

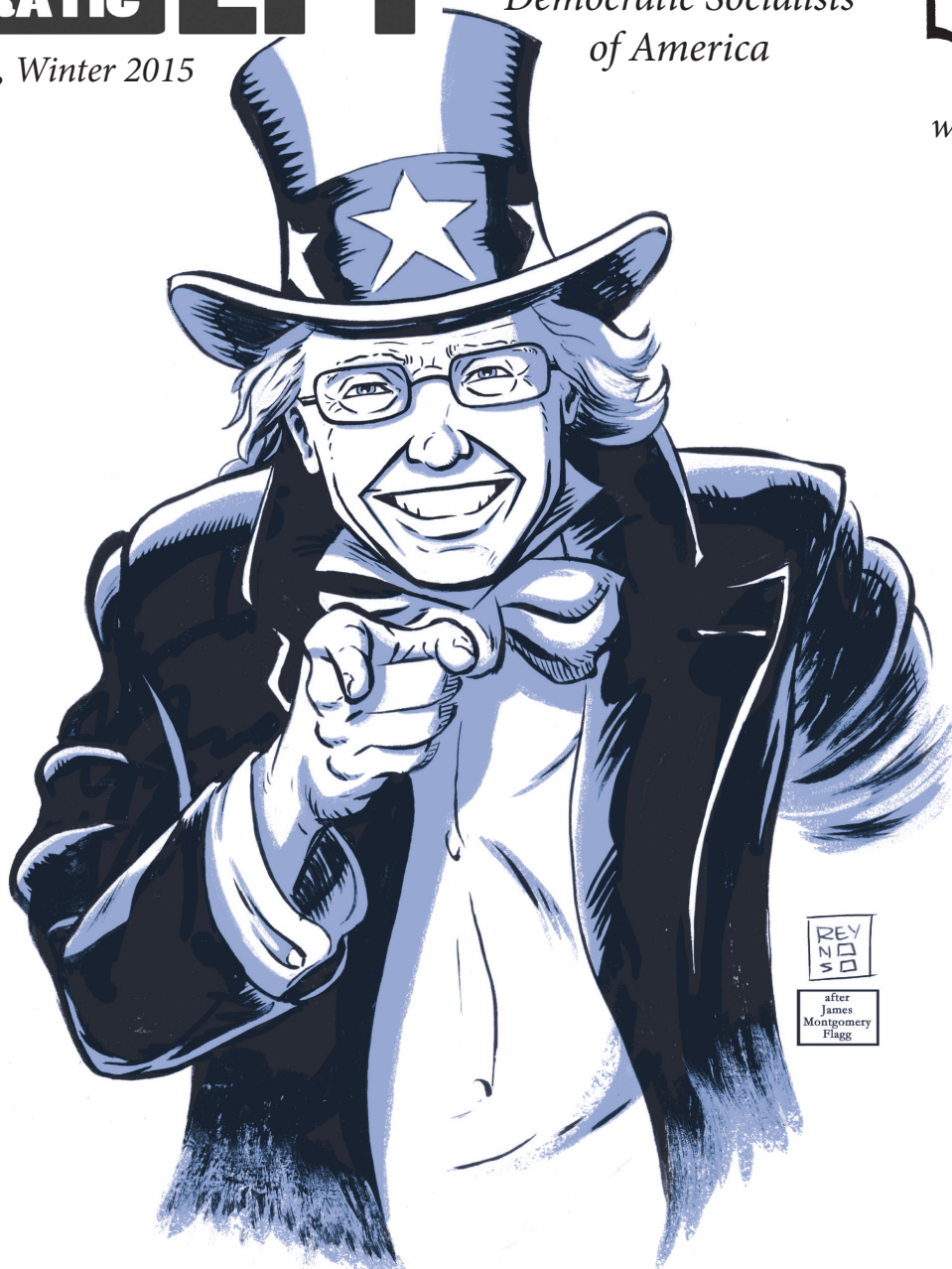
DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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WZREY
DDY

after
James
Montgomery
Flagg

BERNIE NEEDS YOU TO BUILD A SOCIALIST MOVEMENT!

From the National Director

Seize the Day!

By Maria Svart

In recent issues of *Democratic Left* I talked about the importance of *building solidarity*, of acknowledging and building on our differences in mutual support. I also discussed the importance of *walking with vision*, always keeping our socialist ideals fixed in our sights and strategy.



But neither really matters if we don't dramatically grow our movement!

In that regard, Bernie Sanders has given us a gift. His campaign is hitting two birds with one stone: explaining that democratic socialism is not the totalitarian nightmare that the capitalists claim and empowering ordinary people to take the first step toward collective action. You and I know that movement work can be tiring, discouraging, and frustrating. But it can also be exhilarating and transformative. Can we get a significant number of these newly active Bernie supporters to become long distance runners for democratic socialism? ¡Sí, se puede!

Here's what we have to do to truly make this a movement rather than a moment.

One: Be proud of who we are, what we believe, and what we are doing. You are a member of an organization fighting for the liberation of all people, for the right of each of us to a dignified and healthy life, and for the expansion of democracy into all areas of life. Join Bernie in scoffing at the red-baiters and heed his call to build a mass grassroots movement of politically aware and empowered people.

Two: Understand that this organization won't grow by itself. We're in an all-hands-on-deck moment, and, for once, we're on the offense. Now is not the time to snuggle up in front of the TV or computer or abstain from action because our volunteer-run organization isn't perfect. Get involved.

And get others involved. The only way to get someone to say "yes" to becoming a member is if you ask them to join.

Three: Learn from fellow members, and from other movements. Reach out to DSAers to find out how they have accomplished exciting things and do the same with organizations in your own community. How did the new Austin DSA chapter double its membership in just two years? How did the eight new DSA organizing committees get up and running so fast? How have NYC, Philly, and Chicago DSA managed weekly Bernie tabling? How did the five new YDS campus chapters self-organize this fall? How are Latinos for Bernie and African Americans for Bernie spreading the word? How can we learn to expand our own organization from the lessons Bernie learned about reaching new demographic groups through forthright solidarity? Listen to each others' stories, and don't be afraid to tell your own. We're building this future together.

Will you ask a Bernie supporter you know to join DSA? Will you start attending meetings organized by your local DSA or YDS chapter (if you don't already)? Will you help *organize* a chapter if there isn't one in your community? Will you do your part to expand our infrastructure so that we can maximize our effectiveness between now and the primaries, and beyond?

If not now, when? If not you, who? ❖

Contents

Building a Political Revolution.....	3
All Out for Bernie	5
Talkin' Bernie and Socialism	8
Welfare Rights, Wrongs, and Attacks on Women	9
Mass Incarceration: Is Change Gonna Come?	11
Creating a Culture of Reproductive Justice.....	12
Socialist for President: Debs and Sanders	13
Elections in Popular Culture	14
Bernie Comics.....	15

Cover art by Frank Reynoso



Nadia James, Dustin Guastella, Adam Goldman, and Phillip Logan tabling for Philadelphia DSA at First Friday this summer. Photo: Elizabeth Henderson.

Building a Political Revolution

The Sanders Campaign and the Future of the Left

By Joseph M. Schwartz

Senator Bernie Sanders's campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination offers the biggest opportunity for growth that U.S. socialists have had in decades. In a few months he has transformed the Democratic Party primary into a debate about the causes of rampant inequality and possible solutions. But the political revolution he talks about can only happen if activists in the Sanders campaign broaden its social base among voters of color and the non-college educated and build local multi-racial progressive coalitions. Stronger DSA locals must play a central role in such coalitions if they are to offer a coherent alternative to corporate domination.

These state and local formations should link social-movement activism to electoral politics and develop a diverse array of viable Sanders-type candidates in their communities. If they do that, the Left can both challenge pro-corporate Democrats and change the game in the 25 states where Republicans rule all three branches of government.

Sanders hesitated to run for fear of being a marginal candidate. But hundreds of thousands have joined his campaign, disgusted by the bipartisan corporate control of our politics. Who would have thought that the first Democratic presidential debate would focus on whether democratic socialism is a superior system to capitalism?

Sanders's program includes both the social democratic reforms of progressive income and corporate taxation and the more radical "non-reformist" reforms that shift control over capital from corporations to social ownership. The former would be used to fund such public goods as free universal child care, free public higher education, and a national health care system. The latter includes a public infrastructure bank to invest one trillion dollars over ten years to create three million jobs and federal

funding for worker cooperatives. His proposal to create a Post Office banking system would provide low-cost financial services to people who are now exploited by check-cashing services and pay-day lenders.

**BERNIE NEEDS YOU
TO BUILD A
SOCIALIST MOVEMENT!**



We may not be Denmark, as Hillary Clinton famously said, but Sanders would like the richest country in the world to do better than the small countries of northern Europe. Today, the United States spends 30% of its gross domestic product on public expenditure and over a quarter of that is wasted on mass incarceration and militarism. In contrast, northern European governments channel 45-55% of their GDP through the state and spend only 2% of their GDP on defense.

Why the difference? Most of northern Europe has publicly funded universal child care, truly universal health care, and more generous public pensions that replace 60% of average income. Social Security, our equivalent program, replaces a paltry

40%. How do these countries pay for programs that benefit all their residents? They can do it because affluent taxpayers see the value of these relatively high quality social goods and are willing to pay for them.

Could the United States afford these goods? Certainly, but only if the 1% and corporate America pay their fair share. In 1962, corporate taxes constituted more than 25% of federal revenues. Today, corporate taxes account for 8% of federal revenues. If the country just went back to the pre-Reagan and pre-George W. Bush tax levels on the top 5% of income earners, federal spending could immediately expand by \$250 billion or more than 7%.

However, not even one of Sanders's platform planks could pass a center-right Congress without massive protests. Politicians, even left-leaning ones, are opportunists; they want to be re-elected. The social movements of the 1930s and 1960s not only scared elites into supporting pro-

gressive reforms but also increased the number of left-leaning representatives.

Building an effective protest movement will not be easy. Racism and coded appeals to it have long divided people who should be natural allies. Many swing white voters favor an expansion of universal public goods but are skeptical about tax reform. Despite ample evidence to the contrary, many still believe that too much social welfare spending goes to the “undeserving” poor. Widespread economic anxiety fuels the rival populisms of Left and Right, hence the popularity of Donald Trump and Ben Carson.

Outrage against inequality and declining living standards, particularly among young, heavily indebted, and underemployed recent college graduates, fueled Occupy. It also provides Sanders with a strong base among millennials. They have a somewhat more favorable view of socialism than of capitalism, probably because they vaguely associate northern European social democracy with a more egalitarian and socially mobile society than our own.

The outrage is there among other demographic groups, and the Sanders campaign must find a way to reach them. These groups are non-college-educated whites, communities of color, and immigrants. The core of Sanders’s national support remains among Democrats who self-identify as liberal, progressive, or radical. These voters are primarily college-educated and white and work as civil servants, educators, non-profit advocates, and in the caregiving professions. Hillary Clinton has double Sanders’s support among the 40% of likely Democratic Party primary voters of color who say they are well-acquainted with Sanders. Among the 60% of likely Democratic voters of color who do not know enough about Sanders to make a judgment, he is barely on the radar. Voters of color make up more than 35% of the Democratic primary vote. Bernie still runs far behind Hillary among self-identified feminists and self-defined “moderate” working-class Democrats, particularly those who are not members of unions.

To change those numbers, local Sanders groups have to reach out to progressive activists of color willing to vouch for Bernie within their communities. They have to work with Labor for Bernie to secure local union support. The Sanders campaign has to accelerate its hiring of organizers who have deep roots in working-class and black, Latino, and Asian American communities. To its credit, the campaign has begun to do this. Finally, we have to be willing not only to criticize Hillary’s flip-flopping on the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Keystone pipeline but her strong support of welfare “reform” policies that have been devastating for low-income

women and children.

To build local “rainbow coalitions” that last beyond the Sanders campaign, DSAers need to prioritize linking struggles for racial justice to the Sanders effort. Struggles for immigrant rights, for equitable public education, for a \$15 minimum wage, and against mass incarceration and police brutality are the civil rights struggles of our time. If a multi-racial Left is to emerge from the campaign, we need new forms of grassroots coalitions that can put street heat on government officials while building the independent electoral capacity of the Left, labor, and communities of color. The last time the Left had such an opportunity was with Jesse Jackson’s 1988 presidential nomination run. We failed to build a national rainbow coalition after that campaign; we cannot afford to fail again.

As Hillary supporters ramp up the anti-socialist rhetoric (“Bernie’s unelectable because he’s a socialist”) DSA activists have to demonstrate that democratic socialism can be a viable and effective force in U.S. politics. Socialism fits squarely within the U.S. democratic tradition—from Tom Paine to the radical abolitionists and on to Frederick Douglass, Eugene Debs, Helen Keller, A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, and Martin Luther King, Jr. We can build on prior progressive policies by expanding Social Security and instituting Medicare for All. And we can tackle the climate crisis by going beyond prior public investments that transformed the U.S. energy industry—the Rural Electrical Cooperatives of the 1930s and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Vibrant socialist organizations have always played a key role in building the social movements that take on the power of capital. And now is the time to build DSA. The Sanders campaign shows that resistance is possible; but radical transformation is the work of a lifetime, not just of a campaign. ❖

Joseph M. Schwartz is a National Vice-Chair of Democratic Socialists of America and a professor of political science at Temple University. His writings on Sanders and socialism have appeared in In These Times, Jacobin, and Telesur. Search for his interview on MSNBC on Sanders and socialism.

Books by DSAers

Once a year we publish a list of recent books by DSAers. If your book has come out in the last 12 months, please send us the title and publisher by January 1. If we missed you last year, but the book was published in the past three years, let us know: dleditorvol@dsausa.org

All Out for Bernie

By Elizabeth Henderson

From Austin, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia, to New York City and Washington, D.C., DSA locals and organizing committees are recruiting members, developing leaders, and connecting with new communities through work on Bernie Sanders's presidential campaign. Conversations with local leaders from around the country show that people are more receptive to talking about socialism as a result of Sanders's candidacy.

In New York City, most of the people local members encounter are "super receptive," says Rahel Biru, co-chair of the New York City DSA, especially when they hear about Sanders's plan for expanding Social Security and funding free public higher education. "It is so common sense and it appeals to people," she says.

After spending more than a decade volunteering for political campaigns, including Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, Biru started coming to DSA meetings last winter. Since then, Biru says, Sanders's run played a big role in her decision to become a leader in the New York City local.

Biru says that routine tabling has allowed the local to develop a presence and connect with new members. "They're looking for a group where they can do things, and they're ready to get to work. They see our DSA Bernie table and they're like, 'Yes, I want to do that.'"

Member recruitment, orientation, and retention, though, is a long-term undertaking that happens one member at a time. Although the Philadelphia local routinely tables for We Need Bernie, Adam Goldman, co-chair of the local, says that the deeper conversations that convert Sanders supporters into dues-paying members are happening at monthly Happy Hour events and bi-weekly discussion groups.

Goldman, who joined the local in 2011 after getting his start at Temple University's YDS chapter, saw We Need Bernie as a chance to increase his in-

volvement in the local, and he is now chair of the local's Sanders work. "My trajectory shows how much of a long-term game recruitment and fostering activists in the organization is," Goldman says.

In Washington, D.C., We Need Bernie work has energized members and motivated them to get more involved in local work. Coleson Breen, a former co-chair of the local, is hopeful that the newer recruits will join DSA, but like Goldman, he takes the long view.

"I think it's too early to tell if some of the people that we're signing up through Bernie work will stick around, but I am hopeful that they will," Breen says.

Breen increased his involvement in the local to help plan a We Need Bernie rally featuring writer and progressive political activist Jim Hightower, author and DSA honorary chair Barbara Ehrenreich, and retired Communication Workers of America president Larry Cohen, among others, earlier this fall. The event had around 100 attendees.

Breen thinks that Sanders's campaign, unlike the

financial crisis in 2008 or Occupy Wall Street, presents DSA with a historic moment to get the word out about democratic socialism. "We'll never have a better opportunity to do this work. This is the time to really step up and get involved," says Breen.

Working with Others

Many locals and organizing committees, including those in Atlanta, Austin, and Knoxville, Tennessee, have found that collaborating with other groups on Sanders work has been a successful way to educate people about Sanders's candidacy and strengthen local membership.

Members of the DSA organizing committee in Knoxville are working as individuals with local progressive groups to get Sanders on the ballot for the presidential primary. Because We Need Bernie is an "uncoordinated independent expenditure" campaign, DSA locals and organizing committees must



James Cajuste and Jeevan D'souza, members of the NYC DSA local, participated in a bilingual tabling in East Harlem. Photo: Miko Brandini.

refrain from directly coordinating with the official campaign, which includes collecting signatures.

Travis Donoho, one of the coordinators of the Knoxville committee, says that the petitions are a great organizing tool. “People who would give us twenty seconds or ten seconds if we were handing out a flyer give us three or five minutes as they sign the petition.”

Donoho joined the New American Movement (NAM) when he was 18 years old and became a member of DSA when NAM merged with the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) in 1982. Donoho believes that there’s “never been a better time to ask people to join DSA. Bernie is making it okay to talk about democratic socialism. And we haven’t seen that in 40 years.”

Austin DSA, which Donoho helped found with current co-chairs Alice Embree and Danny Fetonte before moving to Knoxville, has worked through Texans for Bernie after its members developed relationships with a number of local progressive groups while organizing an event for Sanders and Jim Hightower last spring. Sixty members of the Austin local are participating in Texans for Bernie.

Fetonte says that this level of participation, combined with DSA members being open about their membership, makes it possible for DSAers to have plenty of discussions about socialism.

“The key is to just let people know who you are, and if you’re open about it like Bernie is, people will ask a lot of questions and you’ll be talking about it

all the time and you can recruit people,” Fetonte says.

Through this approach, as well as by encouraging all attendees at local DSA meetings to join the organization, Austin has recruited a dozen new members since the campaign started.

Coalition work is also central to the Metro Atlanta local’s organizing approach, with local members participating in Georgia for Bernie. Daniel Hanley, an at-large member of the local’s Executive Committee, says that although the local wants to increase its membership numbers, it sees the value of building the broader progressive movement by plugging people into other activist movements such as Fight for \$15 and Black Lives Matter.

“We hope they become DSA members or, at least, a member of some organization, like a DSA coalition partner, and then we can continue to build relationships with people in those groups,” Hanley said.

The local’s ties to Sanders stretch back to his first Senate run, when members did fundraising work for his campaign. Atlanta combined efforts with other locals in a bundling campaign to help the DSA PAC raise \$60,000 for Sanders. The newly elected senator was then the keynote speaker at the local’s first Douglass-Debs awards dinner in 2007.

Through the local’s organizing work with Georgia for Bernie—which includes tabling, participating in marches, flyering on public transportation, and creative outreach tactics like banner drops and light projections on buildings—Hanley believes that the people they come in contact with are now



Boulder DSAers Dave Anderson (l., holding up one corner of banner), and Jack Hanley (behind Dave’s right shoulder) march on Labor Day with Coloradans for Bernie. Photo: Jim Adams

one step closer to becoming socialist organizers. “I think the seeds have been planted with a lot of people.”

New Ground

Since Black Lives Matter activists interrupted a Netroots Nation forum featuring Sanders and former Maryland governor Martin O’Malley this past summer, the senator’s platform on race has been in the spotlight. Additional critiques from racial justice activists led Sanders to release a racial justice platform addressing many of their concerns.

Some DSA locals, recognizing that DSA’s membership is overwhelmingly white, are working to connect their Sanders work with racial justice organizing. These locals aim to bring attention to issues of racial justice while simultaneously building a more diverse DSA.

The Philadelphia local is currently organizing a forum on racial justice and Sanders, and members of the Washington, D.C., local canvassed for Sanders in the Fort Totten area, a predominantly African American neighborhood in the northeast section of the city.

The New York City local recently started bilingual tabling outreach with volunteers who speak both English and Spanish.

The Greater Oak Park branch of the Chicago local is also using its We Need Bernie work to connect with Latino and African American communities. Members of the group did outreach work in these communities during socialist candidate Jorge Mújica’s campaign for 25th ward alderman earlier this year.

Bill Barclay, co-chair of the Chicago local, noted that when individual members of the Greater Oak Park local attended a meeting of Sanders supporters last spring, they looked around at the mostly white faces in the room and decided that they should prioritize getting the word out about Sanders to communities of color in Chicago.

Since then, members of the local have routinely distributed flyers at community events, including farmers’ markets and art festivals, where a significant number of African Americans or Latinos are present.

Peg Strobel, treasurer of the Chicago local, notes that it’s important for white activists to get used to working in communities of color. “I think people need to get over a sense of discomfort and being one of the few white people around,” Strobel said.



Metro Atlanta DSA members (from left to right) Barbara Joye, Minnie Ruffin, Brandon Payton-Carrillo, Barbara Landay, and Adam Cardo marching to a Bernie fundraiser in Atlanta in September. Photo: Reid Jenkins.

More than 60% of Chicago’s population is made up of African Americans, Latinos, and Asians. Tom Broderick, co-chair of the Greater Oak Park branch of the Chicago local, says that bringing Sanders’s platform to all of these communities is vital to the success of the campaign. “The Chicago area is a metropolis. We have all kinds of folks around here who may or may not know who Bernie Sanders is, and what we need to do is get them to know who he is,” Broderick says.

‘It’s Up to You and Me’

Sanders’s presidential campaign has created an unprecedented opportunity for progressives in general and socialists in particular. Since the senator from Vermont announced his decision to run last spring, DSA’s membership has increased, and eight new organizing committees have been established.

Maria Svart, DSA’s national director, says that the next phase of DSA’s involvement in Sanders’s “political revolution” is “up to you and me. Do we utilize this window of opportunity to turn people interested in democratic socialism into members of DSA? Do we build a democratic socialist movement that reflects the diversity of the working class and is truly capable of winning? The capitalists tell us there is no alternative. Let’s prove them wrong.” ❖

A longer version of this article will also be published on www.dsausa.org/democratic_left.

Elizabeth Henderson is a freelance writer, member of the Philadelphia chapter of DSA, and co-chair of the We Need Bernie campaign.



Talkin' Bernie and Socialism

By Dustin Guastella

Scene I: You've set up your table. The Socialists for Sanders sign can be seen from ten feet away. You're wearing a DSA T-shirt. The table is stocked with flyers on Bernie's positions. The sign-up sheet is in front of you. You're building DSA and Sanders's campaign. Someone walks up to the table.

Scene II: You're at a party and somebody notices your Sanders button or T-shirt. "He seems like a nice guy, but what does he stand for?" "I like his ideas, but I really want a woman president." "He doesn't have a chance."

Linking Bernie's campaign and our vision of democratic socialism requires real conversations with thousands of workers, students, and voters, many of whom have not heard of Bernie, his platform, or his call for political revolution.

So, what do you say after you say hello? First, listen to the person's comments and questions, then put the message and the man together.

Link Bernie's platform to a socialist analysis and a long-term vision of a radically democratic and egalitarian society. For instance, when we talk about Bernie's commitment to tuition-free public higher education, we should explain why education is a fundamental social right, not a commodity sold to the highest bidder in order to get an edge in the global capitalist marketplace. Just as our country decided to make elementary and secondary education available to everyone, not just the wealthy, we can do the same for higher education, paid for by a financial transaction tax.

When we mention Bernie's position on wealth redistribution, we make it clear that wealth itself is *created by society as a whole* and not by a class of capitalists.

You bring up easily relatable and popular key positions: "Bernie is the only candidate pushing for a \$15 minimum wage," "Bernie is the only candidate fighting for free healthcare for all," and "Bernie is the only candidate pledging to expand the labor movement." And then you explain *why that mat-*

ters. Bernie's platform has many strong policy positions. We socialists need to bring the analysis that informs those policies to the foreground.

What if the person is already a "Sanderista" but didn't even know that DSA existed? Schedule a time to sit down one-on-one and talk about how to make this political revolution a reality. First, find out where the person is coming from. Then, explain how Bernie's goals and ours fit with their desire for a more equal and democratic future. Explain that we need a parallel social movement to complement Sanders's electoral movement. If he's elected, he's going to need a strong movement behind him. And if he's not elected the need for such a movement is even greater. Bernie himself has repeatedly stressed the need for increased social movement activity. His supporters need to know that it is not enough to vote for him and go home.

Without a strong socialist organization there can be no strong leftist movement. When you table and leaflet or wear a button or T-shirt, always introduce yourself as a member of DSA and invite enthusiastic Sand-

ers supporters to talk with you at greater length or come to your next local meeting. DSA has been fighting for many of Bernie's positions for nearly 40 years (way before it was cool!). DSA is training and developing the next generation of socialist leaders, activists, and organizers. If Sanders supporters want to continue this work after the campaign is over, they should see our organization as their political home. Democratic socialists should be front and center of the Sanderista political revolution, but we can only make that happen if we organize and speak up about socialism. ❖

Dustin Guastella is a member of Philadelphia DSA and co-chair of the DSA We Need Bernie campaign. You can find DSA resources at www.dsausa.org/weneedbernie_organizing_materials.



I, to, r. Rick Belliveau, Jason Potter, and Brady Lange of the Portland, Oregon, DSA

Welfare Rights, Wrongs, and Attacks on Women

Michele Rossi speaks with Frances Fox Piven

Right-wing talk-show host Glenn Beck has called her “one of the nine most dangerous people in the world.” DSA is proud to call her an honorary chair. Political scientist and sociologist Frances Fox Piven has inspired and angered political activists for decades. Almost 50 years ago, the *Nation* published an article by her and her colleague and husband Richard Cloward in which they argued that, with Democrats in control of the White House and Congress, poor people should claim the welfare benefits to which they were entitled. The result would swamp the system and lead to something new, a guaranteed annual income, which would end poverty as we knew it. The Cloward-Piven strategy, as it became known, was seen as a way for powerless people to take advantage of disruptive moments to make more than incremental gains. Later, the strategy was expanded to include massive voter registration drives. Cloward and Piven, with George Wiley, helped found the National Welfare Rights Movement, which, for a few years, was the militant voice of heretofore voiceless welfare clients. Michele Rossi talks with Piven about the impact of Bill Clinton’s so-called welfare reform and its enduring impact on the poor. —Ed.

Rossi: *It has been almost 20 years since then-president Bill Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, also known as “welfare reform.” You were a prominent critic of the legislation, maintaining that it wrongly focused on the morality of poor women’s highly constrained personal choices and deflected attention from crises in the labor market.*

What consequences has the reform had for the women who were its target? And what has been its impact more broadly?

Piven: The passage of PRWORA meant the elimination of Aid to Families with Dependent Children

(AFDC), which had been the main cash assistance program for poor families with children. It was replaced by Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, which imposed time restrictions on the length of assistance as well as work requirements. In addition,

it gave the states a big incentive to restrict aid, because they could use the block grant funds for other purposes. This the states proceeded to do. Welfare caseloads plummeted, from about 14 million people in 1995 to a little over 4 million today. This has meant a doubling of households living in extreme poverty. Some three million children live in such households.

Of course, the effects are also felt more widely. AFDC functioned as a kind of unemployment insurance program for people who were not eligible for UI benefits because they worked irregularly or in jobs that were not covered. With that safety net gone, many millions of precarious workers are much more vulnerable to the harsh terms of work at the bottom of the labor market.

Rossi: *Hillary Clinton calls herself “a lifelong fighter for women’s issues.” Apparently, she does not see revisiting welfare reform as part of that fight. And neither do the prominent feminists and many other progressives lining up behind her candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination. Why?*

Hillary Clinton has a very mixed record on the issue of poverty, including the poverty of women and children. She began as a lawyer with Marian Wright Edelman’s advocacy group, the Children’s Defense fund, and she later popularized the slogan “It takes a village to raise a child.” But in the 1990s, as the right-wing campaign against blacks and the poor escalated, she joined with her husband in trying to minimize the damage the Republican assault was causing Democrats by endorsing some of its principles. Bill Clinton campaigned in 1992 with the promise to “end welfare as we know it,” and



“We should not endorse policies that punish the poor.”

when a Republican House put a bill that did just that on his desk before the 1996 election, he signed it, with Hillary's support.

The problem is not just Hillary. The main argument for PRWORA was that welfare caused the poor to become "dependent." Better to show tough love and cut out the checks, because then poor women would shape up, get a job, and begin the climb out of poverty. This conviction that wage work is always better than welfare is deeply ingrained, and it is shared by much of the Left as well as all of the Right. It's time we reevaluated it, not only because it has confused our support for income assistance to the poor but because contemporary labor market conditions make full employment at decent wages less and less likely. Maybe there will come a glorious day when investment will mean investment in a green economy, caregiving jobs, and so on. But in the meantime, we should not endorse policies that punish the poor.

Rossi: *How should we understand the energy and enthusiasm coalescing around Bernie Sanders's candidacy? Is this the beginning of a movement?*

The Sanders campaign is the continuation of a movement, not the beginning. It's hard to be sure of the exact beginning. Was it the occupation of the Wisconsin state capitol? Or Occupy? Or Ferguson? Or now Black Lives Matter? All these events are evidence of the scale and intensity of popular anger at escalating inequality and the abusive government policies that inequality makes necessary. And just as neoliberalism is bigger than the United States, so is the movement. Occupy drew inspiration from the Arab Spring, UK Uncut from Occupy. And the movements are spilling over into electoral politics, not only with the remarkable Sanders campaign here, but with the defeat of the arch-conservative Stephen Harper in Canada and the ascendance of Jeremy Corbyn to the leadership of the Labour Party in Britain.

It's a good time to be a political activist! ❖

Michele Rossi researches and writes about inequality, culture, and politics. She is a member of Philadelphia DSA.



DSA Convention News

You can find photos and a report of the DSA convention at dsausa.org.

Join Our Legacy Circle

Our Legacy Circle program lets you make a final gift to ensure that the values we share will receive the support they deserve.

A bequest of any size will help us meet the challenges of 21st-century capitalism. For more information about how you can become part of the Legacy Circle, call DSA's National Director Maria Svart (212) 727-8610 or email msvart@dsausa.org.

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Mass Incarceration: Is Change Gonna Come?

By James Kilgore

Mass incarceration is trending. Criminal justice never even got on the radar during the 2012 presidential election; now it's big-time news. The president and the pope have ventured behind bars. Politicians from Rand Paul to Cory Booker have sounded off on the need to end the War on Drugs and de-racialize criminal justice. The Koch brothers are on board, too. For those of us who have spent years in prison and many more campaigning for an end to mass incarceration, people in high places paying attention raises all kinds of possibilities. Yet even with all this change of heart, it's hard to keep faith in a change of system.

To begin with, promises around criminal justice at the presidential level don't have a great track record. Remember the closing of Guantanamo? Even the recent release of 6,000 people from federal prisons constitutes a baby step. Plus, about a third of them are being transferred not to freedom but to the ICE deportation queue. Many more released under this quick-fix initiative will end up in dead-end, impoverished situations.

Starry-eyed fiscal conservatives see corrections budgets as soft targets for cutting government spending. They just don't get it. Ending mass incarceration will not save money. The prison-industrial complex reflects a national strategy for dealing with poverty, inequality, and racial conflict. We are caging the unemployed, the homeless, and those with mental health and substance abuse issues. Meeting the needs of this population requires not slashing corrections but reallocating resources into public housing, employment, and treatment. Decarceration on the cheap means replicating the massive Skid Row of Los Angeles in every city and town in the country. We have already segregated our cities via gentrification. If we empty the prisons without supporting those released, we will create what activist Jazz Hayden calls "open air prisons"—over-policed communities of color devoid of opportunities for residents.

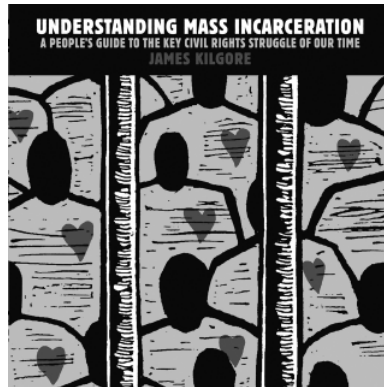
Ultimately, ending mass incarceration requires more than innovative policy packages and changes in legislation. It demands a new mindset. Mass incarceration mushroomed from a vast media cam-

paign to promote "law and order." Manufactured racialized images of drug dealers, thugs, and gang-bangers spawned white moral panic. Nancy Reagan went on tour with her "Just Say No" message. The largely discredited Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program sent police into middle schools and high schools to win the hearts and minds of children. Fear made "soft on crime" the most damning label any post-Reagan political candidate could imagine. Can we re-brand "soft on decarceration" with the same moral authority? I doubt it.

If we are to return the United States to 1980 incarceration levels, the approximate point where all this madness began, we would have to cut the prison and jail population by about 80% or 1.7 million people. That would bring the United States to the incarceration rate of the United Kingdom, the next most punitive state among the established capitalist powers. We can't arrive back to the future by picking the "low-hanging fruit" of those with nonviolent drug offenses. They are only 16% of those in prison. Thousands of people the system has labeled "violent" need a re-think as well. Are Hillary Clinton and Marco Rubio ready for this? Again, I doubt it. Even Bernie Sanders's latest bill on prisons contains nothing that will significantly reduce prison populations.

When a politician puts forward a plan to "Free the Mass Incarcerated 1.7 Million," then the serious talk has begun. In the meantime, let's use the trendiness of mass incarceration to make whatever changes are possible and keep building a social movement that can pressure for needed tweaks in the legislation as part of a much bigger and more difficult process of fighting for systemic change. ❖

James Kilgore is a writer, activist, and educator based in Urbana, Illinois. His latest book is Understanding Mass Incarceration: A People's Guide to the Key Civil Rights Struggle of Our Time. Contact him at waazn1@gmail.com, [@waazn1](https://www.instagram.com/waazn1) or www.understandingmassincarceration.com



Creating a Culture of Reproductive Justice

By Jean Peterman

PRO: Reclaiming Abortion Rights

By Katha Pollitt

Picador, paper, 288 pp., 2015

Grandma, a film by Paul Weitz, starring Lily Tomlin, Julia Cox, Marcia Gay Harding, Judy Greer, Laverne Cox, Elizabeth Pena, Sam Elliott, 2015

Katha Pollitt's compelling and necessary book *PRO: Reclaiming Abortion Rights*, is now out in paperback. This is good news in a very bleak season for reproductive justice. Pollitt, who writes frequently in the *Nation* about these issues, makes a clear case that the right to abortion is an economic issue as well as a moral one. Reproductive control "didn't just make it possible for women to commit to education and work and free them from shotgun marriages and too many kids. It changed how women saw themselves: as mothers by choice."

Studies show that access to contraception and abortion have contributed to the increase in the numbers of women in college and in the professions and the number of women who are economically independent. Pollitt contrasts the hypocrisy of our cultural veneration of mothers with the economic realities of their lives. Most of the consequences of being a parent fall on the mother. In two-income heterosexual families, often the woman's income can kick the family into a higher tax bracket while barely or not even covering the cost of child care.

Because the United States does not have paid parental leave, the woman's staying at home may make economic sense at the time, but means that when she re-enters the workforce she usually does so at a lower wage and a lesser job. The situation of single mothers is bleak indeed. Not only are they demonized, but there are very few social services and income supports to help them raise healthy children.

As an activist since the mid-seventies and later, a researcher, I have heard abortion stories from many women. For each woman, the abortion decision was embedded in her own life and was not an abstract moral issue. Their abortion allowed them to accept a scholarship to graduate school, leave a bad relationship, care for children they already had, and basically get their lives back. Several revealed that they had never told anyone about their abortion. Of

the 35 women I interviewed for research projects, about half were practicing Catholics. Their religion was important to them, yet they did not agree with everything their church teaches. Said one, "My abortion is between me and God."

One of Pollitt's biggest contributions to the reproductive justice/anti-justice debate is to clarify that it is not a battle between religious people and non-believers. Most mainline Protestant denominations and Reform and Conservative Judaism support reproductive justice.

Catholic women get abortions in the same proportion as their numbers in the general population. George Tiller, the doctor who performed late-term abortions in Wichita, Kansas, was murdered by an anti-abortionist in the narthex of his Lutheran church. This controversy is between fundamentalists and the rest of us. Supporters of abortion should stop being so apologetic, says Pollitt, and claim reproductive justice as crucial to women's empowerment at every level.

Director writer Paul Weitz's latest film does just that. *Grandma*, starring Lily Tomlin, is an "odd couple" saga of a lesbian grandmother helping her teenage granddaughter (Julia Garner) get the money for an abortion.

Both funny and very moving, it serves as a perfect example of what Pollitt writes about. Contemporary feminism and generational divides are very much a part of this story. *Grandma* Elle is a 70ish lesbian feminist. Her daughter, Judy (Marcia Gay Harden), is a high-powered lawyer. Granddaughter Sage, unsure about her future, does not want to drift into motherhood. One of Elle's plans is to sell her first edition copies of *The Second Sex* and *The Feminine Mystique* to her local feminist bookstore but she is offered much less than she expected for them. Sage asks if the *Feminine Mystique* is an X-Men character.

Read *PRO*. Invite your friends to see *Grandma*. Then organize. ❖

Jean Peterman is a member of the National Organization for Women and a former board member of the Chicago Abortion Fund. She is retired from the faculty of Chicago State University.



Changing the Conversation

Socialist for President

By Maurice Isserman

“It is very probable, especially if you are a young person, that you have never heard of Eugene Victor Debs.” Those are the first words spoken in a 1979 documentary (you can find it on YouTube) about the man who, running on the Socialist Party ticket in 1912, won nearly a million votes. Debs’s 6% of the total vote was, at least electorally, the high-water mark for U.S. socialism. The producer of the half-hour educational film intended to restore Debs to his rightful place in U.S. historical memory was one Bernie Sanders of Burlington, Vermont. At the time a marginally employed 38-year-old radical organizer, he would enjoy his own electoral triumph two years later by being elected Burlington’s mayor. Sanders’s documentary about Debs is earnest and informative, and distinctly low-budget. He wound up voicing the famous bits from Debs’s speeches himself (“I would not lead you into the promised land if I could, because if I led you in, someone else would lead you out”), which can be entertaining, given the Brooklyn transplant’s still very pronounced accent.

Debs was not from Brooklyn. He was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1855. Although his family prospered, Debs dropped out of school at age 14 to take a job on the railroad and worked his way up to the position of locomotive fireman, a skilled occupation. He also worked his way up the ranks of his craft union, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, becoming its Grand Secretary. And he launched a career in mainstream politics, winning election on the Democratic ticket to become city clerk of Terre Haute, followed by a seat in the state legislature.

But in the 1890s, he took a new direction politically. Becoming convinced of the need for industrial unionism (which, unlike craft unions, united skilled and unskilled workers), he organized the American Railway Union. After enjoying some initial successes, and rapidly expanding its membership to more

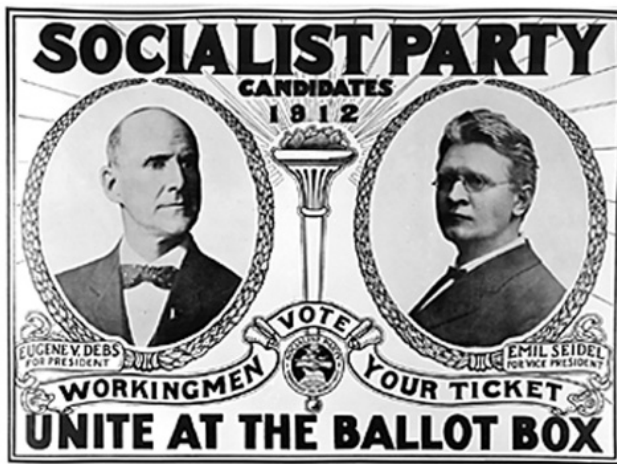
than 150,000, the ARU launched a national rail strike in solidarity with workers already on strike against the Illinois-based Pullman Company (which manufactured sleeping cars for the railroads). Federal troops were dispatched to break the strike, widespread violence ensued, and Debs wound up in prison for defying an injunction. Soon afterward, he was drawn to the socialist movement, and in the

first years of the 20th century became the newly unified Socialist Party’s most famous and eloquent spokesman, as well as perennial presidential candidate. By 1912, when Debs made his fourth run for president, the Party had 100,000 members, ten times its membership in 1900, and counted scores of elected officials across the country.

Historian Nick Salvatore’s 1982 biography, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist*, remains the best single source on Debs’s life and legacy. Debs, Salvatore reminds us, “was not born a Socialist, and he did not reject American values when he became one.” Rather, he understood, and was able to persuade many others, that the greatest threat to individual autonomy and the well-being of families and communities, as well as democratic self-rule, was represented by the unbridled growth of corporate power. “Debs understood that a commitment to the class struggle was neither unpatriotic nor irreligious.” On the contrary, Salvatore writes, “such a commitment was the very fulfillment of the basic democratic promise of American life.”

The year 2015 is not 1912. Bernie Sanders is not Eugene Debs. But from Occupy to Bernie-mentum, echoes of the Debsian message still resonate today. ❖

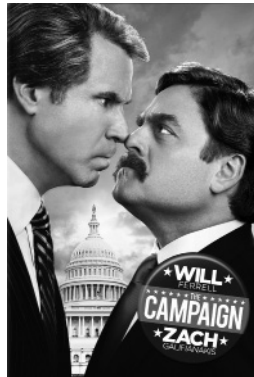
Maurice Isserman teaches history at Hamilton College. He is the author of The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington.



Elections in Popular Culture

From the fictional portrayal of Huey Long in *All the King's Men* to *Election* with Reese Witherspoon or *Bulworth* with Warren Beatty or *The Candidate* with Robert Redford, U.S. culture has plenty to say about elections. Here are some favorites from DSA activists.

The Campaign is the funniest satire of our recent electoral politics I've seen outside of *Saturday Night Live*. Two candidates compete for a congressional seat: a Democrat going for his fifth term (Will Ferrell) and a Republican naif (Zach Galifianakis), but you soon forget the party affiliations, as both speak in the same patriotic clichés and sling outrageous personal attacks at each other with not one mention of any actual policy issue except, briefly, “jobs.” The evil Moch (!) brothers manipulate both candidates and—look for it—supply the voting machines. Well acted. —Barbara Joye



The Manchurian Candidate A still-enthralling cold-war-era melodrama, it centers on a plot by combined Soviet-Chinese Secret Service operatives to influence the upcoming presidential selection process by “brainwashing” a returning soldier into an assassin. From the 1959 book by Richard Condon, the film stars Frank Sinatra, Lawrence Harvey, Angela Lansbury, and Janet Leigh. Complete with such staples as military police derring-do, Asian conspirators, a stunning Lansbury (*Newsweek* in 2007 named her character one of the ten greatest villains in film), and a national convention at Madison Square Garden, the production is masterly, better than its 2004 remake featuring Denzel Washington.

—Michael Hirsch



For more information: yds@dsausa.org



To understand U.S. politics you need to watch three television shows: (1) *The West Wing* to understand the idealistic aspirations of D.C.'s army of staffers. They imagine they are C.J. Cregg or Sam Seaborn, running between cubicles and changing the world; (2) *House of Cards* to understand the Machiavelian character of our political leaders. The ruthless rise of Kevin Spacey's character, Frank Underwood, is a reflection of the career trajectories of Dick Cheney and Bill Clinton; and (3) the most important, *Veep*. U.S. politics is defined by its clownishness. Julia Louis-Dreyfus's character is a carbon copy of Joe Biden.



What is truly radical about Bernie Sanders? He is the first candidate to run for president who isn't a character out of one of these three shows.

—Neal Meyer

Bernie Comics*

"WHEN YOU PUT MONEY INTO ROADS AND BRIDGES AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION... YOU CREATE FAR MORE JOBS THAN GIVING TAX BREAKS TO THE CORPORATE WORLD"

~ A STORY BERNIE TELLS ~



LOOKS LIKE YOU COULD USE A NEW BRIDGE!

THE ENGINEER WHO DEVELOPED THIS WATER SYSTEM ~ AFTERWARD HE WENT OFF TO FIGHT IN THE WAR ~ ... THE CIVIL WAR!

"OF COURSE, THE REPUBLICANS HAVE LONG WANTED TO PRIVATIZE SOCIAL SECURITY AND DESTROY IT."



"BLACK LIVES MATTER IS A VERY VERY SERIOUS ISSUE... WE HAVE TO MOVE AWAY FROM A SITUATION WHERE BLACK WOMEN ARE DRAGGED OUT OF THEIR CARS... ASSAULTED, AND THEN DIE IN JAIL THREE DAYS LATER FOR THE CRIME OF NOT SIGNALING A LANE CHANGE..."



"LET US WAGE A MORAL AND POLITICAL WAR AGAINST WAR ITSELF, SO WE CAN CUT MILITARY SPENDING AND USE THAT MONEY FOR HUMAN NEEDS!"



END

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*<https://berniesanderscomics.wordpress.com/about/>. Art and script: Sharon Rudahl; editor: Paul Buhle.

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