

# Writers Guild of America, East

## COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2010

### CANDIDATES' STATEMENTS

#### Freelance Candidates

#### Andrew Bergman

I've been a member of the WGA since 1971. In 2007 I served on the Negotiating Committee and in that same year was honored to receive the Ian McLellan Hunter Award for Lifetime Achievement in Writing, an honor I had thought reserved for dead people. Serving on the Negotiating Committee and getting the Hunter both led me to this place on the ballot. These are perilous times for writers, as are most times, but this time it's worse. Allow me to help.

*Credits include Blazing Saddles, The In-Laws, So Fine, Fletch, Oh God, You Devil, The Freshman, Soapdish, The Scout, Honeymoon In Vegas, It Could Happen to You, and Striptease.*

#### Robert Levi

I'm Robert Levi, a lifetime Guild member and four-time WGA award-nominee. On September 22, 2008, my film, "Billy Strayhorn: Lush Life" – a work I independently wrote, produced, and directed for PBS – became the first program in broadcast history to win the Emmy for Best Documentary, a Peabody, and the WGA Best Documentary

(other than current events) Award, all in the same year.

Ironically, in the month that followed, the pride I shared with PBS turned to concern as I began work on the WGAE-PBS Negotiating Committee, helping to analyze the complex structure and far ranging implications of a very imbalanced contract proposal from PBS' legal team, a document that sought to dismantle many of the benefits we'd tirelessly worked for. The negotiations lasted over a year, with the economy serving as a cloak of invincibility to shield a broadcaster in transition. We crafted a series of counter-proposals, held white-knuckle negotiating sessions with PBS and their lawyers, wrote letters to rally media and industry support, and had meetings with a Congressman and a Senator. Indeed, we're only now being tendered the final documents to read and hopefully ratify, the end result of eighteen months of intense committee work.

Having worked on the Negotiating Committee, I now embrace the opportunity to serve on the Council. I believe that the WGAE must continue to organize reality-shows, animation, news, and other internet incarnations that fall into the new media category. I often witness how production executives deal with union involvement, and I'm opposed to anyone who says that hiring our writers "is not in the budget." In this new and frenzied workplace, there's

*Please note: The Guild does not endorse or recommend any candidates for Guild office. Statement order determined by lot.*

**(Robert Levi cont'd)**

little status quo or business as usual; even the usual suspects are harder to track as they fly under the radar.

In addition to being a WGAE lifetime member, I had a successful earlier career that served me well and bolsters my qualifications to serve the WGA. For almost a dozen years, I was a film and video Director of Photography who also sat on the Executive Boards of NABET Local 15, AFL-CIO, and Local 600, the International Photographers Union. I grew up in a pro-union environment, but I also continue to produce independent films, which helps me understand management concerns and realities specific to low-budget and new media production. We're now in a phase in which many projects – with origination and capturing formats changing yearly – need to be examined and considered when we decide on how best to involve and cover our writers. My experience with production budgets, new media formats, and image-capturing systems will hopefully add to my qualifications.

The creative workforce and management playing field is less level than in recent history, and the stakes higher than ever. We must remain united and vigilant but open-minded; committed and impassioned in our writers space, but equally so at the bargaining table. We're a creative guild, but also a catalytic force; witness the meaningful effect on popular culture and prime time television that resulted from our strike. We need to follow lessons learned during these hard-fought victories as we continue to develop strengths and unity and build on our successes. Thanks for your consideration in this election.

**Israel Horovitz**

As I've been a member of the WGA and an active screenwriter since the 1960s (which ended in 1972), I think I've probably seen it all. Areas of work to be done that interest me most concern matters of respect for screenwriters. Having been a working playwright for nearly fifty years, it is quite clear to me that screenwriters need to be accorded the same respect when working in film that playwrights enjoy when working in theatre. Ask anyone on the street to name a dozen playwrights and he/she usually can. Ask the same person to name three screenwriters and he/she is stumped. This is fixable. There is no earthly reason why original writing can't be credited to its author *possessively* in film, as it is in theatre. It is absurd that a writer can spend years writing a highly personal script, only to have his/her film credited possessively to a director. I find this wrong-headed and infuriating -- but absolutely fixable. It doesn't happen in theatre. It mustn't continue to happen in film. I am also profoundly interested in supporting the unique identity of our East Coast film industry by strengthening its unique relationship with the WGA West.

I love my writing-life and will be happy to serve our Guild as a council member.

Best-known plays include *Line*, *The Indian Wants The Bronx*, *Rats*, *Morning*, *The Primary English Class*, *The Wakefield Plays*, *The Widow's Blind Date*, *The Growing Up Jewish Trilogy*, *Park Your Car In Harvard Yard*, *North Shore Fish*, *Fighting Over*

### **(Israel Horovitz cont'd)**

*Beverley, Lebensraum, My Old Lady, Unexpected Tenderness, Fast Hands, 6 Hotels, Compromise, and The Secret of Mme. Bonnard's Bath.* Newest plays include *Sins of the Mother, What Strong Fences Make,* and *The P Word.* Screenplays include *Author! Author!, The Strawberry Statement, Sunshine, New York, I Love You, James Dean,* and *3 Weeks After Paradise.* Awards include OBIE, Writers Guild of Canada Best Screenwriter Award, Christopher Award, Drama Desk Award, Award in Literature of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Massachusetts Governor's Award, and many others.

### **David Steven Cohen**

Comedian-absurdist Steven Wright deadpans that he is a *peripheral visionary*: "I can see into the future, but only way off to the side." I often think about that while trying to craft a story, move it forward, see into *its* future – not to find some predictable plot point lying dead and obvious ahead, but instead, something unexpected and (credibly) incredible. Something way off to the side – a future I discover and choose.

This is where we find ourselves as writers and union members. This life and livelihood can feel like a multi-sequel saga involving rampaging technology, corporate evil and the threat of economic Armageddon. As we worry where our next paycheck will come from, an epic issue jolts us: What will our professional landscape look like in

five years, a decade, beyond? What is the best hope for us, our guild and those who follow in our pen-strokes? That's the story being written now – and we have to write or it will be written for us with narrow vision and little humanity. (Rewrites will be unpaid and uncredited, but, hey, they'll be happy to take your pitch.)

This is – and must remain – *our* story. Here's one plot element to take advantage of: Methods of distribution are shifting towards digital aggregation, giving us greater opportunity to invent our future. In a discussion I moderated this year involving members of the Animation and New Media Caucuses, writers and animators discussed success and struggle with animation on the Internet. (All the animated projects were Guild-covered. Kudos to our robust Organizing Department). One of the web series turned out to be quite lucrative for its creators; through a deal with an advertiser, they managed to cut out the middle-conglomerate. Their success is laudable, but more so their generosity in sharing creative insights and strategies with fellow writers.

I maintain my commitment to working with WGAE staff and membership to continue and improve the flow of information and ideas among members. Guild coverage of our work on the web was a significant gain in the last MBA negotiation. Vigilance and foresight are necessary to keep and extend that coverage as Internet profits become greater, more predictable and more accountable. We must maintain our rights, residuals,

**(David Steven Cohen cont'd)**

protections, and pension and health benefits in all current and future media, no matter what the means of distribution. But negotiations are only part of the story. I want to bring more of our members (and future members) together in collaboration so we can better share and develop the creative and intellectual tools to create the future and shift paradigm.

My career has brought me across many genre lines. I have written sitcoms, drama, features, comedy-variety, children's programs and animation, and have long been an active participant in many Guild activities, events and committees. As two-term WGAE Council member, I have learned much, but not yet enough, about the specific needs of the many genres we cover. I also have learned about our shared concerns. I will continue to learn, and to advocate communication and collaboration so that all our needs, shared and divergent, are addressed.

I am committed to the fight to improve the terms of our employment – and the future of our profession – for my friends in news, primetime and late night TV, daytime drama, animation and screenwriting, as well as creators and writers of webisodes, mobisodes and sodes yet to be invented. I am passionate about engaging our membership – and our brothers and sisters in the other creative unions and guilds – in defining the terms of our livelihoods, increasing our strength as unionists and using our creative resources to change, in our favor, how business is

done. After all – and before all – there is nothing without content. And that's our business.

I am thrilled that there are so many strong candidates on this year's ballot. I have great fondness and respect for my fellow Council members. I would be honored to continue to serve with them, as well as many of our new candidates. I ask for your vote, but more, your involvement, creative passion and collaboration. I look forward to sharing our vision, creatively peripheral, but ultimately central to our solidarity and professional security.

David Steven Cohen is a Lifetime Member of the WGAE and received this year's Richard B. Jablow Award for devoted service to the Guild. His credits include *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, *ALF*, *Living Single*, *Parker Lewis Can't Lose*, *Arthur* and the animated feature *Balto*. David was head writer of Cartoon Network's *Courage the Cowardly Dog* and received two Emmy nominations and a Writers Guild Award as executive producer of Nickelodeon's *The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss*. He was recently nominated for a WGA Award for Disney Channel's *Phil of the Future*. David's other work includes the libretto for the opera *Lilith*, which premiered at Lincoln Center in 2001.

**Tom Jennings**

I hear we writers are the most disregarded class in the media world. I don't doubt it. But I think that along with a few others I inhabit an even more rarified realm of the disregarded – that of the PBS writer.

**(Tom Jennings cont'd)**

This was one of the thoughts I had over the past year sitting with my peers on the PBS negotiating committee, each one of us an amazing, varying combination of intellect, pomposity and not-for-profit insecurity. Each session we'd face off against the suits and their corporate counsel and be told it was in our interest to accept the MBA we all fought and struck for two years back – I picketed in solidarity though PBS is not governed by that contract.

Of course, the 2008 MBA is fundamentally based on percentages of profits. And PBS is based on no profits – by law. So, yes, they wanted us to take percentages of nothing. They were convinced we would be the better for it, too. It's just to say that we PBS scribes are the primo incarnations of the disregarded.

But here's the thing. Our negotiating team was able to get a solid, forward-looking contract that none of us entering the discussions a year before expected to attain. It took a lot of time and some concessions, but the language we won opened the way for us to get jurisdiction over internet content. This was a big win, thanks in large part to our resilience (and some pomposity) as a team. It was a proud moment for us all, and I was especially thrilled to help define some extensions of health coverage for new media writing.

I've been a member of WGAE for 10 years, but only this past year became more active in the organization. Being nominated to run for council was unexpected. But I

think my interests in extending the Guild's representation to younger writers, along with my work in the new media world make me a solid participant for the membership's interests.

I think the Guild's work in the next few years will be to build on the successful negotiations we've recently had, and I'm keen to be involved in helping set a course that will benefit all members. I'm also concerned with the internal operations of the Guild, and how our interests are best represented especially regarding health and pension issues. This is the bread-and-butter of membership privileges for most of us – the ones who just scrape enough together to make annual minimums or every few years must keep our families insured through COBRA. I can't be the only one stressed to distraction by constantly calibrating my earnings, accepting or rejecting jobs based solely on achieving minimums. I'd like to help oversee this lifeline that sometimes feels like a noose, for instance encouraging new thinking on ways to allow scribes to maintain affordable coverage in lean years. And I see the power of our pension and health plan to be an asset to increasing membership. I'd like to see the Guild extend its reach into the masses of new media writers by structuring innovative, affordable union health and pension packages to this dramatically underpaid class.

## Leslie Nipkow

Like many writers, I was perfectly happy sitting alone in my office with a bottomless cup of coffee, a blank screen and a vivid imagination... until the strike forced me into the streets. As a strike captain, I was proud to fight for the rights of the writers I knew and those I met as we tromped in endless slushy circles.

Believe it or not, we are again facing contract negotiations, and this Council will be instrumental in formulating our pattern of demands. It is vitally important to elect members who are energetic, tough, and accessible so that your voices and concerns are heard.

I spent the last eleven years writing for daytime, both as scriptwriter and editor. With the cancellation of *As the World Turns*, I no longer work in soaps, which puts me in the unique position of knowing the needs and problems of daytime writers, with nothing to lose. I will fight for you.

Daytime writers are workhorses who bring steady income into our Guild coffers, but more often than not, get no respect. From arbitrarily being left off awards ballots to being at the mercy of agents who represent both hirers and hirees, daytime writers are constantly reminded that they are lucky to be working. Now you are being "asked" to waive your contractual guarantees or lose your jobs. That is the definition of union-busting.

I have heard it said that the strike destroyed daytime. No. The change was inevitable; the strike

was merely an excuse. I am not suggesting we advocate for jobs that are obsolete or redundant. If elected, I would like to find more ways to empower all members to make a living by crossing genres and creating their own work.

With the new offices, there is room for ongoing member-led writing workshops and mentoring. The West has Writer Access and Diversity programs that could be replicated in the East. In turn, there are opportunities for members to give back by mentoring young writers through the Writer's Guild Foundation. New space, new energy.

We have more power than we think. We are paving the way in New Media for the other entertainment unions. We have a strong presence in Washington, as we fight to preserve freedom of the airwaves, speech and the press. We operate on the creative power of our membership.

If chosen to represent you, I look forward to working with Michael Winship, Lowell Peterson, Council, staff, and, of course, the members. I know it won't be easy. We writers are a scratchy, opinionated tribe. I plan to take on the challenge with commitment, courage and, always, a sense of humor.

## Jeremy Pikser

I am just completing my first full term as a Council member. Much of what makes a good council member, I have learned, is how the individual

**(Jeremy Pikser cont'd)**

takes part in the process of meetings, making decisions, talking things through.

I think I've brought to the council enthusiasm, clarity, fairness, support for the group and a lack of a personal agenda. Others on the council seem to agree. During my first year as a member I was appointed to the National Council to represent the WGAE in consultations with the WGAW. I'm very proud to list as endorsers of my candidacy: President Michael Winship, Vice-President Bob Schneider, Treasurer Gail Lee, Council Members Walter Bernstein, Adam Brooks, Susan Kim, Melissa Salmons, Tim Carvell, Courtney Simon, Phippen Parker, Phil Pilato, and Duane Tollison as well as Guild activists Charlie Rubin, Jackie Reingold, and Al Ruben.

When I first arrived at the Council, the Guild was already deep in negotiations over the MBA. Now I'm running again, and, believe it or not, it's almost time to start negotiating with the AMPTP again. Once again, it's likely to be a tough negotiation.

Let's face it-- it's kind of scary out there. Whether you're talking movies, television or news, the future seems uncertain, with old "business models" being abandoned and new ones just forming. This means that the Writer's Guild has to be smart, flexible, innovative, and aggressive. All our past dealings with the companies, as well as their current demeanor, tell us that standing pat and hoping to hang on to what we've won in the past is not going to be an option, no matter how much

we might wish it were.

So how do we move forward? Despite hardships many of us have faced professionally in the last couple of years, the Guild, is, in many ways in very good shape. I'm very proud to have played a significant role in the selection of Lowell Peterson as our new Executive Director. He has proven to be an excellent administrator and leader: diligent, smart, hard working, moderate in temperament, firm in resolve and forward thinking. With its new leadership, new home, and new level of membership participation (this is, I think, one of the largest fields of candidates for council, in Guild history) things auger well for our future.

One thing that the new guild leadership has prioritized is organizing, which, to me, is essential for securing a future for professional writers. Over the past year I have become an active member of the New Members Committee, working with WGAE organizers Justin Molito and Ursula Lawrence, to try to expand Guild membership in new media, non-fiction television, and independent film. If you ever feel worried about the future, depressed about the state of the industry (or the world), I suggest spending a few hours with these young, talented, dedicated, knowledgeable, and inspiringly optimistic union professionals.

Bringing in new members and expanding guild coverage in the industry is the best way to ensure that the current and coming changes in distribution and business

**(Jeremy Pikser cont'd)**

models won't be used to run the industry away from unionized writers. This is why we were right, why it was necessary to sacrifice so much in the strike of 2008, and why it's crucial before the next round of negotiations to dispel any illusions that we "lost." Sure, many of us have suffered cutbacks, layoffs, and deteriorating conditions since we won the last contract. But the studios are just using the strike as a scapegoat for changes really brought on by the economic downturn and their own changing business models: making fewer films and cutting back news, narrative television, and daytime drama. This stuff was starting before the strike and has been accelerated by the bad economy. No union, no smart union, anyway, strikes unless it has to. And we had to. If for no other reason (and there were plenty) because they were trying to shut us out of internet revenues, where everyone knows the lion's share of future money is.

In the short time since the last contract was signed the WGAE has signed 45 new media guild agreements. These contracts may not be a gold mine right now (although, due to the new contract the writers of just one heavily downloaded network show have received \$150,000 in internet revenues in the past 6 months alone!) but getting in at the ground level is not only crucial to the working lives of professional writers in the coming decades, it's also going to be crucial to support the health plans and pensions of writers who have had their careers in traditional

media. Whether it becomes effectively monetized by the conglomerates, by independent writer/director/producers, by some combination of both, or by something no one has figured out yet, the Guild will be there, ensuring writers a fair deal. When they get paid, we'll get paid. That is, if we make use of the opportunity winning new media coverage in the last contract has given us, hang on to it, and, hopefully expand it in the next contract.

No one, and I do mean no one, wants another strike. What we want is, as always, a fair contract, one that preserves our gains in previous negotiations and expands them to whatever extent is feasible. But the only way to achieve this is for the Guild to be strong, pro-active, and assertive. Otherwise the studios will try to roll back everything we won last time, and we'll have to face the prospect of doing it all over again.

In conclusion, as someone who believes it's important to show up, I'd like to explain my uneven attendance record. From September 08 through February 09 I was being treated for a serious illness, and I had to miss council meetings, although I made every effort to stay current with Guild business and stay in touch with other council members. Other than that time, my attendance record has been almost perfect.

I've been a professional screenwriter and member of the WGAE since 1988. In 1998 I was nominated for an Oscar, a Golden Globe, and the WGA best original screenplay award for "Bulworth." Over the years I have



**(Jeremy Pikser cont'd)**

written screenplays commissioned by Sony, Warners, Fox, New Line, Universal, Miramax, Touchstone, Showtime, and FX. I have taught a graduate screenwriting workshop at NYU Department of Dramatic Writing since 1998 and have been an advisor at Sundance Screenwriters Labs since 2005.

**John Auerbach**

I have served on the Council since 2006 and I am seeking another term to tackle the following issues still facing writers.

IN FEATURES, we have seen the widespread implementation of **one-step deals** which are, no doubt, linked to the proliferation of **free rewrites**. While the writer always has the choice to say no, often times he feels coerced into doing the free work. It is time the WGAE had the writer's back and said, enough is enough.

IN FEATURES, **late payment** continues to plague our members, both on the commencement and delivery steps. It has been said by many writers that they have written drafts faster than the studios have written their contracts. **Writers should get paid on signed deal memos**. Delivery payments are often held up as the writer's script delivery to the studio is delayed by the dreaded free rewrites.

IN FEATURES, **sweepstakes pitching** has replaced the paid development process. Usually, the producer or studio has only the vaguest of

original ideas or has underlying material with no notion as to how to adapt it and then **invites hordes of writers to pitch them approaches, outlines, sometimes even beat sheets – all for free**. The studio or producer then takes this work, as if it is theirs, and pitches it to the next wave of writers. If you owned a car would you allow someone to take it out for a test drive and then let them declare that they now own your car? Plots, characters, themes, these all belong to the writer and the WGAE must make sure of that.

IN FEATURES, writers **cannot re-acquire their screenplays** based on their own underlying material, e.g., novel, comic book, play, etc., as they can with their own original screenplays. Simply put, they should be allowed to.

IN TELEVISION, there is little difference now in terms of viewing episodic shows on, for example, CBS and TNT. On my digital cable box, one is channel 702 and the other is 703. Yet the **basic cable channel pays lower scale script fees and residuals**. With the migration of viewers and ad revenue dollars from broadcast TV over to basic cable, this must be adjusted accordingly.

IN TELEVISION, a writer on a **magazine news show** such as *20/20* gets paid union wages and receives union benefits and protections. A writer on, say, *The Deadliest Catch* or *Forensic Files* does not. It's the same job. The guild must **organize** them so that they get **paid and protected as union members**.

(John Auerbach cont'd)

IN TELEVISION, a writer for a **made-for-pay-TV program**, e.g., HBO or Showtime, gets a **lower residual rate** than a director for the exact same program. This is the only area where **our residuals are out of line with the directors**. Of course, it makes no sense and must not stand.

IN DIGITAL MEDIA, we see entertainment content carriers like Hulu switching to **subscriber based models**. Other sites are also becoming pay sites. Yet, under our current agreement, sites like Hulu will reap revenue from streaming WGAE members' created content, i.e., popular TV shows, **without paying writers a nickel for the first 17 days of their run**. *If you get paid, we get paid.*

IN DIGITAL MEDIA, a WGAE member writing for a signatory on the web will rarely earn enough – more than \$33,000 annually – for his employer's health insurance contributions to qualify him for a year's worth of health coverage. Digital media writers should be able to qualify through these contributions for **lower premium/high deductible health coverage** that would protect them **in the event of catastrophic illness**. Of all our members, NEWSWRITERS find their working conditions most affected by rapid changes in technology. The WGAE must continue to ensure the **protection of their wages and benefits** along with making sure that members stay current with the evolving workplace by continuing to **provide digital technology training**.

I have served on the last three MBA

Negotiations Committees, in addition to currently serving as a Trustee on the Writers' Guild-Industry Health Fund and the Producer-Writers Guild of America Pension Plan. Most recently, I was a member of the WGAE Real Estate Committee that supervised our search for new office space downtown. On this committee, I was the primary advocate for what should be a welcomed addition to the WGAE – the guild's first **Writing Room**. Here, freelance members will have a place to come write *for free* and perhaps even make some new acquaintances.

I am a lifetime member of the WGAE. I have written for movie studios, broadcast networks and basic and pay cable TV networks. I am a recipient of the Richard B. Jablow Award for Devoted Service to the Guild.

## Susane Lee

Becoming a member of the Writers Guild of America, East was one of my proudest moments. I loved joining an organization devoted to the welfare and support of writers. I joined the Guild's Activities Committee in 1997 because its mission to bring relevant programs, workshops, speakers, screenings, as well as social events to our members was something I believed vital to creating a strong community. I was on this committee for more than twelve years and I've seen the positive effects our programs have made on our members -- from providing industry tips and networking opportunities to getting jobs.

**(Susane Lee cont'd)**

In 2007, I began producing the Screenplay Reading Series in collaboration with the JCC of Manhattan; in 2009 the readings became a joint program of the WGAE and the WGAE Foundation. This Reading Series produces two script excerpts. The judging is blind and we encourage all WGAE members to submit their screenplays for consideration. The readings are professionally cast and directed and performed in front of an audience of Guild members and the public at the JCC. Each evening features a talk-back, moderated by WGAE President Michael Winship, between the writers and audience. This program is ideal for our writers to share with others the process and business of writing. The Screenplay Reading Series has grown through the years and is a wonderful opportunity for our members' work to be read in front of an audience with the goal of helping to get these scripts into the next stage of development and production.

In 2006, I spearheaded a new literacy writing program in response to the Guild's taking action in the promotion of literacy among youth. I brought in 826 NYC, the national writing workshop created by David Eggers, to be our fellow collaborators. For the pilot program, I chose the Aichhorn Center, a residential center that provides long term care for those children and teenagers who are unplaceable in the foster care system. Eight WGAE members volunteered for this writing mentorship workshop. By the end of the eight week program, the students' radio dramas were

broadcast on WNYE-FM's Teacher's & Writers literary radio program "Everything Goes." After the success of this program, a second mentorship workshop was enacted at the Abbott House. The mentoring group has moved to the WGAE Foundation.

I am seeking a seat on the Council because I wish to continue to be an active supporter and advocate for writers. If I'm elected, I will ensure that programs that get writers work, give their writing greater exposure, and offer an opportunity to share their expertise with others, will foster and grow. As a Council member, I would work hard to see more programs such as these engage, inspire, and promote the writers of the WGAE.

Susane Lee is a producer and writer of documentaries with more than fifteen years experience working at PBS, first at WGBH in Boston and then twelve years at WNET in New York City. In 1999 she won a PBS Communications Award. She is also a New York Foundation of the Arts Fellowship recipient for Nonfiction Literature in 2005. She also won a writing fellowship from the Urban Artist Initiative in 2006. She published a memoir for MORE magazine this February 2010. She is currently Executive Producer/Managing Director of the Hudson Warehouse, an outdoor theatre company on the Upper Westside. Susane is a Lifetime Member of the Writers Guild of America, East.

## Elizabeth Page

As a writer/director, I belong to several production networks in the city. A few weeks ago one of them sent out the following email – a query from a fellow independent filmmaker:

“Does anyone know the benefits or drawbacks of being part of the WGA? Am currently being solicited for its new media writers, but my concerns are that the landscape is changing so much, the WGA won't really be able to protect or help me in any way in the web.”

Wow. That really says it all, doesn't it.

This is why I threw my hat in the ring.

I'm an eternally grateful member of the WGAE. Because of the WGA, my family has health insurance. Because of the WGA, I will have a pension. Because of the WGA, when I have an issue with a contract or a credit, I have someone to call who will help me find an answer and then back me up. Because of the WGA, there's a framework – a bottom line – that every professional producer must honor.

The WGA will not make anyone a writer but the WGA will make sure that when a writer is hired to practice her craft or sells her work, she will be paid and credited. These are not small things. And yet somehow, these extraordinary gains for writers are either taken for granted or completely unappreciated. This is dangerous for all of us because without the support of the writers coming up, our union

will lose jurisdiction, clout and the financial contributions that support our health insurance and pension plans.

I'm offering my time and energy to help spread the word about the gifts of union membership, to help organize the “new media” world where I spend a lot of my time and to help strengthen and enforce our jurisdiction in this area by serving on the Council and the committees dedicated to this area. I believe that “new media” is the future. The kids rarely go to the movies and don't watch TV – or rather, they catch up when they feel like it by jumping on the web and streaming to their phones and computers. This is where it's all going. We've fought for and achieved jurisdiction in this area but it's a very fragile beachhead. The companies will simply run around us if the new writers coming up don't join us.

I've been a writer for a long time and am a “Lifetime” member of the Guild. I started as a playwright – some of you might remember “Spare Parts” which was produced by Olympia Dukakis at Whole Theatre and then transferred to the Off B'way theatre Circle in the Square Downtown where it was nominated for an Outer Critics Circle Award. When my daughter was born, I moved into TV, doing every kind of writing job from head writing/story consulting to breakdown writing, editing and scriptwriting in almost every soap out there and winning half a dozen Emmy's and a couple of Writers Guild Awards with the wonderful teams on these shows. During this time, I also wrote a weekly

**(Elizabeth Page cont'd)**

film column for a string of newspapers owned by the Journal Register in Connecticut and went to film school at the New School. I've been writing/directing short narrative films, docs and commercials and on the film festival circuit ever since.

All of it has been aided and abetted by the guild. During my career I've walked picket lines, volunteered during elections and served on credit arbitration panels. I'm asking for your vote so that I can keep giving back to this great organization. Thank you.

**Walter Bernstein**

If there is one lesson I've learned in the years I've been active in the Guild, it's that none of the benefits we have - health, pension, minimums, working conditions - have been gotten without a fight. The conglomerates that own our business are not our friends. They do not respond to making nice. This Fall we go once again into negotiations for the MBA. As always, it will be a fight. As a member of the Council, I will do my best to be of use in that fight.

**Terry George**

I've been involved in community and political activism all my life, yet this is, as best I can remember, the first time I've ever ran for elected office. Oh I've been voted on, voted for and voted against many times, during awards campaigns, box office weekends, co-op board reviews etc. etc. Win, lose (mostly)

or draw, I am not comfortable with the process.

So, why now? It's because I am fearful for myself and for my family, for my fellow writers and for their families. I think that a 'snake oil' business culture now permeates the Entertainment Industry. We've gone from the Golden Age to the gutter in two decades and it's time for the Talent to take a stand.

I think our contract, the MBA, a solid document on paper, is not just ignored but actively pissed on day and daily. My experience is mostly in Features where writers are now expected to participate in pitch auditions, face endless producer notes to 'refine' a first draft and deal with a pattern of late payments. These breaches have become commonplace thanks to a lousy economy and a shrinking marketplace for writers. It's an intimidating scenario that we need to address collectively. I want to sit on the council and discuss with my colleagues how we can stop this and implement policies to get the employers to abide by the MBA.

I think our Health Care, particularly for WGA East members, is deteriorating. The number of 'approved' doctors and medical facilities is shrinking. The number of bills that are challenged for bureaucratic or other b..s.. reasons is on the increase. I have a family member who is seriously ill, and there's not a week that passes that I am not on the phone battling over treatments. I want to work on the council to challenge the Provider to improve the service.

**(Terry George cont'd)**

I served on the Negotiating Committee during the 2008 strike. It was an inspiring time. We won important concessions relating to new technologies, and just as importantly showed the power of a Union, united and determined. Seems like yesterday we were picketing, lobbying, persuading, and yet another negotiation is just ahead. Both sides have learned from 2008. I want to be part of the Guild's preparation for 2011. What should we be preparing to negotiate for? I want better job security, a less intimidating work environment, a more secure future for the members of my Guild and an improved health and pension plan. These are the basic tenets of a Guild, now they all seem under threat. I want to do something about it. That's why I'm asking for your vote.

I've worked in Theatre, Television and Film and been an active member of the WGA for two decades. I've twice been nominated for Writers Guild Awards, in 1996 for *In The Name of the Father*, and in 2005 for *Hotel Rwanda*.

**Richard Vetere**

Writers are under siege. Those of us who are established and accomplished may not see the enormity of the threat even though we have encountered seeds of it through our years of struggle. In general all of us have suffered because of it most recently when our strikes were rightfully taken as a call to arms against it. I, however, foresee that a lot more of it is on the

way. I'm not only writing about how the internet is affecting what is created and written or the intrusion of reality shows or the call for more interactive media that is threatening us, but something even deeper; and that is an erosion of respect for the *writer*. This disregard for writers and what they do has gained such an insidious momentum evident in film, TV, stage and perhaps even eventually fiction.

Why do I say this? I've been fortunate not only to have my screenplays made into feature films, written for prime time TV shows, have produced and published plays and novels but I've been lucky enough to be an educator in our universities as well. And what I have found is that young up and coming screenwriters, playwrights and hopeful televisions writers, are seriously confused about their creative rights, the control of the actual works they have created and see themselves as second class citizens subservient to directors, producers and actors.

When I started out I wanted nothing more than to belong to the Guild and now I find a minority of students know anything about the Guild. The Guild has always been there for me. When I was struggling to get residuals, looking for fairness in screen credit arbitration, the Guild came to the rescue. I learned about my rights not from agents but from Guild attorneys.

From the beginning, I believed that what I wrote was mine regardless if they paid me or not and no one could change it unless I agreed. Yet, when I was starting out I saw that

**(Richard Vetere cont'd)**

directors were getting credit for the 'creation' of the film when I knew that someone had written it, conceived it and spent perhaps years creating characters and nuance. I protested at film festivals when I saw that on all publicity for the event only the director was called "the filmmaker" when I knew that was ludicrous. When doing arbitrations for the Guild I was stunned to see how producers hired other writers, sometimes their friends, to rewrite scripts and then present the credits to the Guild eliminating the original writer from the future of that work for all kinds of questionable reasons without paying any kind of penalty for being blatantly dishonest. In other words, if we caught them, fine. Justice prevailed, if we didn't, well, it was only a writing credit, meaning residuals and some writer's years of hard work out the window.

Now, today, students buy Final Draft software and find that the title page makes room for their elimination already having them replaced by other writers. I have no idea why the Guild has not fought this.

Young writers today work on their screenplays already expecting that someone will replace them and I'm not talking about adaptations of source material, but original work they shaped, fashioned and formed from their imagination. In what other art form is this allowed?

This insidiousness of 'giving notes' has now trickled down from television and film writing to theater where playwrights are told what to keep and change in their plays. We've

allowed 'writing by committee' to corrupt all of what is written and we are in the processes of handing over our essential value to an apathetic future. It's important to bring this up since a lot of playwrights enter television writing then go back to the theater where they believe their work will be respected, only to find the insidious note giving has spread even to there.

Walter Matthau, who was starring in a movie I wrote for CBS based on my stage play of the same title, *The Marriage Fool*, called me and asked me to change a word in one of his lines. A word. He wanted to change frankfurter to hot dog because he thought it was funnier. I agreed and he said, "I'll fax you the change."

The greater the talent the more respect they give and the more generous they are towards those they are working with. I've worked with Oscar and award winning directors and actors including Francis Ford Coppola, Agnieszka Holland, Ed Harris, Aremin Mueller – Stahl, Carol Burnet, Robert Forester, Jason Alexander and I know that it's about collaboration and commerce and I know we are living in difficult times when jobs are scarce and no one knows what the future has in store. Yet, that is exactly the time when things must be said and done.

My credits include *The Third Miracle* published by Simon & Schuster and I co-wrote the screenplay adaptation. I wrote the screenplay adaptation of my own stage play *How to Go Out on a Date in Queens* with Jason Alexander; *Vigilante* with Robert Forster; and the teleplay

**(Richard Vetere cont'd)**

adaptation of my stage play *The Marriage Fool* for CBS with Walter Matthau and Carol Burnett; the teleplay adaptation of my stage play *Hale the Hero!* with Elisabeth Shue. I was Story Editor on *Threat Matrix* for ABC; a writer for *Dellaventura* on CBS; and wrote several TV pilots including *The Wonder* for producer George Clooney, Warner Brothers and CBS. My other television work includes writing for TV shows on Showtime, Lifetime and USA.

My published and produced plays include *One Shot, One Kill*; *Machiavelli*; *Caravaggio*; *The Engagement*; *Gangster Apparel*; *The Vows of Penelope Corelli*; *A Coupla Bimbos Sittin' Around Talkin'*; *Painting X's on the Moon*; *The Classic*; *First Love*; *An Epic Story of Love and Sex*; *Meatball Hero*; *Ersatz* produced at Primary Stages; *Archlight* in NYC; *Silk Road Theater* in Chicago; *Old Red Lion* in London; *St. James Theater* in Melbourne; *Naked Angels*; *Kraime Theater*; *Cherry Lane*; *Geffin* in LA; *Edgemare*; *Actor's Studio*; *EST*; *The Barrow Group* to name a few.

I believe individual members of the Guild embody the spirit of all writers. I believe there are a lot of smart, dedicated people who guide the Guild and they know their business and that is why I believe the Writers Guild is in capable hands.

If elected I would follow their lead yet always be the voice that alerts them to the fundamental fact of who we are so we never forget it, and that no one else does either.

**Bernardo Ruiz**

I joined the WGAE in 2003, but for many years, did not see many of my concerns as a freelancer reflected in the guild's activities. In the past two years, however, I have seen a newly invigorated WGAE with a leadership that is putting meaningful support into areas that were overlooked in the past, and that are crucial to our future as a union.

For the past year, I have been an active member of the WGAE non-fiction organizing committee, working alongside dedicated WGAE staffers to organize the unregulated, wild-west of non-fiction, reality and "factual entertainment" (pick your genre) in basic cable. Our strategy has been to slowly build a coalition of unaffiliated writers, writer-producers, "story-producers" (pick your title) who labor without minimum standards and in most cases, without benefits. They should be a part of our union.

Why should current members care? Put simply, we cannot afford to neglect basic cable, and its new media and digital off-shoots. We need to create and raise standards in this space for three reasons: (1) creating standards in basic cable, raises standards for all working writers (2) more members will mean a stronger union with more collective bargaining power and greater leverage in future negotiations and campaigns (3) the next generation of writer-hyphenates deserves to make a living wage, reap the benefits of their work and have guild protections. They will also become dues-paying members of our union,



**(Bernardo Ruiz cont'd)**

contributing to health and pension funds.

An important ancillary benefit of our organizing work has been the development and support for the creation of social and professional networks—both on and off-line. Community-building and organizing go hand-in-hand, and I have also been heartened by the guild's successes on the digital media front—which has led to new companies that produce content for the Internet and apps for the iPhone becoming signatories. I am eager to support the guild's efforts on these important fronts.

On the public media side, I have been active in the WGA-PBS negotiating committee (I joined the guild while working on a PBS show.) Last year, I was part of the seemingly incongruous coalition of public television and comedy-variety writers who traveled to Washington to meet with elected representatives and successfully lobbied the House Appropriations Committee for increased funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. I will continue to support guild efforts to protect the gains we have in our PBS contracts, as well as look for ways to add more PBS signatories and to cover more writers.

Finally, I would like to see greater diversity—racial, ethnic and gender—in our guild. Arguably, the guild is a reflection of the entertainment industry as whole, but I encounter a greater degree of diversity in the media workplace than I do in the guild. I think the

WGA can grow successfully by more accurately reflecting who we are as a workforce in 2010 and beyond. As a board member of the National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP) I have already been working to create meaningful diversity in both the commercial broadcasting world and PBS, lobbying the White House's Office of Public Liaison and coordinating with media nonprofits and foundations.

I am a writer and independent producer. Most recently, I wrote, directed and produced an *American Experience* (PBS) biography of outspoken athlete and humanitarian, Roberto Clemente. The film was awarded the 2008 NCLR ALMA Award for Outstanding Made for Television Documentary. I have written and or produced for a variety of cable outlets and am the recipient of a New York Foundation on the Arts fellowship in film. My documentary work has received support from ITVS, The Ford Foundation, the Sundance Documentary Fund and Cinereach, among others. This fall, I will be teaching part-time in the newly created MFA Social Documentary program of the School of Visual Arts.

**Jerome Coopersmith**

I respectfully offer my experience to you for consideration in the coming election. I am a council member now, and I have been one for many years.

I have witnessed and sometimes played a role in some of our major achievements. They did not come about through the good will of

**(Jerome Coopersmith cont'd)**

management, but had to be strategized and fought for step by step; among them our health fund, our pension plan, and residual payments for reruns of our work. Residuals were not our birthright. We won them in lieu of royalties received by writers in other media. We were not eligible for royalties because we had to accept the status of employees to qualify as a union.

There was a time when the companies said, "You get paid once for a script no matter how many times we use it." How they longed for those days again. Then came what seemed like their opportunity: the arrival of the new digital media which they saw as their chance. It took a hundred days of strike to prove to them that they were wrong.

Most people in the industry believe that our future is digital. What a wind-fall for companies if they didn't have to pay residuals any more. We ended that dream by acting together in a great show of strength and organization. Strike captains, the marchers behind them, and those who served on support groups behind the scenes. I was happy to serve on the Strike Fund Committee that provided interest-free loans to members who had emergency needs. I did some marching too.

But the companies never give up. Some of them are now downgrading the contract we achieved. They are saying that we obtained nothing. That is false. Thanks to the strike, we are firmly embedded in the new technologies no matter what shape

they may take. When the scripts you are writing now are rerun digitally, you will see the checks rolling in. I call that victory.

Besides serving on the Strike Fund Committee, I have served on others: the Awards Committee, the College Outreach Committee, the Executive Committee, and several negotiating committees including the one that won unprecedented rights from public broadcasting stations. I am a proud holder of the Richard B. Jablow Award for devoted service to the Guild. And I have been a Vice President of our union.

I ask you to let me serve you again.

**Gina Gionfriddo**

I'm a TV writer (*Law & Order; Law & Order: Criminal Intent; Cold Case; and The Borgias*) and a playwright (most recently, *Becky Shaw* at Second Stage and *After Ashley* at The Vineyard). I've served two terms on the WGAE council and I served as a strike captain during our MBA strike.

My goals for the guild today are really not that different from the goals I had when I ran two years ago, and I would argue that's as it should be. The old adage "slow and steady wins the race" has been and should continue to be our mantra as we work to expand our reach in both old and new media.

MBA writers rallied and struck three years ago on the belief that a major paradigm shift is coming—in both creation and distribution platforms--and we risk extinction if we don't

**(Gina Gionfriddo cont'd)**

fight for a place in that new landscape. We gained from that strike a jurisdictional foothold in new media in advance of the shift, and this, I think, is as monumental a gain as the pension & health benefits and residuals secured by earlier strikes. The current mobilization challenge, to my mind, is that for most of our members it has yet to feel like a measurable gain. Have our members seen income from new media as a result of the strike? Absolutely. But new media is still a relatively small percentage of the industry. I've heard it said that you're always striking for the future. When we talk about the value of new media we are still, to a great degree, talking about future tense imputed value. I think that's a complicated message to mobilize around and I think we have some work to do in effectively communicating it to members.

Obviously, the paradigm shift I'm talking about isn't just an MBA issue. It's a major issue for our news writers and I think the new leadership at the guild is doing its level best in contract negotiations to prevent our news writers from being restructured out of existence. Part of this fight is to simply maintain the jobs and benefits we have; the other part involves positioning our members for new jobs and new positions as they emerge in a changing news landscape.

But contract negotiations and member mobilization are really only a piece of the "slow and steady" fight we're waging in a still-evolving new media world. Here's what I see as major areas of priority right this

minute:

I think we have to continue hammering away at organizing uncovered work in digital media, basic cable, animation, non-fiction television, and independent film. This truly is slow and steady work, like winning little-by-little more territory in a protracted ground war. These gains aren't big headlines individually, but in their accumulation they represent truly significant gains.

I think we have to address the current climate in the film industry, the way in which a weak economy and a dearth of jobs has led to our screenwriters being asked to do more and more work for free, often based on the promise of a job that may not even exist. This isn't just an A-list problem. Our seasoned screenwriters recognize that this stuff is not standard practice and flirts with violating our contracts; our up-and-coming members (or future members) often don't recognize this. We have to address this at both the studio and the membership level if we're going to restore fair working conditions.

I think it remains to be seen whether the handful of media conglomerates we currently negotiate with will ultimately take the lead in producing original content for the Internet. There are new companies and new business models that have the potential to present the studios with real competition, and the guild needs to make the WGA relevant to these innovators. It may be a pipe dream to think we'll ever entirely break the studio stranglehold, but giving them some stiff competition is

**(Gina Gionfriddo cont'd)**

realistic and desirable.

I think the guild must continue offering its members education and skills training that keep pace with changes in the industry. The guild has begun doing this, offering seminars and events under its "Writers Guild 2.0" digital media educational program. I'd like to make sure we keep up this good work and find ways to make it available to members who can't attend in person.

I think we have to keep up our political involvement at every level—local, state, federal. We should continue working for a tax incentive that requires shows that film in New York to write in New York. We should continue to frame the plight of our news writers as a news quality issue with serious ramifications for all Americans.

To end on a genuinely optimistic note, I think that the WGAE *finally* has strong leadership and a smart, fiercely committed staff. Great things are happening in our new home at 250 Hudson. I want to be part of a council that supports this leadership. How do we do that? By being accessible to members and articulating their needs to a staff with tremendous energy and resources to meet them.

**Richard Wesley**

We are now entering an era in which a new business model continues to formulate itself in Hollywood; a new matrix requiring writers to acquire

skills beyond writing or, at the very least, prepare themselves to exercise a new range of expertise that will allow them to compete. This new reality not only affects young writers just entering the business, but older writers who are trying to maintain a presence in the industry.

Employment in the video games arena, webisodes and other new venues in the electronic media are opening up for writers. I want to be a part of the policy-making decisions that will help shape the fortunes of these writers over the years to come.

In our news shops, our members continue to pursue their careers under increasingly trying circumstances. Vigilance in defense of the rights of news writers remains a constant.

Our rights, the very respect we deserve as human beings, are constantly under siege, threatened and curtailed by the ever-increasing pressure of employers who consistently demand more for less, caring little for how they achieve their goals, or who is run under in the process. Now, as much as ever, we need Council members prepared to fight back, and forward thinking enough to try new, innovative ideas and strategies. I am standing for election because I believe I can be one of those leaders on the Council and I am seeking your vote in September.

*Richard Wesley is a former Vice President, and was previously elected to the Council four times during the 90s and the early years of this decade. He has served on the Executive and Finance Committee,*

**(Richard Wesley cont'd)**

*the Committee For an Informed Membership, the Organizing Committee and is a former co-chair of the Marketing Committee. In the past, he has represented the Guild at international gatherings in Los Angeles, New Zealand, Toronto, Sydney and in Prague. He has written scripts for the motion pictures, UPTOWN SATURDAY NIGHT, LET'S DO IT AGAIN, FAST FORWARD and NATIVE SON. In television, he scripted the movies THE HOUSE OF DIES DREAR, MURDER WITHOUT MOTIVE, MANDELA and De KLERK, BOJANGLES and DEACONS FOR DEFENSE, and wrote scripts for the episodic dramas, FALLEN ANGELS and 100 CENTRE STREET.*

**Julian Sheppard**

Hello, my name is Julian Sheppard, and I have been nominated for the WGA East Council.

I'm that guy in the WGAE – I've been a professional writer for years, but mostly as a playwright, with some stray film and TV attempts and forays, and a sold pilot which attained my membership in the Guild.

I'm the one who drags down the much-banded about 'average writer's salary'. And until the strike year, I was the typical, happy-to-be-in-it but uninvolved member.

The strike was a great motivator for many members, including myself. I picketed and stood in the rain and leafleted for myself, and for all our futures. I became a strike captain a

month into the effort because I wanted to be at the center of what was happening, and by taking a leadership role, I not only was able to help in the moment, but gained useful experience, knowledge and relationships within the WGA East. I am honored to be amongst the other candidates for this position – truly I am happy to be here. But I believe I would bring an energy and intensity and rationality to the council, that will be essential as we continue to fight for our futures, futures that remain as up in the air as they did two years ago.

It is not so much a fight about new media anymore. It is that media itself is a liquid thing, it is like mercury, and no one knows the best way to hold onto it, not the huge corporations, not the movie studios, and not even fully us. But we must continue to make our voices heard and elbows felt and to not back down from what is to come.

I am also excited at the potential of being involved with the guild on a day-to-day basis, in its programs and events, and to be part of the discussion and decisions on issues like credits, and working with the WGAW, with our tremendous staff and Executive Director.

**Jenny Lumet**

Before I began my screenwriting career I was a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade school teacher at a Progressive Elementary School in Manhattan for seven years. One of the many things I learned was that the school served the students best when the teachers, the building staff, and the

**(Jenny Lumet cont'd)**

administration had solid systems of communication.

Each year brought a new class of kids, with unique needs. That very quality ensured that the school was always a living, breathing body and we understood we could never stand and wait for an agenda to present itself, we always had to seek out opportunities to serve.

As a Board Member of the WGAE Foundation, I've found that lesson to resonate. To preserve what has been fought for and won, and at the same time, anticipate where the next battle will be fought, requires communication between all the Creative Guilds and a sense of ownership amongst the members.

If elected I will, passionately and to the best of my abilities, strive to strengthen the lines of communication amongst our sister guilds.

The challenges faced by the Creative Unions are not going to come any slower. I relish these challenges as opportunities to serve my Guild and the Creative Community.

Thank you,  
Jenny Lumet

**Staff Candidates**

**David Keller**

My name is David Keller, I am 55 years old and married with two

daughters, ages 16 and 12. I have been a graphic artist for CBS News/Sports and a WGAE member since 1985. I have been on staff since 1995 and currently serving as a shop steward for CBS Network Graphics.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to serve on many WGAE negotiating committees over the years, bargaining contracts with CBS (including our current one). This experience has given me some insight into how our union and corporations work. Accordingly, I feel I could utilize this experience as a member of the council as well. I would welcome the opportunity to work on many of the issues that face our union, such as pensions, health insurance, work environment and training.

Having a strong union is more important than ever in this troubled economic time, and as your representative on the council I will work hard to address the concerns that face us.

Thank you for your consideration.

In Solidarity,  
Dave Keller

**Cath Twohill**

The promise of working with new people and new ideas makes me hope you'll return me to office, but I recognize the paradox. I've been on and off the Council since 1983, so you can believe me and my mirror: I am not a new face. On the other hand, I do embody a big chunk of institutional memory, and a record of

**(Cath Twohill cont'd)**

creative service. I'd like to continue that service and share my experience for another 24 months.

I'd also like to direct your attention to two people who are running this Fall.

Marta Gibbons is a writer-producer with many years of experience at Thirteen/WNET, the shop where I spent my working life as a Guild member. Marta's served on negotiating committees and as a shop steward, but more than anything else, she's helped her shop navigate a grinding change in management at Thirteen that reduced her unit and continues to eat into the staffing and morale at the station. Marta's passion and experience would enhance the Council.

Jeremy Pikser has been my colleague on the Council for the past two years. He brings to the table a balanced sensibility that has been the determining element in tough Council deliberations. Like that old brokerage firm ad, when Jeremy speaks, folks listen. You folks got it right voting him into office, and you can't go wrong if you return him to his seat in September. And that goes for every one of the incumbents seeking reelection.

In fact, even though there are folks I disagree with and folks I don't know on the ballot, there isn't a one of them who doesn't merit your consideration. The Guild is a resilient, vibrant institution, strong enough to absorb different opinions, styles and

visions, and nimble enough to extract the value each person brings to the Council table. That's why you really need to vote -- the more of us make a choice, the more who talk with each other about the candidates, the stronger the collective intelligence we tap. Your vote makes a difference, so please take a moment, vote, and get your ballot back to the Guild.

Thanks so much for letting me serve in the past...I'm looking forward to the next two years.

Cath Twohill is a lifetime member of the Guild. After 30 years at Thirteen/WNET, she was laid off in 2001, but has continued her union work, winning the Jablow Award for service to the Guild in 2008.

**Ted Schreiber**

My name is Ted Schreiber and I am currently a writer at CBS Radio News. I have been working in radio and television since the 1980's. I got my start in broadcasting working at small non-union stations on Long Island. I know what it's like to work overtime without compensation and to battle it out with the person who was signing my paycheck. When I came to New York City in 2000 I was specifically looking for work as a writer in union shops, and landed several freelance jobs that allowed me to join the WGA and NABET.

I worked for WNBC from 2000-2008 and saw NABET decimated. The union job I held as a newswriter during those years no longer exists. The former newswriters who applied for the new "content producer"

**(Ted Schreiber cont'd)**

position are getting two thirds of what they used to make -- and no overtime. We can't let that kind of thing happen at any of our shops. My primary interest in seeking this council position is to make sure the WGA East sticks to the fundamentals. We need to protect ourselves from companies that are eager to break unions and care nothing for the health and well being of their workers. We cannot let the pressure of a slumping economy force us into decisions that will affect our bargaining power when things get better. In 2000, when the economy was humming and jobs were plentiful, the non-union shops started upping the ante trying to lure away workers. Of course all those people were fired by 2005. We have something better. We have a union and a contract. For a while there union bashing seemed to be a popular thing. I think we are entering a time when the general public is beginning to again appreciate what a union does for its members. A tough economy makes people think differently about big corporations. This is good for us. We need to stay strong and not give back an inch!

In recent years this union showed true solidarity for all of the writers we represent. That willingness to walk the line paid off. We need to use this solidarity to our benefit -- and not just on the major bargaining points. Even with a tight economy and our business shedding jobs at three times the rate of other industries, I still insist that we stay strong. Let's work on the conditions inside the shops. Things like scheduling, workloads,

environmental issues and even matters of common courtesy. That's what the union is for. Work with dignity. It's something many Americans wish they had.

**Kathy McGee**

A few years ago, a manager referred to WGA members as "generic writers". I found it peculiar "generic" was uttered. It's an example of how some managers feel about the importance of our work. We are creative, dedicated and hard-working. We are the driving force behind the award-winning broadcasts the Company often celebrates. Passion and commitment are often essential elements of writing.

I have been a WGA member since 1997. The industry has changed. Some question if we'll have a future as writers for television and radio. I say "yes we can". As a writer for WCBS-TV, I understand the challenges of working with fewer employees. We shouldn't just be fearful. The "changes" can be opportunities for the WGA to grow stronger and last longer in a media world that is in transition. That will be my focus as a member of the WGA East Council.

**Armando Norat**

This is my first nomination for the WGA EAST Council, and as such, I wish to share some background information about myself. I have been a member of the WGA EAST since 2001, working for Metro/Shadow Traffic, a division of



**(Armando Norat cont'd)**

Westwood One, I have been involved in the writing and broadcasting of the traffic content seen and heard on many of the major radio and television stations in the New York market. Among them WCBS, WNBC, WABC, FOX, CBS-880, 1010WINS and Bloomberg Radio. During this period, I have watched the strength of our union put to the test in two contract negotiations and seen it pass with flying colors. Having said that, I, like many of the other nominees, cannot stress enough the importance of the strength of our union and the continuing bonding with our fellow unions in our business. If elected, I will work towards the accomplishment of that goal. Thank you.

**Brian Morgan**

I am honored by my nomination and would like to thank everyone who has approached me about it. It humbles me to know that I have some level of respect from my peers to even be in contention for this position.

I have been a member of the Guild for the past seven years, after gaining employment as a traffic producer at Westwood One's metro Traffic division. Before that, I was a radio reporter in New Jersey for 15 years. Since my inclusion in the Guild, I have been more and more involved in issues relating to the Guild, including serving on the negotiating committee during the last renewal of our contract.

I believe that I can bring a fresh

perspective to the position based on my experience. I pride myself on keeping up to date and aware of the issues surrounding the Guild and how it affects me though my workplace: something crucial, in my mind, in order to do the job effectively. While I am a man of few words, I certainly won't hesitate to speak my mind when I feel it's necessary.

Should you feel me worthy to serve you in this capacity, I give you my word that I will do the best I can to serve you ethically, admirably, and tirelessly. I also promise to ensure that the lines of communication between the Guild and you, the membership, be as open as possible, as well as more interactive. I never want anyone to feel that they are being ignored by the Guild.

In conclusion, I am not asking for your vote: I am asking you to be well informed and vote for the person you believe will do the best job for you and the Guild. If that turns out to be me, I thank you in advance for your support.

**Marta Gibbons**

Hello, my name is Marta Gibbons. I've worked at Thirteen-WNET for fifteen years, the past ten as a writer/producer for the on-air promotion department producing national and local promotional spots, on-air image campaigns and special projects. A highlight of my career is the program "Setting the Stage", a special on the arts, which received local EMMY nominations in 2006 and 2007.

**(Marta Gibbons cont'd)**

I have been a member of the WGAE since 1997, and the Thirteen-WNET shop steward since 2007. In 2008 our shop negotiated a new contract, a challenging task which demonstrated the importance of union representation. We succeeded in negotiating pay increases for our members at a time when management instituted a pay freeze for non-union employees. Additionally we negotiated high value severance packages during a recession where no departments went unscathed.

I believe communication is vital for a successful relationship. When dealing with negotiations, listening to both sides of a debate is vital as opposed to only viewing aspects from one side. My ability to listen and present concrete solutions to maximize union objectives has helped me to establish and maintain a relationship with management. There are times when leadership skills are required to unite people and I have brought members together to resolve issues without conflict. It's these skills which I want to contribute as a member of the WGAE council.

It has been said that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, human talent will be a greater differentiator than technology or capital. If we look back at the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we see how machinery allowed people to produce goods once crafted by human hands. Machinery provided work for unskilled labor which allowed management to put more emphasis on machines than workers. In the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

technology revolutionized production of goods and services and employees began to be treated like dispensable commodities. Technology will continue to evolve but it will only succeed by having an educated, well trained human element.

An individual is a lone voice but a union, our union the WAGE, is there to negotiate the rights of labor not only for a livable wage but for the continued training to allow for long term growth of both employer and employee.

Workers rights must remain constant. I am in this election because I believe the WGAE looks after its members. I hope you will grant me the privilege and opportunity to be part of this mission by voting for me in this election.

Thank you.

**Julia Yoler**

I believe I would be an asset as Council Member on the Guild for the following reasons. Using my experience as a news writer for Shadow Broadcasting I have seen firsthand the pros and cons that many of our members face on a daily basis.

There is a tendency from upper management to question available skills and competencies. Employee confidence is depleted by the blatant management perspective that they can do our jobs better than we can. A perception change is in order and I hope I can aide current employee confidence by

**(Julia Yoler cont'd)**

supporting this trend.

The Guild is an excellent tool to provide support on many levels. Yet employees sometimes are discouraged to seek out this support as they are threatened by current market conditions related to job security or progress up the corporate ladder. Many lack the self assurance to make their voices heard. I aim to promote an atmosphere where the employee voice is listened to.

Lastly, there are lessons our union can learn from synergies with other unions. Empowerment comes from organizing groups with common interests at hand. There are many potential ways to recognize the collective voice and improve the expectations we have of ourselves and the Guild.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Art Daley**

It's hard to believe it's been two years since I was first elected to the Council. It's been a steep learning curve, but fascinating nonetheless. In my rookie year, I was part of the negotiating committee that helped secure a decent contract for WGA members at CBS, despite the company's longtime hard line stance.

Fast forward two years --- here we are again in negotiations with CBS. This time around, the company thinks that by throwing the R word (recession) across the table, we'll just

cave in to whatever demands it makes. As part of the negotiating committee again, I'll help make sure that doesn't happen. If re-elected to the Council, I'd like to continue to make sure that both Council members and WGA staff are made aware of the needs and concerns of those of us in the news business during these challenging times, especially those of us who work all kinds of crazy hours. With 20 some odd years (ok, they were ALL odd!) experience in local news, I believe I can add a valuable voice to the conversation about our endeavors going forward.

Lastly, I'd also like to keep my colleagues at CBS up to date on the excellent educational programs the Guild has been putting together, such as the digital media conferences. The union is making a huge effort to keep members aware of the ever changing landscape that falls under the big umbrella "Writer."

Thank you for your consideration.



