Why Attacks on Public Employee Unions Are on the Rise!

By Steven Weiner

In recent years throughout America, there have been massive attacks on public employees and the unions that represent them. The latest salvo has come from the train, delayed elected governor of Illinois, Bruce Rauner, who, in the name of “fiscal austerity,” issued an executive order that bars public sector unions from requiring workers they represent to pay fees (often called “fair share payments”) to the union. This means that a worker can benefit from a union’s collective bargaining with respect to wages, health insurance, pensions and job protections, while not financially supporting the union by paying their fair share. The purpose behind this measure is described by Roberta Lynch, Executive Director of AFSCME Council 31:

“I was shocked by the breadth of his assault on labor….It’s not limited to public sector unions. He’s targeting the private sector unions too….It is crystal clear by this action that the governor’s supposed concern for balancing the state budget is a paper-thin excuse that can’t hide his real agenda: silencing working people and their unions who stand up for the middle class.”

Right here in New York teachers are being blamed by various politicians for the state of our education system. In response, New York State United Teachers President Karen E. Magee said:

“New York has one of the strongest public education systems in the nation and a professional, highly dedicated teaching force….The truth is, there’s no epidemic of bad teachers. There is an epidemic of poverty and under-funding that Albany has failed to adequately address for decades. Nearly one million New York schoolchildren—including more than one-third of African-American and Latino students—live in poverty. The state’s systemic failure to provide enough resources for all of its students and to do so equitably—while giving all teachers the tools and support they need—is the real crisis and the one our governor is trying to sweep under the rug.”

And in an open letter in the Albany Times Union, seven retired “Teachers of the Year” added more compelling evidence, writing:

“Classes are larger and support services are fewer, particularly for our neediest students….Students with an achievement gap also have an income gap, a health-care gap, a housing gap, a family gap, and a safety gap.”

What Must Be Understood

The stepped-up, increasingly ferocious efforts to extinguish public sector unions are alarming. The persons most affected are children, the elderly, and those on very limited incomes. These individuals have few resources, and depend for their well-being on the services provided by those who work in the public sector—in health care, education, libraries, the maintenance of our bridges, roads, parks, and more. To effectively oppose these attacks, their source must be fully understood.

Beginning in 1970 Eli Siegel, the founder of Aesthetic Realism, gave a series of lectures in which he showed definitively that America’s economic system—the profit system—had failed and would never work successfully again, despite any attempt to keep it going. Since then Ellen Reiss, Aesthetic Realism Chairman of Education, has been giving detailed evidence showing that the only way to keep profit economics going is by impoverishing the American people. That is why in these past years millions of workers have lost their jobs, union-busting is rampant, and increasing numbers of Americans are struggling in desperate poverty.

In an issue of The Right of Aesthetic Realism to Be Known, Ellen Reiss explains:

“Because of this failure of business based on private profit, there has been a huge effort in the last decade to privatize publicly run institutions. The technique is to disseminate massive propaganda against the public institutions, and also do what one can to make them fail, including through withholding funding from them. Eminent among such institutions are the public schools and the post office. The desire is to place them in private hands—not for the public good, not so that the American people can fare well—but to keep profit economics going. The purpose of privatizing what the American people as a whole own is 1) to provide new means for private profits to be made—which is necessary if profit economics is to continue at all; and 2) to have people feel that the non-profit or public way of owning and employing does not work and that the only way things can possibly be run is through the profit system!”

“For the same purpose, we have municipalities giving tax breaks and subsidies to private companies, and handing over public jobs to private firms, while also trying to slash the hard-earned pensions of public employees.”

Firsthand

Ellen Reiss is right. I saw this go on firsthand. In my opinion, the chief objection by some (and really the only objection) to public employees is that the work they do does not provide profit to a few individuals and corporations. For example, as a computer specialist for New York City’s Department of Education for more than three decades I took great pride in my work. One of my most satisfying assignments was to take a substantial role in rewriting the computer programs that calculated how much New York State reimbursed the city for the services provided to Special Needs students. The city and its children depended on getting this money, and I’m glad to say that as a result of my own and other programmers’ efforts, New York received $50 million more per year in reimbursements. However, by the 1980s, jobs that were being done efficiently by public employees were outsourced to private companies in the name of “efficiency and cost savings”—not so different from what the governors of Illinois and New York are trying to do now. I also saw that often the work performed by profit-making contractors was shoddy and outrageously expensive. As far as I’m concerned, the people of New York City and its students were massively rocked by this outsourcing business.

And as Ms. Reiss has explained:

“The purpose of privatizing what the American people as a whole own is to provide new means for private profits to be made—which is necessary if profit economics is to continue at all.”

As a passionate, committed union activist, I am convinced that there will be no end to this thirst to privatize the work of public sector employees, and thereby extinguish unions, until the following question asked by Ms. Reiss is answered by union officials and the American people as a whole:

“Should our economy be based on contempt, on the seeing of people’s labor and needs as means for someone else’s profit; or should it be based on good will, on having the people of our nation get what they deserve?”

It is definitely the second!
The Beauty and Ethics of Linear Perspective

Donita Ellison

In the 15th century, the Florentine architect Filippo Brunelleschi worked out a scientific method of representing three-dimen-
sional forms on a flat surface. This understanding of linear per-
spective changed the course of art history. At last, artists were
able to depict the depths and distances of the world.

The technique of perspective is now a fundamental part of the
art classroom, and I have loved teaching it to high school stu-
dents at LaGuardia High School for Music and Art using the Aes-
thetic Realism Teaching Method. I have been fortunate to learn
with my students how the beauty of art has an urgent message
for our lives. That message is in this principle, stated by the 20th-
century educator and founder of Aesthetic Realism, Eli Siegel:
“All beauty is a making one of opposites, and the making one
of opposites is what we are going after in ourselves.”

The technique of linear perspective puts opposites together:
near and far, surface and depth, appearance and reality. “The
purpose of perspective,” said Eli Siegel in his great 1951 lecture
Aesthetic Realism as Beauty: Painting, “is to have a surface
function as if it were also inclusive of distance, also inclusive of
depth.”

Surface inclusive of distance is what we see in the painting The Avenue at Middelharnis, by the 17th-century Dutch artist
Hobbema, which I have discussed with my students.

Through the use of perspective, the artist is able to relate with
great proportion what is far in the distance to what is near.
Hobbema uses perspective to show an accurate relationship among
figures, trees, buildings, space. We see that relationship in the
people at the end of the road, the man and dog in the middle
distance, and the figure in the field to the right, nearest to us.

This has an important ethical meaning for every student and
teacher. I have asked my students: as something gets smaller
and further away, does its meaning become less? It doesn’t. As
Hobbema so beautifully shows, the artist doesn’t flatten near
and far off against each other, as we often do in life. He wants to
see meaning in both near and far. I have also asked my stu-
dents, “Do the sides of a road really come together as that road
goes into the distance?” No, they don’t. In life, we can change
depth to maintain its meaning.

As an exercise for students to begin
learning the technique of one-point perspective, I have them
draw a horizon line on a piece of paper, establish a vanishing
point on that line, and draw 3 squares or rectangles, one above,
one below, and one on the line. Using a ruler we connect the
corners of these shapes to the vanishing point. We then draw
vertical and horizontal lines parallel to the original squares or
rectangles. And an amazing thing begins to happen: the flat
shapes begin to appear three-dimensional.

“What a delightful thing this perspective is,” said the artist Paolo
Uccello, Brunelleschi’s 15th-century contemporary. And students
in the 21st century are delighted as well. Linear perspective—
with its oneness of surface and depth, near and far—has been
used by artists to create works with great beauty and meaning,
as in, for example, da Vinci’s The Last Supper and Seurat’s La
Grande Jatte. And through studying it, my students and I
have gotten more hope that these opposites can be in a friendly, pro-
portionate relation in the world and in ourselves.

Donita Ellison is a sculptor, printmaker and an Associate at the Aesthetic
Realism Foundation in New York City. In seminars on the subject of art and
life, she has spoken about the lives and work of artists, including Barbara
Hepworth, Hokusai, Louise Nevelson and Auguste Rodin. She has been a
guest lecturer at The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and El Museo
del Arte de Puerto Rico, and regularly gives staff development workshops.

The Avenue at Middelharnis by Hobbema

On Schools, Testing, & Profit

In the Letters column of April 2, two Sayville parents have expressed their ob-
jection to the Common Core testing in our public schools. They describe its
devastating effect on children and their teachers, writing with logic and passion
that I respect very much.

Near where I reside in Brooklyn, stan-
dardized testing is being used to close
schools in poor neighborhoods. These
“failing schools” are being replaced with
charter schools that will make a profit
for their investors while drawing on pub-
lic funds, further weakening public edu-
cation.

Ellen Reiss, Chairman of Education at
the Aesthetic Realism Foundation in
New York City, writes:
“We should be clear: the purpose of edu-
cation is completely opposed to the
purpose of profit economics. The pur-
pose of all education, Aesthetic Realism
explains, is to like the world through
knowing it. That is the purpose of learn-
ing how to spell a word; how to find
Africa on a map; how to solve an alge-
braic equation. The profit motive—the
purpose behind profit economics—is not
to know, but to grab and own....This way
of seeing people and reality is a form of
sheer contempt. And Aesthetic Realism
identifies contempt as the most hurtful
thing in us; it’s the ‘addition to self
through the lessening of something
else.’” (“The Right of Aesthetic Realism
To Be Known #1857)

There is a powerful teaching method
based on Aesthetic Realism that shows
children that every subject is related to
their very selves. Teachers who use it are
succeeding, even under the current test-
ing mandate.

Mary Fagan
Brooklyn, NY
Contempt at root

Regarded the stabbings at Franklin Regional High School in Murrysville, Pa., as more, appallingly, a shocked nation asks: How can this happen—again—in American schools, places where every child should be safe and secure? As parents, our hearts go out to the children who were hurt, to their families and to the other students at the school who were so profoundly affected by this tragedy. We were moved, too, reading about the courageous actions of Sam King, the assistant principal, and many students.

As educators, politicians and citizens all cry out for an answer to the question “When will this end?” we are impelled to say that these atrocities are contempt—“the addition to self that is the opposite of deep and real as their own.”

As big a fight as any going on in the world—indeed, as big a fight as any in the history of humanity—is the fight now taking place between the profit system and unions.... It is a fight that even most union leaders have not seen clearly. We need to see it clearly, because the fight is really a sheer one. For the profit system to continue, unions must be defeated.

Ms. Reiss, who is the Aesthetic Realism Chairman of Education, continues, describing the chief reason that “the UAW—with all its historic grandeur, kindness and power,” narrowly lost the VW election:

The story is not over in Chattanooga or the rest of the South, where many working people are demanding justice for themselves and their communities. In fact there is a UAW organizing campaign going on at the Nissan plant in Oxford, Mississippi. And it is clear that workers are ready to fight for their right to be in a union. For example, Chip Wells, an 11-year veteran working there, said, “People think that [the Volkswagen] vote derailed us, but we think it made us stronger....Here labor rights are civil rights, it's really human rights.” (Labor South blog Feb. 28th by Joseph B. Atkins)

Millions of Americans who are suffering—unemployed, struggling to make ends meet, worried about their future—are depending on a strong and vibrant labor movement. So now is the time for union officials, activists, and rank and file members to be clear about what we are fighting for, and fighting against. I’ve seen firsthand that Aesthetic Realism is the knowledge that makes for that much needed understanding and meets the hopes of people, including every member of a union. Ellen Reiss writes:

And if unions and the economic justice they represent succeed, the profit way will fight against unions with every vicious weapon they can. The profit system won't be able to go on. If unions prevail, profits will be a way of economics different from any that has been. It will be (as the idiom goes) good riddance to bad rubbish. There will be a way of economics different from any that has been. It will be based, neither on profit for a few nor on “collectivism,” but on an honest answer to the question Eli Siegel said was the most important for humanity: “What does a person deserve by being a person?”
Teaching with movies:
Can contempt be animated?
By Ken Kimmelman

Can contempt be animated? Yes it can! Film animation artists since 1909, when Gertie the Dinosaur defiantly turned her back to the audi-
cences, have been interested in animating the contempt people have for the world. And when animation is successful, it gives form to
contempt as a means of opposing it.

I began to learn this in my study of the philosophy Aesthetic Real-
ism, founded by the American poet and critic Eli Siegel. I showed
my students how to move an artistic form to something I disliked myself
for very much—how I could mock and make fun. That form is in this
great Aesthetic Realism principle: “All beauty is a making one of opposites, and the making one of opposites is what we are going after
in ourselves.”

With one part of me I wanted to make films that had beauty, but
with the other, I thought the more ridiculous and silly I could make things
look, the more profound I’d be. This was definitely contempt, the thing
takes the possible beautifully and makes it ugly; and also exploits the ugly for the glory of oneself. But the purpose of
art, which Aesthetic Realism shows corresponds to our deepest de-
sire, takes the pretenses, hypocrisies and cruelties and shows they can be used in behalf of beauty, good sense, and like of the world.

That was my purpose in 1989, when the United Nations commis-
sioned me to make a film for children against prejudice, with the
proviso there be no spoken language because it was going to be shown all over the world, and no colors that would imply a partic-
ular race of people.

I came to the idea of an artist’s canvas being painted with different
colors and shapes as the characters who, instead of speaking to each other, express themselves through motions, sounds, and music.

Brushstrokes is one of the films I show to children in the presenta-
tions I give, titled “Prejudice Changes to Kindness: Aesthetic Real-
ism Shows How!” in schools and libraries. A large value of the film is,
through humor, it gives form to, makes outward, the ugliness
and hurtfulness of the contempt, which, I learned, is the cause of prejudice, as it also shows the ridiculousness of it.

It moves me every time to see how much children are interested in
ethics. When they see contempt acted out on
a big screen, they show how much they dislike it and want to be against it. The main
character, the prejudiced green brush-

I’ve asked the children, “Do you think the green brushstroke is
smart, cool?” “No!” they shouted back, “he was mean and stu-
pid!” I’ve also asked, “Do you have anything like the green brush-

The purpose of animation is to bring objects to life, to give them
anima—to have people feel the charm, the wonder of reality. That
contempt can be animated, criticized, and changed into useful
form—the meaning of this for the world and every person’s life is
truly great!

KEN KIMMELMAN is an award-winning filmmaker and consultant on the fac-
tory of the Aesthetic Realism Foundation in New York City where he teaches the class “If It Moves It Can Move You”: Opposites in the Cinema.

Does the Keystone Arch Meet a Hope of Ours?—
or, Strength and Grace Can Be One!
By Donita Ellison

I taught Art History at LaGuardia High School in
Manhattan for many years, using the Aesthetic Realism Teaching Method, based on the educa-
tional philosophy founded by Eli Siegel. I’ve seen this
method work in my class-
room with thousands of stu-
dents. For a teacher to know what I’m fortunate to have
learned—that the purpose of
education and life itself is to bring
the world on an honest basis—
is an absolute necessity! Aes-
thetic Realism also explains the biggest
interference with learning: the desire to have
contempt, to get an “addition to self through the
other,” to be disdained and dismissed. And
what he cares for are things that are like
him—other green brushstrokes.

I began to learn this in my study of the philosophy Aes-
thetical Realism, was excited, “That’s really cool,” he said.

The class was thrilled to see that the key-

keystone

A not-for-profit educational foundation
By Ruth Oron, Rose Levy, Zvia Ratz, Avi Gvili, Harriet Bernstein

Like many Israelis, we were shocked to learn of the recent attack by Israeli teenagers on Palestinian youths in Jerusalem. There has been huge enmity and cruelty on both sides for decades, but the idea that we, the Jews, who endured the Holocaust could be brutal in this way is unbearable to us.

People all over Israel are tremendously worried and are asking: How have we, a people who pride ourselves on our moral values, come to this? What have we been teaching our children?

In a recent article in the New York Times, Ninmor Aloni, the head of the Institute for Educational Thought at Tel Aviv’s Teachers College, likens this attack to other instances of cruelty in history and now. He writes: “This is directly tied to the fundamentalist that is the same as the rhetoric of neo-nazis, taliban and KKK. This comes from an entire culture that has been escalating towards an open and blunt language based on us being the chosen people who are allowed to do whatever we like.”

As Israelis who dearly love our country, we have learned from Aesthetic Realism, the education founded by Eli Siegel, that when Mr. Aloni describes is contempt: “the addition to self through the lessening of something else.”

Contempt is ordinary. People build up themselves by lessening others through gossip, not listening when someone is talking, feeling smugly that we have better taste, that we are superior to someone else. But ordinary contempt taken far enough leads to horrors.

We deeply regret the contempt we once had for the feelings of how we thought they were, and spoke about them, scorning their culture and seeing them as ethically inferior. We unjustly used the fact that the Jews had met enormous cruelty, to be unfueling ourselves, to justify this contempt.

We know now that there is an answer to the crisis in the Middle East, one that is practical and just. It is in the study of contempt and also in the study of good will, as Aesthetic Realism explains: “The desire to have something else stronger and more beautiful, for this desire makes oneself stronger and more beautiful.” Good will, we have seen, is the only thing strong enough to combat contempt in a person and a nation.

Our lives changed when, in 1990, Ellen Reiss, Aesthetic Realism Chairman of Edu-

Aesthetic Realism write a 500-word soliloquy of a Palestinian person, describing his or her hopes and fears as deeply and honestly as we could. Each of us wrote about one human being: a mother, for instance, terrified her husband might be killed in a raid by the Israelis; a teenage girl in Lebanon hoping for love; a college student studying agriculture, learning to cultivate the land he grew up on and dearly loves. For the first time, we saw the feelings of how we had seen only as enemies, as real. And we were amazed and moved to find how much their feelings were like our own.

When you see the feelings of a person as real, it is impossible to be cruel to them. This is a fact. We have lived it. We are proud to say that our ignorance and hatred of once has changed into a passion that justice come to the Palestinian people.

For peace to be in our homeland, both Is-

raelis and Palestinians need to write these soliloquies. All government representatives do. What happened to us can happen to every person. Let this recent brutality in Jerusalem be the impetus to begin now.

To learn more, visit the website: www.AestheticRealism.org, the not-for-profit educational foundation.

Root cause of Newtown tragedy is contempt

To the Editors:

I grew up in Weston and was in one of the first graduating classes from the new high school. Newtown was our rival in football and basketball. Those memories come now with a different feeling.

As a mother and a New York City teacher for 27 years, my heart is breaking for the families of the children and the teachers of Newtown. So many lives were lost and gone by the courage they showed and by the strength and unity of that community in these days.

Nothing can bring back the precious lives that were taken with unsurpassable violence on an ordinary December morning. But for true healing to begin and for an end at last to horrors like this one, an understanding of what made for it is imperative. And that understanding does exist.

Horrifying details surrounding the tragedy at Newtown are being sought with great care by investigators, the root cause of this terrifying occurrence, and others that have taken place like it, has been explained by Eli Siegel, founder of the philosophy of Aesthetic Realism. In his understanding of contempt: “The origin of what is different from oneself as a means of self-increase as one sees it.”

That desire for contempt that is in every person can show itself in bullying, but taken far enough it leads to massive cruelty. Eli Siegel wrote:

“As soon as you have contempt, as soon as you don't want to see another person as having the fullness that you have, you can rob that person, hurt that person, kill that person.”

As people ask over and over, what can we do to make sure this doesn’t happen again—I know that the study of contempt as explained by Aesthetic Realism is the only way. It needs to be an urgent national study now.

Barbara Spetly McClung

New York, N.Y.
PHOTOGRAPHY, LIFE, and the OPPOSITES
by Len Bernstein
A Book Review by Harvey Spears

I thought I was going to read Len Bernstein’s new book, Photography, Life, and the Opposites, in one sitting. But I couldn’t, and here’s why: it inspired new thought and made for such large emotions in me that I wanted to savor them. When I got to the last page, I was sure of two things: first, I had a deeper understanding of what makes for beauty in photography; and second, I was a more thoughtful person. Mr. Bernstein, a photographer and teacher, has based his approach to the art he clearly loves on this historic principle of Aesthetic Realism, stated by its founder, the eminent American philosopher and poet Eli Siegel: “All beauty is a making of one opposites, and the making one of opposites is what we are going after in ourselves.” With clarity and style, Mr. Bernstein keeps the premise he makes in his Preface: “You will learn what makes a photograph successful and how our most everyday and urgent questions are answered in art.”

The black & white and color photographs in this volume display a fine artistic sensibility and are reproduced beautifully. Many of them are of daily life, and they are moving. But it is their meaningful relation to the text that will have you feel, from the very beginning, part of an odyssey that is not only the author’s, but has large meaning for every person. You will learn about the impediments in one’s life to seeing life and in life. Len Bernstein’s journey, before we realize it, becomes our own, even while it is uniquely his. We see ourselves in him and his work.

People have been waiting a long time for a book like this—a book that illustrates, through beautiful photographs and text, how art and life are inextricably together. It’s with style and the thrill of a hopeful explorer. The chapter titles alone will draw you in. For example, there are “The Oneness of Aesthetic Realism and Life,” “Photography Begins Long Before We Ever Pick up a Camera: It Begins with Artistic Sensibility and Are Reproduced Beautifully,” and “The Structure and the Impediments of the Mind to Seeing Fairly, Both in Art and Life.” He tells of his study of Aesthetic Realism in consultations, where he began learning how to see both the world and how we see the whole world.” He tells of his study of Aesthetic Realism while it is uniquely his. We see ourselves in him and his work.

As a photographer myself, and as one who is fortunate to be learning from Aesthetic Realism about how to see things with the justice they deserve, I know that good photography does not come easily and I’m grateful to Mr. Bernstein for what he has seen. It will make me a better photographer.

In the chapter “Where Does Photography Begin?” he writes: “The art of photography begins long before we ever pick up a camera; it begins with how we learn what makes a photograph successful and how the Difference Between Candor and Brutality?” and “Truth and Our Imagination.” As a photographer myself, and as one who is fortunate to be learning from Aesthetic Realism about how to see things with the justice they deserve, I know that good photography does not come easily and I’m grateful to Mr. Bernstein for what he has seen. It will make me a better photographer.

In the chapter “What Does a Person deserve by being alive?” is a question asked by Eli Siegel, founder of the philosophy called Aesthetic Realism. This question must be asked by all of us, including our elected officials. Everyone person deserves a decent place to live, clothes to keep warm, food and the opportunity to earn a living through useful work. Until these things are a reality for every person, we are not truly civilized.

PHOTOGRAPHY, LIFE, and the OPPOSITES

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Why are there homeless?

The actions of the NYPD Officer Larry DePrimo, who bought boots and socks for a homeless man near Times Square, were commendable (“Man gifted shoes back on streets—without them,” News, Dec. 4).

However, the main question not being asked is, why in this day do we have human beings living on our streets? The sight of this man barefoot was heart-breaking. No person, regardless of circumstances, should be in this situation.

“What does a person deserve by being alive?” is a question asked by Eli Siegel, founder of the philosophy called Aesthetic Realism. This question must be asked by all of us, including our elected officials.

Everyone person deserves a decent place to live, clothes to keep warm, food and the opportunity to earn a living through useful work. Until these things are a reality for every person, we are not truly civilized.

Matthew D’Amico, Lynbrook

Good will vs. contempt

In bus bullying issue

Like people all over the world, we were outraged seeing how merci-

lessly seventh graders were making fun of this taunted 86-year-old Karen Klein, retired New York school bus driver now working as a homeless to-

tor! This particular bul-

lying is just one example of bullying that is taking place across our land. When will the bullying come from? Can it stop?

Eli Siegel, founder of the educational philosophy Aesthetic Realism, explained the cause of all cruelty, all human in-

justices, including what makes for the pleasure of good will. This is the topic of his book, Good will vs. contempt: what makes for the pleasure of good will. This is the topic of his book, Good will vs. contempt: what makes for the pleasure of good will. This is the topic of his book,

Webster Post

Good will vs. contempt

In bus bullying issue

Like people all over the world, we were outraged seeing how mercilessly seventh graders were making fun of this taunted 86-year-old Karen Klein, retired New York school bus driver now working as a homeless tourist! This particular bullying is just one example of bullying that is taking place across our land. When will the bullying come from? Can it stop? Eli Siegel, founder of the educational philosophy Aesthetic Realism, explained the cause of all cruelty, all human injustice, including what makes for the pleasure of good will. This is the topic of his book, Good will vs. contempt: what makes for the pleasure of good will. This is the topic of his book, Good will vs. contempt: what makes for the pleasure of good will. This is the topic of his book, Good will vs. contempt: what makes for the pleasure of good will. This is the topic of his book, Good will vs. contempt: what makes for the pleasure of good will. This is the topic of his book,

LAUREN & BRUCE BLAUSTEIN, NYC
Racism deserves to get the red card

Eli Siegel, an American educator who founded the philosophy of Aesthetic Realism, has an answer. He explains that racism begins with the hope for contempt—the “false importance or glory” a person gets by making others feel inferior to himself.

In his book James and the Children, a consideration of The Turn of the Screw by Henry James, Siegel writes: “According to Aesthetic Realism, the greatest sin that a person can have is the desire for contempt. Because as soon as you have contempt, as soon as you don’t want to see another person as having the fullness that you have, you can rob that person, hurt that person, kill that person.” Contempt, Aesthetic Realism explains, is the cause of every injustice—from ethnic ridicule and slurs to the deadly forms of racism, bombs and war.

One of the clearest places where contempt can be seen is on the pitch, where it can construct itself as an international danger. It also carries personal friction, as demonstrated by Suarez’s and Terry’s moments of “false importance or glory.” A person who is “white” (Suarez) looks at a person whose skin is darker (Evra) and feels: “I am better than you.” Because the two white players wanted to think well of themselves, an easy way of seeming to think well of themselves was to consider the other as inferior.

In my life, respect for people begins with asking, and honestly trying to answer, the necessary question which Siegel first presented: “What does a person deserve by being a person?”

No one begins life as a racist, but all of us can yield to the temptation of wanting to feel superior to other people, especially when we feel unsure of ourselves.

Rich Mkhondo, an executive for Corporate Affairs at MTN Group, was Chief Communications Officer of the 2010 World Cup.

Meaning of Machias 1775 Naval Victory Lives On

By Harvey Spears

Why does an historical event that took place on June 12, 1775—the onset of America’s Revolutionary War—have such meaning for people today? As a photographer who loves the natural beauty of Maine, and the history of our great country, that is the question I was thinking about as I traveled from New York City to Machias last summer to participate in Margaretha Days.

I loved being at this event, which commemorated the 240th anniversary of the first naval battle of the American Revolution. Its meaning came alive as I thought about what Eli Siegel, the great American philosopher and founder of the education Aesthetic Realism, said: “The aim of history is to make past feeling felt more, or, simply, the past felt more.” I believe this is why people are so stirred seeing our relation to the past, to men and women who lived at a critical time in our nation’s history.

Largely unknown today, this mighty occurrence was called the “Lexington of the Sea” by the eminent writer James Fenimore Cooper. Though few know the names of the individual women of Washington County seized the British ship the Margaretta, anchored in Machiasport. It was a known fact that the British were planning to use the Margaretta as the “Lexington of the Sea” by using it, planted it, built on it—the wealth…was honestly answering the question Eli Siegel asked: “What does a person deserve by being a person?”

This feeling was represented with depth and style in the Margaretta Days celebration! While today America is going to the British monarchy, there is tremendous hardship and distress in the lives of most Americans because our vast wealth is used to bail out corporations and enrich executives and shareholders, as the average American gets poorer, including in Washington County. No person should ever be forced to worry about not having a good-paying job or not being able to afford the basic necessities. If America’s economy were based on ethics, and people, including in our government, were more concerned with the question Eli Siegel asked: “What does a person deserve by being a person?” our country would be so different!

As a photographer, I was stirred by the expressions on the faces of the participants. For instance, one of the Margaretta women was Chris Sprague, a direct descendant of Jeremiah O’Brien, who spoke with such pride as he told of the preparations prior to the attack on the Margaretta. There was Donna Emerson who described the dilemma of Hannah (Watts) Weston, a young woman of 17, trying to decide how she can aid the defense of her land. She bravely carried ammunition for miles through the woods to support the men fighting at the front. We learned about the Rev. James Lyon who was portrayed by Doug Guy, Rev. Lyon, through the immortal words of Thomas Paine, inspired courage and perseverance:

“THESE are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.”

And I was delighted to learn that Edmund Alfred who told the story of “The Battle of the Men of Rim” where the Passamaquoddy Indians joined the colonists, and fought side by side with them.

All these activities represented the feelings of people and what people are now insisting on more than ever—that they be seen with the fullness and justice they deserve. Commenting on the battle of Lexington, Ellen Reiss wrote: “As they (the colonists) came out, that April day, with their flag and weapons, to face the trained soldiers of England, they were saying, ‘This land on which our lives take place is ours. It does not exist for some monarch and his henchmen to make profit from, while tyrannizing over, sapping, and ruining our lives in order to do so.…For the 13 colonies to be independent was for the people living in them to own the rocky Massachusetts earth and the lusher Virginia earth and the earth at New York—the ships could come.’

I believe that in 1775, the people of Machias felt intensely: “This land is ours—and we’ll protect it with our very lives.” We can use what took them to be clearer and surer about what we hope for and deserve—an economy that is based on ethics, and which will enable every man, woman and child to have good lives.

For more photos of Spears is a photographer/editorial director who is from New York and Maine and loves photographing in Maine. His work has appeared on the State of Maine website, including the Mame Fish and Wildlife magazine. His work has also appeared in photographic exhibitions.
Racism can end

Dear Editor:

As two persons—one black, one white—who have been friends for over 25 years, we like so many others are very angry at the killing of young Trayvon Martin.

We feel it is a national emergency that people use this tragedy to once and for all understand what racism comes from and how it can end. And yes racism can end!

The answer is in the important philosophy and education Aesthetic Realism, founded by Eli Siegel. It explains that there are two desires in everyone, regardless of the color of their skin. The first is our deepest desire: to like the world honestly and see meaning and value in things and people. The second is the desire for contempt, “the addition to self through the lessening of something else.”

Contempt is so ordinary, from making fun of a person who makes a mistake or thinking you’re better than another because of the section of town you live in. Contempt is also what makes for the great injustices of this world from war to racism—it’s what made for slavery and Nazism.

In the international journal The Right of Aesthetic Realism to Be Known, of June 25, 1997, titled “Racism Can Begin,” Chairman of Education Ellen Reiss wrote: “…pen- ditions should not be a luxury.”

Ellen Reiss, chairman of education, writes, “…pen- ditions should not be a luxury.”

Editor, writes, “…pensions should not be a luxury.”

Pensions are not luxuries

To the Editor:

As a retired school crossing guard for the Nassau County Police Department for 28 years who loved the work I did making sure our children were safe, I am grateful to the labor movement, including CSEA, for the modest pension I now receive. It has allowed me and my husband to live with dignity in our later years.

I am outraged at our political leaders who are trying to blame our economic problems on pensions. We, the workers, are taxpayers who have paid into the pension system; we are not getting rich from it. The attempt to destroy traditional pensions and replace them with 401(k)s is shameful, and is only making it harder for people to retire. In the journal The Right of Aesthetic Realism to Be Known, Ellen Reiss, chairman of education, writes, “…pensions, which are not gifts, were earned by workers with the labor or their bodies and minds. Pensions are not luxuries, because in a civilized country, to feel one can meet old age without terror of impoverishment should not be a luxury.”

I am grateful for this quote because it describes how I feel about my pension and the fact that no pension getting older should be terrified that they will not have enough money to live decently.

Sincerely,

ANNA MILLER
West Hempstead

* The Corriere della Sera, or Evening Courier, is the largest newspaper in Italy.

Napoleone a NYC, l’arte di Koppelman

La mostra
Un sottotitolo titolo curioso e immaginario, “Napoleone a NYC, l’arte di Koppelman” ha dedicato parte della sua carriera a descrivere la figura dell’imperatore.


Translation of Corriere della Sera article:

“Napoleon Entering New York” is the subtitle, intriguing and fictitious, for the exhibition inaugurated yesterday at the Museo Napoleonico in Rome on “Chaim Koppelman and the Emperor,” with works from 1957-2007.

Koppelman, a student of Eli Siegel (1902-1978), the philosopher and founder of Aesthetic Realism, explores the figure of Napoleon with a profundity that derives from his lengthy study of that philosophy. He presents in the Napoleonic figure the contrast of what is and what appears, of revolutionary roots and imperial ambition, a perfect embodiment of the Siegelian theory of the oneness of opposites. The emperor is represented as he has never been seen before: riding a steer as he enters Manhattan.