



From the President...

Preparing my legacy

Legacy: something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past.

It seems natural at our stage of life to ponder what our legacy will be, though some of us may have been thinking about this for decades. What will we be passing on to the generations following us?



Debby Weintraub

At our last PRO Board meeting we discussed current efforts among climate change activists who are advocating for retirement systems like CalSTRS and CalPERS to stop investing in fossil fuels.

The Board agreed that exploring what these activists have to say about our pension plans' fossil fuel investments was worth bringing to the attention of our members through the newsletter. Climate change will be an enduring part of our legacy and what each of us individually decides to do about it, and what we do collectively, will have an impact.

I hope all of you will read Roger Newman's piece (page 3) and think about how PRO as an organization can use our collective power to make a difference on the climate change front and what our legacy as an organization could be. Let's become educated and proactive about how our money is being invested and this includes our OPEB, bonds that help fund our lifetime benefits. I hope you will join me and others in calling for CalSTRS and CasPERS to divest from fossil fuels.

I have been particularly immersed in thoughts about my personal legacy as well as my generation's as I just returned from almost two weeks in the deep South visiting important sites in the 1950s-1960s Civil Rights Movement: Atlanta, Montgomery, Selma, Jackson, Memphis, and Birmingham. The long, brutal and painful legacy of racism washes over all of us. I learned an enormous amount and I am still processing the mixture of emotions and experiences I had as we visited museums, art installations, and memorials. I had many conversations with people along



PHOTO BY DEBBY WEINTRAUB

Ashley Dopson's "Herstory" —Street art in Atlanta honoring activist heroes of past and present.

the way that informed me and made me think more deeply about the legacy of racism and its effects on all of us. Though we were initially focused on the 1950s-1960s when planning our trip, we quickly learned about numerous other actions that were part of the prolonged (and continuous) fight for justice. The deep and rich history was disheartening and inspiring.

It was disheartening to see that today we are still facing similar problems. For example, economic disparities are obvious in every urban center, and we are once again in a battle for voting rights for our most disenfranchised citizens. In Bryan Stevenson's Equal Justice Initiative Legacy Museum in Montgomery, each visitor is confronted with the narrative that there has been a clear arc from slavery to mass incarceration. The terrorism of lynching has shifted to the terrors of the criminal justice system.

But I was also immensely inspired by the grit and grace of people that risked everything, including their lives, to speak out against racism and inequity. Those brave, determined souls, many unknown to us (I discovered so many unsung female leaders—the backbone of many actions)
(See President's Message on page 7)

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LETTER TO EDITOR

Remembering two colleagues, dear friends

By Bruce Jacobs

Two former colleagues and dear friends passed away at the end of January and mid-February: Marlene Griffith Bagdikian and Ernestine Camp. I feel fortunate to have known both of them for over 40 years.

I first met Marlene at Laney in 1980 when a mutual friend introduced us because she thought that we had similar ideas about how to work with basic skills students. Together with Smokey Wilson we brainstormed and then created and taught together in Project Bridge, a program for students who needed help in basic reading, writing and math. That experience gave me the opportunity not only to get to know Marlene as a brilliant writing teacher, but to become her friend. Marlene had the ability to sit down next to a student and start a conversation that helped the student to clarify her ideas and to get to the point of putting pen to paper to write, in the beginning about personal experiences, and later about her ideas and ambitions. Marlene knew what questions to ask in order to stimulate student's natural curiosity and to overcome their fear of writing.

In addition to our relationship as colleagues we also became friends in our lives. When Marlene married in 1982, my wife Rochelle and I became "couples friends" socially with Marlene and her husband. We would often sit on the backyard deck at her home snacking on a sweet (always present at Marlene's house) and talking about everything from elections to politics, from gardening to recipes, from travel plans to catching up on mutual friends and from her childhood experiences fleeing the Nazis to mine growing up in Brooklyn. Marlene liked to bring people together. On many occasions she invited us over because there was someone she thought we would enjoy meeting.

Marlene was a remarkable person. She was intelligent and often passionate about what she believed in, and an incredibly loyal and generous friend.

I met Ernestine (or Ernie as she was universally and affectionately called by all of us in the Math Department) when I started teaching at Laney in 1972. She and I were colleagues in the department for the many years that we both worked there. She gave me a warm welcome into the

department and became not only a colleague but a friend as we got to know each other. We were both raising children of more or less the same age and we spent a lot of time hanging out in the Math Lab talking about our growing and often challenging-to-parent teenagers.

She was a superb colleague. I was fortunate to serve on her evaluation committee a number of times, which meant that I got to sit in on several of her classes. She was a wonderful teacher, striking just the right balance between demanding a lot from her students and being helpful to them. You could tell that her students adored her.

And she was someone who valued her own growth and set an example that I (and I'm sure many others) followed. Her years of studying Spanish and spending time in Mexico, Russia and Africa, her love for poetry, and her interest in the wider world all stimulated me to follow my own interests, especially after I retired. I loved spending time with her when she would share her enthusiasm for whatever it was she was engrossed in studying.

In the last years of her life, Ernie suffered from Alzheimer's disease, which robbed her of much of her memory and especially of her brilliant mind. Elsewhere in the newsletter you can read about her youth and everything she had to overcome to become the extraordinary person that she was.

Marlene and Ernestine came from two backgrounds that were worlds apart. Yet each of them was a valued colleague and beloved friend. They were part of the tapestry that made (and I hope still makes) Laney College such an extraordinary place. #

Bruce Jacobs is vice president of PRO.

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VIEWPOINT

CalSTRS: Divest from fossil fuels, Support Calif. Senate Bill 1173

By Roger Newman

(Editor's note: This article has "hyper text," reference to related articles and websites. To view them you must read the online version of this article, which can be found at <https://www.peraltareirees.org>.)

The appalling news from Ukraine and the ongoing struggles with Covid-19 continue to occupy our news and our minds. Meanwhile, our struggle with greenhouse gas emissions appears to have been forgotten. How can we elevate our battle to save the planet to the same level of urgency as the war in Ukraine and the Covid pandemic?

Bill McKibben, one of the founders of 350.org, discussed the threat of climate change and what retired persons, elders, and investors can do about it in a recent talk for Ashby Village, a Berkeley-based nonprofit benefiting seniors. (A recording of McKibben's remarks can be watched on the Ashby Village website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJiB8zjvK>.)

One of McKibben's strongest recommendations is to divest from the stocks of Exxon Mobil and other fossil fuel corporations. We need to insist that our retirement funds move their financial support to life-affirming rather than atmosphere-polluting companies. To date, CalSTRS, the faculty S pension fund, has refused to divest from fossil fuel stocks. According to the most recent CalSTRS financial statement, our pension dollars are supporting Exxon-Mobil to the tune of \$472 million and Chevron at \$359 million, among many other energy stocks.

The disruption of oil and gas supplies from Russia to Europe has shown quite starkly how dependent the world economy is on commodities which may not always be available. One need only look at the controversy over completing the second NordStream gas line under the Baltic Sea, which would bring more Russian gas to western Europe, to see the panic this can cause. If we needed more incentive to move quickly to a carbon-neutral economy, here it is.

Investment in fossil fuels is not such a stable and safe investment as CalSTRS fiduciary consultants project: Senator Gonzalez' fact sheet cites a study showing that if CalSTRS had divested from fossil fuels in 2010, they

would have gained \$5.5 billion in returns by 2019 (<https://theclimatecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SB-1173-Gonzalez-Fossil-Fuel-Divestment-Fact-Sheet.pdf>),

With the specter of energy disruption in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, investors must move away from corporations with business models that pollute our atmosphere, raise sea level, acidify the oceans and burn our forests to those companies that stress sustainability and conservation.

Senators Lena Gonzalez and Scott Wiener recently introduced SB1173, the Fossil Fuel Divestment Act, in the California State Senate https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB1173). Currently, CalSTRS has \$3.4 billion invested in fossil fuel companies out of a total portfolio of \$327 billion. SB 1173 would require that all investments in fossil fuels be phased out by July 2027. PRO, SEIU and PFT need to urge their members to support this legislation. Individuals should also write or phone their state senators and ask them to sign onto the legislation. For many of us this is Senator Nancy Skinner. We can also petition the CalSTRS and CalPers boards directly and demand that they divest from fossil fuel stocks as soon as possible and invest our retirement in nonfossil fuel stocks.

Many of the beneficiaries and union members whose retirement futures are invested by CalSTRS have already passed resolutions calling for the divestment from fossil fuels, including the United Teachers of Los Angeles, the California Federation of Teachers, and the California Faculty Association. For a comprehensive look at the legislation and the fight to divest, have a look at the CFT Divest! web site.

The disbelief seen in Western countries at the war crimes being perpetrated in Ukraine needs to be matched by outrage at the slowness of our reaction to the threats to our planet from climate change. Please contact your representatives and demand that they take action. #

(Ashby Village is an East Bay nonprofit seeking to enable elders to continue to lead connected and productive lives in the years after retirement in their own homes.)

Roger Newman is a retired Peralta instructor of anthropology and history.

Ernestine Camp / 1944-2022

Laney teacher traces Mom's incredible path to classroom

By Tracy Camp

My mom, Ernestine Camp, was born in 1944 in a town in South Carolina. She was one of seven kids and very poor. Her father worked as a car mechanic and iron worker (when he could get work) and her mother worked as a maid for rich white people. Segregation laws were in effect during my mother's childhood. She told me she remembers very clearly the first time she realized life would be unfair for her because of racism.



Ernestine and Tracy

She said she was three years old and walking home with her mother from her mom's job. They walked by a park and my mom asked her mom to let her play in the park for awhile. Her mother told her she couldn't play there because she was colored and it was a park for white kids only. (Can you imagine having to tell your child that?) My mother's schools K-12 were all segregated. Also, the four-year-college that she went to was a historically black college (Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina).

My mom growing up was consistently the highest scoring student in her classes. Her parents had a troubled abusive marriage (Her dad cheated on her mom and her mom would hit her dad and he'd hit back). My mom was a very nervous kid from the time she was born and being in a home with so much unrest and violence made life difficult for her. Also, her family was so poor that often she'd spend her days hungry. Sometimes she even passed out at school because of hunger. When she learned how to read, she found a tool to escape her difficult life.

She would go with her mom to some of her cleaning jobs and whenever she was in a home that had kids, my

mom would go in the kids' rooms and devour their books. She said reading the book *Alice in Wonderland* changed her life. It made her realize there was a whole other world out there. She knew the things in *Alice in Wonderland* weren't real, but through that book, she learned that the imagination could create wonderful ideas. She started reading ferociously, as much as she could. At one point during her childhood, a colored library opened in her town (there had already been another library, but only white people were allowed). When the library for black people opened up, she was in heaven. She would spend hours there (to avoid being in her house) and when she had to go home, she'd check out a book and take it home and read to her doll. She says she always wanted to be a teacher and so she would pretend she was teaching her doll. My mom especially loved Russian novels. She said at the library she would look for the biggest novels because she never wanted the books she was reading to end; she found Russian novels the longest and therefore the best in her mind.

At some point during her childhood, her mother had my mom and my mom's sister start taking piano lessons. It's hard to believe, isn't it? They didn't have enough food to eat, but my grandmother scrounged up enough money for piano lessons! My grandmother was not formally educated (no school after elementary school), but she was very particular about who she cleaned houses for. She wanted to raise her children to be formally educated, and so she made sure she only worked for rich, educated white people so she could mimic them. When she saw the daughters of the people she cleaned for took piano lessons, she decided her daughters would take piano lessons too.

My mom loved her piano lessons. I guess it was another escape. She did really well because she practiced religiously. At one point my grandmother stopped paying the
(See Ernestine Camp on page 8)



Tracy's Mom and Dad

Contribute To The PRO Scholarship Fund By Honoring Or Memorializing A Friend Or Loved One



Yes, I want to support the PRO Scholarship Fund with a contribution.
(Please print)

In honor of: **On the occasion of:** **In memory of:**

Please send acknowledgement card to:

Name: _____

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Make check payable to: **The Peralta Foundation—PRO**
Send to: **PRO, 4200 Park Boulevard #605, Oakland, CA 94602**
Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by federal and state law.

Contributions Received for the PRO Scholarship Fund

From **Sue Chin**
In Honor of Bruce Jacobs

From **Sue Chin**
In Honor of Debby Weintraub

From **Heo Park**
In Memory of Carmen Rezendes

From **Heo Park**
In Memory of Marlene Griffith Bagdikian

From **Bill Sato**
In Memory of Douglas Kyle

From **Bruce Jacobs**
In Memory of Marlene Griffith Bagdikian

In Memoriam

The following Peralta retirees have passed away. PRO extends our deepest condolences to their families and loved ones.

Marlene Griffith Bagdikian

Ernestine Camp

John Greene

Evelyn Glaubman

Helen Bersie



Singers support 'Codger Power'

By Bill McKibben and Akaya Windwood

(This excerpt is from a guest essay that recently appeared in the *New York Times*.)

Neil Young and Joni Mitchell did more than go after Spotify for spreading Covid disinformation last week. They also, inadvertently, signaled what could turn out to be an extraordinarily important revival: of an older generation fully rejoining the fight for a working future.

You could call it (with a wink!) codger power.

We've seen this close up: Over the past few months, we've worked with others of our generation to start the group Third Act, which organizes people over the age of 60 for progressive change. That's no easy task. The baby boomers and the Silent Generation before them make up a huge share of the population — nearly 75 million people, a larger population than France's. And conventional wisdom (and a certain amount of data) holds that people become more conservative as they age, perhaps because they have more to protect.

But as those musicians reminded us, these are no normal generations. We're both in our 60s; in the 1960s and '70s, our generation either bore witness to or participated in truly profound cultural, social and political transformations. Think of Neil Young singing "four dead in Ohio" in the weeks after Kent State or Joni Mitchell singing "they paved paradise" after the first Earth Day. Perhaps we thought we'd won those fights. But now we emerge into older age with skills, resources, grandchildren — and a growing fear that we're about to leave the world a worse place than we found it. So some of us are more than ready to turn things around.

It's not that there aren't plenty of older Americans involved in the business of politics: We've perhaps never had more aged people in positions of power, with most of the highest offices in the nation occupied by septuagenarians and up, yet even with all their skills, they can't get anything done because of the country's political divisions.

But the daily business of politics — the inside game — is very different from the sort of political movements that helped change the world in the '60s. Those we traditionally leave to the young, and indeed at the moment it's young people who are making most of the difference, from the new civil rights movement exemplified by Black Lives Matter to the teenage ranks of the climate strikers. But we

CalPERS Retirees

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE ANNUAL COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT (COLA)?

The Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) is a benefit to ensure your value of money at retirement keeps up with the rate of inflation. Typically, this benefit begins the second calendar year of retirement, although the annual rate of inflation and retirement law could affect the onset of your COLA. Under existing retirement law, retirees receive an annual COLA paid in the May 1 warrant each year.

HOW MUCH WILL MY COLA BE?

The chart below indicates what percent COLA increase a retiree will receive based on Peralta contracted COLA provision and their retirement year.

2003 & Earlier	2.00%
2004	2.19%
2005	3.59%
2006-2014	4.70%
2015	3.13%
2016	2.39%
2017	2.52%
2018	2.96%
2019	2.77%
2020	2.00%

To learn more check the website: <https://www.calpers.ca.gov/page/retirees/cost-of-living/cola>

can't assign tasks this large to high school students as extra homework; that's neither fair nor practical.

Instead, we need older people returning to the movement politics they helped invent. It's true that the effort to embarrass Spotify over its contributions to the stupidification of our body politic hasn't managed yet to make it change its policies yet. But the users of that streaming service skew young: Slightly more than half are below the age of 35, and just under a fifth are 55 or older. #

Mr. McKibben is the founder of Third Act, helped found the climate advocacy group 350.org and is the author of the forthcoming memoir "The Flag, the Cross, and the Station Wagon." Ms. Windwood is the lead adviser of Third Act and a co-author of the forthcoming "Leading With Joy."

President's Message

(Continued from page 1)

decided that being silent was not an option and they would do everything in their power to bring justice to the generations that followed them. And that is their legacy.

I have a beautiful book to recommend for anyone who has young children in their lives and wants to help them begin thinking about how they will contribute to the world in which they live. The book is Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney (for ages 5-8). As a young girl, Miss Rumphius is instructed by her grandfather that, among all the things she does in her life, she must be sure to leave the world a better place. The story is about her journey to do that. It is a child's introduction to the concept of legacy. I have read it to my grandchildren and have often given it as a gift since I find the message so important. I too want to leave

the world a better place than I found it for the generations to come. I believe doing even small things to address climate change and social and economic inequities are essential to my legacy.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who responded to our call for scholarship contributions and membership renewals. In addition, as a result of our requests in our last newsletter, several people volunteered to review another set of SPD's and



More street art in Atlanta honoring heroes past and present.



Street art in Montgomery, a commentary on where we are now.



PHOTOS BY DEBBY WEINTRAUB

A small portion of Montgomery's hanging tombstones dedicated to victims of lynching all over the USA. Every state in the contiguous part of the country has at least one victim's name.

once again people have quickly volunteered to read scholarship applications for PRO.

Bruce Jacobs will be doing a zoom workshop for people who is planning to retire this year or for anyone who wants a refresher on how Medicare and District Benefits work together. It is always an excellent workshop. Please tell anyone you may know that has either recently retired or planning to retire to check PFT and PRO communications. It is scheduled for April 22. #



Contradictions of the South.



Honoring MLK and all the sanitation workers in Memphis.

Ernestine Camp

(Continued from page 4)

tuition for the lessons because she didn't have the money. She'd tell my mother to tell her piano teacher she'd pay her the following week. After a few weeks of my mother telling her piano teacher the tuition would come the following week, the piano teacher told my mom not to worry about paying and that she would teach her for free! So my mom continued lessons. A few years later, during her teen years, my mom was able to make money by getting jobs playing piano in churches.

As I was saying, my mom always did well in school. When it was time for her to go to college, she got a full scholarship. Her city would award four scholarships each year to four top high school graduates (the top white female and male and the top black female and male). My mom was the top black female student the year she graduated. She said she had a hard time choosing between a major in math or a major in music. She knew she wanted to teach; she just wasn't sure if she'd rather teach math or music. In the end she decided on math because it was something she could study in her dorm room and if she had majored in music, she'd have to leave her dorm room to

practice piano. She wanted the option of just staying holed up in her room when she felt like it!

She did extremely well in college and she planned to start teaching soon after she graduated. But before she started teaching, she was contacted by one of her college math professors. He told her that President Lyndon B. Johnson (this must have been around 1966) was giving universities around the country money to educate students specifically in the fields of math and science. The country was worried about the Soviet Union back then and President Johnson wanted the US to beat the Soviet Union in science. So mom applied to one of President Johnson's programs to get a master's in math at LSU (Louisiana State University). My mom was selected (she was one of four people of color selected—in order for the schools to get funding for this program, they had to let people of color in). LSU was to be the first school that she would attend with white people.

My mom was terrified. She had always been at the top of her class, but since she had only gone to segregated schools, she didn't know if her education would hold up at a white school.

Read the entire story at <https://laney.edu/tcamp/my-mothers-story/>

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