janet Potter, Denny Shea, and Bill Simons.]



CCAL stalwart Bill Peitraface

You probably wouldn't work at a college unless you have a passion for learning and that doesn't end with retirement. In 1993 a group of local retirees, including SUNY Oneonta and Hartwick College retirees and others from the surrounding area started a group to promote learning in later life, the Center for Continuing Adult Learning, better known as CCAL. Road Scholar (formerly Elderhostel) has helped create a national network of life-long learning institutes that help colleges promote non-credit learning opportunities for older adults. The local organization is affiliated with SUNY Oneonta and Hartwick College. CCAL continues to offer opportunities for SUNY retirees and many others to teach and learn. All classes are taught by volunteers. It has been an important part of my retirement years.

In 2009 I retired from the Sociology Department. When I was asked what I would do in retirement, I said I would think about it after a year. I spent the first-year canning and freezing local produce and that is probably why I ran into Pat Gourlay at the Farmer's Market. Some of you may remember Pat. She was a highly respected member of the English Department and an expert on Shakespeare. She told me I should teach for CCAL. According to her, it was everything I loved about teaching and none of what I disliked. There were no students in class simply because it was required and there were no papers to grade. It was time to get out of the kitchen. I joined and for the next decade I took two courses per year on Shakespeare plays from Pat. This was one of the great pleasures of my retirement. I also took classes from Paul Scheele,

a retired SUNY political science professor. Both Pat and Paul ran their classes as book discussions, and I decided to use the same format when I offered classes. After years of sometimes struggling to get students to read and discuss assignments, these classes were magical. I was in a room with eager intelligent learners. Hopefully, they learned from me, but I certainly learned from them. For the last sixteen years I have facilitated two CCAL book discussion classes each year on a variety of topics loosely related to my years of teaching sociology, women's and gender studies, and aging.

There are many other SUNY retirees and even some current SUNY employees that are facilitating or have facilitated CCAL classes. Classes are also facilitated by others from Hartwick College and the community. Some members of CCAL prefer to take courses and not teach classes and their contribution to creating a community of life-long learners is also valued. Many, like me, both facilitate and take classes. The SUNY retirees that are or have recently facilitated classes include Bill Peitraface, Janet Potter, Donna Vogler, Bill Starna, Bill O'Dea, Ed Pixley, Elaine Downing, Dennis Higgins, and others. You don't have to be retired to teach a CCAL class. Members of the current faculty, including Mark Ferrara, have taught CCAL classes. Instructors do not have to be members of CCAL to offer classes.

The classes cover a wide range of topics. This fall offerings include courses on American Indians, current fiction, essential tremors, history of romanticism, energy and the environment, Jonathan Edwards and the First Great Awakening, local history and the Otsego Trolley Line, Shakespeare, Frederick Church and Thomas Cole, Richard Nixon, plant growth, Madison Square Park, the geology of our area, films, the depersonalization crisis in jobs, television mysteries, poetry, pollen, DNA and genealogy, rebel women in the Victorian era, tannins, the causes of WWII, and the Cooperstown and Cherry Valley Railroad. If you want to learn a skill there are classes on Pinochle, carving a wooden spoon, and line dancing. Other classes share travel experiences to Peru, Thailand, Namibia, and Yellowstone and Teton National Parks. There is even a Tuesday trivia team competition. This is only our fall catalog. New course offerings appear three times each year. Most classes are taught in Morris Hall. More information about CCAL is available on the CCAL website: <https://www.ccaloneonta.org> I highly recommend teaching for CCAL or taking CCAL classes. When I asked other facilitators what they enjoy about teaching and taking CCAL classes, they all mentioned the enthusiasm and engagement of the participants. A comment from Donna Vogler surprised me. She said she

especially enjoyed the preparation. It surprised me, because I thought it was my own peculiar nerdy pleasure. Going into depth on a specific topic and reading several related books on the topic to prepare for a class was a luxury unavailable when teaching several classes each week as a professor. Donna also mentioned “enjoying being a student again” and taking classes on a wide range of topics she didn’t even know she “would be interested in.” Like Donna CCAL is for me a way to revisit the pleasure of being an undergraduate without tests or grades. As a social scientist who has always had minimal interest in the natural sciences, Donna has made botany interesting to me, and I may take a geology class in the future.

Ed Pixley describes how he benefits from CCAL: “Taking and preparing CCAL classes has helped me to keep mentally young. Since I’ll turn 90 in two months, I find it better than all the medicines in my cabinet.” After observing Pat Gourlay remain brilliant while teaching Shakespeare into her 90’s and now being amazed by Ed’s memory for long passages of Shakespeare, I plan to continue teaching sociological topics and studying Shakespeare with Ed. Think about joining us.

Article 16:

Harmonic Dissonance: Jose Feliciano, the 1968 World Series, and the Evolution of the National Anthem

by Jeff Ward, Assistant Professor of Sport Management



Dr. Jeff Ward at the ballpark

[**Editor's Note:** *The Sentinel* welcomes article submission featuring the activities and achievement of our Academic and Professional members.]

I presented at the May 2026 Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture, an annual conference co-sponsored by SUNY Oneonta and the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Over the course of thirty minutes, I traced the overlooked history of the '*Star-Spangled Banner*'—from its origins to how it became a pre-game staple of American sports—and the barrier-breaking performance that changed it forever. He also explored how the tumultuous events of 1968 impacted what many considered the sacred patriotic tradition.

In October 1968, at the height of America's social and political turmoil, a young musician took the field at the World Series and sang '*The Star-Spangled Banner*.' What happened that day—and in the following years—wasn't just about a song; it was about tradition, identity, and the power of personal expression in a country struggling to define itself. The soulful, heartfelt rendition shocked the nation and caused a backlash that would nearly end the musician's career. His performance marked a turning point in American culture: it changed the modern understanding of patriotism, the boundaries of protest, and the cultural weight of tradition and national symbols.

José Feliciano shattered a barrier that could never be rebuilt. In the space of one minute and forty seconds, he took an 18th-century drinking song repurposed as a wartime public relations ritual and, with pure soul, forced America to finally start listening to '*The Star-Spangled Banner*.' Today, when we watch an artist bring their own heart and truth to that microphone, we are hearing an echo of October 7, 1968. The establishment tried to erase his career to protect the status quo, but his courage altered the soundtrack of baseball and American sports forever.

A young musician vs. the entire nation. One minute and forty seconds.

Article 17:**Transitions and Thoughts from Bangkok**

by Rob Compton, past president, UUP Oneonta, and
former Chapter Vice President for Academics



our best wishes to Rob, who has done so much for so many, as he fights hard

Initial Changes

This article is a hindsight 20-20 thought piece. Two months in Bangkok again, I am very pleased with my decision to retire and leave the United States. I feel normal now and Thailand now accords with my state of mind and the world. Also I love the thinking of Thai people and their great similarities to thought and cultural patterns of me growing up in Japan.

I do not miss the institutions of Oneonta one iota. I do miss my friends dearly and past three weeks has transformed my thoughts about relationships, commitments, money, and the human condition. What have been especially transformative are the friendships I developed with Tar and Fah. Despite our age differences, occupation and educational differences, and real language, cultural and communication differences; they have become integral to my life here. I am blessed. Chaya, my fiancé, has given me latitude, independence, and guidance through my life changes.

I continue to be engaged in assisting and advising friends and their families through sustain financial support and mutual life encouragement. Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe but Africa in general and black Africans will always have a place in my heart. Many of those relationships forged out of academic work but are now sustained differently since the end of US AID. Our personal friendships could not have endured on the bases of Gesellschaft. I have discovered that with some people, you are part of a natural Gemeinschaft. I gives me great meaning to life. I also enjoy reading and pondering in detail and in whole nonfiction. I have the luxury of reading entire books in detail and fully, it's something deprived of me for my entire "career."

Life Work Balance and Meaning

For the first 15 years of my calling at Oneonta, I doubt anyone, even those who had disagreements with me, would say I was lazy or a coward. I worked 70 hours a week. Despite injustices we may bear, whether it is deprofessionalization directed at you by and increasing faculty hostility by administration. It was all a calling to me. Whether sick or raising five children, I was intent on working with students to transform their lives and better the work environment of my colleagues. I took zero days off.

The neglect of self-care is dangerous. Here I am not talking about the contemporary self-love narcissistic and hyped-up faux cottage industry version peddled in higher education as "love yourself" today. My perhaps sanctimonious advice to earlier myself and younger self and colleagues is: "it is now an imagined community more than ever. The transformation from calling and community to the pure instrumentality of higher education these days is clear. It has metastized. Please wake up and smell the new environment and make your ethical and morally-based behavioral changes. Being a purist will kill you from the inside and destroy your modus vivendi on today's academe.

The Boomerang

My last days in Thailand, thus far, has not been roof top or beaches. Instead it has been excruciatingly painful (emotionally, financially, and physically) and makes me look at events, people, and relationships differently. I appreciate my Gazan journalist as a new friend who provides me with personalizes accounts including pictures of punctures and bullet holed skulls of children and people that she captured photographically and the stories and pictures of her friends

and community. I have enormous respect for Saja. That is another story which relates to research I am doing about how to conduct BDS on the US regardless of whether you are working or not, or where you work. That may be another The Sentinel article but definitely a focus of my new research.

So what happened? I am very happy right now despite the tentative morass I find myself in. I have come to embrace those I love much more closely and unguardedly. My Weltsnschaaung has refined in complexity, profundity and nuance. Friends and family and dearer. Those who inflicted past pain on friends, family and my community, forgive but not forget. Those who continue to engage in the destruction of our community, I must redouble my efforts to thwart and expose them.

Years of personal well-being neglected, as stated in the earlier part of the article, caused me to ignore impeding serious health issues. I have been through the ICU and treatments, tests, MRIs and pain and suffering and was diagnosed finally with AFOP. My immune system was weak and even when healthy ignored the autoimmune nature of my body. For the last 10 years things were not physiologically in tune and as an example fatigue, bronchitis, and other illnesses became more and more pronounced. I had assumed it was natural aging. The problem was misdiagnoses at hospitals in the Oneonta vicinity. AFOP (Acute Fibrinous Organizing Pneumonia) has a 50 percent mortality rate and is severely misdiagnosed and underdiagnosed. In this case it was also misdiagnosed initially. AFOP is a disease and there is no cure and it's episodic but severe manifestation links with autoimmune and an inflammatory conditions that serve as triggers.

So just a report to comrades and friends at Oneonta. More to continue and perhaps you may glean something of value in this meandering piece. I promise more cogency and less rambling in my next piece, God willing. Cheers and as we say in Thai, susu! (Chin up and keep going).

Article 18 UUP Disclaimer:

Statements made in UUP Oneonta publications do not necessarily reflect the opinion of UUP or any of its statewide representatives. To go to the UUP Oneonta Chapter website, go to the

following link at <http://www.oneontauup.org/> The UUP Oneonta Chapter website is constantly updating, evolving, and expanding. The State UUP website is located at <https://uupinfo.org> Contact us at oneonta@uupmail.org It contains information about member benefits and many other important topics.

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