



# PASI NEWS

**May 2018**

Newsletter of Peace Action of Staten Island [www.peacesi.org](http://www.peacesi.org) [pasi.contact@gmail.com](mailto:pasi.contact@gmail.com)

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*Calendar:*

- **Wed., May 30, 6-8:30 PM** Pizza & Patriotism: Veterans Speak Out. Peace Action's Annual Meeting & Elections Unitarian Church of Staten Island, 312 Fillmore St., Staten Island
- **Sunday, June 3rd, 11 am - 12:30 pm.** Democratic Primary Candidate Debate, Arden Heights Boulevard Jewish Center, 1766 Arthur Kill Rd. Staten Island, NY 10312
- **Tues., June 5,** Statewide Day of Action in Albany for New York Health (A4738/S4840). Register and endorse at <https://www.nyhcampa.ign.org/>.
- **Tues., June 26,** CONGRESSIONAL PRIMARY ELECTION. Get out the Peace Vote!



## Peace Action of Staten Island Holds Annual Meeting with Vets

**Wednesday, May 30, 2018  
6-8:30 PM**

*Unitarian Church of Staten Island,  
312 Fillmore St. Staten Island, NY 10301*

Two days after Memorial Day weekend, active duty soldiers and veterans will be invited to speak out at the PASI Annual Meeting about what patriotism means to them. In this era of seemingly endless wars, is it possible to be a patriot and to be against war? What is the difference between identifying as a patriot versus a nationalist? While these may sound like semantic questions, our different answers seem to define many of our political divisions. The panel for this conversation will include Brittany DeBarros, Ghanim Khalil, and Patrick Youngkin, all who have experience in the military service since September 11, 2001.

The meeting is free and the public is invited. New faces are especially welcome. Doors open at 6 pm and pizza will be served.

A new PASI Board will be elected at this meeting. Members who joined by April 30, 2018 are eligible to vote in the PASI Board election. See the candidates' statements starting on page two. Use the enclosed membership form or go to [www.peacesi.org](http://www.peacesi.org) to join or renew your membership. Flex your membership muscles!

## Be a Peace Voter!



Have you noticed how candidates for Congress talk about taxes, transportation, education, and jobs, but never about the proposed \$819 billion military budget, the U.S. military involvement in the Middle East, the \$1.7 trillion new nuclear arms race, or the importance of diplomacy?

Peace Action is trying to change the conversation with the Peace Voter Campaign. We have sent out candidate questionnaires, held 6 candidate briefings, hosted 7 candidates at an April 21st Candidates Forum, and created a Voter Guide to help voters compare candidates on key foreign policy issues. We want to help register voters too. If you want to join the Peace Voter Campaign, send an email to [pasi.contact@gmail.com](mailto:pasi.contact@gmail.com).

## PASI Board Nominee Statements for May 30 Election

The PASI Annual Meeting and Board Election will take place on Wednesday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 6 PM, at the Unitarian Church of Staten Island, 312 Fillmore Street. The PASI Nominating Committee presented a slate of candidates to the membership at the meeting on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Tom Shcherbenko, the PASI Chair for the last year, has accepted the Committee's invitation to continue on, as have Treasurer Delphina Vannucci and Secretary John Lawrence, as well as At-Large Board Members Eileen Bardel and Dave Poleshuck. The following excellent candidates have agreed to come on the Board as At-Large Members: Teresa Caliari, Yamda Johnson, Nidhi Khanna, Richenda Kramer, Brittany DeBarros, Daniel Falcone, and Paul Sperling. Many thanks to the service of our outgoing At-Large Members: Tatiana Arguello, Danielle Yhap, Victoria Apostol-Marius and Michael Santangelo. Please contact [pasi.contact@gmail.com](mailto:pasi.contact@gmail.com) if you have any questions or would like to be sent a copy of the PASI Bylaws. To vote in the PASI Board election, you must be a member in good standing by paying your dues and have paid your dues before April 30<sup>th</sup>. Below are statements from the board candidates.

*The Nominating Committee members are Victoria Apostol-Marius, Eileen Bardel, Sally Jones, and John Lawrence.*

### Tom Shcherbenko, Chair

Besides being a member of Peace Action for over ten years, I've also been involved in local political campaigns. I ran for Borough President in 2017, was the Bernie Sanders delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 2016, and the President of the Staten Island Democratic Association in 2013 and 2014.

My work in the peace movement dates to the October 15, 1969 Vietnam War Moratorium and the subsequent rallies and protests. In college at SUNY Albany, I was active in an organization promoting improved relations with China (the US-China Peoples Friendship Association) and travelled there in 1975. After returning home, I spoke to thousands of high school students (while showing them home movies of my trip) about the necessity for diplomatic recognition.

Those experiences led me to become a school teacher, but after a few years of the near-poverty

conditions that young teachers endured back then, I became a computer programmer. I was fortunate to return to teaching after twenty years.

Although I am officially retired, I never seem to have enough free time. I have three adult children (Gina, Michael, and Diana) and live with my wife (Liz Price) and cats in Stapleton, where we've lived for over twenty years.

### Delphina Vannucci, Treasurer

Delphina was born in Italy and grew up in Italy and Brazil. She has been on PASI's board, serving as treasurer, for three years. Keeping the cause of peace, social justice, and nonviolence on the minds of Staten Islanders is a necessary and important goal, so it's vital that voices for peace and justice remain strong. PASI has worked to be a voice of reason and hope in these difficult times. I've been personally touched by the commitment to compassion and humanity of the people who make up PASI, expressed through their activism and kindness. I'm grateful to be able to take part in

its activities.

### John Lawrence

John has been a board member since 2003. He has served as chairperson and secretary. He teaches psychology at the College of Staten Island. He is the vice chairperson of the Professional Staff Congress, the union that represents faculty and staff at the City University of New York. He has helped organize many talks and protests with Peace Action.

He believes that it is vitally important that we work hard to revitalize the peace movement. The U.S. continues to wage hot wars in Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen and low intensity wars throughout the global south with horrendous consequences for the people. The Trump Administration wants war with Iran. Trump has threatened nuclear war multiple times. The mass movement in South Korea is modeling how a peoples movement can create the conditions for the possibility of

### **PASI Board Nominee Statements(continued)**

historical advances towards peace. We can do it in the U.S., also. Let's organize.

#### **Eileen Bardel**

Like many Americans, the United States' decision to enter the Iraq War was a turning point for me. It was around that time that I learned about Peace Action of Staten Island and decided to support their efforts to raise awareness about the dangers and futility of war and the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons. As a member, I am grateful for the opportunities to work with others for peace at home and abroad and to stand with other Staten Islanders who care about the environment, racism, income inequality and healthcare for all. Through legislative visits, rallies, marches and forums we can work together for change. Being a board member is a chance to help plan events and network with others in the community who advocate for diplomacy and understanding instead of war and the use of nuclear weapons to resolve conflict.

#### **Teresa Caliarì**

I have been a Staten Island resident for over 35 years and after having raised my children, spent much of the last 10+ years advocating for positive change in our community. I was the neighborhood team leader of Staten Island for Change, a part of Organizing for Action. In that capacity I received training and led actions in supporting issues such as gun violence prevention, immigrant rights and healthcare access for all. These actions included

demonstrations, letter writing campaigns, social media events and petitioning. I realized the need to work in coalition with other groups to amplify our voice and share thoughts and strategies. I am thrilled with the idea of bringing my expertise to the board of Peace Action Staten Island, an organization that is in the forefront of advocating for many of the causes I feel passionately about.

#### **Brittany Ramos DeBarros**

Brittany started her first small business at 18 years old while working on her business degree at University of Miami. Upon graduating, she commissioned as an Army Officer and deployed to spend a year working on public engagement and strategic communications in Afghanistan. After returning home, she began work at a philanthropic collaborative called Living Cities where she supported economic justice initiatives in cities across the country. In 2017 her growing sense of urgency to contribute more deeply to ongoing justice movements led her to leave that job and launch an independent consulting practice that allowed more flexibility for grassroots activism and organizing. Since then, in addition to her paid consulting work that primarily focuses on results-driven strategy and process, she has become an active volunteer organizer with About Face: Veterans Against the War, The Poor People's Campaign and other coalitions working at the intersections of race, class and

militarism, among other things.

#### **Daniel Falcone**

I came to Staten Island two years ago to teach history. I've been in education for the past 15 years. Prior to that I lived and worked in Washington, DC and Philadelphia. I'm a founding member of the US Peace Memorial Foundation in DC. Since moving here I supported the Philippe-Edner Apostol-Marius campaign for NY City Council and joined a number of organizations. I write for a number of publications in my free time. I also enjoy art, film, music and sports. I reside in Stapleton, Staten Island. Normally not interested in electoral politics, I supported the Sanders Campaign in 2016. <https://twitter.com/DanielFalcone7>

#### **Yamda Beatrice Johnson**

Minister Yamda Beatrice Johnson was born unto the Union of William Gyude Hodge and Esther Allison Boyd. Married to Rev. Thomas G Johnson of 34 years. Blessed with six wonderful Children, four boys and two girls. Her Children obtained college education. She is also blessed with five beautiful granddaughters. She obtained a High School diploma in 1984. Yamda studied communication, and held the position of head of communication at her job. Upon her migration to the United States in 1988, Yamda studied nursing. She obtained a degree in Child Care. She also attended the New York Theological Seminary where she obtained a degree in

Theology. She is currently attending Nyack College, where she is pursuing a degree in Organizational Management. She was the proud owner of Tiny Steps Day Care for 16 years. She serves on the board of directors for the Union of Liberians in the Americas. Yamda is an advocate for women empowerment, a Director for the Compassionate Ministry here and in Africa and has received many awards.

**Nidhi Khanna**

Nidhi Khanna first got her start in organizing while in college as a volunteer for Barack Obama’s presidential campaigns. Since then, she has actively participated in electoral politics and worked as an issue and digital organizer for the non-profit organization, Organizing for Action. She also serves as a mentor for the Climate Reality Project, team leader for Staten Island 4 Change, member of Sustainable Staten Island, and has been active in the “resistance.” She is a member of Peace Action Staten Island’s Voter Committee and currently works with a broad coalition of groups on Staten Island focused on voter registration efforts. Khanna works as a scientific researcher and as an educator. A Staten Island native, she currently resides in Sunnyside.

**Richenda Kramer**

After ten years of volunteering with asylum seekers after I retired, I am now involved in a wide variety of peace and justice issues, such as peace in the world (especially Yemen and Palestine and now Iran), criminal justice (primarily to pass

the HALT bill in New York State, which seeks to curtail the outrageous use of solitary confinement in NYS prisons and jails). I am a member of PASI, Women in Black (Union Square), Action Corps (previously Oxfam Action Corps), Yemen Vigil, Granny Peace Brigade, Raging Grannies, and various other social action groups. Raging Grannies is a very loose group which sings protest songs. Each of us is involved in a variety of different issues, which we share with each other, and so participate in demonstrations, vigils, and other activities which we would not otherwise know about.

**Dave Poleshuck**

For over five decades, I have been active in organizations fighting against wars of aggression and against racism. PASI is an excellent local organization that leads that fight here on Staten Island. Things tend to go up and down in organizations especially because we don’t always see the interconnectedness of our various struggles. Peace Action Staten Island has always continued to fight against the never-ending U.S. imperialist wars and it has joined in other fights over the years including about the destruction of the environment by war and other examples of corporate greed. I’ve been more active in the fight against racist oppression these past years since Eric Garner was murdered but will always continue to fight with PASI. And PASI has joined in supporting that struggle too. Racism is the always the justification for how we treat the “other” during wars. The fight goes on because we must continue which ever capitalist party is in power.

**Paul Sperling**

Paul Sperling is a born and raised Staten Islander running to be on the Peace Action of Staten Island As an activist, Paul worked to pass the community safety act which greatly reduced the inhumane practice of stop and frisk. Paul also worked successfully to put restrictions on NSA domestic spying. Currently, Paul is a Democratic candidate for Congress in NY-11, Staten Island and South Brooklyn. At 25 years old, he is one of the youngest congressional candidates in the country, and would be the youngest Democrat in Congress in over 20 years. Paul believes in an American foreign policy that puts peace, human rights, and democracy at the forefront of the agenda.

**☎ A Call A Day**  
**☎ Keeps Peace in Play**

Make it a habit to call Congress at least once a week. Watch for Peace Action alerts. Call the Capitol Switchboard and follow the prompts to be connected to your Senator or Representative: 202-224-3121. **(Rep. Donovan’s number is 202-225-3371.)** Here's a starter script:

*"Hi, my name is {your name}. I'm a constituent and a member of Peace Action. I'm concerned about the direction of U.S. foreign policy. Does the [Senator/Rep] support ending U.S. military involvement in the Middle East wars, diplomacy with Iran, bringing peace to the Korean peninsula?"*



## The Diary of a Peace Activist

It has been one helluva year. Any Peace Action member who has followed the news has been pulled in countless directions trying to respond to assault after assault on diplomacy and peace by the Trump administration. We know it is overwhelming. We know that there aren't enough hours in the day to tweet, post, call, march, write letters, or react. But believing in the importance of "We Will Not Be Silent," here is a diary of what we have done together this during this year of resistance.

- ✂ January 3<sup>rd</sup> – **Vigil for Erica Garner.** PASI joined community members to honor and remember Eric Garner's daughter Erica who was a fierce advocate for justice and died at the young age of 27 from a heart attack.
- ✂ January 20<sup>th</sup> – **#SIUnited2018 CONFERENCE.** For the first time in the history of Staten Island, a coalition of grassroots community groups and organizations (including Peace Action of Staten Island) held a conference, showing the intersection between issues of income inequality, immigration rights, environmental justice, and peace. PASI held a membership meeting after the conference and formed a Peace Voter Committee.
- ✂ January 25<sup>th</sup> - **#YemenCantWait.** PASI members made calls to their Senators and Representative to ask them to support legislation to end all U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. The coalition's airstrikes have had enormous humanitarian consequences. 1 million people in Yemen are impacted by cholera, 22 million are food insecure and 8 million are at risk of famine.
- ✂ February 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> – **National Peace Action Organizers Meeting in DC.** PASI was represented at the training and lobby days in Washington DC by David and Sally Jones. Together with Tara Currie of Brooklyn For Peace, they met with aides of both Senators and Rep. Donovan on Yemen, Korea, Iran, the nuclear weapons build up, and military spending. Despite several requests, PASI is still waiting for a meeting with Rep. Donovan in Staten Island.
- ✂ February 24<sup>th</sup> – **Peace Voter Committee kick off meeting.** PASI's Peace Voter Committee kicked off plans to gather candidate questionnaires, schedule briefings with candidates, organize a candidates' forum, and create a Peace Voter guide.
- ✂ March 10<sup>th</sup> - **U.S. Militarism at Home and Abroad.** Peace Action of Staten Island hosted a forum, along with Staten Islanders Against Racism and Police Brutality to discuss how the military has changed domestic policing. Tara Tabassi and Skanda Kadirgamar of the War Resisters League shared their experiences as activists working on this issue.
- ✂ April 15<sup>th</sup> – **March and Rally to End Endless Wars.** Just days after the U.S. bombing of Syria, Peace Action of Staten Island members attended a rally and march to Trump Tower.
- ✂ April 21<sup>st</sup> – **Candidates Forum: Peace, Foreign Policy, and Staten Islanders.** All the candidates for Staten Island's congressional district, New York's 11th Congressional District, were invited to participate in a non-partisan, public forum sponsored by Peace Action of Staten Island and co-sponsored by Sustainable Staten Island, Staten Island 4 Change, the Staten Island Debate Society, Fight Back Bay Ridge and other groups. The forum was livestreamed and is available on PASI's facebook page.
- ✂ May 10<sup>th</sup> - **Diplomacy, Not War, with Iran!** PASI members called Rep. Donovan to express their outrage that President Trump violated the Iran nuclear agreement, essentially withdrawing the US from the deal. President Trump has gone against the judgement of many Republican and Democratic representatives, almost two-thirds of people in the U.S., and all other parties to the agreement (Iran, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China, and the European Union).
- ✂ May 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> – **ABOLITION WEEKEND.** Abolition 2000 met in NYC. Peace Action NYS was one of the sponsors of a "Two Minutes To Midnight" conference featuring Noam Chomsky, and PASI members attended a meeting to promote the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty in the U.S. Let's Ban the Bomb!

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YOUR PEACE VOTER GUIDE!

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**PASI BOARD 2017-18**

Chair – Tom Shcherbenko  
Secretary – John Lawrence  
Treasurer – Delphina Vannucci  
At-Large: Victoria Apostol-  
Marius, Tatiana Arguello,  
Eileen Bardel, David Polshuck,  
Michael Santangelo, Danielle  
Yhap

**Membership Coordinator:**

Sylvia Zaage

Newsletter Editor:

Sally Jones

YOU'RE INVITED TO  
PEACE ACTION OF STATEN  
ISLAND'S ANNUAL MEETING



**PIZZA +  
PATRIOTISM:  
VETERANS SPEAK  
OUT**

WED. MAY 30, 2018  
UNITARIAN CHURCH OF STATEN ISLAND  
312 FILLMORE STREET  
DOORS OPEN AT 6 PM  
PROGRAM BEGINS AT 6:30 PM

