



## Anti-Racist Politics Today

Special Issue with the DSA Anti-Racism and Latino Commissions

Bill Fletcher on The Future of TransAfrica Forum

The Central Park Jogger Case: Scottsboro Boys Revisited

Crisis in Urban Education

On The March with the UFW

*plus*

Memories of Jim Chapin and Gordon Haskell

DSA Locals Report

# DSA Statement on Reparations

DSA joins in solidarity with the position expressed by the Black Radical Congress (April 17, 1999):

Reparations is a well-established principle of international law that should be applied in the US. Historically, the US has been both the recipient and disburser of reparations. As the descendants of enslaved Africans, we have the legal and moral right to receive just compensation for the oppression, systematic brutality and economic exploitation Black people have suffered historically and continue to experience today. Thus, we seek reparations from the US for its illegal assault on African peoples during the slave trade; its exploitation of Black labor during slavery; and its systematic and totalitarian physical, economic and cultural violence against people of African descent over the last four centuries.

DSA, as a socialist organization, rejects the proposition that corporate wealth and individual property are the same. The wealth that we plan to re-distribute is corporate wealth not personal private property.

The wealth of the US corporate class was developed from the exploitation of vast numbers of Africans and a great many indigenous peoples by slavery and the theft of indigenous wealth and land by the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the English-speaking peoples. The current wealth of the ruling elite and the poverty in African-American and indigenous communities are direct consequences of this incorporation by force and terrorism of these and other dominated communities into the capitalist system.

And we, along with the Latino Commission of DSA, further call for reparations for the assaults and despoliation of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and their descendants, including Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and others, for the loss of their lands and the attempted destruction of their cultures and institutions. This includes supporting the land claims and other treaty-related social justice cases of the Native American tribal nations.

In pursuit of these reparations, we take the following steps:

1. DSA supports H.R. 40, introduced by Representative John Conyers, to study the issues related to slavery and to make recommendations to Congress.
2. We further recognize that reparations are fundamentally a social rather than an individual process. It is clear from a number of studies that the underdevelopment of communities of African Americans, indigenous people, and their descendants continues to this date. We recognize that this underdevelopment is a direct result of the crimes of the past, and the forced subjugation of these people and their incorporation into a White Supremacist society based upon the unfair and inequitable extraction of labor and capital from the work, and death, of these people.

We therefore call for monetary reparations to be in the form of public ownership of utilities and means of production. And we call for the investment of compensatory funds into publicly owned institutions for the development of their communities. And public funds shall be used to promote the general welfare, education, health care, public transportation and infrastructure targeted on those communities historically denied lack of access to capital and education by prior governmental and corporate actions.

3. DSA will conduct internal and public education around the issue of reparations.

*Adopted by the National Political Committee, October 6, 2002.*



*Editorial Committee*

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(1928-1989)

Democratic Socialists of America share a vision of a humane international social order based on equitable distribution of resources, meaningful work, a healthy environment, sustainable growth, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships. Equality, solidarity, and democracy can only be achieved through international political and social cooperation aimed at ensuring that economic institutions benefit all people. We are dedicated to building truly international social movements—of unionists, environmentalists, feminists, and people of color—which together can elevate global justice over brutalizing global competition.

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# Lott & the Politics of Racism

Senator Trent Lott's nostalgic endorsement of the segregationist politics of Senator Strom Thurmond's 1948 Dixiecrat Presidential campaign overtly reflects the usually covert politics of racism and racial resentment that now characterizes the Republican Party.

From Nixon's "Southern strategy" to Reagan's symbolic kick-off of his 1980 campaign in Philadelphia, Mississippi—the town where Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney were murdered—to Bush Sr.'s Willie Horton ad and Bush Jr.'s refusal to support a Florida-wide recount, the Republican Party has sent clear messages to whites that they value their votes more than those of people of color.

Democratic Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle's off-hand acceptance of Senator Lott's statement that he did not mean to say what he explicitly said is also deeply troubling—the "collegiality" of the Senate should never preclude the criticism of overtly racist remarks. President Bush's much more forceful statement demonstrates how serious Lott's remark really is. But Bush's words should not be allowed to divert attention from the disastrous use of reactionary racial politics for partisan Republican gain. Nor should it cover up the timidity of moderate Democrats in confronting the continued legacy and reality of gross racial inequalities and institutional discrimination.

The fact is that Lott chose the language deliberately and he has said the same thing on other occasions. This is just another example of how easy it is for Republicans—not only southern Republicans—to slip into the language of white supremacy. After all, it was Strom Thurmond who led the Southern Dixiecrats into the Republican Party when the Democrats finally embraced civil rights in the 1960s.

The reluctance of establishment Democrats to directly address problems of race and racism must stop. We see it on issue after issue. We saw it in the debate on TANF, when providing adequate child care, health care, and job training to women moving off welfare fell victim to the conservative ideological view of women on welfare as indolent and undeserving. We saw it in the careful way in which the Democrats and candidate Gore addressed the Florida debacle. The state of Florida acted in official and unofficial ways to systematically reduce African-American participation in the election, yet the challenge was limited to abstract calls for recounts in only a few counties.

Senator Lott has a long history of making statements that unambiguously support racism and has maintained relationships with organizations that preach white supremacy. Only a few years ago he spoke at meeting of the white supremacist Council of Conservative Citizens, the successor organization to the White Citizens Councils that led southern white resistance to desegregation.

Behind the scenes Republican operatives are asking themselves how long they can afford to stand behind a Senate party leader who repeatedly embarrasses himself and the Republican Party by making overtly racist statements. Democratic Senators should be asking how long they can afford a minority leader that helps Lott cover up the obvious intent of his despicable remarks.

—Frank Llewellyn  
DSA National Director

*Editor's Note: After this writing, many Republicans in the Senate decided that they could not afford to stand behind Lott any longer, especially in the face of criticism by influential black conservatives, and threw their support behind the White House's preferred candidate for party leader, Bill Frist of Tennessee. Lott resigned leadership on Friday, December 20.*

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# TransAfrica Forum: Retooling for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

By *Bill Fletcher, Jr.*

TransAfrica, Inc., and TransAfrica Forum collectively emerged as a significant and leading force in the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s. Under the direction of Randall Robinson, TransAfrica and TransAfrica Forum were successful in building a broad front to pressure the US government to impose sanctions on the racist South African regime. Subsequently TransAfrica Forum helped lead opposition to the military juntas in Nigeria and Haiti.

As important and courageous as these stands were, the campaigns did not attract nearly as much attention or mass support as the anti-apartheid movement. The reasons are complex, but certainly the neo-colonial/post-colonial nature of the latter regimes—compared with the virulently racist apartheid system—served to confuse many people of good will as to who were friends and who were enemies.

In 2002 we are beginning a process of retooling and refocusing TransAfrica Forum. This is taking place within the context of neoliberal globalization and the corresponding global justice movement, the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, and the “declaration of empire” by the US government. We are now in an environment vastly different from the one that existed at the time of the anti-apartheid movement.

A massive polarization of wealth between the haves and have-nots, both domestically and internationally, has developed over the last 20 years. National liberation projects have, in many cases, stalled. This is illustrated by the degeneration of those post-independence leaders who—irrespective of their rhetoric—have sold their souls to global capital. As with the domestic civil rights movement, the implications for this turn have been quite serious both at the level of potential strate-



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## ***New conditions necessitate new strategies, new alliances, and a new vision.***

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gies as well as alliances. Class and gender politics have risen in importance and visibility in the shaping of social movements and nation building.

In this context the direction of TransAfrica Forum has shifted. TransAfrica Forum seeks to become a Black global justice organization focusing on the African world. This means developing or redeveloping a constituency, principally within Black America, committed to reshaping US foreign policy and addressing international solidarity of the historically oppressed. To carry this out TransAfrica Forum is placing an emphasis on reconstructing a policy operation largely through our Scholars Council, and an organizing component largely through mass-based coalitional campaigns. This includes work to defend Haitian sovereignty; an anti-sweatshops campaign; a long-

term effort to mount a reparations campaign focused on Africa; support for labor movements in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America; and support for normalized relations with Cuba. As part of reinvigorating the organization, TransAfrica Forum is taking steps to organize a TransAfrica Student Network as a means of organizing and mobilizing students of color around these issues in particular, and global justice generally.

The challenges are substantial. TransAfrica Forum cannot afford to rest on its laurels. While its historic role in the anti-apartheid movement should not be forgotten, it is also the case that this legacy is insufficient in making TransAfrica Forum a 21<sup>st</sup> century organization. New conditions necessitate new strategies, new alliances, and a new vision. Thus, we undertake the difficult journey that involves remaking the organization, and translating the good will we have received into a commitment to movement building. Our success in this endeavor can result in the development of a different sort of global justice movement with people of color at its core, a movement that reshapes US foreign policy, the role of global multilateral economic institutions, and efforts at solidarity with the nations and peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

*Bill Fletcher, Jr. is a long-time labor activist who currently serves as president of TransAfrica Forum, a Washington, DC-based non-profit organizing and educational center formed to raise awareness regarding the issues facing the nations and peoples of Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. He can be reached at [bfletcher@transafricaforum.org](mailto:bfletcher@transafricaforum.org).*



# The Central Park Jogger Case: Scottsboro for the new millennium

By Fabricio Rodriguez

The old saying goes something like, "Those who don't know the past are doomed to repeat it." The cryptic warning indicates that darker times have passed, and that if we ignore our mistakes then the future will bring sorrow and disgrace. Apparently, the hard learned lessons have been forgotten.

Recently, it has been reported that five black and Hispanic men have been seemingly cleared of guilt in the notorious "Central Park Jogger Case." This case, which captivated the nation at a time when white-middle-class fears were reaching a frenzied pitch, helped fuel a decade of tough-love, lock-em'-up-and-throw-away-the-key, tough-on-crime laws. Punitive legislation such as "Three Strikes" and "mandatory minimums" laws seemingly reaffirmed the racist fears that prompted the harsher sentencing laws in the first place, in a self-fulfilling prophetic fashion that is only now beginning to wane.

Americans today are aghast to learn that five boys who were convicted of severely beating and gang raping a New York City jogger may have, in fact, had nothing to do with the crime at all. No DNA evidence has linked any of the convicted to the victim. The fury over the case and the taped "confessions" of the five scared youths resulted in a rhetorical lynching in the nation-wide press. The coverage in the mainstream press, conservative radio call-in shows and the political pandering of Democratic and Republican talking heads alike in retrospect appears to be little more than convenient cover for latent racism. Four of the obviously frightened boys confessed during videotaped interviews. None of

the stories bore much of a resemblance to the crime as reconstructed by investigators. None of the admissions accurately described the time, place or even the substance of the actual events. Apparently, neither the press nor the twelve people who convicted the five youths had any problem with the conflicting accounts.

The DNA of another man, who is serving time for an unrelated murder, has proven the convictions

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***History has shown once again that white fear can sanction horrid perversions of justice.***

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wrong. Sadly, this isn't the first time rampant suppositions, buttressed by age-old myths of black sexuality, have whipped the press into a noose-twisting frenzy and our courts into a klansman's den.

In March of 1931, four African-American hobos hopped a west-bound train through northern Alabama. On the train, there was a scuffle between nine black drifters and as many whites; in the end the whites were ousted from the train. When the train stopped forty miles up the track, the police and the white hobos were waiting. The police rounded up every black face that jumped off the train. In a fiasco now referred to by historians as the "Scottsboro Boys," the fist fight would throw nine innocent lives into a storm that illustrated how bigotry hides just below the surface of America at any time.

Several hours later, the six strangers and three traveling com-



panions were lined up while two white young women pointed them each out. The police officer who was running the line-up instructed the young ladies to pick out the ones who had "had them." The story that nine black transients had beaten and gang raped two white southern "ladies" exploded into graphic stories in the national newspapers. Within three weeks of arrest all but the youngest, who was twelve years old at the time, had been tried, convicted, and sentenced to death for the rape of Victoria Price and Ruby

Bates. The two young women, like the accused, were hobos jumping the train on the search for employment. Six of the defendants stated that they had never seen the girls. Three others first claimed to know nothing of the women and then, under cross-examination, gave various, conflicting accounts that essentially protected the group that they had boarded the train with. Though this frame-up differed in degree, the poor and uneducated black youths knew the drill well: if a white man blames you for something that you didn't do, you can't deny it. Editors and reporters stated that this was a crime that "savored of the jungle, the way back dark ages of the meanest African corruption."

Sam Leibowitz, a New York attorney, backed by the International Labor Defense (ILD), a Communist Party front group, would fight to

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# Racism and the Crisis of Urban Education

By Duane Campbell



*Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental... The freedom to learn... has been bought by bitter sacrifice. And whatever we may think of the curtailment of other civil rights, we should fight to the last ditch to keep open the right to learn, the right to have examined in our schools not only what we believe, but what we do not believe; not only what our leaders say, but what the leaders of other groups and nations, and the leaders of other centuries have said. We must insist upon this to give our children the fairness of a start which will equip them with such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have a real chance to judge what the world is and what its greater minds have thought it might be.*

—W.E.B. Du Bois  
“The Freedom to Learn”

Quality schools are an issue of human rights for young people. Our public schools should provide all students with a quality education. At present, in urban and poverty areas, they do not. Public schooling is in crisis, particularly for children living in poverty in urban areas. Inequality and white supremacy are created and re-created each year in our schools. One group of students learns skills and confidence and is prepared for their future, while other students learn their place (at the bottom) in a stratified and difficult economic system.

Of the 11.5 million poor children living below the official poverty line—39.8 percent of all African American children, 32.2 percent of all Latino children, 17.1 percent of all Asian children, 38.8 percent of Native American children, 12.5 percent of all White children—most attend underfunded, poverty-stricken schools. Students in these schools learn that society does not choose to provide them with decent school buildings, computers, counselors, and well prepared teachers or to

open interesting career paths for them.

In most of our major urban centers, a new majority of students has emerged—one composed of diverse people of color: African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Islanders, multi-racial kids, and many more. But, in the face of this dramatic shift, the population of teachers remains over 78 percent European American. This division would not be so much a cause for concern except that, according to the 2000 Reading Report Card of the National Center for Educational Statistics, nationally, while 40 percent of White students are proficient in reading in the 4th grade, only 12 percent of black students, 16 percent of Hispanic students and 17 percent of Native American students are proficient. The achievement gap in math scores is equally stark.

The gaps between groups remained relatively unchanged during the 1990s, a decade in which presidents, governors, mayors and legislators all made promises about “school reform.” Meanwhile, the longitudinal studies of achievement in

the National Reading Report Card demonstrate that, after 20 years of announcements, programs, and pronouncements, achievement levels of US children remain remarkably stable and remarkably unequal.

## A crisis of inequality

We do not have a general education crisis in the nation: we have a crisis for black, Latino, and some Asian and poor white kids. We are not providing the children of the new majorities with “a fair start which will equip them with such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have a real chance to judge what the world is and what its greater minds have thought it might be.”

As Berliner and Biddle demonstrated well in *The Manufactured Crisis* (1995), schools for middle-class kids—Black, Latino, Asian and European-American—fundamentally fulfill their purposes. But the schools for poor African-American, Latino and European-American children fail.

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# Dolores & Me: On the March for the UFW

By Wendy Gonzalez

I woke up August 20th at 5:00 AM not knowing what to expect. All I knew was that I had packed my backpack with five days worth of clothes, that I would catch the 6:00 AM Greyhound bus from Sacramento to Stockton and that I would be walking all the way back. In those five days I received an education that no textbook or classroom could ever provide.

What am I talking about? The 10-day march from Merced to Sacramento to let everyone, especially the governor of California, know that the United Farm Workers and its supporters wanted justice for farm workers. We were marching to let the governor know that he must sign the legislation that would allow workers to negotiate a union contract in a reasonable amount of time. We do not want to wait years and years for workers to negotiate union contracts to get decent wages and basic benefits.

Once the bus dropped me off in Stockton, a city that is unfamiliar to me, I looked at the address and the street map that would get me to the Teamsters union hall. "How ironic," I chuckled to myself, thinking back to my Chicano studies class in which I had learned that back in the sixties the Teamsters were the ones that came in to try to break the strikes the UFW put on.

I got to the hall just in time for mass. Relieved that I saw a familiar face, I went to the back to sit next to my friend, Jose, "El Rascuache." He already had five days of marching under his belt, all the way from the start in Merced. After mass, he filled me in on all the people that he had met, People like Pascualito, the serene and softspoken priest that came all the way from Phoenix, Arizona; Ruth the nurse; the unofficial water boys who drove the porta-potties and handed us bottles of water every so often; Bernie and Don Ruben; and

many more people that I would later get to know and learn from.

Once outside, the barren and quiet streets that I had walked through in the morning were now filled with shouts of "Una linea, una

work in the fields of the Central Valley. I know the sacrifices and struggles that people have made in order for me to have the luxuries that they never had. Five days of marching is nothing compared to



Wendy Gonzalez (left) with Dolores Huerta

linea, cinco pies de distancia!" ("One line, one line, five feet of distance from each other!") Someone handed me a red flag with the words, "United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO" circling around a bold black eagle. Someone once told me that the UFW flag should not be used as a decoration on your wall, but should be used as a tool to attain justice and dignity. I now know what he meant by that.

I was asked by one of my friends why I would sacrifice a couple of days of summer to walk 10-15 miles a day in the hot sun of the Central Valley. My answer was simple: "People in the past fought for me to be able to be where I am today." It is my obligation and duty to give back to my community and fight for future generations to have a better future in a society where things are still not equal for everyone. My father told me stories of when he would

what others have given up for social justice.

At first I was simply walking quietly, following the line of people, observing everyone else. There were a little over 100 people marching that day. Out of all those people one little boy caught my attention. This little boy, who I later found out was named Emilio, would deviate from the line, carrying his red flag high, shouting, "¡Si se puede!" He couldn't have been more than seven years old. I smiled and thought to myself, "a future leader."

At lunchtime I finally had the honor of meeting the phenomenal Dolores Huerta. I was sitting alone at one of the picnic table waiting for Jose. Mrs. Huerta walked up to me and said hi. I looked up and saw her magical smile. Her eyes had this soft

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## Dolores & Me

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glow that showed years of love, struggle, and sacrifice for other people. She asked me my name and where I was from. I nervously answered that I was from the Bay Area but I was going to school in Sacramento. She then called Arturo Rodriguez over and introduced me to him. It is hard for me to describe how I felt having met Mrs. Huerta, someone that I respect and admire so much. I told her how much I looked up to her and how she is truly an outstanding person. She humbly smiled and said thank you. I would stare in awe every time Mrs. Huerta would speak. She is such a strong human being and it is evident that she is passionate about what she believes in. She is the type of person that I strive to be. In those few days that I marched with her I learned from her more than I could ever learn in a book.

As I continued marching that day, I began meeting more and more wonderful people—people like Mrs. Jessie De La Cruz, whom the director of California Rural Legal Assistance, Jose Padilla, described as a militant of life. Being with the union since the beginning, she inspired me every time that I would get tired. Here she was, over 80 years old and marching; even when she stumbled and tripped over a large speed bump she kept going. It's people like her that keep me going and keep me passionate and true to the struggle.

As I would march past the fields and the farmworkers it only made it more obvious that a lot more work needs to be done to improve the conditions that these hard working people must endure. It only made me angrier to think about how these large companies want to keep these people from being able to sign a union contract.

The final day of the march, the rally at the state capitol really opened my eyes at how much power we as

a people have once we organize ourselves. It was so empowering to see over 5000 people together in a peaceful demonstration in support of a law that will bring justice to so many workers. It really made me proud to be a part of such a movement.

I know that everything that I learned from the people that I met and from the experiences that I had will truly help me in my quest of becoming a bilingual elementary school teacher. I will use these experiences to pass on to my students in teaching them how important it

is to support causes that promote social justice. As Dolores Huerta told me, "One of the most important things you can learn is to fight for your rights and the rights of others. Fighting for social justice is the best education you can get." This is so true. Fighting for social justice has been the one of the best learning experiences that I have ever had!

*Wendy Gonzalez is a bilingual teacher and a graduate student in bilingual education at California State University Sacramento. She is also a member of the DSA Latino Commission.*

## What is the Latino Commission?



The Latino Commission of DSA is a group of Latino DSA members, chartered by the national, who choose to make Latino issues central to their work. DSA members become members of the commission by paying dues of \$15 per year and working to support the campaigns.

Our mission statement says in part:

In the current situation, we intend to create a left pole within the Chicano/Latino Community. This involves setting forth the position that politics matters. We assert that all residents need to understand the political economy of our nation and to believe that we can change the course of the future by the struggle for political power. We recognize and accept the liberal ideals of the nation. We admire the generations of working people who have fought to achieve the right to vote, the right to join a union, and the rights contained in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

As a minority group (some 12 percent of the national population and over 30 percent of the population in key states including New York, Illinois, California, New Mexico and Texas), we recognize the need to develop coalitions and to work in coalitions with persons of several racial, national, class and identity groupings.

The Latino Commission has been active since 1983. We have carried out campaigns for immigrant rights, union solidarity, Central American solidarity, and others. Our current focus is on immigrant rights and union rights. You can find out more at our web site: [www.dsausa.org/antiracism](http://www.dsausa.org/antiracism).

Co-chairs of the Latino Commission are Eric Vega and Dolores Delgado Campbell, both of the Sacramento Local of DSA.



# Crisis of Urban Education

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And while this failure affects all poor children, it disproportionately impacts the children of African-Americans, Latinos and Asians. Fully half of all their children are in failing schools. Not 10 percent, not 20 percent, but over 50 percent of these children are being failed.

The problem is not race: there is no intellectually defensible evidence of differences in learning abilities by race. The problem is racism. Racism is developed and strengthened in the continuation of radically

ing made little substantive difference in students' test scores. We need to invest in urban schools, provide equal educational opportunities in these schools, and recruit a well-prepared teaching force that begins to reflect the student populations in these schools.

## Testing vs. investment

Rather than invest money in reform, most states have followed the lead of conservative foundations and the Clinton and Bush administrations

and plaster doesn't fall from the ceilings. We ought to be able to at least assure our students that the toilets work and fresh water is available. But the Williams v. California suit and the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision in New York clearly show we cannot.

The Williams complaint alleges:

Tens of thousands of children attending public schools located throughout the State of California are being deprived of basic educational opportunities available to more privileged children attending the majority of the State's public schools. State law requires students to attend school. Yet all too many California school children must go to school without trained teachers, necessary educational supplies, classrooms, or seats in classrooms. Students attempt to learn in schools that lack functioning heating or air conditioning systems, that lack sufficient numbers of functional toilets, and that are infested with vermin, including rats, mice, and cockroaches. These appalling conditions in California public schools have persisted for years and have worsened over time.

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***The persistence of inadequate, unsafe, and disruptive conditions clearly indicates that voters and elected officials accept the failure of many of our children, particularly students of color.***

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unequal learning conditions.

Schools are more segregated by race today than they have been for decades. A close look at the *de facto* segregated urban schools serving people of color reveals, for example, that we have the greatest number of teachers without appropriate preparation in our lowest performing schools. We have teachers with degrees in social studies and art teaching math. Guess what—the students don't learn as much math as they should. In some urban areas, those teaching out of field approach 40 percent of the total.

We now have significant evidence from New York City, Los Angeles, Houston, and many other major city school districts that we can have an African-American superintendent and staff or a Latino superintendent spend 3-5 years on new programs and leave the district hav-

and increased emphasis on testing to improve scores. This is the heart of school reform passed by the Bush regime in PL 107-110, the misnamed No Child Left Behind Act.

In California, it's the Academic Performance Index; in Texas, the Academic Excellence Indicator system; in Illinois, the Illinois Standards Assessment Systems; and in Massachusetts, the MCAS. What you will find when looking at the scores in each of these systems is—surprise!—schools with high concentrations of student in poverty have very low academic performance rankings. We are spending millions of dollars to find out what we already know rather than to improve the schools.

One would think that we could all agree that children ought to be able to attend public schools that are safe, where gangs and narcotics are not common, where roofs don't leak

A fundamental purpose of schools is to prepare future citizens to be stakeholders in society. Public schools are one of the few institutions designed to produce a public, civic community. Schools distribute knowledge. Unequal schools distribute knowledge unequally. When schools distribute knowledge unequally, as they do, they contribute to the social stratification of the economy and the decline of democratic opportunity. Schools do not exist in a vacuum. They are not isolated from their neighborhoods and communities. Inequality in schooling reflects inequality in society.

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## Jogger Case

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have the convictions overturned for the next five years. Each time the ILD appealed, the convictions of the nine men were upheld. In 1935, Ruby Bates testified that she and her traveling partner had made the whole thing up. The juries at the retrials, however, believed Victoria Price, who had stuck to the story. Despite the recantation and the testimony of the medical examiner who stated that he had seen no evidence of rape, the convictions were upheld time and time again. The luckiest of the men, Eugene Williams, Olen Montgomery, Willie Roberson and Roy Wright, spent six years in prison; the least fortunate, Haywood Patterson, only lived his last four years as a free man by escaping. By 1976, only one of the men had been pardoned.

As with the Central Park Jogger case, a handful of lives were ruined because of little more than long held, racist fantasies of black criminality and sex drive and the taboo of black-on-white intermixing. The evidence in the Scottsboro case pointed to only one conclusion: most of the nine men convicted had never even seen one another and none of them had ever seen their accusers. In the Central Park case, the evidence suggests that the five men convicted never crossed paths with the victim. Despite the fact that the victim could not recall any of the crime, investigators felt that they had their perpetrators. The five youths, who were in custody at the time of the rape for mugging someone else in the vicinity, fit the profile they were looking for. History has shown once again that, once the black and white lines are perceived to be crossed, white fear can sanction horrid perversions of justice. Have we learned the lesson yet?

*Fabricio Rodriguez is an activist, economist and a freelance writer and was formerly co-chair of Young Democratic Socialists.*

## Letters to the Editor

Frank Llewellyn in his article "Can the Greens See the Forest for the Trees?" [Fall 2002] uses exactly the same argumentative tactics as Greens who argue that the Democrats are no different from the Republicans: hold every Green responsible for whatever any Green does anywhere; and handpick your evidence to promote your thesis.

I won't defend the Minnesota Greens' decision to oppose Paul Wellstone, and neither will most of the Greens I know. Unfortunately, the national Green Party and its other state affiliates have as little power as the national Republicans or Democrats to change a local party's behavior.

Nationwide, Greens for the most part run candidates where they have people willing to run. At this point strategy can hardly enter into it, although it did in Philadelphia, where the local Greens declined with thanks an offer to run against a very progressive state representative, and

instead chose to run against an incumbent who had recently been indicted for bribing and intimidating voters in his election as Democratic ward leader.

Of the five Green Congressional candidates in Pennsylvania, four ran in heavily Republican areas of the state against Republican incumbents, three of whom had no Democratic opponent. The fifth ran against a moderate Democrat with an entirely safe seat simply to give voters in that district the opportunity to vote a straight Green ticket.

Which, if either (or any), is the "real" Green Party? That's the question that must be answered before we can determine what sort of future they represent for left electoral politics and how DSA should relate to them. It would be a mistake to make that determination based only on the evidence Llewellyn presents.

*John Hogan  
Philadelphia*

## What is the Anti-Racism Commission?



We are a group of DSA members from all racial and ethnic groups, from various parts of the country, who regard anti racism organizing as central to building a left in the US. We have been active since 1983 and we publish a quarterly newsletter *Our Struggle/Nuestra Lucha*. Membership is open to any DSA member wishing to work on this agenda. We seek to participate in a social justice movement and to focus on defeating racism.

You can find out more about our work at [www.dsausa.org/antiracism](http://www.dsausa.org/antiracism), which includes our most recent document, "Beyond Diversity: the Struggle for Justice and Solidarity," and strategies for organizing.

The Chair of the Commission is Duane Campbell. You can reach him at [Campd22702@pacbell.net](mailto:Campd22702@pacbell.net). Hunter Gray is the regional organizer for the Northwest. We welcome other regional organizers and activists.

# DSA Locals Report

## NORTHEAST

**Albany DSA** has been working regularly with the local chapter of the Alliance for Democracy, a multi-issue neo-populist group dedicated to “ending corporate rule.” It has worked on “Clean Money/Clean Elections” public financing of political campaigns, helped organize teach-ins in Albany and Utica on capitalist globalization, and pressed members of Congress to oppose fast-track legislation. It has also participated in coalitions, protests, and lobby visits with Congress members to oppose Bush’s threatened pre-emptive invasion of Iraq, helped organize teach-ins on war and peace issues (including a large event September 11-12, 2002), and been very active in the Working Families Party. *(Submitted by Mark Schaeffer)*

**Boston DSA’s** recent political activity has been focused on the state budget crisis, joining with others to fight cuts in human services by raising the capital gains tax. The local’s annual awards reception reinforced this theme by honoring State Representatives Patricia Jehlen and Anne Paulsen, Co-Chairs of the Progressive Caucus. DSA members later joined the United Food and Commercial Workers union in a shop-in at Star Market, where workers are trying to organize. Twenty shoppers in yellow T-shirts lettered “We support Shaw’s/Star Workers Right To Organize” shopped and checked out at the same time, while a union organizer leafleted outside. *(Submitted by Mike Pattberg)*

In the last few months, **Greater Philadelphia DSA** has been a major participant in several local actions protesting Wal-Mart’s policies. The local organized the Shopping for Justice coalition, including the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), Jobs with Justice and PA NOW, which conducted an informational picket around the opening of a new Wal-Mart outside of Philadelphia. Members also took part in the NOW and UFCW Days of Action targeting Wal-Mart. The local’s “Always Low Wages Always” placards (shown on DSA’s Low Wage website) were a highlight of these events. The local also hosted Noam Chomsky at a very successful fundraiser for three

alternative media organizations including the local’s newspaper, *Greater Philadelphia democratic Left*. Two more in Philly DSA’s series of Free Speech Cafes dealt with Wal-Mart policies and with the electoral politics. Finally, the local sent a contingent to the national march against the war with Iraq held in DC on October 26. *(Submitted by Kathy Quinn)*



*Boston DSA supported the UFCW organizing effort by taking part in a “shop-in” at Star Market.*

**Ithaca DSA** continues to churn out a video every week for cable access—on the low-wage economy, against Bush’s plans for war, and with a socialist view on contemporary events. *(Submitted by Theresa Alt)*

## The Reading-Berks (PA)

**DSA** local held its 19th Annual Socialist Picnic on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. Over Labor Day weekend several members picketed the Wal-Mart store in Temple, PA, protesting Wal-Mart’s importation of goods made by child labor, and their anti-union policies. Local DSA members were very active during the fall in several local congressional races and are also involved in ongoing efforts to oppose a U.S. war on Iraq, helping to organize regular vigils in Reading and a rally in West Reading on October 27th that attracted over 100 people, and making plans for future events on local college campuses. *(Submitted by Bob Millar)*

## MIDWEST

**Central Ohio DSA** is participating in a local fair trade group. Members work with Jobs with Justice as well as various antiwar and Palestine Solidarity groups. It’s devoted its fall and winter programs to various topics related to economic inequality: Enron and CEO fraud, the current US recession, Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Nickel and Dimed*, and capitalist globalization, and was involved in the Wal-Mart Day of action. *(Submitted by Simone Morgen)*

**Detroit DSA** used its dinner to draw people to the Wal-Mart Day of Action. Local members helped get two progressives elected to the state legislature and one to the state senate, as well as a member of the Wayne State

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## ***We Remember . . .***

*In the past few months, long-time DSA members have mourned the deaths of two former DSA National Directors, Jim Chapin and Gordon Haskell. Here, two other former National Directors reminisce about these two men and their contributions to the cause of social and economic justice.*

### **A Tribute to Jim Chapin**

There were times when Jim Chapin seemed like a marvelous voice-activated study guide. You asked him a question, and for the next half hour you got an answer that could take you back a couple of hundred years. You always learned something new, and by the end you saw the situation in a different light. He had a photographic memory and an analytical mind, both of which he put to good use—as a teacher (Rutgers and Yale), political operative (vice chair of Democratic Socialists of America, senior adviser to New York City Public Advocate Mark Green), textbook author (he was especially happy that his American history text was used in Texas, where every district had to purchase the same books), writer (national political analyst for United Press International), and citizen (board member for 22 years of the Queens Public Library; chair of National Hunger Year, an organization founded by his late brother, the singer Harry Chapin). He made his mark intellectually, but the word that comes up over and over again in the tributes written after his recent death from a massive heart attack at age 60 is “generous.”

He never pulled punches or hesitated to speak his mind, yet however sharp the written words, the spirit underneath was one of generosity, an understanding that life was complex, that there were no easy answers, that his opponents had points that he understood. In an age when time is our most precious commodity, Jim was profligate with his. He was always available, at any hour, no matter whether he'd last seen you yesterday or five years ago. He gave good advice, put you in touch with the right person, or—during one period at least—acted as a one-person employment agency to find jobs for graduates of what was then the DSA youth section.



Jim was the first person I interviewed about Democratic Party politics after I became managing editor of *Democratic Left* in the late 1970s. I'd never met anyone so intense, so erudite, so talkative. He often joked that as the tone-deaf member of a family of musicians (his father was a jazz drummer, Harry was a singer, as is his brother Tom, and brother Steve is a musician) he overcompensated with words. The tone-deafness and actual partial deafness may have contributed to his nasal monotone, which furthered the impression of a flat affect. At first meeting, you could think he was all intellect. Then you heard him talk about his sons, James and David, or his wife, Diana, and even though he could talk analytically about them, he couldn't hide his love and pride.

Despite his unsparing self-observation and observation of others, he never wasted time on pettiness or anger. He just looked at a situation, told you what all the historical precedents for it were, and helped you plot a way out of it. He served as DSA's national executive director for two years and discovered that administration wasn't his forte. He didn't sour on the organization, even though his time there was rocky. When I took the job a few years later, he told me I would need a kitchen cabinet (which seemed to be made up of former staffers) to show me the ropes. Those meetings in a congenial Greenwich Village restaurant helped keep my mind from being completely clogged with administrative problems. Now that I'm a parent, I know that giving up an evening at home for politics isn't something one does lightly.

Often, Jim would bring the boys to the office, where they studied or played strategy games in the

mailroom while we planned other strategies in the front office. Long before the Internet, Jim played simulation war games, spreading the pieces of the Crimean War, Civil War, or Russian Revolution on a long table and communicating with fellow enthusiasts across the country, phoning in moves after 11 p.m., when the rates went down and people in other time zones were awake. He could get as excited about his next move at the Battle of Gettysburg as about Democratic Agenda's press conference at the Democratic mid-term convention. And, he reminded us, this activity gave him a chance to talk to people outside the normal leftist circles.

His enthusiasm stays in my memory. No matter how bad the political situation, he could always think of a time when it was worse. He could always propose a way out. In the perverse way that people on the left comfort themselves, this perspective helped.

He saw cycles and peaks where we saw slumps and valleys.

He wasn't a sentimental person, but I'm sure he would have enjoyed knowing how much people appreciated his gifts. In recent years, as an analyst for UPI, he'd had a national stage on which to display them. There was a lot of good work still in him. The loss of this exemplary (to use Eric Alterman's word) father, son, and husband is incalculable for his family. His contributions to the left, to the larger society, and specifically to individuals were enormous. The space he leaves will not be filled by his like again.

*Maxine Phillips was managing editor of Democratic Left for eight years and Director of DSA in 1984-85. This article is reprinted from the Autumn 2002 issue of Religion and Socialism, the newsletter for DSA's Religion and Socialism Commission.*



## Gordon Haskell: Stalwart of Democratic Socialism

Gordon Haskell, one of the first directors of the newly merged Democratic Socialists of America in the early 1980s and a stalwart of American democratic socialism, died in October 2002 of a heart attack.

I first met Gordon when Michael Harrington persuaded him to come out of retirement to work as the DSA organizational director. At that time, I joined Maxine Phillips, Holly Graff, and Gordon as the first four full-time national directors in the unwieldy organizational structure that was produced by the merger of DSOC and NAM to form DSA. The three of us, and our west coast office stalwart Jim Shoch, worked closely with Gordon in those first months and years, and we all came to know and appreciate Gordon's good humor and his "optimism of the will," a disposition sorely needed in the first years of the "Reagan Revolution." Gordon brought decades of organizational and fundraising skill and experience to the post of DSA director, and he was instrumental in helping the fledgling DSA overcome a financial deficit it had inherited from one of its predecessor organizations. That there is still a DSA today is a result, in no small part, of his efforts.

But Gordon's activism on the American left goes back decades, back to the Upton Sinclair campaign for Governor in California and back to the various Shachtmanite political organizations—the Workers' Party and the Independent Socialist League. For many years, he was co-editor, with Hal Draper, of the ISL's newspaper *Labor Action*. Gordon also had a stint working for the American Civil Liberties Union, where he developed considerable fund-raising expertise, and he was very active in the Association for Union Democracy, where he served as the first president.

In our neighborhood in Brooklyn and later in Santa Cruz, where he re-retired, Gordon and his wife, Rachel, were stalwarts of the local reform Democratic Party club. In Brooklyn, they played a central role in mobilizing DSA to force an anti-gay clubhouse politician, Tom Cuite, who had kept civil rights legislation out of the City Council for years, into early retirement in the face of sure defeat by Stephen DiBrienza.

*Leo Casey is currently on the staff of the United Federation of Teachers.*

# Crisis in Education

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Most parents care about their kids. And parents in urban areas are increasingly angered, offended, and frustrated when public officials refuse to offer a decent opportunity for their children. Some see a racial conspiracy; some blame teachers' unions. Many have given up on democracy and public life and turned to cynicism. Others have been sold on vouchers as an alternative.

So, while schools should be a site for building democracy and equal opportunity, this opportunity can only be created with significant new investment in schools in low-income areas. Investment requires a political decision. Our elected officials, both New Democrats and Republicans, have refused to make this decision each year in most local, state, and federal budgets. As state after state faces the current budget crisis, they are cutting education funding rather than improving funding.

The persistence of inadequate, unsafe, and disruptive conditions clearly indicates that voters and elected officials accept the failure of many of our children, particularly the failure of students of color in urban areas. Although a few districts have improved, and many dedicated teachers continue to struggle against the scandal of urban public schooling, individual efforts are not enough. We need substantial and effective reform.

Research summarized by the Education Trust ([www.edtrust.org](http://www.edtrust.org)) and my own experience working with teachers in urban schools for over thirty years lead me to conclude that we know how to improve these schools. I explain many of the details in my book *Choosing Democracy: a practical guide to multicultural education* (Merrill/Prentice Hall 2000; a new edition will be out in 2004).

Improving these schools will cost a great deal of money. We would

have to spend as much on the poor kids in the cities as we spend on the middle-class kids in the suburbs. The testing and accountability models presently popular with politicians will not work. And the privatization models being tried in Philadelphia and elsewhere will fail.

## A choice between two futures

Schools can continue as they are. One segment of the society will be well educated and prosperous, and another segment will fail. The schools would continue to serve to train some workers for subservience and to maintain and extend the current racial divisions, which permit the political domination of the corporate ruling class. The economic crisis for working people and people of color will continue to accelerate.

Alternatively, schools can be transformed into places where all students, rich, middle-class and poor,

receive compelling, interesting education. Such democratic reform would engage teachers and their unions as equal, trusted, respected partners in progress. Authentic school reform, which requires both teacher union and teacher participation, could play a major role in healing a divided nation. The challenge is both pedagogical and political.

"The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born in earnest struggle.... [I]f there is no struggle, there is no progress."

—Frederick Douglass, 1849

*Duane Campbell teaches at California State University-Sacramento and is the Chair of DSA's Anti-Racism Commission. He can be contacted at [Campd22702@pacbell.net](mailto:Campd22702@pacbell.net).*





# DSA Locals Report

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board of Governors. With four labor-friendly board members, DSA is looking at a living wage and anti-sweatshop campaign at Wayne State. *(Submitted by David Green)*

**Madison Area DSA** sponsored a workshop on equitable taxation at the Midwest Radfest, an annual event for community activists and progressive academics in late May. Its workshop on Tax Literacy for Progressives included a preliminary tax quiz and a panel with Mike Prokosch (United for Fair Economy), Marc Pocan (progressive legislator from Wisconsin), Jon Peacock (state budget analyst from the Wisconsin Commission on Children and Families), and moderator Frank Emspak from the University of Wisconsin School for Workers. There was an excellent turnout, and rumor has it that the workshop was one of the best events at this year's Radfest. In late August local members met with Mary Jo Uphoff, one of the major movers in the Socialist Party of Wisconsin in the late 1940s and 1950s. She shared some history, including tales of her personal encounters with Norman Thomas. *(Submitted by Marc Silberman)*

For **Twin Cities DSA** the death of Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone was a personal as well as a political loss, as most many local members knew Paul individually. DSA's Social Democratic Action caucus in the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party is working to keep Paul's legacy alive and to move the DFL in a solidly progressive direction. Some of the local's members have worked to form a permanent International Commission within DSA and recently hosted a meeting with Swedish Social Democrats and Left Socialists. The local is also a member of a coalition promoting fair and clean elections in MN. *(Submitted by Stephan Peter)*

## WEST

**East Bay DSA** has joined with progressive Democrats and the Committees of Correspondence in the People's Electoral Project to support propositions and get Tom Bates elected Mayor of Berkeley. The local has also campaigned for Instant Runoff Voting, receiving publicity for its efforts. For monthly meetings it has invited speakers on topics such as the Israel-Palestine conflict and how to help shape the peace movement. *(Submitted by Karl Knobler)*

**Sacramento DSA** sponsored a forum on Saturday, September 21st. Representatives from the Democratic Party, the Green Party, the Labor Party, the Central Labor Council, and many other organizations were present. A heated debate over the "spoiler" role of third parties swept the group within twenty minutes. Back and forth, Democrats and Greens, trade unionists, socialists, and veterans of every peace and justice campaign since World War II were frankly discussing this critical issue. Sacramento DSA is also participating in anti-war demonstrations and distributing the paper *War Times* at all events. *(Submitted by Duane Campbell)*

**San Fernando Valley DSA** devoted its bimonthly dinner meeting to the worsening plight of low-wage workers by showing a documentary. Barbara Ehrenreich was interviewed on becoming a poverty-level worker to gather research for her expose on the exploitation of the poor in her best seller *Nickel and Dimed*. Postcards were available to write representatives for an increase in the national minimum wage. *(Submitted by Leo Whitaker)*



*The Teamsters' "Rat" with Philly DSA's "Always Low Wages Always" placard at a Wal-Mart demonstration.*

**San Francisco DSA** participated in some local elections. Things went well regarding getting people elected, but badly on the SF ballot propositions. The SF resolution asking the NPC to attend to various matters of DSA organizing seems to have produced results. *(Submitted by Ross Boylan)*

**DSA Oregon** members were involved this election season in Oregon's Universal Health Care campaign, which lost by a large margin, and an initiative to raise the minimum wage to \$6.90 per hour and tag it to inflation, which passed by a substantial majority. The chapter was a founding member of the Oregon Public Power

Coalition, which is attempting to form a People's Utility District to take over Enron's local subsidiary. A PUD measure on the ballot in Multnomah County (Portland) is expected in the spring. The local is also involved in a new statewide economic justice coalition, which will work on issues such as TANF and living wage campaigns. On November 17 it sponsored a panel discussion on Poverty in Oregon with some Oregon anti-poverty leaders in conjunction with the local's annual statewide membership meeting. DSA Oregon has also taken on the project of rebuilding the radical Red Rose School, now in its 23rd year. *(Submitted by Duane Poncy)*

# Confronting America's Low-Wage Economy



Frances Fox Piven was the opening speaker at the Friday night outreach event at DSA's conference, with Miles Rappoport of Dēmos (center) speaking at one of Saturday's sessions, and former DSA National Director Jack Clark giving closing remarks on Sunday.

DSA marked the 40th anniversary of the publication of Michael Harrington's *The Other America* with a three-day conference in Washington, DC, September 20-22, entitled "Confronting America's Low-Wage Economy." The conference also kicked off DSA's national campaign to focus attention on the problems of low-wage workers with a series of

presentations and workshops setting forth the issues and possibilities for activism.

Friday night's outreach event, "The Other America: What has changed in 40 years," featured DSA vice chair and welfare expert/author Frances Fox Piven; Lawrence Mishel, Executive Director of the Economic Policy Institute; Peter Edelman of Georgetown University Law Center, a Clinton administration official who resigned in protest against Clinton's signing the welfare "reform" bill; and Tom Woodruff, Executive Vice President of the Service Employees International Union.

Saturday presentations featured such speakers as author Holly Sklar (*Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies That Work For All Of Us*); Wade Rathke, Chief Organizer of ACORN; Wendell Primus of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities; Miles Rappoport of Dēmos: A Network of Ideas and Action and former Connecticut secretary of state; and DSA vice chair Harold Meyerson, editor-at-large for *The American Prospect*. Workshops took up the issues of TANF reauthorization, public attitudes toward the poor, hunger in America, living wage campaigns, organizing low-wage workers, and privatization of Social Security.

More information on the conference, including video clips and transcripts, is gradually being made available on DSA's Low-Wage Economy Campaign website at [www.dsausa.org/lowwage](http://www.dsausa.org/lowwage).

- Yes, I want to join the Democratic Socialists of America. Enclosed are my dues (includes a subscription to *Democratic Left*) of:
  - \$50 Sustainer     \$35 Regular     \$15 Low-Income/Student
- Yes, I want to renew my membership in DSA. Enclosed are my renewal dues of:
  - \$60 Sustainer     \$45 Regular     \$20 Low-Income/Student
- Enclosed is an extra contribution of:  \$50     \$100     \$25 to help DSA in its work.
- Please send me more information about DSA and democratic socialism.

My special interests are:

- Labor
- Religion
- Youth
- Anti-Racism
- Feminism
- Gay and Lesbian Rights

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