



New York Gray Panthers
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Upcoming Gray Panther Meetings:

April 20

“Sex, Seniors and the HIV Crisis”

Co-sponsored with the Caring Committee of the New York Society for Ethical Culture

Join us and encourage your friends and family to learn more about the impact of the HIV crisis on women and men over 50 from our two speakers:

Jane Fowler, 69 years old, HIV-positive grandmother, retired journalist, founder of HIV Wisdom for Older Women, will eloquently explain why older adults are at risk for HIV; why they get infected; why it does not have to happen; and how each of us can play a role in prevention. Jane Fowler has spoken around the U.S. and appears frequently on television—most recently on the CNN documentary “Are You Positive?”

Susan Forlenza (M.D., M.P.H.), Epidemiologist New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene HIV Epidemiology Program, will outline the problem as well as actions being taken by the City to address the local crisis: according to 2003 statistics 27% of all persons known to be living with HIV and AIDS in New York are over the age of 50. *For a list of organizations supporting this forum see Page 3.*

**Note location and time for this event: Society for Ethical Culture,
2 West 64th Street, Wednesday evening 7-9 p.m. Admission free.**

May 11

“Envisioning a Totally Accessible New York City” -- 1:00-2:45 p.m.

Our program will focus on disability issues and access for everyone. Details will follow in a flyer mailed in advance of this program.

Penn South Program for Seniors, 290 Ninth Avenue at 27th Street.

For information call Mary Springer at 212 243 3670, or New York Gray Panthers at 212 799 7572.

June 8

Summer dinner party for New York Gray Panthers & Friends -- 6 p.m.

Moonstruck Restaurant, 9th Avenue & 23rd Street. Cost about \$15.00.

RSVP if you can join us: call New York Gray Panthers at 212 799 7572.

2005 NYGP officers were elected at the February membership meeting: Convener, Judy Lear; Co-Convener, Naomi Dagen Bloom; Treasurer, Bob Wesner; Recording Secretary, Roger Sanjek; Corresponding Secretary, Shiuho Lin; board members Joan Davis, Jill Gerson, Edna Graig, Marie Maher, Mary Springer, Michael Texeira.

Social Security

At the February network meeting Gray Panther **Roger Sanjek** presented an overview of the current attack on Social Security. His 4-page outline covering "What Social Security Is and Isn't," "What Happens after 2042/2052 & What Can Be Done," "The Bush Benefit Cut/Privatization Proposals," and "Why People in the 20s, 30s & 40s Should Be Worried" is available from the NYGPs. In response, the NYGP board decided to focus on three issues:

1. Social Security affects **people of all ages**, including **young people** who are **hit hardest** by proposed benefit cuts.
2. The **payroll tax cap** of \$90,000 should be **raised to \$140,000** to help achieve long-term solvency.
3. **Private investment opportunities already exist**, including 401(k)s & IRAs. We can do more to encourage such retirement savings as **add-ons** to Social Security. We should not **carve out** private accounts by using 1/3 of Social Security payroll taxes and thus increase federal borrowing to meet obligations to current beneficiaries.

We are participating in the **NY Network for Action on Medicare and Social Security (NYNAMSS)** and **NY State Alliance for Retired Americans (NYSARA)** Working Group on Social Security. A 2-page "Talking Points" flyer is available and a detailed "Toolkit" covering background issues and advocacy will be ready in mid-April.

Youth & Media Violence

"By age 18 American youth have clocked more hours watching TV than hours in the classroom." At the March NYGP meeting four NYC Department of Education psychologists & social workers offered a disturbing view of the impact of television and video games on elementary school kids. (Big thanks to **Mary Springer** and **Joan Davis** for arranging this excellent program.)

Joel Seltzer told us that levels of violence and confiscation of weapons in schools rose sharply in the 1980s & 1990s. This had an impact on all kids, from pre-school age and up. In NYC the terrorist attack & deaths on 9.11 complicated the situation. **Chris Hudson** described the blood, punching, dismembering, and killing of pedestrians & police in the video games "Grand Theft Auto" & "Mortal Combat," which nearly every school-age boy has at home. The games are marketed with TV ads aimed at kids and they feature highly realistic graphics. Overall they individualize kids rather than encourage them to socialize with others. **Felicia Polikoff** explained that children "imitate what they see," both from other kids and at home. The correlation between TV violence and aggressive behavior she said "is like smoking to lung cancer." **Chani Elbaz** emphasized that the stresses from 9.11 amplified everything-- "kids want to talk about it," and parental explanations matter. Television, including news programs, presents its own alternative vision of violent behavior and role models, and parents should not refrain from "turning-off the TV."

Panthers on the Prowl

NYGP membership has grown from 50 to 85 in the last four months.... **Mary Springer** is organizing a June 3-4 **Intergenerational Arts Festival at Penn South....** March 19 **Judy Lear, Joan Davis** and **Jill Gerson** carried the **NYGP banner** amongst the thousands of New Yorkers protesting the war in Iraq. On the march from Mount Morris Park to Central Park the line stretched for ten blocks.... **Lani Sanjek**, national GP board co-chair **Tim Allison**, GP executive director **Susan Murany**, and **Dave Taylor** of Presbyterian Senior Services NY participated in a panel on “The Changing Face of Activism” at the **National Council on Aging** meeting in Philadelphia March 12. The event honored GP founder **Maggie Kuhn** with the Council’s “Ollie Randall Award” for 2005.... **Gloria Korecki** and **Mildred Blechman** joined 13 disabled activists February 17 to testify before the **City Council** for “accessible traffic signals” that use sound and recorded messages to assist the visually-impaired and wheelchair users. These signals are used in many other countries, and the city should “think about the Olympics,” Gloria urged, and get serious about welcoming people from all over the world.... **Roger Sanjek** spoke about Social Security during February at the **Queens Interagency Council on Aging (QICA)**, the Social Action Committee of the **Queens Selfhelp** senior centers, and on “**To the Point,**” a one-hour Manhattan Neighbor Network cable TV show on Channel 56. April 7 he participates in a Social Security forum sponsored by **Queens College NYPIRG....** Led by **Marie Maher** NYGPs **Shiuho Lin, Michael Texeira, Jill Gerson, Joan Davis, Judy Lear, Roger Sanjek** and **Weishan Huang** joined scores of housing and community groups at the February 2 “**Housing Here and Now**” rally demanding that “elected City leaders guarantee housing for ALL New Yorkers.” The New York Times reported that the 5,000+ demonstrators in City Hall Park made this “the biggest housing rally in the city in decades.”

We thank the following organizations for supporting and publicizing our April 20 program “Sex, Seniors and the HIV Crisis”: AARP NY State, American Psychological Association, Avery Institute for Social Change, Condomania.com, Copasetic Women over 50, Council of Senior Centers & Services of NYC Inc., Griot Circle, International Association of Psychologists, International Federation on Ageing, International Longevity Center USA, International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse, Jamaica Service Program for Older Adults, JPAC/Joint Public Affairs Committee for Older Adults, National Council of Jewish Women NY Section, NYAHOF/NY Association on HIV Over 50, New York Open Center, NOW NY State Inc., OWL/Older Women’s League USA, Planned Parenthood of NYC, Presbyterian Senior Services, Taiwanese Association of America NYC, Village Cares of NY, Women’s City Club of NY.



The New Gray Panthers

I have a mug on my desk. It has all these little heads painted on it as though the people are in a crowd or bleachers, and there is one woman painted in red holding a banner that says, "If it's gonna be it's up to me!" This could be the motto of the Gray Panthers!

We have been in the forefront of major social movements - the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the rights of disabled people. The major priorities deal with quality of life issues, and the Gray Panthers stand against injustices in the forms of ageism, sexism and racism.

The Gray Panthers of the past in the days of Maggie Kuhn, the founder, spoke out on issues and marched at demonstrations. They challenged the system and the people in power.

The new Gray Panthers are doing the same things because what was important then is important today! Unfortunately, some of the issues of 30 years ago continue to draw our attention. At the top of the list are Social Security and health issues, including Medicare. We still march for peace and fair housing. And we continue to roar!

If we want to change our world, each of us, as individuals, need to commit ourselves to action in some way. We need to talk to people, and we need to use the new technology to communicate. We need to continue to stand for human rights and high ideals. And it is up to each of us to do so.

Judy Lear, Convener New York Gray Panthers

NETWORK REPORT Issue #2

NETWORK REPORT is the newsletter of the New York Gray Panthers. It first appeared in 1973 and was published continuously through 2000. As a voice of the "new" NYGP network, which reorganized in 2003, the first issue of the revived **NETWORK REPORT** was published in December 2004.

Editor, Roger Sanjek - rsanjek@earthlink.net